



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

2012 - 2017

For every youth ... a place, a purpose, a plan

FOREWORD

Join us in this great venture

We are extremely proud to present the Trinidad and Tobago, National Youth Policy for the period 2012 to 2017.

For us in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, this Policy promotes our vision of youth as change agents whose representation and involvement will lead towards local, regional and international development. Essentially, this will mean a giant leap into the future, fostering a new relationship with the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. It will require us to implement new structures, strategies, programmes and initiatives, intended to make youth development a more significant driving force in Trinidad and Tobago.

This vision establishes the resolve of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago that, for every youth ... [there is] a place, a purpose and a plan. Through this policy, and the outcomes that will surely be derived from its implementation, we would like the young members of our community to know that there is a place in Trinidad and Tobago for each of them, regardless of where they were born and the current circumstances of their lives.

We acknowledge that each young person has a purpose in life and our goal is to help reveal that purpose and engage each one of them in a plan to achieve that purpose, whether through educational, cultural, community service or sporting pursuits.

It is important and necessary that each one of them is known to us, not merely as a number or statistic, but as a whole person with desires, needs and challenges for which solutions are available and people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to contribute to their own development and to the greater good of our nation.

If we succeed, our young people will know that the entire country is there for them. They will know where to go and whom to call if they wish to celebrate an achievement or report that they are in trouble, or if

they just want to talk to someone ... about anything. For youth who have gone off their purpose and are involved in situations for which they need help, there will be a safe harbour in the midst of the storm where they can spend some time, reset their compass and continue on their journey.

This is a tall order for accomplishment. It means that the entire country must be mobilized in support of our young people. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is unwavering in its commitment of ensuring prosperity and inclusion of all our citizens and our young people are at the forefront of this forward thrust. We wish to make it clear that this National Youth Policy is for every young person, not just a chosen few. Within its structures, each young person, whether abled or differently-abled; at home or in an institution; in school or out of school; must find a place to grow, thrive and prosper.

Our Ministry is prepared to take the lead in this venture but we recognize that it is way beyond our capability to do it alone. We need our partners in development. The young people of the nation themselves must engage with the national community, accept their rights and responsibilities – no 'opting out' will be acceptable. Our partners in local, regional and international public, private and NGO sector organizations as well as interested individuals, are welcome to join us and contribute.

We shall also create the enabling environment for the accomplishment of our goals: new institutional arrangements and relationships; strategies that are practical and solutions-oriented and activities that are innovative, creative and attractive in their concepts and delivery.

We hope you will join us in this great adventure on which we have embarked. Welcome aboard!

Senator The Honourable, Marlene Coudray
Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This National Youth Policy, 2012-2017, lays out the plans of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for youth development for the next five (5) years. Its development came after a long process of consultation with young people across the nation and strategic partners with whom the Ministry shares a common involvement in youth development. The Ministry of Gender, Youth & Child Development provided oversight for the review of the National Youth Policy of Trinidad and Tobago which was done by a Cabinet Appointed Committee. This document therefore represents the collective wisdom of both internal and external stakeholders and in particular, a wide cross section of youth across the nation.

RATIONALE FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

This policy was developed to provide a single authority for the Government's voice in all matters related to youth development. It forms part of the country's obligations as signatories to the Lisbon Declaration of 1998 and The Braga Action Plan (1998) as well as its commitments as part of the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS), all encouraging the establishment of youth development as a key strategy in national development. The policy document establishes the orientation and direction of the Government: for every youth....a place, a purpose and a plan and the role of state and non-state actors and the wider national community in youth development, inviting their widest possible participation.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

Youth has been variously described in different environments and each country establishes its own definition of youth, given its national context. Trinidad and Tobago defines a youth as a person between the ages of 12 and 29 years who is becoming independent of parents and learning to master the biological, psychological, political, economic and

social changes associated with this period of transition. Notwithstanding the official definition, the policy recognizes that within this age cohort there are significant differences in profile, needs and service delivery portfolios. Consequently, a further segmentation of the definition of youth is desirable, as follows:

The Early Years (12 – 15 years)

Youth within this category are primarily in school and their needs may revolve around matters related to their education, sport, early initiation of sexual activity and drug use; negotiating peer pressure and establishing positive relationships within family, school and social circles.

Transition Years (16 – 21 years)

Youth within this category are concerned with either further education or entering the world of work. Some will get married, start a family, set up a home and become more politically and socially significant. Many can move abroad at this stage. Others may focus on career development, while deferring marriage and family for later. Those who had engaged in risky behaviours in the earlier part of their lives may find themselves in difficult situations with unwanted pregnancies, involvement in criminal activity and drug use and addiction. The needs of youth within this category are vastly different from the Early Years and therefore require a radically different portfolio of services.

Mature Years (22 – 29 years)

These are the mature years of youth. Many would have started families, completed higher education and are seeking to establish sound foundations for careers and employment. In this category, youth require higher order services related to business start-up, financial planning, employment, housing, parenting and children's services. Others, who may have deferred their education and joined the work force, may be seeking to further their studies on a part time basis during this stage.

Differently-abled Youth, Youth in Institutions & Youth in Complex Circumstances

In addition, the policy recognises that, within the context of certain youth populations such as the differently-abled, youth in institutions and youth in complex circumstances, chronological years may not constitute the most accurate representation of the status of youth. In these situations, an assessment of the 'developmental' age, may be a more realistic and practical methodology for age definition and so, these young people require the special attention of policy makers.

NATIONAL YOUTH PROFILE

The national youth profile provides a demographic profile of youth and attempts a census of the main activities in which they are engaged. It is estimated that there are approximately 450,556 young people between the ages of 12 and 29 in Trinidad and Tobago, representing some 34.2 per cent of the national population with males (104,420) outnumbering females (85,302) by 51 per cent to 49 per cent.

Those in the age category 12 to 15 are usually found within secondary school system. The youth labour force (16 to 29 age group) accounts for some 201,000 (2009) of which males account for 117,100 and females 83,900. While the number of unemployed youth has been decreasing within the last few years (in 2000, the unemployed youth population was 38,900, while in 2009 this figure reduced to 18,000), when compared with the national unemployment rate, youth are still worse off. Many young people have taken advantage of opportunities and have continued in further education and others are in the many skills-based and apprenticeship programmes available for their usage. Unfortunately, many young people have found themselves in gangs and criminal activity.

KEY CONCERNS OF YOUTH

Young people are concerned about many issues that affect them directly and indirectly. Some of the main issues raised relate to education and training,

employment and enterprise, gender relations and health.

Education and training

Young people expressed anxiety about poverty and limited access to financing, as key determinants in accessing educational and training opportunities. They are also concerned about inadequate family support and guidance, in particular, by the children of teenaged-parents; bullying, peer pressure and low self-esteem; inappropriate curriculum for the needs of students; unhealthy learning environments; insufficient integration of new technology into the learning environment, thereby losing potential benefits; and inadequate information to youth, as many are unaware of the opportunities that are open to them.

Young people living in rural areas were particularly concerned about a lack of transportation in certain areas and at certain times. Other issues that are in need of redress are: 1) a lack of access to key infrastructure and support systems to facilitate young people, including sporting, recreational, library and internet facilities, that are easily available in urban centres; and 2) curricula that are not sufficiently structured to meet their needs. Differently-abled youth have challenges related to transportation, access to learning institutions and their facilities as well as discrimination due to a lack of understanding by persons without visible disabilities.

Employment and enterprise

Young people have named exploitation as their most critical issue with respect to employment. They cite exposure to several forms of exploitation including low wages, long hours, child labour and sexual harassment. Other areas of concern were lack of qualifications and work experience; lack of information on jobs and opportunities that may be of interest to them; discrimination and lack of respect, especially with respect to age, stereotyping of individuals and denying youth access to jobs because of their 'rasta' hairstyles, their home address, their religion or their personal circumstances. They also dislike biased recruitment policies, the apparent

nepotism or the 'who you know' approach to recruitment which demoralizes them and makes them cynical about the future. On the other hand, employers who do not engage in these practices are seen by some as 'not helping' family and friends.

It is felt by many young people that current programmes directed at youth development were either outdated or insufficient in number. There was consensus, particularly in rural areas, that market-driven skills' training was not available and there were insufficient assessment centres to service the entire youth population. A lack of a 'hands on' approach by the education system was also seen as contributing to this challenge.

In terms of small business development youth interested in establishing their own enterprises were concerned about the significant difficulties in starting their own businesses, including a lack of resources for start-up capital and the difficulties inherent in accessing bank financing for this purpose. The issue of lack of experience and qualifications experienced by those seeking employment also confronted those who were trying to establish their own businesses. Some young people did admit that fear of failure could also be an inhibiting factor in business start-up and management. They also suggested that a lack of motivation on the part of many young people meant that some of them were not actively seeking employment and if they were employed, they contributed only marginally to their organisations.

Gender relations

Youth are concerned about their education and socialization, relative to gender relations, as it is felt that the education system does not teach about gender relations and its challenges. Educational attainment, poor communication, peer pressure and the negative presentation of women and men in the media were all seen as factors affecting gender relations.

Health

The main challenges to youth health have been identified by young people as substance abuse,

decreased physical activity and inadequate sexual and reproductive health education at home, in school and within the wider community. It was felt that youth health services are insufficient and many of them were unaware of what constitutes sound health practices. Additionally, the physical infrastructure of many health and public facilities are quite old, in need of repair and inadequate in terms of space and layout. Service delivery can be protracted, with large crowds, long waiting times and laborious procedures, representing invisible barriers to access by young people. Many young people also expressed concern about the level of privacy and confidentiality in some health institutions. It is felt that unsafe sexual practices, a sedentary lifestyle and the dangers of second hand smoke are exposing their health and lives to innumerable risks.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

This section focuses on the local, regional and international contexts in which Trinidad and Tobago is developing its current national youth policy. It establishes the direction of youth development agendas within the major groupings to which Trinidad and Tobago belongs and further, positions the current national policy development goals as consistent with those of leading organisations in the regional and international environments.

