

YOUTH POLICY REVIEW SERIES

Khushbu Agrawal

Semanta Dahal

Nabin Rawal

Sanju Koirala

Archita Pant

Srishti Adhikari

Deborah Tsuchida

Youth and
Public Policy in

Nepal

A publication of

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Research Team

Khushbu Agrawal

Semanta Dahal

Nabin Rawal

Local Coordination

Sanju Koirala

Archita Pant

Editorial Consultant

Srishti Adhikari

International Advisor

Deborah Tsuchida

International Editorial Board

Harini Amarasuriya

Project Coordination

Yael Ohana

Milosz Czerniejewski

Andreas Karsten

John Muir

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Youth Policy Press, Alt-Moabit 89, DG, D-10559 Berlin
Tel +49 30 394 052 555, Fax +49 30 394 052 505
hello@youthpolicypress.com

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ASD	Alliance for Social Dialogue
AYON	Association of Youth Organizations in Nepal
CA	Constituent Assembly
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CC	Constitutional Committee
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
CTEVT	Council of Technical Education and Vocational Training
DDC	District Development Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EIG	Education for Income Generation
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FY	Fiscal Year
GA	General Assembly
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMG	His Majesty's Government
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IEB	International Editorial Board
ILO	International Labor Organization
I/NGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LPC	Local Peace Committee
LFPR	Labor Force Participation Rate

MoF	Ministry of Finance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NDVS	National Development Volunteer Service
NFEC	Non Formal Education Center
NLFS	Nepal Labor Force Survey
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRs	Nepalese Rupees
NSTB	National Skills Testing Board
NYP	National Youth Policy
OSF	Open Society Foundations
OSYI	Open Society Youth Initiative
SEP	Self Employment Program
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise Partners
SPA	Seven Party Alliance
TEVT	Technical Educational and Vocational Training
The Foundations	Open Society Foundations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDHR	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPCN-M	United Communist Part of Nepal (Maoist)
VDC	Village Development Committee
WHO	World Health Organization
WPAY	World Program of Action for Youth (to the Year 2000 and Beyond)
YCL	Young Communist League
YFP	Youth Focal Point
YPP	Youth Partnership Program
YRBS	Youth Responsive Budgeting System
YSESEF	Youth and Small Enterprise Self-Employment Fund

Executive Summary

In recent years, during its political transition, Nepal has made tangible progress in highlighting the rights of youth and increasing its focus on youth within its policy context. In 2010, the Ministry of Youth and Sports established the country's first National Youth Policy to address the rights and needs of youth exclusively. This policy created a national definition of youth. Though the definition still remains somewhat controversial, its creation and existence indicate that Nepal is affirming youth's societal significance.

With the country's nascent youth policy implementation still in process, now is a strategic time to assess the current state of Nepalese youth and youth policy and provide recommendations on actions moving forward. Up until now, little research has existed on this topic, with most existing analyses using census statistics from 11 years ago. Major changes have of course occurred in Nepal during the last 11 years, rendering much of the available data irrelevant to the current situation.

In order to address this information gap, the New York-based Open Society Foundation's Youth Initiative funded a youth policy review process to assess and examine the current state of youth and youth policy in Nepal, and to identify opportunities, gaps, challenges, and recommendations for moving forward. This review endeavored to look at the newly formed National Youth Policy, other sectoral policies addressing youth issues but not focusing exclusively on youth, specific issues that youth are currently facing within society, and perceptions of youth within Nepalese communities and by stakeholders. The aim of this review was to examine the process and background of youth policies in Nepal, how these policies affect youths' standing within the country, the current state of implementation and coordination of these policies, and the various perceptions of youth and youth

policy within the country. The review was also to be used to provide analyses and recommendations moving forward.

Research Methodology

Between April 2011 and June 2012, a five-person team was assembled to conduct this review. This team included one international advisor, one local research coordinator, and three country researchers. The research process was divided into various phases:

- » *Initial desk review of background documentation and empirical research.* Because sufficient data and statistics on youth policy did not exist, this desk review was conducted in conjunction with first-round interviews with stakeholders.
- » *Country report draft.* A preliminary report was drafted based on data collected from the initial desk review. Evident gaps and hypotheses arising from this initial country report draft served to inform the question guidelines for the country field visit.
- » *Country field visit.* The country field visit took place in five regions of Nepal between September 11 and September 29, 2011. The team met with various stakeholders, including government officials, youth, and the staff of NGO and I/NGO local organizations.
- » *Finalization of country report.* Results and findings from this field visit were analyzed and have been compiled into this report throughout 2013.