National Context

Within the national context, the National Youth Policy is positioned within the policy agenda of the Government, the Medium Term Policy Framework 2011 – 2014 and its Seven Pillars of Sustainable Development. The first five pillars address the areas that have been outlined by youth as key sources of concern. These five pillars are:

1. People-centred development
2. Poverty Eradication and Social Justice
3. National and Personal Security
4. Information and Communication Technologies
5. A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy

Within these five (5) Pillars, the case for youth mainstreaming within the government and non-state sectors and the wider society can be found. Young people's desire for an education system that is relevant and stable could be found in Pillar 1; concerns about exploitation, unemployment, inadequate and expensive housing options and issues related to rural youth and the differently-abled have found a place under Pillar 2; crime and violence, of which young people are both perpetrators and victims are the subjects of Pillar 3. Pillar 4 reflects young people's wide usage of technology-based products and services in education and training; recreation and leisure; and in the course of their employment. Pillar 5 will utilize their creative and innovative talents in existing and new, economically-significant sectors that will come on stream in the future.

Regional Context Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

The regional context focuses on CARICOM and the CARICOM Commission for Youth Development (2010) which concluded that individual countries must take the time to invest in youth development as current youth policies are weak, outdated and rarely implemented. It concludes that current investments in structures and programmes for youth development — in education, health and well-being, culture, sports and job creation — such as they are, are just not enough and in some instances, are misdirected. It recommends that young people should be consulted on all matters of national importance and there should be a shift away from viewing youth as the future leaders and instead, see them as they are now, partners in development. Once this is accomplished, the structures must be put in place to establish this new partnership with youth on a national scale.

Organisation of American States (OAS)

The OAS Youth Agenda aims to provide youth with the capacity to safeguard their future as well as the countries within the Hemisphere by increasing the role of youth within governmental circles of their

countries. The OAS Youth Agenda is based on three (3) pillars: 1) institutionalisation of dialogue with youth; 2) capacity building; and 3) strengthening institutional development in member states and with the OAS to take into account youth issues.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Commonwealth of Nations

The international context focuses, firstly, on Trinidad and Tobago's membership of the Commonwealth of Nations (the Commonwealth). The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the youth arm of the Commonwealth, advocates for full youth development policies in all Commonwealth countries and they work continuously to ensure that the voices of young people are heard at the highest levels of decision-making and that they make valuable contributions to national development such as reversing marginalization, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease.

Millennium Development Goals

Secondly, the policy considers the commitments made under the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, established in the year 2000, are eight international development goals that all 193 members of the United Nations and at least 23 international organizations agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The goals are to: 1) eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality rates; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) develop a global partnership for development. With respect to youth development, material successes in these areas will directly impact our young people because at least six (1 through 6) of the eight goals have immediate and direct impact on the youth population. The news that the world has already achieved three (3) of the eight (8) goals should provide some optimism for the achievement of the others.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES SUPPORTING THE POLICY

This policy is supported by the two (2) core principles of youth development and empowerment that will guide its policy agenda for youth over the next five (5) years.

Youth development

The Government is committed to principles and practices of youth development, defined as "...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to: (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded; and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives." (Pittman, 1993, p.8).

Consistent with international trends, The Government of Trinidad and Tobago sees young people as partners, participants, resources, and inheritors of the world. In this regard, this policy strives towards the realization of young people as change agents whose representation and involvement at every level of shared community life will lead towards local, national, regional and even global development. This is in direct contrast with other schools of thought which see young people as 'citizens in waiting' or 'delinquents'.

Empowerment

Youth will be able to fulfill their mandate only if they go through a process of empowerment which will provide them with the skills and competencies to develop their own capability which they can then contribute to national development. The National Youth Policy provides a framework that:

Enhances the service delivery system and legal framework for young people

Motivates our young people to be active participants in development

Partners with youth as a critical element in their development

Opens avenues for young people to achieve more
Wills support for youth in special circumstances
Expresses youth creativity, innovation and foresight
Recognises the contributions that young people continue to make to national development

VISION AND GOALS

Given the preceding discussion it is evident that the vision and goals of the policy must mirror the principles and values of youth development and empowerment enunciated above. It is in this context that the vision for youth will be:

*For every youth ... a place,
a purpose, a plan*

It is a vision to which all citizens can aspire. For young people it communicates that there is a place for each of them at the national table, attaching a sense of importance to their lives and the role they will fulfill as they progress through their stages of youth: The Early Years, 12 – 15 years; through Transition Years, 16 – 21 Years; and to their Mature Years, 22 – 29 Years. It provides a sense of connectedness and social inclusion, thereby removing their feelings of isolation and alienation from national life.

The vision also sees each young person as having a unique purpose to his or her life, based upon naturally endowed skills and competencies and those they may choose to develop over time. This allows them to have a sense of contributing something of value to society which should cause them to be optimistic about the future and comfortable with their own identity. Finally there is a unique plan for each life that will be developed and implemented as young people pass through their phases. This will generate positive beliefs that they have choices about their future and alternative courses of action. No barriers will be insurmountable and they will know that they are not alone but are fully supported by the entire country.

GOALS

Youth development will be placed firmly on the national agenda. In this regard, the policy will establish the following goals:

1. To enable young men and women to initiate, lead and participate in actions that promote their own development and that of their communities and the wider society, at all levels of national life.
2. To ensure that young people have access to adequate and appropriate programmes, resources and services to facilitate their widest possible participation, regardless of their geographic location, race, ethnicity, gender, level of disability and social, religious and economic standing.
3. To establish a unified, coordinated response and participation of all stakeholders including government, non-government, private organizations and young persons, to ensure all youth-related programmes are integrated and synchronized, while providing new and effective mechanisms to build collaboration among all youth development stakeholders.
4. To define and prioritize areas of specific action for youth empowerment in accordance with the overall policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
5. To develop qualities of citizenship and pride in our national identity, while sustaining and reinforcing the spirit of volunteerism among youth and recognizing their contribution.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The implementation strategies that will secure the achievement of the policy vision and goals are divided into Lead and Support Strategies, as follows:

LEAD STRATEGY

Youth Empowerment & Mobilization Strategy

Used in close collaboration with the Communication & Youth Engagement Strategy, this strategy will focus on the enabling mechanisms that would empower young people to engage in self-development. These include all educational and training initiatives and activities to promote personal and career development, as well as those aimed at differently-abled youth and those in complex circumstances.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Institutional Development Strategy

This will cover all the organizational-related mechanisms that will be developed to accomplish the vision, goals and objectives of the Policy and will include internal re-alignment of the Ministry and the institutional arrangements for collaboration with youth, other Ministries, other entities within the State sector, social sector partners and private enterprise. A major component of this strategy is the establishment, in 2015, of the National Youth Commission.

Youth Development Financing Strategy

This strategy will focus on the identification of sustainable sources — local, regional and

international – of funding for youth development programmes and will include initiatives, in collaboration with private and public sector partners and volunteers, for financing educational and training development, youth enterprise, housing and other projects of national, regional and international significance to young people.

Communication & Youth Engagement Strategy

This strategy will establish positive, mutually beneficial relationships and understanding among all stakeholders, in particular young people themselves, involved in youth development and implementation of the National Youth Policy and will encompass all known forms of communication.

International Engagement Strategy

This strategy is focused on establishing, deepening and widening mutually beneficial relationships among young people and other youth stakeholders in regional and international communities.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategy

This strategy will focus on the technical and technological mechanisms through which the communication and youth engagement strategies will be undertaken in order to establish positive, relationship-centered communications.

Operations & Logistics Strategy

This strategy will focus on the operational aspects of service delivery, in particular, coordination of activities, products and services that form part of the implementation of the Policy. Utilising an integrated systems approach to implementation, it will ensure that all linkages in the chain work together efficiently to achieve the goals of the Policy.

Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy

The monitoring and evaluation strategy will focus on monitoring all aspects of implementation while in progress and evaluating their outcomes and impacts on the goals identified for achievement.

ACTION PROGRAMME

Recognizing that the Policy will span a five-year planning period, with annual reviews, the action programme will be subdivided into shorter timeframes to which implementation priorities may be applied and which will provide ample opportunity for strategy adaptation and capacity enhancement. Consequently, the action programme will be implemented as follows:

- Short-term: 2012- 2014
- Medium-term 2014 - 2016
- Long-term 2016 - 2017

SHORT-TERM: 2012 - 2014

The short-term action programme will run for the first two years of strategy implementation and will consist of two main sub-activities:

1. Short-term implementation phase, concerned with undertaking the activities with the highest and most urgent priorities and those with readily available resources that can be implemented with very short planning horizons; and
2. Planning phase, concerned with undertaking the required consultative, research and planning mechanisms for implementing the medium-, and long-term action programmes.

The strategies to be activated during this period are the Youth Empowerment & Mobilization, Communication & Youth Engagement, International Engagement and the Monitoring & Evaluation Strategies.

MEDIUM-TERM: 2014-2016

This represents a very intense phase of activity and will involve the core and most complex strategies for accomplishment during the planning period 2012 – 2017. These strategies (Institutional Development, Youth Development Financing, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and Operations & Logistics Strategies) require two (2) years of intense, advance planning activity before implementation, both as a result of their complex nature as well as the depth and value of the human and capital resources required for implementation.

LONG-TERM: 2016-2017

This long term planning horizon will be primarily concerned with monitoring and evaluation and bringing projects started in the previous period through to their final phases of completion. It will include a full strategic and operational review and the completion of the National Youth Policy for the next planning period 2017 – 2022.



CONTENTS

01	INTRODUCTION
02-03	RATIONALE FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY
04-08	DEFINITION OF YOUTH International Definitions Trinidad & Tobago's Definition <i>Differently-abled Youth</i> <i>Youth In Institutions</i> <i>Youth In Complex Circumstances</i>
09-11	NATIONAL YOUTH PROFILE Demographic Youth Labour Force Youth Employment Youth Unemployment Further Education Skills Based Programmes
12-16	KEY CONCERNS OF YOUTH Education And Training Employment & Enterprise Gender Relations Health
17-20	NATIONAL, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
22-32	PRINCIPLES AND VALUES SUPPORTING THE POLICY GOALS AND VISION POLICY OBJECTIVES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES Lead Strategy Support Strategies
32-38	ACTION PROGRAMME Short-term: 2012 - 2014 Medium-term: 2014-2016 Long-term: 2016-2017
42	CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Endings and beginnings

Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Lisbon Declaration of 1998 which advocated for countries to develop a National Youth Policy. The declaration encourages countries to review the situation of youth, their needs and priorities, through their participation in a consultative process, thereby ensuring that young women and young men actively contribute to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national and local youth policies, programmes and action plans (Lisbon Declarations 1998).