Research Approach

Youth participation and consultation were integral to this research process. The team used this review not only to research youth in communities, but also to empower and disseminate information to youth in communities. During focus group discussions, the team asked questions to challenge youth in finding creative ways to participate in the youth policy process, to voice their opinions in meaningful ways, and to learn how to devise their own solutions. For example, during discussions, youth identified the lack of information distribution and access to information outside of Kathmandu as a significant problem. Knowing this concern, the research team

was able to guide youth participants in brainstorming the media sources to which all youth currently have access. Through these brief discussions, youth participants and interviewees came to recognize that since not all youth have access to more traditional media sources such as newspapers and television, these traditional sources may not be the ideal channels for distributing important information to youth. On the other hand, nearly all youth do have access to FM radio. Thus, youth themselves identified that FM radio could be a more effective communication channel for ensuring that important information would reach them within their communities.

The team also utilized this consultative research process to ensure that youth and stakeholders were informed about youth policy and youth programs within their respective areas. Summaries of the National Youth Policy were brought to all meetings and focus-group discussions, and the research team members left behind these copies with all stakeholders and youth. Research team members also served as a bridge for information sharing. When team members learned about youth programs in the area through their meetings with stakeholders, they would make sure to share this knowledge with the youth in that region in order to increase awareness of the opportunities available to them.

Key Findings

- » There is a strong need for information dissemination about the National Youth Policy and other youth-related policies in the districts outside of Kathmandu. During the review, researchers discovered that while many youth, stakeholders, and line ministries were aware of youth policies in Kathmandu, outlying districts had very little knowledge or awareness of the National Youth Policy or other youth policies. Surprisingly, even many of the government district offices were unaware of the existence of a National Youth Policy.
- » The National Youth Policy of 2010 is the first policy in Nepal not only to define youth and age limits for youth, but also to focus exclusively on the needs and rights of youth. As this document also extensively highlights the rights of Nepali youth, this policy has been viewed by many as a human rights charter for youth. While some stakeholders expressed doubt whether this policy will translate into action, many were in agree-

ment that this particular policy still served as a step forward for youth rights within the country.


- » There remains a need for youth to be recognized as a priority by all ministries, and for youth themselves to know that they need to be involved in decision making at all levels—from the local to the central. Currently, many Youth Focal Points from various ministries have not been properly oriented toward youth issues; thus, advocacy and trainings should be conducted with Youth Focal Points from these ministries to ensure they have the capacity to incorporate youth as a priority into their respective ministry programs.
- » Greater coordination between line ministries, youth organizations, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders needs to be established. A current priority should be to establish effective communication channels between these various organizations, as information sharing has been particularly weak. Doing so will be a first step in establishing coordination, and ensuring less duplication of efforts.
- » Currently, the official age of youth defined by the National Youth Policy in Nepal is from 16 to 40, an unusually wide age range that encompasses different stages of life. This report recommends that this definition be subdivided by age category when creating programs and projects to address the specific needs of youth. Furthermore, since youth often face varying types of circumstances, they should not be addressed only as a homogenous group when stakeholders are thinking about creating programs for them.. Programs should thus be created to address the various needs of different groups of youth, depending on their education, skills, knowledge, and interests.
- » Youth identified both education and employment as their two greatest program needs. An effective education policy for youth is therefore recommended, focusing on education that can lead to employment. Education and training should focus on skills and technical areas relevant to the job opportunities in their communities.
- » Youth identified idleness and lack of opportunities to engage in meaningful activities as factors that often lead to drug use, violence, stress, and other negative outcomes for them. Communities and districts should involve youth in sports, cultural preservation, tourism, or other

activities to address these problems in a constructive way. Doing so simultaneously helps the community.

- » The current National Youth Policy is filled with vague concepts and generalizations. For effective implementation, the policy needs to focus solely on a few areas (e.g., education, employment, and immigration) during initial implementation and define these areas more thoroughly through concrete action plans.
- » Currently, agencies, government ministries, and organizations all utilize different age spans to define youth in their policies and programs. For more effective coordination and implementation of the NYP with other youth policies and programs, stakeholders should collectively decide how youths' age group should be defined. For example, currently the youth age range used by NGOs in their programs often differs from youth as defined in government policy. While certain organizations and policies may still target a subset of the youth age group, establishing a set definition of youth will allow for greater coordination and collaboration among youth stakeholders.
- » Although a National Youth Policy has been created, currently little budget has been allocated for conducting activities related to this policy, and the policy only vaguely addresses this issue. Detailed action plans, rules, regulations, and formal legislation should be designed for effective implementation of the policy. Until these plans have been created, it will be difficult to implement the National Youth Policy. Once activities and programs are established through the action plans, committing a budget amount to each activity or program will be essential.
- » Youth Information Centers are currently lacking resources and funding, and should be equipped with sufficient resources to be made effective. Most Youth Information Centers referenced in the National Youth Policy were discovered to be nonfunctional during the field visit. Furthermore, few youth were aware of them in their districts, and the few Youth Information Centers that were open did not have sufficient resources or funds to be operational and useful to youth in the community.
- » Migration was identified as a huge trend among youth, with lack of employment being one of its greatest drivers. The majority of youth who migrate are male, but females occasionally migrate as well, particularly

those traveling with husbands. With open borders between India and Nepal, seasonal migration of Nepalese youth occurs frequently between these two countries. One specific challenge for youth regarding migration is a lack of training and practical counsel on living options for them after they arrive in their destination country. Lack of awareness of these options and alternatives often leads Nepalese youth to become trapped in exploitative work conditions while living in other countries. To address this issue, more advocacy and training on safe migration options for both males and females, as well as a realistic orientation toward life abroad, should be implemented for youth in Nepal.

- » One of the gaps identified through this review was a general lack of information dissemination to youth in communities regarding policies and local programs for youth. Though information is occasionally passed along through various media sources, not all youth have access to these forms of media. For information dissemination, youth have suggested that FM radio would be the most effective way to spread information within a community. Although not all youth have access to televisions or are literate, all youth do have access to some type of FM radio.
- » Youth representation in Village Development Committees (VDCs) is non-existent or minimal in many districts, and youth activities are often the first to get cut out of VDC budgets. The review revealed that youth were only present in VDCs of a few districts; even in those districts, youth did not have a strong voice. More youth should thus be encouraged to actively participate in VDCs in order to have more representation as well as a voice when allocating VDC budget lines for youth activities.
- » Although a consultative process about the National Youth Policy took place in various districts of Nepal, very few Nepali, regardless of age, in the targeted districts were aware of such consultations. Apparently, most of those who were involved in this process had personal connections to the government or to specific organizations working with youth policy. Thus, these consultations may not have been representative of the average youth in the district communities. For future consultations, more effort must be made to ensure more representative samples of youth are involved in the process.



Youth and
Public Policy in

Nepal

Background to the Pilot Review

1



1.1 Rationale for the Pilot Review

This report evaluating youth policy in Nepal is part of a pilot series of six reports reviewing public policies affecting young people in the following countries: Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Serbia, and Uganda. The pilot project consisted of research teams on the ground to conduct analyses based on a specially developed evaluation matrix, assisted and supported in the research process by international advisors. An international editorial board supervised and evaluated the pilot process.

The Open Society Youth Initiative provided funding for the pilot project. The Youth Initiative supports young people in their efforts to be agents of positive change and advocates for the full and effective participation of all young people in the political, social, and cultural life of their communities.

The pilot project had the following objectives:

- » To review public policies pertaining to youth (including, but not exclusively, specific youth policies) in several countries using the draft evaluation matrix specifically developed for the purpose.
- » To make available research that will allow young people to engage in an informed debate on the public policies affecting them and their communities in the countries concerned.
- » To build a pool of young researchers capable of evaluating policies pertaining to youth, including specific youth policies.
- » To contribute to building the capacity of the youth sector in the countries concerned to research public policy issues.
- » To develop the evidence base for pilot advocacy activities in cooperation with the Open Society Youth Initiative and other partners.
- » To broaden the scope of the international youth sector to include general policies pertaining to youth that go beyond specific youth policies
- » To develop the capacity of the international youth sector and its partners and networks for evidenced-based strategy development for young people and their issues.