The Braga Action Plan (1998) also advocated for the formulation of cross-sectoral, comprehensive and visionary youth policies in all States by 2005. These policies were to be coupled with Action Plans and were to take into consideration the guidelines set forth in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond. The Plan also encouraged the engagement of young people to act as change agents in addressing the socio-economic challenges with which many of them are faced.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) 2000-2015 places significant value on the full engagement of young people at all levels of decision-making and their effective participation in the development process, as well as on the implementation of these developmental interventions which are designed to create social transformation.

The 2010 Report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development stated that youth participation and involvement are critical and quintessential elements, if the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) is to be effectively implemented.

The report further stated that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago loses out on the potential increase of 11.45% of GDP on an annual basis by not addressing critical issues of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, early school drop-out, crime and violence and HIV/AIDS. This adds up to approximately TT\$15b,

based on 2012 GDP figures.

This policy document is a revision of the existing National Youth Policy, which was developed in 2006. The previous policy promoted the vision of empowering young people to make informed choices so that they can lead meaningful, enjoyable lives and contribute to the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. It placed emphasis on the following:

- Y** — youth as individuals
- E** — creation of an enabling environment
- S** — systems and institutions that impact on youth.

The policy therefore said YES to youth as valuable and worthy of investment by the national community.

This policy builds on its previous iteration and was led by the Ministry of Gender, Youth & Child Development, in collaboration with the Cabinet-appointed 'Multi-sectoral Review of the National Youth Policy' Committee (2011). It was developed after wide consultation with stakeholders throughout Trinidad and Tobago and reflects their collective desires for youth development. In this regard the National Youth Policy provides a framework that:

- E**nhances the service delivery system and legal framework for young people
- M**otivates our young people to be active participants in development
- P**artners with youth as a critical element in their development
- O**pens avenues for young people to achieve more
- W**ills support for youth in special circumstances
- E**xpresses youth creativity, innovation and foresight
- R**ecognises the contributions that young people continue to make to national development

RATIONALE FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

Who, what, why, where, how & whom?

This National Youth Policy is the single, authoritative source of the philosophy, guiding principles, policy position, strategic choice and direction, goals, objectives, strategies and implementation of programmes that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to establish as bases for youth development in Trinidad and Tobago.

It establishes the definition of youth; the contributions and challenges of young people within the national community. It also indicates what our stakeholders can reasonably expect within this planning period with regard to the ways in which young people's contributions can be recognized and made more meaningful; and their challenges, minimized or overcome altogether.

The policy establishes in the minds of young people, in a definitive (as opposed to abstract) way, the manner in which they are perceived by the national population; their value to the community; and the high expectations that the national community has of them. At the same time, it invites all young people to bring their intellect, knowledge, skills, personalities, energies, ambitions and motivations to the national table to be used in their own development, as well as in service of others in the country.

In this way, this National Youth Policy gives young people the assurance that their offerings are valuable to the nation and provides the basis for self-confidence to explore, invent and create, given their natural talents.

It establishes, for all stakeholders to observe, the resources that the Government is willing to invest in order to ensure that young people operate at their highest level of capacity, in whichever sphere of national activity they undertake: national service, the arts, science, construction, agriculture, social development, academia or business. In this regard, all

government ministries must be committed to forming their priorities for youth mainstreaming within their organizations.

The policy also establishes the resources and mechanisms to ensure that objectives and programmes established in the current planning period are sustainable in the next one, and in the long term thereby making sure that the national youth development agenda is sufficiently insulated from the vagaries of economic and political life.

This commitment then provides the basis for the wider national population to establish its own goals for youth development and it encourages widespread participation of all members of society in helping and empowering any young person with whom they come into contact. In this regard, the Government seeks partners in youth development within both the state and non-state sectors and in particular, from among young people themselves.

This National Youth Policy therefore provides the fulcrum around which non-state actors, private sector, non-governmental and community-based organizations can turn for information, advice, support and backing for their own initiatives that may be directed towards youth development.

It provides concrete, identifiable ways in which young people, across the wide spectrum of our definition of youth, can both access and provide services and engage in the process of national development.

No young person must be unaware of where to go if in need of help with any question or challenge s/he is confronting. Conversely, if the young person has a skill to contribute, s/he must know which agency is the most appropriate and the location of the best point for contact initiation.

This youth policy recognizes the significant cost to society and to young people themselves of not investing in youth development and the tremendous benefits if we do seize the initiative and make this sacrifice now.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth & Child Development has lead responsibility for developing and implementing the National Youth Policy and is ultimately accountable to the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, and in particular, the young people of Trinidad and Tobago, for youth development. In this regard, it recognizes and accepts its mandate of policy making, coordination, support and monitoring and evaluation of the next youth development thrust.

Notwithstanding, this Ministry consistently collaborates with several other Ministries and organizations in designing and implementing its youth policy agenda. At the core of these collaborations are the Ministries of Education, Labour

and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, National Security, Sport and Tertiary Education and Skills Training. Outside of the public sector, the Ministry works closely with the Youth Councils, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and relevant United Nations (UN) agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The Ministry remains grateful for the support of these partners and expects to upscale its association with them. At the same time, the Ministry remains consistently open to new partnerships that would bring to the mainstream, the values provided by youth in national development.



DEFINITION OF YOUTH

We are active contributors and partners ...

INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The definition of “youth” varies widely from country to country. The United Nations defines “youth” as “persons between the ages of fifteen (15) to twenty four (24) years.” The Commonwealth Youth Programme also defines youth to be persons between the ages of fifteen (15) to twenty-nine (29) years. Trinidad and Tobago ratified the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child which proposed that a child in Trinidad and Tobago should be a person under the age of eighteen (18).

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO’S DEFINITION

Research conducted by the National Youth Policy of Trinidad and Tobago (NYPTT) National Task Force in 2004 concluded that the socio-economic and cultural profile of Trinidad and Tobago facilitated a long period of dependence of children and young people on their parents and adults. Contributory factors that lead to this are high levels of youth unemployment and the inability to procure independent and affordable housing.

This evidence led to the definition of a youth in Trinidad and Tobago as a person between the ages of 12 and 29 years who is becoming independent of parents and learning to master the biological, psychological, political, economic and social changes associated with this period of transition.

While this period of transition is usually recognized as one in which young people are arguably their most creative and motivated and exhibit great potential, it can be simultaneously marred by fear, insecurity and isolation.

There are many societal influences that have shaped the situations and experiences of young men and women today. Such factors play an important role in defining the needs, opportunities, aspirations and

challenges of young people. However, young men and women are sometimes perceived as problems that must be fixed. This perception is commonly referred to as the “deficit approach”. According to Jeffs and Smith (1999), adults view young people in three (3) ways — as delinquents, users and victims.

As delinquents they engage in negative acts that affect both elders and young people. As users, they consume illegal narcotics (drugs) and excessively drink and smoke. Further, young people also act carelessly by getting pregnant. As victims, they are unemployable, lack proper schooling and are products of broken homes.

Young people are also perceived merely as ‘citizens in waiting’, suggesting that they are not quite ready to assume the roles that are associated with their more mature parents and grandparents. The implication here is that they are still ‘becoming’ and therefore must await their turn until the passing of the current generation. This view ignores the significant contributions that young people can make to national development today, rather than at some indeterminate future time.

This National Youth Policy accepts the interpretation of young people as key contributors to national development. In our view, adults should view young people as responsible human beings who know what they want and have the ability to achieve their desired goals. Young women and men are not only a major resource and inheritors of the future society; they are also active contributors to the nature of society today. Young women and men are national assets and their needs and aspirations should be central to national development. This provides a foundation and mechanism for youth participation in socio-economic development while recognizing that young people should be the protagonists of their own development, not merely recipients of state support.

Consistent with Government's thrust for 'People-centred Development', inclusiveness and prosperity for all citizens, as outlined in the Medium Term Framework Policy Framework 2011-2014, this National Youth Policy provides a framework for the development of young men and women across the country.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and the Cabinet-appointed 'Multi-sectoral Review of the National Youth Policy' Committee (2011) have decided to maintain the existing definition of youth as determined by the National Youth Policy Task Force of 2004. In its estimation, the reasons advanced for the definition six (6) years ago, that the socio-economic and cultural profile of the nation facilitated a long period of dependence of children and young people on their parents and adults, still holds true today. Contributory factors back then were high youth unemployment and the inability to procure independent and affordable housing. More recently, significant Government investment in free and subsidized tertiary-level education to both undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels has encouraged young people to remain longer in school, thereby further deepening their dependence. Consequently, this National Youth Policy, its related documents and initiatives that are developed and implemented, will continue to define youth as a person between the ages of 12 and 29 years.

Notwithstanding, the Committee has recognized that within this age cohort several significant, widely discernible differences exist in terms of needs, aspirations and demand for services. Therefore, the Committee has proposed a further segmentation of the definition of youth as follows:

- The Early Years: 12 – 15 years
- Transition Years: 16 – 21 years
- Mature Years: 22 – 29 years

The Early Years (12 – 15 years)

Youth within this category are primarily in school and their needs may revolve around matters related to their education, sport, early initiation of sexual activity

and drug use; negotiating peer pressure; and establishing positive relationships within the family, school and social circles. Identifying and communicating with this category of youth are fairly easy as they can be found in school and church, are still under parental control and may be initiating heavy usage of mobile technology.

Transition Years (16 – 21 years)

Youth within this category are concerned with either further education or entering the world of work. Some will get married, start a family, set up a home and become more politically and socially significant. Many can move abroad at this stage. Others may focus on career development, while deferring marriage and family for later. Those who had engaged in risky behaviours in the earlier part of their lives may find themselves in difficult situations with unwanted pregnancies, involvement in criminal activity and drug use and addiction.

The needs of youth within this category are vastly different from the Early Years and therefore require a radically different portfolio of services. Identifying and communicating with this target group are made more complex as they tend to be more dispersed in higher and vocational education, work places, sporting activities, gangs, and are heavy users of entertainment, mobile and more advanced technologies.

Mature Years (22 – 29 years)

These are the mature years of youth. Many would have started families, completed higher education and are seeking to establish sound foundations for careers and employment. In this category, youth require higher order services related to business start-up, financial planning, employment, housing, parenting and children's services. Others, who may have deferred their education and joined the work force, may be seeking to further their studies on a part-time basis during this stage.

Those who had continued high-risk behaviours throughout the transitional stage may find themselves in even more difficult circumstances,

possibly in trouble with the law, struggling with the difficulties of maintaining a drug habit or raising children born out of unwanted pregnancies. Communicating with this group is also difficult as they are found mainly in employment and can be highly dispersed.

Definition of youth

Youth: 12 - 29 years		
Early Years: 12-15 years	Transition Years: 16-21 years	Mature Years: 22-29 years

Differently-abled Youth

Notwithstanding these categories, differently-abled young people have additional challenges and needs. In the first place, the definition of youth, as applied to differently-abled persons with learning disabilities, must first reflect their developmental age, as opposed to their chronological age, because traditional age categories may not necessarily strictly apply to them. Like their abled counterparts, they share concerns related to their education, skill development, unemployment, exploitation, housing and guidance and parenting support. They however face additional challenges related to literacy and numeracy; restrictions on educational attainment; mobility and transportation; and general acceptance by society as a whole, which does not cater to their specific requirements. They are fairly accessible as they are mainly found in centres designed for their education and skills development but are also found in school and work.

As a group, they require services related to their specific needs in education, skills development, travel, housing, employment and parental training and support. They also require legislative backing, specific to their needs, and a strong advocacy and voluntary

network that would create awareness in the public domain and facilitate mutual understanding and more effective integration of the abled- and differently-abled populations.

Youth in Institutions

Youth living in institutions such as orphanages or correctional facilities also have specific needs related to their lack of freedom to engage and make choices on their own behalf. They too require an expanded portfolio of services that must be considered.

Youth in Complex Circumstances

Many young people find themselves in situations over which they have no control but which negatively impact their lives. Some of these young people may be living or working under difficult circumstances and may be suffering from ills such as incest, rape, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, child labour, malnutrition, poverty and homelessness. Faced simultaneously with all the challenges of their usual age cohort they must also overcome obstacles to their wholesome development posed by these adverse circumstances. These young people need additional services related to their protection, psycho-social support and development.

Definition of youth

All Youth: 12 - 29 years		
Differently-abled	Youth in institutions	Youth in complex circumstances

While policy makers recognize that some of these sub-categories may be arbitrary, it was felt that the need to strategise and plan effectively to ensure that ALL youth are equitably served makes this segmentation necessary.

The policy seeks to ensure that all young women and men are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential as individuals and as active participants in society. Although there may be both abled- and differently-abled individuals outside of these age categories who share similar circumstances of our youth population, this policy focuses exclusively on the age category 12 to 29 inclusive, with recognition of special categories for differently-abled youth, youth in institutions and youth in complex circumstances. Nevertheless, the Ministry will welcome the opportunity to partner with individuals and organizations that may be serving other such groupings of our citizens.

Finally, the policy also addresses the major concerns and critical issues identified through consultations with young men and women and gives direction to

youth programmes and services provided by both state and non-state organizations. Through the development and implementation of this National Youth Policy, the Government declares its commitment to the active involvement of young people in national development. The Government also demonstrates its intention to engage all state agencies, the non-governmental sector and youth groups in youth development; provide the framework, with common goals, for development; and to promote a spirit of co-operation and collaboration in order to: EMPOWER our young people to create sustainable paradigms to advance our country.



NATIONAL YOUTH PROFILE

Where we are, what we are doing

Young people today have far more opportunities for development than their parents and grandparents. Free secondary education from primary to tertiary level has provided vast opportunities for their growth and development. The de-shifting of secondary schools, making all schools at least five (5) years, has facilitated a more stable educational environment for students who were originally accommodated in three-year schools and transferred, through the 14+ examination, to another institution for a further two (2) years.

In addition, the mushrooming of secondary-, and tertiary-level private sector institutions; the expansion of the University of the West Indies; the establishment of the University of Trinidad and Tobago; and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) have created new access that previously was just not available. The wider availability of scholarships and the expansion of the national library system have also supported this thrust.

Attainment, although generally low in some instances, has been significant, as students of Trinidad and Tobago routinely excel at CSEC and other international examinations in which they compete 'head-to-head' with their counterparts all over the world.

DEMOGRAPHIC

In Trinidad and Tobago, the youth population (12 to 29 years), accounts for some 450,556¹ (est.) or 34.2 per cent of the total population. Males (229,619) outnumber females (220,937) by 51 per cent to 49 per cent. The younger ones, 12 to 15 years, are usually found within some 224 government, assisted and

private secondary schools² in the country. Those over 16 years old are generally found in the labour force, in further education or in the many specialized, skills-based, youth service programmes within the country. Of greatest concern is the high examination failure rate in Mathematics and English among this target group.

YOUTH LABOUR FORCE

Defined as the total of the employed, self employed and unemployed persons who are actively looking for work within the 15-29 age groups, the youth labour force in 2009 was estimated to be approximately 201,000, a decrease of 4,200 persons or 2.05% when compared with the previous year, 2008. A breakdown by gender showed that males accounted for 117,100 and females 83,900³. The male labour force decreased by 4.8% (from 123,000 in 2000 to 117,100 in 2009) while the female labour force increased by approximately 4.7% (80,100 to 83,900)⁴. Analysis was done on the youth labour force participation rate for a three-year period, 2007-2009 and it was found that the youth labour force participation rate in 2009 was 61.9%, down by 0.4 of a percentage point from 62.3% in 2008 and 1.5 from 63.4% in 2007.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The total number of youths employed over the period 2000 to 2009 fluctuated but there was a general increasing trend. The number of youths with jobs was 164,000 in 2000, while in 2009 the figure went to 183,000, an increase of 19,000 or 11.6%. However, when compared to the previous year, persons with jobs had decreased from 188,700 in 2008 to 183,000 in 2009, a decrease of 3.02%.

1. Central Statistical Office, Trinidad and Tobago, Provisional Mid-year Estimates, 2010, by Age, Sex and Region.

2. Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education Website, Secondary Schools Directory, http://www.moe.gov.tt/SchoolDirectory/Secondary/A_list.html, viewed on August 16, 2012

3. Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Brief, Youth Unemployment and Employment Trends in Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain, 2012, pp.5.

4. Ibid, pp. 6.

Examining the data by gender and looking at the trend from 2000-2009, the number of female youths with jobs increased from 61,600 in 2000 to 75,000 in 2009; for the males, 102,400 were employed in 2000, whereas in 2009, 108,000 were employed. More males than females were generally employed during the entire period 2000-2009. For example, in 2009 alone, 33,000 more males were employed compared to females.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Over the past years the total number of unemployed persons in the youth population has been decreasing. In 2000, the unemployed youth population was 38,900, while in 2009 this figure reduced to 18,000 (see table 2). This was also reflected in the number of unemployed females, which declined from 18,400 in 2000 to 8,900 in 2009, a 51.6% reduction, while there was a 55.6% reduction in the number of unemployed males (from 20,500 in 2000 to 9,100 in 2009). Although statistics show that the number of unemployed youths is reducing, when compared to the total number of unemployed in Trinidad and Tobago, the youths are worse off. For the entire period under review the total number of youths unemployed had been more than half the total number of persons unemployed (see Table 5), which reflects the fact that generally more youths are unemployed compared to the adult population.



Table 1: Youth Labour Force, 2000-2009 & Youth Labour Force Participation Rate, 2007-2009

Youth Labour Force			
Year	Male	Female	Total
2000	123,000	80,100	203,100
2001	121,300	79,800	201,100
2002	115,900	82,300	198,200
2003	122,300	87,600	209,900
2004	126,100	87,600	213,700
2005	129,100	92,400	221,500
2006	124,600	92,400	217,000
2007	126,800	87,100	213,900
2008	117,500	87,700	205,200
2009	117,100	83,900	201,000

Youth Participation rate

Year	Participation Rate
2007	63.4
2008	62.3
2009	61.9

Source: Central Statistical Office

Compiled by: Research and Planning Unit, Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

Table 2: Youth Unemployed, 2000-2009

Youth Unemployed				National Level Total Unemployed
Year	Male	Female	Total	
2000	20,500	18,400	38,900	69,600
2001	18,700	18,700	37,400	62,400
2002	16,000	18,600	34,600	61,100
2003	17,200	17,600	34,800	62,400
2004	14,500	15,600	30,100	51,100
2005	12,700	15,400	28,100	49,700
2006	10,100	12,600	22,700	39,000
2007	9,300	10,300	19,600	34,500
2008	7,900	8,600	16,500	29,000
2009	9,100	8,900	18,000	32,600

Source: Central Statistical Office

Compiled by: Research and Planning Unit, Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development

FURTHER EDUCATION

The establishment of free education to tertiary level, within approved institutions, since 2004, has seen a mushrooming of private and public sector institutions to meet the demand. In fact, thousands of young people are enrolled in tertiary level education in 34 private, 13 local public and allied and six (6) regional institutions offering further education opportunities to students of Trinidad and Tobago. The University of the West Indies, for the academic period 2008/2009, had a total of 12,867 students registered in all undergraduate, diploma, certificate, advanced diploma and higher degree programmes. The total number of males enrolled was 4,665 or 36.2 per cent and 8,202 females or 63.8 per cent.⁵ The Government of Trinidad and Tobago provided support to 30,675 tertiary level students through the Government Assistance for Tertiary Expenses (GATE) Programme for the academic year 2010/2011.⁶

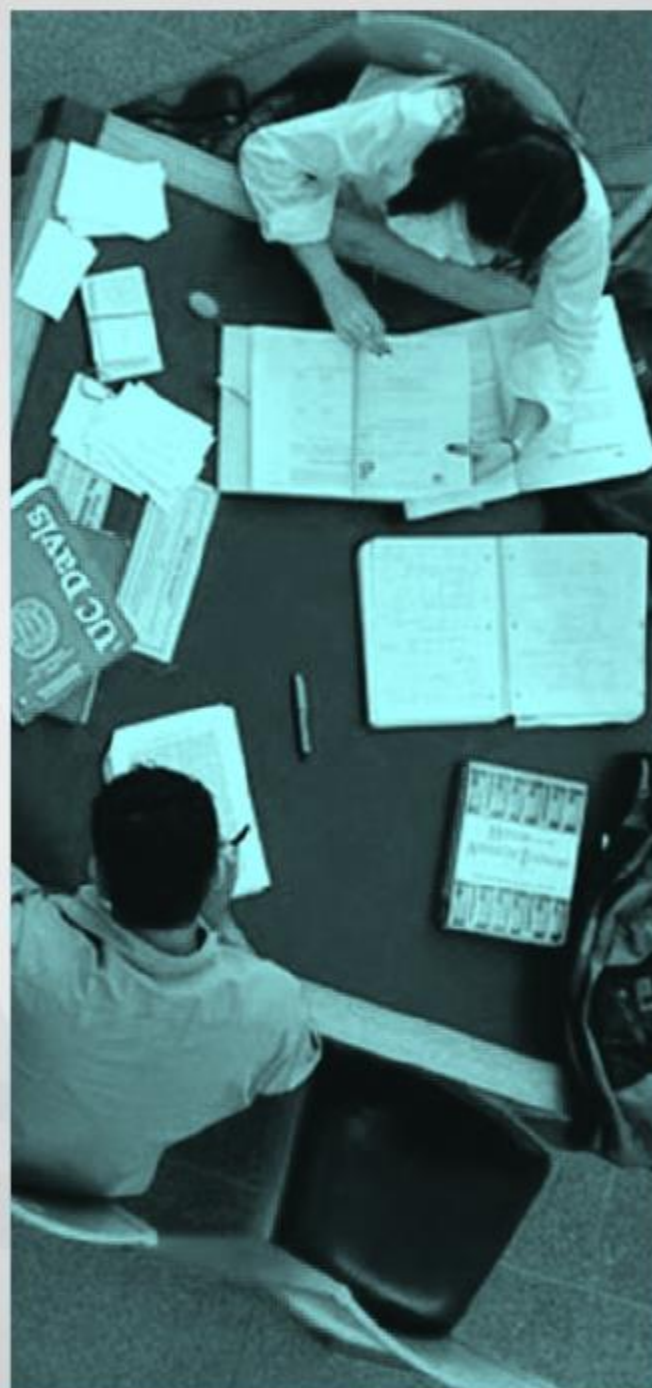
SKILLS-BASED PROGRAMMES

Trinidad and Tobago has established a sound network of skills-based programmes, almost exclusively targeted at young people. For the period 2010 to 2011 over 20,000⁷ young people have benefitted from their enrolment in 17 skills development programmes in Trinidad and Tobago.

YOUTH AND CRIME

Notwithstanding the large numbers of opportunities at their disposal, many young people have found themselves in correctional facilities as a result of their involvement in crime and other deviant behaviour. Research conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean has concluded that both the perpetrators and victims of crime are young men of low levels of socio-economic status, of low educational attainment with limited opportunities for income enhancement, who had witnessed violence at close range. It has been further estimated that the age category of victims of serious crime was 15 to 34 years.⁸ In Trinidad

and Tobago it has been estimated by the national police that there are some 66 known gangs, consisting of some 500 members.



5. The University of the West Indies, Total Number of Students Registered (Excluding Off-Campus Students) at The University of the West Indies, (St. Augustine Campus), by Programme, Sex and School, 2008/2009, St Augustine, 2009

6. Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Social Sector Investment Programme 2012, pp. 79

7. Ibid

8. The World Bank, Guns and Crime, A Case Study of Trinidad and Tobago, siteresources.worldbank.org/INTHAITI/Resources/Caribbean (viewed on August 16, 2012)

KEY CONCERNS OF YOUTH

In our own words ... we tell it like it is ...

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Many young people have expressed concern about some of the challenges that are manifesting themselves with regard to access and utilization of educational and training opportunities. In national consultations, there was general agreement that poverty and limited access to financing were key determinants in accessing educational and training opportunities.

Other issues cited were inadequate family support and guidance, in particular, by the children of teenaged-parents; bullying, peer pressure and low self-esteem; inappropriate curriculum for the needs of students; unhealthy learning environments; insufficient integration of new technology into the learning environment, thereby losing potential benefits; and inadequate information to youth, as many are unaware of the opportunities that are open to them.

Rural Youth

Young people living in rural areas of Trinidad were particularly concerned about a lack of transportation in their communities, at certain times. Other issues that are in need of redress are a lack of access to key infrastructure and support systems to facilitate young people including sporting, recreational, library and internet facilities, that are easily available in urban centres; and curricula that are not sufficiently structured to meet their needs.

Differently-abled Youth

Differently-abled youth with learning disabilities have challenges with overcoming basic literacy and numeracy skills and the teaching methods they receive require radically different approaches from their non-disabled counterparts. Formal education for differently-abled youth tends to follow traditional curricula but with significant adaptations to fit their individual stages of development. In these

circumstances, education proceeds at the pace of the learner and not at a predetermined time frame or age requirement. Many students utilize the SEA curriculum and subsequently, are sent to skills-based programmes.

Many physically differently-abled youth, with the same academic capability as their non-differently-abled counterparts, have challenges related to transportation and access to facilities at educational institutions and face discrimination due to a lack of understanding by persons without visible disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE

Young people have named exploitation as their most critical issue with respect to employment. During consultations it was revealed that youth are faced with many aspects of exploitation in the workplace. It was suggested that exploitation could lead to violence as young people who are not treated justly could be tempted to use force, either to get their own way or to get money.

Lack of qualifications and work experience

Young people cited a lack of qualifications and experience as serious sources of concern. They were most worried that the absence of formal, academic qualifications was shutting them out of the workforce or alternatively, leading them into difficult, exploitative work situations. In some cases qualifications that students had worked diligently to acquire were not being recognized. Even when their qualifications were acceptable, some young people had difficulty convincing potential employers that they were capable and very often were given menial, non-challenging work.

Unavailability of jobs

Given the above, it is therefore not surprising that many young people indicated that the unavailability of jobs, in particular, in non-academic areas, was a key issue for them. They indicated that the labour market was saturated and in many cases they were unable to get jobs when they left school.

Lack of information

Young people also expressed concern about the apparent lack of information in the public domain on potential opportunities. In their estimation, there is insufficient information about or inadequate dissemination of jobs and training programmes that youth may be interested in, or are able to access. In this regard, a lack of advertising was seen as the key to this problem.

Discrimination and lack of respect

Young people also indicated that discrimination and lack of respect were key obstacles to their employment. Discrimination revolved around the issue of age, stereotyping of individuals and denying youth access to jobs because of their 'rasta' hairstyles, their home address, religion or personal circumstances.

Biased recruitment policies

During consultations it was also revealed that young people are very challenged by the apparently biased recruitment policies of some organizations. They are deeply concerned about the apparent nepotism or the 'who you know' approach to recruitment which demoralizes them and makes them cynical about the future. On the other hand, employers who do not engage in these practices may be seen as 'not helping' family and friends.

Programming

It is felt by many young people that current programmes directed at youth development were either outdated or insufficient in number. There was

consensus, particularly in rural areas, that market-driven skills training was not available and there were insufficient assessment centres to service the youth population. A lack of a 'hands on' approach by the education system was also seen as contributing to this challenge.

Small business development

Youths interested in establishing their own enterprises were concerned about the significant difficulties involved in starting their own businesses. These include a lack of resources for start-up capital and the complications inherent in accessing bank financing for this purpose. The issue of lack of experience and qualifications experienced by those seeking employment also confronted those who were trying to establish their own businesses. Some young people did admit that fear of failure could also be an inhibiting factor in business start-up and management.

Lack of motivation

Many young people admitted that there did exist a lack of motivation and interest in employment among some sections of the youth population. It was suggested that some young persons do not wish to work and were therefore not motivated to look for jobs. Even if they were able to secure jobs, some of them were not motivated to make significant contributions within their work places.

GENDER RELATIONS

Socialization and education

One of the greatest concerns expressed by youth with regard to gender relations during the consultative process was the issue of their education and socialization. It was felt by many participants that the education system did not teach about gender relations and its challenges. Consequently, this gap was addressed by environmental and social factors, which established meaning and norms for gender relations. It was generally agreed that parenting was a critical element and was the first teacher of gender roles.

Educational attainment was identified as a gender-related issue of particular concern. In this regard, it was recognised that lower percentages of males as compared to females graduated from secondary schools and went on to attain higher education while there was also a tendency for male students to leave school with a 'lower grade education'. It was suggested that this imbalance caused a rift between males and females.

Youths highlighted that social conditioning which assigned different gender roles to men and women led to misunderstanding of these roles which, in turn, resulted in abuse, disrespect and low self-esteem. Males and females were therefore communicating 'at cross purposes' because they interpreted each other differently. They also noted that the socialization process began at a very early age and therefore had an impact on the very young. However, participants recognized that gender roles were not static and were changing from generation to generation.

Poor Communication

Poor communication was felt to be a key factor in creating misunderstanding about gender roles. There appears to be little understanding of the gender roles among parents, relatives and friends of young people. As a result of poor communication there is inaccurate interpretation, which may lead to abuse, disrespect and disregard of each other. The youths stressed that tolerance and understanding are needed to bridge this gap.

Social/Peers

Peer pressure was also seen as a factor that affects the very young, in particular, and inhibits their appreciation and practice of gender relations. It was felt that peer pressure encourages young people to do wrong and sometimes the types of conversations that occur on the "block" are not conducive to healthy, positive gender relations.

Media

It is generally agreed that the media: television, Internet, print and video games, are instrumental in

influencing young people with respect to gender relations. These play a significant role in objectifying/devaluing both genders. Popular culture, for example, music, television, Internet (mass media) all negatively influence behaviour. Some types of rap music, pornography and music videos sometimes determine young people's concept of gender roles based on their portrayal in the media. These engender a lack of respect, which in turn may lead to aggressive behaviour.

HEALTH

The main challenges to youth health have been identified by young people as substance abuse, decreased physical activity, especially due to increased dependence on technology; and inadequate sexual and reproductive health education.

Sexual and reproductive health education

Young people have articulated that their parents are not equipped with the skills and knowledge to discuss topics of sex and sexuality with their children. There is the tendency for parents to avoid topics relating to sex, leaving young people to get information from sources external to the home. A lack of parental support in this and other areas has negatively impacted young people.

Youth health services

Some young people expressed the view that there are insufficient health education services and many of them are unaware of what constitutes sound health practices. Additionally, the physical infrastructure of many health and public facilities is quite old, in need of repair and inadequate in terms of space and layout. Service delivery can be protracted, with large crowds, long waiting times and laborious procedures, representing invisible barriers to access by young people.

Confidentiality

Many young people expressed concern about the level of privacy in health organizations to which they go in order to access contraceptives. This has been observed as a deterrent to young people's utilization of much-needed sexual and reproductive health services because of a fear of breaches in confidentiality.

Unsafe sexual practices

Participants in consultations also expressed the view that young women's involvement with older men to obtain financial favours exposed their health and lives to innumerable risks. Further, sexual experimentation, early sexual activity of both males and females, the refusal to use contraception (because of young love, trust issues), mis-education and other socially accepted myths were all suggested as elements that compromise the health of young people.

Sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise

Many young people are unaware of the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle marked by long periods of inactivity and lack of exercise. The rise in access and

utilization of technology has been marked by a decrease in physical activity, thereby leading to increasing levels of obesity.

Dangers of second hand smoke

Many young people are subject to second hand smoke in their home and environments. Although smoking has been banned in public places, many children are still affected by second hand smoke from parents and relatives at home. Industrial and commercial by-products and vehicle exhausts, especially in high traffic areas, affect the environment and potentially, the health of young people.

The above-highlighted concerns of young people represent visible and invisible obstacles to their development and full participation in national development. The extent to which these challenges can be circumvented will ultimately determine the outcome and impact of the strategies and implementation programme contained in this National Youth Policy.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Building strategic partnerships at home and abroad

This discussion focuses on the local, regional and international contexts in which Trinidad and Tobago is developing its current national youth policy. It establishes the direction of youth development agendas within the major groupings to which Trinidad and Tobago belongs and further, positions the country's national youth development policy agenda as consistent with those of regional and international organisations, worldwide.

NATIONAL

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has established the Medium Term Policy Framework 2011 – 2014, that will guide its policy agenda through the current planning period. Premised on the possibility of "Prosperity for All", the Framework seeks to accomplish its work through seven (7) inter-connected pillars: People-centred development; Poverty Eradication and Social Justice; National and Personal Security; Information and Communication Technologies; A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy; Good Governance; and Foreign Policy.

While all of these are of concern to youth, the pillars with the most immediate relevance, given their current status, are:

1. **People-centred development**, with its focus on improving the education system and developing a seamless link for continuous learning.
2. **Poverty Eradication and Social Justice** introduces strategies to reduce the income inequality that exists and provides a social safety net for the poor and vulnerable.

3. **National and Personal Security** centers on human security and the maintenance of law and order. Addressing the social conditions that serve as incubators for criminal activity and the reform of the prison and justice systems will be critical.

4. **Information and Communication Technologies** serves as the backbone that supports our educated population, maintains effective communication locally and globally and promotes timely information sharing and management.

5. **A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy** emphasizes the expansion of other productive sectors in the economy through the continued development of existing sectors and the establishment of new areas that span the creative, technological and manufacturing sectors.

Within these pillars, youth development issues are well enshrined. Young people's desire for an education system that is relevant and stable could be found in Pillar 1; concerns about exploitation, unemployment, inadequate and expensive housing options and issues related to rural youth and the differently-abled, have found a place under Pillar 2; crime and violence, of which young people are both perpetrators and victims, are the subjects of Pillar 3.

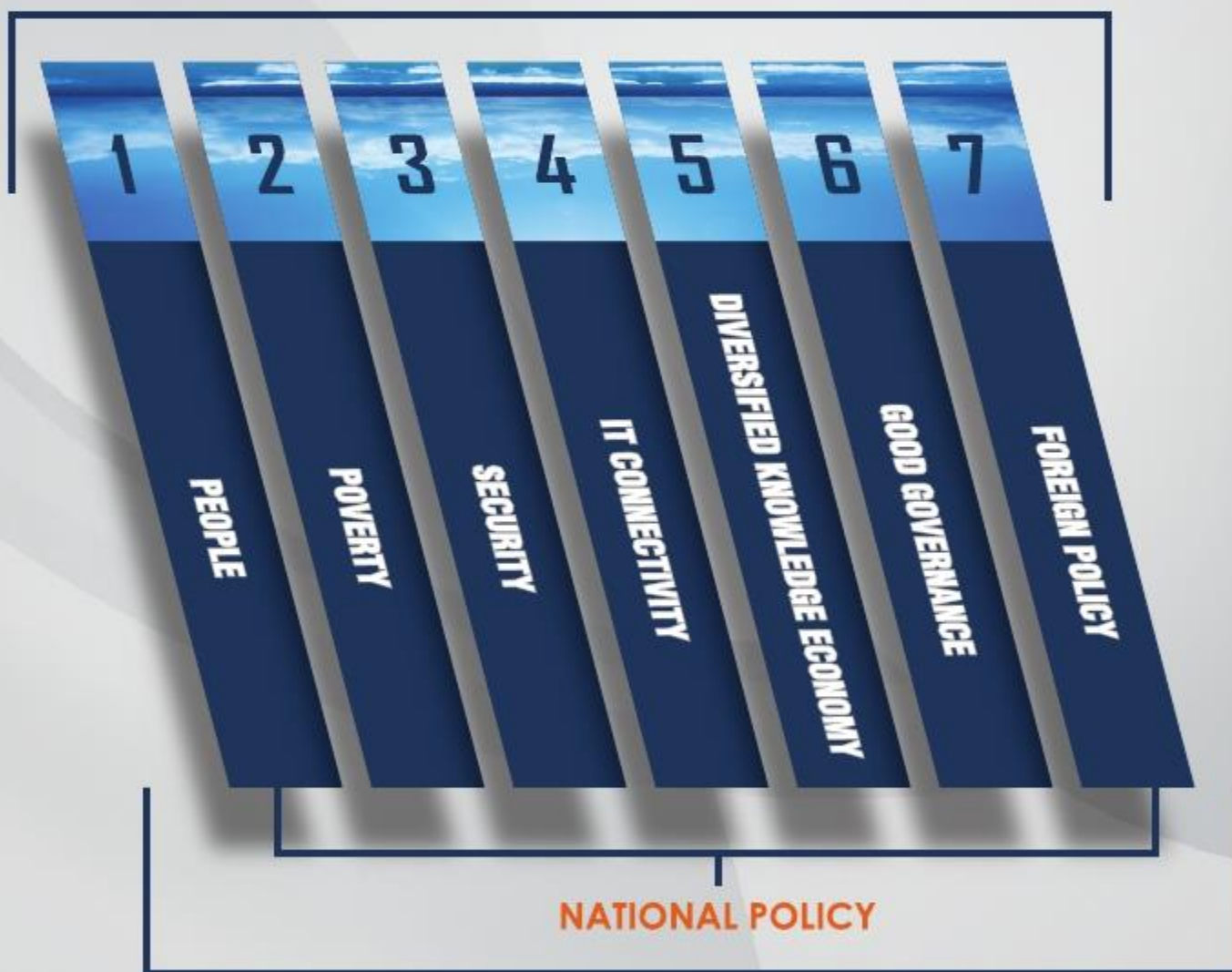
Young people are heavy users of Information and Communication Technology products and services for different purposes, including education and training, recreation and leisure, and in the course of their employment. Therefore, Pillar 4 is expected to serve

them well in the implementation of their National Youth Policy. Young people are creative, innovative and multi-talented both in traditional sectors and new ones that are still emerging. The opportunity to discover new, productive avenues for human capital will be welcomed by our young stakeholders under Pillar 5.

SEVEN INTERCONNECTED PILLARS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

7 PILLARS



PROSPERITY FOR ALL IS THE COMMITMENT

REGIONAL

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Trinidad and Tobago stands with its Caribbean neighbours within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in support of mainstreaming youth development throughout the region. The Twenty-Seventh Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government in July 2006 mandated the establishment of a Commission on Youth Development, which was tasked with undertaking “a full scale analysis of the challenges and opportunities for youth in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME); and making recommendations to improve their well-being and empowerment”.⁹ Based on the findings of the report, it is possible to conclude that the experience of youth around the region is remarkably similar to those in Trinidad and Tobago.

Caribbean youth have described living in the Caribbean as “O.K.,” “challenging,” “hard,” “difficult” and “boring” at one end, to “living in hell,” “living without hope” and “living like dogs” at the other.¹⁰ The report confirms what young people have been saying all along, that:

- the education system does not prepare them for the world of work, high unemployment being a major outcome of this deficiency;
- there are challenges to health and well-being occasioned by HIV/AIDS, violence and accidents;
- high levels of crime and violence that create fear, restricts free movement, stigmatizes individuals and communities and negatively affect their sense of well-being;
- sports, recreation and cultural activity is one domain in which youth enjoy high participation; the benefits have been felt throughout the region;

- the majority of young people continue to feel alienated from governance and political participation partly because they are intimidated by what appears to be impressive structures and ceremonies, and partly because they are not perceived as significant contributors to national development, notwithstanding official rhetoric to the contrary.

The solutions are also remarkably similar. Individual countries must take the time to invest in youth development as current youth policies “are weak, outdated and rarely implemented and concludes that current investments in structures and programmes for youth development — in education, health and well-being, culture, sports and job creation — such as they are, are just not enough and in some instances, are misdirected”.¹¹

It requires that time be spent consulting with young people on their views, needs, aspirations and values. There must also be a shift in the philosophical bases upon which youth are engaged such that they are viewed, just as the commercial, legal and industrial interests, as valuable partners to development now and not merely an investment that will reap (uncertain) benefits sometime in the future.

Given the similarity of the problems and solutions across the region, there is an opportunity to engage with each other across multi- and bi-lateral levels on joint initiatives in research, strategic investment and institutional development. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago is keen to join its regional partners in advancing the recommendations of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development Report.

Organisation of American States

Trinidad and Tobago is a member of the Organisation of American States (OAS), a regional body consisting of all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social

9. Caribbean Community, Report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD), 2010, pp. xi

10. Ibid

11. Ibid, pp. xx

governmental forum in the Hemisphere. In addition, it has granted permanent observer status to 67 states, as well as to the European Union (EU)¹². The Organization was established in order to achieve among its member states, as stipulated in Article 1 of the Charter, "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence." It uses a four-pronged approach to effectively implement its essential purposes, based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development.

OAS Youth

The Youth Agenda of the OAS aims to provide young people with the capacity to safeguard their future as well as the countries within the Hemisphere by increasing the role of youth within governmental circles of their countries. The OAS Youth Agenda is based on three (3) pillars: 1) institutionalization of dialogue with youth; 2) capacity building; and 3) strengthening institutional development in member states and with the OAS to take youth issues into account.

The institutionalization of dialogue with youth aims to reinforce or incorporate a participatory mechanism for youth within the policy framework of the OAS. Capacity building seeks to enhance employability and increase equal opportunity, entrepreneurship, and job creation for youth. The focus of institutional development is to support the role of youth leaders within member states, to encourage the exchange of best practices and to include a youth perspective in the programs and activities of the OAS.

INTERNATIONAL

The Commonwealth of Nations

Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of the

Commonwealth of Nations, joins with the remaining 53 Commonwealth countries, including the United Kingdom (UK), to achieve the goals of peace and democracy, to promote fundamental political values, anti-poor growth and sustainable development and to develop the national capacity of member states.¹³

Commonwealth Youth

The Commonwealth Youth Programme is devoted to championing the cause of youth throughout the Commonwealth, ensuring that their voices are heard at the highest levels of decision-making and that they 'play an active part in reversing marginalization, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease'.¹⁴ Trinidad and Tobago is supportive of this approach and has modelled its vision for youth along this premise. Following publication of this policy document, it will seek to establish a closer relationship with the Secretariat, such that it could benefit from the experience of the CYP in this regard and best practices in youth development within the entire Commonwealth.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), established in the year 2000, are eight international development goals that all 193 members of the United Nations and at least 23 international organizations agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The goals are to: 1) eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality rates; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) develop a global partnership for development.

Trinidad and Tobago has been mindful of its role in contributing towards the achievement of these goals in all spheres of national life, with a view that human sustainable development is our ultimate goal. With respect to youth development, the government

12. Organisation of American States Website Homepage, Who we are, http://www.oas.org/en/about/who_we_are.asp, viewed on August 23, 2012

13. Commonwealth Secretariat, Home page, What We Do, http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/190957/what_we_do/, viewed on August 16, 2012.

14. Commonwealth Secretariat, Home page, Youth, <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/subhomepage/190725/>, viewed on August 16, 2012.

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PRINCIPLES AND VALUES SUPPORTING THE POLICY

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago are committed to the principles and practices of youth development, given the national, regional and international policy direction in this area.

Youth development has been defined as "...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to: (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded; and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives."¹⁶ (Pittman, 1993, p.8). Within the context of this definition, the National Youth Policy accepts the premise that young people go through a process of development on their way to adulthood and this process must include a number of supports and opportunities. These include the people, structures and systems that form part of the environment in which this transformation takes place, making them integral parts of the process. These elements must work together cohesively and positively to deliver happy, healthy, successful young people.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago sees young people as partners, participants, resources, and inheritors of the world. As such, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development strives towards the realization of young people as collaborators whose representation and involvement at every level of shared community life will lead towards national, regional and even global development. In this regard, empowerment is seen as the core element underpinning this policy over the next five years. This is entirely consistent with the 5Cs (caring/compassion, competence, character, connection, and confidence) approach of the Ministry for its youth development

strategies.

The Government, through its lead Ministry, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, will act as a coordinating mechanism within which the work of all agencies, state and non-state actors, that engage in various aspects of youth development, can be facilitated in an integrated and harmonious manner. Mainstreaming will allow for the systematic integration of youth affairs into the work of all relevant stakeholders. This will result in the introduction of a youth empowerment perspective to the work of all relevant departments, setting up appropriate mechanisms for youth participation in policymaking and systematically monitoring and reporting progress made in youth development.

E.M.P.O.W.E.R.

In understanding our own national youth policy, we have identified the empowerment of young people as the indispensable foundation of the policy that has as its ultimate vision their full participation in all aspects of national development. In moving this policy through strategy, to operationalization, the Policy provides a framework that:

Enhances the service delivery system and legal framework for young people

Motivates our young people to be active participants in development

Partners with youth as a critical element in their development

Opens avenues for young people to achieve more

Wills support for youth in special circumstances

Expresses youth creativity, innovation and foresight

Recognises the contributions that young people continue to make to national development

16. Centre for Youth Development, Policy and Research Homepage, What is Youth Development, <http://cyd.aed.org/whatis>, viewed on August 20, 2012

Enhancing the service delivery system and legal framework for young people.

This is perhaps one of the most critical elements in facilitating effective development of young people. In conceptualizing service delivery systems, coordination and integration are critical functional dimensions in its operationalization. Young people face significant barriers in attempting to access relevant and critical services for themselves either through lack of functional knowledge and information regarding these services, a lack of negotiating capacity, systemic challenges within the agencies responsible for the delivery, negative predispositions of personnel within these agencies tasked with the responsibility for dispensing these services, among other critical issues that disempower them from accessing these services.

Critical to enhancing the service delivery system for young people is getting all the service providers and relevant agencies to work together in a coordinated and integrated system that complements activities, as opposed to competing among them. Another crucial consideration for the enhancement of the service delivery system is ensuring free and open access in an unbiased and non-stereotypical way. By enhancing the various service delivery systems that serve to advance the progressive interest of youths, we contribute to ensuring that more services are able to reach young people, particularly those that are most vulnerable and marginalized.

Motivating our young people to be active participants in development

Quite often young people are treated as passive receptacles rather than as active participants in their own development. Many adult stakeholders and adult-directed agencies are accused of wanting to make decisions and direct the actions of young people. In some cases, parents are guilty of wanting to live out their own lives through their children. Often, young people are viewed as lacking the interest, capacity, understanding or a desire to contribute to

advancing their own interests. But this misconception is one of the key elements that drive and direct ineffective systems for engaging young people.

Based on prior experiences, which are often misunderstood by many adult stakeholders, young people have become wary and disenchanted by systems and processes that do not give due regard to their interests. This does not mean that they are unwilling to contribute and be meaningful participants in creating change but essential to initiating processes of change is consulting young people to understand their vision for change and creating systems and frameworks that create the opportunity and space for them to be engineers and architects of that change.

These will be essential cogs in motivating young people to become active participants in development. That said, it also does not mean that young people are averse to the contributions of adults. But those contributions must be non-directive and based on the lived experiences of young people; they must be supportive of the desires of young people rather than being cynical or seeking to de-motivate them. Once this is achieved, many more young people would be willing participants in advancing development interventions.

Partnering as a critical element in youth development

Partnerships are collaborative relationships among various stakeholders who all work towards the achievements of a common purpose. As it relates to youth development, it speaks to creating the opportunity for partnerships between and among young people, as well as partnerships between young people and adults.

Opening avenues for young people to achieve more

There is a common misconception that a policy directed at the development of young people will typically engage a particular construct of youth. This construct almost always is identified as being

delinquent, exists in marginalized social circumstances and have no particular purpose in life. However, this picture of whom such policies should target is very limited and extremely stereotypical. One needs to consider that being marginalized can also apply to young people who may appear to be managing well within the system. A young person may be doing well enough to get by and may appear to be okay. However there is a real possibility that this young person is quite capable of doing better or even excelling, given the right support systems.

Thus, in constructing progressive policies to guide the development of young people, we shall identify systems and inclusive frameworks that will allow young people to achieve to their fullest potential. Young people who may not be achieving, or those who may appear to be doing well when in fact they may be underachieving based on what their potential can actually deliver, should be the main focus of such youth development policies.

Willingness to support youth in special circumstances

Youths in special circumstances are quite often found to be absent from discussions related to the development of young people. Owing to the fact of the many silent struggles of this social grouping, their circumstances are quite often easily disregarded. However, they have continued to successfully challenge the social stereotype of their limited capacity or troubled circumstances, enduring in their desire to achieve success and even excelling more than some abled persons. We have witnessed many great stories of these young people. Thus, in seeking to build our many young people, we shall craft policies that demonstrate a willingness to provide support to those in special circumstances. Such policies seek to engage this social grouping in a meaningful manner that will ensure mainstream participation in creating supportive frameworks and systems to address their interests.

Expressing youth creativity, innovation and foresight

Young people represent the best possible expressions

of our higher nature, given their openness, passion, truthfulness, yearning for knowledge and freedom of expression. These values can be harnessed and utilized in the creation of our best work, our best plays, our best cultural expressions, our best designs and our best selves as a collection of disparate people of different races, religions and ethnic backgrounds. If we are successful in doing so, we would reveal new vistas never before contemplated or seen by ourselves and our world. This policy encourages young people to proceed with their business of self and national development. We support these initiatives, which will form part of our unique heritage that cannot be replicated by anyone, anywhere in the world.

Recognising the contributions that young people continue to make to our development

Our young people continue to be great ambassadors for our country in so many areas, among them sport, education, art, culture and entertainment, innovation, business and entrepreneurship, to name a few. But too often we fail to recognize these young people or the efforts they make. Similarly, we only recognize them when they have achieved a major success and not when they are in the trenches in order to provide continuous motivation and encouragement for them. Additionally, attention and focus are paid to our young people more often when the few get involved in the deviant activities while we ignore the many positive and great things they do on a regular basis. This has created the negative social perception that this is a lost generation and that young people are delinquents and trouble makers. In order to create a progressive platform for young people to contribute to our social advancement, we shall partner with them and recognize the many efforts they are willing to make. This will certainly motivate those who are involved to continue working and excelling in their various fields of endeavour, while encouraging others to get involved. The end result will certainly be our own sustainable development.

VISION AND GOALS

The future looks brand new

The vision and goals enunciated here are perhaps the most critical of this entire policy document, not only because their spirit and letter will reflect whether we have heard the concerns of youth and are willing to heed them but also the latitude of our vision and the ambition of our goals will reveal the platform for action that we intend to undertake over the next five (5) years. If our vision and goals are narrow and limited, so will be our actions; if they are expansive, adaptive and all-inclusive, so will be our accomplishments over the next five years.

The Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago have chosen to be expansive, adaptive and all-inclusive. We have listened to the young people, who are at one with the experts, and have determined that our goals must mirror the principles and values supporting our policy. As policy makers, we have agreed with our young people, that:

*For every youth ... a place,
a purpose, a plan*

must be our vision going forward. In order to achieve this vision we have no choice but to be expansive, adaptive and all-inclusive. No one must be left behind; there can be 'no shrinking back'. Youth development has been placed firmly on the national agenda, never again to be replaced. In this regard therefore we established the following goals:

1. To enable young men and women to initiate, lead and participate in actions that promote their own development and that of their communities and the wider society, at all levels of national life.
2. To ensure that young people have access to adequate and appropriate programmes, resources and services to facilitate their widest possible participation, regardless of their geographic location, race, ethnicity, gender, level of disability and social, religious and economic standing.
3. To establish a unified, coordinated response and participation of all stakeholders including Government, non-government, private organizations and young persons, to ensure all youth-related programmes are integrated and synchronized, while providing new and effective mechanisms to build collaboration between all youth development stakeholders.
4. To define and prioritize areas of specific action for youth empowerment, in accordance with the overall policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
5. To develop qualities of citizenship and pride in our national identity, while sustaining and reinforcing the spirit of volunteerism among youth and recognizing their contribution.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Setting the course

The objectives that will guide the achievements of the goals of the policy are:

Goal 1: To enable young men and women to initiate, lead and participate in actions that promote their own development and that of their communities and the wider society, at all levels of national life.

Objectives: This goal shall be met through the following objectives:

A.1: To establish new institutional arrangements that would facilitate the integration of youth development into national life, including the state sector, private enterprise and Non-Governmental Organizations

A.2: To assist young men and women in attaining the knowledge, skills and experiences required to enable them to effectively participate in national development and society as a whole.

A.3: To mobilize and support young women and men in community and national development efforts through programmes which promote leadership, practical skills and opportunities for participation.

A.4: To build the capacity of youth development organizations and any other departments or institutions involved with youth affairs to effectively design, implement, manage and monitor youth development programmes and services.

Goal 2: To ensure that young people have access to adequate and appropriate programmes, resources and services to facilitate their widest possible participation, regardless of their geographic location, race, ethnicity, gender, level of disability and social, religious and economic standing.

Objectives: This goal shall be met through the following objectives:

B.1: To improve access for youths with disabilities to facilities and services.

B.2: To ensure that adequate resources are equitably directed towards youth development programmes and that financial accountability and sustainability are promoted.

Goal 3: To develop a coordinated response and participation of all stakeholders, including Government, non-government, private organizations and young persons, to ensure all youth related programmes are integrated and synchronized, while providing new and effective mechanisms to build collaboration between all youth development stakeholders.

Objectives: This goal shall be met through the following objectives:

C.1: Systematically integrate youth issues into all policies, plans, programmes and strategies at all levels and within all sectors and institutions of Government, NGOs and the private sector.

C.2: To promote youth participation in development activities.

C.3: To promote research and disseminate information on youths

C.4: To involve young women and men at the planning, decision-making and implementation levels of all youth and development programmes.

C.5: To strengthen mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation among relevant Government, non-government and community stakeholders.

C.6: To promote the harmonization of other policies, research, programmes and strategies oriented toward young men and women.

Goal 4: To define and prioritize areas of specific action for youth empowerment in accordance with

the overall policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Objectives: This goal shall be met through the following objectives:

D.1: To provide opportunities for youth employment and initiatives.

D.2: To promote the value and development of vocational and skills training, and education for youths.

D.3: To reduce the spread of STDs, HIV/AIDS among youths and their impact on the individual and society; reduce alcohol and substance abuse among youth.

D.4: To address the specific social, economic, and health problems faced by young people, which inhibit their capacity to participate in society.

D.5: To design a comprehensive, multi-sectoral response to the major problems and needs of young people.

D.6: To promote healthy lifestyles among young people.

Goal 5: To develop qualities of citizenship and pride in our national identity, while sustaining and reinforcing the spirit of volunteerism among youths and recognizing their contribution.

Objectives: This goal shall be met through the following objectives:

E.1: To advocate for the creation in youths a sense of belonging, patriotism and responsible citizenship.

E.2: To design and implement programmes and services which promote opportunities for volunteerism among young men and women.

E.3: To promote the principles of citizenship, participation and well being among young women and men.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Our great journey starts with a first step

In order to accomplish the objectives outlined above, the following strategies have been deemed most appropriate in order to move forward with the implementation thrust of the Policy. It is envisaged that the Youth Empowerment & Mobilization Strategy will be the Lead Strategy, while all the others will be viewed as Support Strategies. Although separated for planning and convenience, the Support Strategies must be viewed as individual fingers on the same hand, all working together to achieve the common good of Youth Empowerment & Mobilization. Therefore, these implementation strategies will be used either alone or in combination with each other, to achieve the objectives set for accomplishment. The strategies that will be implemented are as follows:

LEAD STRATEGY

Youth Empowerment & Mobilization Strategy

Used in close collaboration with the Communication & Youth Engagement Strategy, this strategy will focus on the enabling mechanisms that would empower young people to engage in self-development. These include all educational and training initiatives and activities to promote personal and career development as well as those aimed at differently-abled youth and those in complex circumstances.

Support Strategies Institutional Development Strategy

This will cover all the organizational-related mechanisms that will be developed to accomplish the mission, goals and objectives of the Policy and will include internal re-alignment of the Ministry and the

institutional arrangements for collaboration with youth, other Ministries, other entities within the State sector, social sector partners and private enterprise.

The flagship of this strategy will be the establishment of the National Youth Commission of Trinidad and Tobago (NYCTT) or alternatively, Trinidad and Tobago Youth Commission (TTYC) or National Commission of Youth (NCY). The Commission will be established as an independent Statutory Body, headed by a Board of Multi-Sectoral Commissioners. The Board will be led by the Youth Commissioner and will comprise the Deputy Commissioner and six (6) Commissioners. The Commission will be staffed by a youth-focused Secretariat and will contribute significantly to implementation of the National Youth Policy, when it is established in 2015. It will have a line reporting relationship with the Ministry with responsibility for youth.

Youth Development Financing Strategy

This strategy will focus on the identification of sustainable sources of funding — national, regional and international — for youth development programmes and will include initiatives, in collaboration with private and public sector partners and volunteers, for financing educational and training development, youth enterprise, housing and other projects of national, regional and international significance to young people.

Communication & Youth Engagement Strategy

This strategy will establish positive, mutually beneficial relationships and understanding among all stakeholders, in particular young people themselves, involved in youth development and implementation of the National Youth Policy. It will involve all forms of communication, including advertising, events, conferences, public relations, promotions and direct communication, whether by person, mail, phone or via the Internet.

International Engagement Strategy

This strategy, although related to the Communications and Youth Engagement Strategy (above), has been so designated out of recognition that this National Youth Policy has been developed and will be implemented successfully only if it is placed within the wider context of regional and international development. In this regard, it recognizes the role and influence of CARICOM, the OAS, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations and its associated institutions, and seeks to establish, deepen and widen mutually beneficial relationships among our young people and other youth stakeholders. This strategy will include activities related to exchanges, conferences, research, projects, education and training and technology.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategy

This strategy will focus on the technical and technological mechanisms through which the communication and youth engagement strategies will be undertaken in order to establish positive, relationship-based communications. It will include radio, television, mobile, Internet, computer and network hardware and software as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning and will be used to support all the other strategies that are to be implemented. Given that young people are heavy users of technological products and services, this strategy is of particular importance and relevance to them.

Operations & Logistics Strategy

This strategy will focus on the operational aspects of service delivery, in particular, coordination of activities, products and services that form part of Policy implementation. Utilising an integrated systems approach to implementation, it will ensure that all linkages in the chain work together efficiently to achieve the goals of the Policy. Consequently, there will be a strong reliance on cost-effectiveness and attention will be placed on value-laden activities. This

will include high levels of efficiency, removal of all bottlenecks to effective implementation and ongoing performance management. It will include all activities related to physical facilities for youth-based activity (centralized, decentralized or shared); transportation and supply of materials and products; information sharing and supplier delivery and payment.

Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy

The monitoring and evaluation strategy will focus on monitoring all aspects of implementation while in progress and evaluating their outcomes and impacts on the goals identified for achievement. It will include all performance benchmarks for goal attainment; provide feedback as to whether actual operational and strategic performances match the general and specific objectives set out; and the sources and causes of any variances. Initiatives included under this strategy are quarterly, annual, mid-term and final performance reviews, stakeholder research, reports, assessments and re-alignment initiatives.

ACTION PROGRAMME

All hands on deck, let's go

The action programme will move the implementation platform from the strategic to the operational and will require the strategies to be sub-divided into a series of measurable steps to which resources may be applied and activities undertaken. Recognizing that the Policy will span a five-year planning period, with annual reviews, the action programme will be subdivided into shorter timeframes to which implementation priorities may be applied and which will provide ample opportunity for strategy adaptation and capacity enhancement. Consequently, the action programme will be implemented as follows:

- Short-term: 2012- 2014
- Medium-term 2014 - 2016
- Long-term 2016 - 2017

SHORT-TERM: 2012 - 2014

The short term action programme will run for the first two years of strategy implementation and will consist of two main sub-activities:

3. Short-term implementation phase, concerned with undertaking the activities with the highest and most urgent priorities and those with readily available resources that can be implemented with very short planning horizons; and
4. Planning phase, concerned with undertaking the required consultative, research and planning mechanisms for implementing the medium-, and long-term action programmes.

The strategies to be activated during this period are the Youth Empowerment & Mobilization, Communication & Youth Engagement, International Engagement and the Monitoring & Evaluation Strategies. The other strategies will be activated in 2015, ahead of rapid implementation and roll out during the medium term planning horizon.

Action Programme: Short-term Strategy Implementation, 2012-2014



MEDIUM-TERM: 2014-2016

This represents a very intense phase of activity and will involve the core and most complex strategies for accomplishment during the planning period 2012 – 2017. These strategies (Institutional Development, Youth Development Financing, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and Operations & Logistics Strategies) require two (2) years of intense planning activity before implementation, both as a result of their complex nature as well as the depth and value of the human and capital resources required for implementation. This is the period during which much of the aspirations of the national community for youth development will materialize.

Action Programme: Medium-term Strategy Implementation, 2014-2016



LONG-TERM: 2016-2017

This long-term planning horizon will be primarily concerned with monitoring and evaluation and bringing projects begun in the previous period through to their final phases of completion. It will include a full strategic and operational review and completion of the National Youth Policy for the next planning period 2017 – 2022.

Action Programme: Long-term Strategy Implementation, 2016-2017



CONCLUSION

National youth developmentleading from the front

This policy seeks to chart the way forward for youth development in Trinidad and Tobago. The evidence is now overwhelming that the alternatives to a full-scale programme of youth development and empowerment are untenable. The experts have spoken and they concur with our young people that the way forward must be in this direction. This document therefore represents the beginning, not the end of a process of transformation of our national community, including our young people and in collaboration with our international partners, to prepare the supports and opportunities that may be required to create happy, healthy, successful young people.

The agenda must now be to move ahead with a robust programme of consultation and refinement of the policy, strategy development and

implementation. The implementation programme that is contemplated is broad and ambitious but it represents the best way forward for the accomplishment of our goals for youth development. In this venture, partnerships within and outside of the Ministry are critical. There appears to be a strong desire on the part of existing partners to proceed and new partners need to be engaged and co-opted in the advance. The young people are ready and waiting. This is no time to turn back.