1.2 Rationale for the Review in Nepal

Within Nepal, the Open Society Foundations has been operating and conducting existing programs through its local partner organization, Alliance for Social Dialogue (ASD). The ASD youth officer served as the local coordinator for this review, thus allowing research from this process to feed directly into the ASD's development of youth advocacy activities and enabling feedback from this process to improve existing and future ASD youth activities and programs. Additionally, since ASD provides funding for local individuals, youth, groups, and organizations to establish youth activities, this review can serve to inform stakeholders of these opportunities, as well as possible ways to utilize ASD opportunities for youth policy-related activities.

During the review, the Nepal research team also examined programs designed by government and development organizations that target youth. This review of programs enabled the team to study the impact that these programs have had on youth in terms of improving their status in society.

The terms of reference of this review included:

- » Planning and conducting empirical and desk research on the current state of youth policy in Nepal
- » Drafting a country report based on desk research, with specific areas verified by information gathered from the field visit
- » Conducting an in-country field visit with relevant youth and stakeholders in youth policy
- » Writing and finalizing a country report to include findings and analyses from the in-country field visit; report to include recommendations for the future.

Through this review, the team discovered that current research into and documentation of youth policy in Nepal is scarce and offers little in the way of statistics on youth and youth policy implementation plans. And although the National Youth Policy has been adopted, it remains in early stages and lacks plans for implementation. This report has relied heavily on the last official census, which was conducted 11 years ago and collected statistics on youth at that time. The latest census report, published in November 2012,

was not available as we researched this report. Given the drastic changes that have occurred within the country in the last decade, including the Maoist conflict, as well as high external youth migration, these 11-year-old census statistics were likely to be highly inaccurate and unrepresentative of the current situation of youth. Because we lacked sufficient current data during the initial desk research phase of this project, the research team found insufficient information about youth in existing resources. In order to obtain sufficient background information to write the first draft of the country report, as well as to conduct the in-country field visit, the team made a decision to interview stakeholders early in the desk research phase.

1.3 Approaches and Methodologies

The research team used various approaches and methodologies throughout the following phases of the youth policy review.

Local Contextualization of Evaluation Matrix

The international editorial board developed an initial evaluation matrix. However, the evaluation matrix was deliberately created as a more general tool so it could be applicable to, and used by, all six pilot country teams. During the initial phase of the project, the research team engaged in an exercise to adapt and contextualize this evaluation matrix to the local situation and context of youth policy in Nepal. Through this exercise, the team was able to identify what types of information would need to be collected by this review, as well as what research methodologies would be most relevant to collecting such data.

First Round of Desk and Empirical Research

During this phase, the research team engaged in a background review of extant policy documents, legislation, and previous reviews of the youth policy; the team also conducted research on the situation of youth in Nepal. In addition to desk research, the team led key informant interviews and semi-structured interviews with representatives of youth organizations, political youth leaders, officials of the ministries, youth activists, and

many others. The interviews provided a deeper insight into the policy environment and the status of Nepal's youth. Furthermore, these stakeholders provided access to internal unofficial documents for the team to use for this research project, and recommendations on additional documents to review. Through these interviews and background research, the team also mapped out relevant actors and stakeholders who would be a good source of information during the field visit.

Draft Country Report Preparation

Once the information collection from primary and secondary sources was completed, the team prepared a draft country report based on guidelines provided in the evaluation matrix tool. This exercise helped the team pinpoint what information was missing from the country report and should be collected during the field visit. In addition, this initial report provided a background summary of the current youth policy environment, thus serving as a basis for the formulation of the team's field visit question guides. Through this first draft of the country report, the research team was able to develop some initial hypotheses and conclusions—to be corroborated or to be found false during the field visit.

In-Country Field Visit

The in-country field visit took place between September 11 and September 29, 2011. The team short-listed districts for field visits after initial consultation with youth organizations. Since the situation for youth varied in different regions of Nepal, it was crucial to ensure that all primary regions of the country were included through selection of these districts. Currently, Nepal is divided into five established development regions: Far Western, Midwestern, Western, Central, and Eastern. These are currently the regions that administrative districts also fall under. Utilizing these established development regions to define our field visit would also allow our recommendations to be more relevant for future implementation in each district.

Since the situations and communities of hill and plain areas within these five regions vary widely, the team also selected one hill district and one plain district in each of the five development regions. Meetings were

arranged with possible youth stakeholders and other policy sectors in the selected districts. The following are the selected locations and districts for the field visits:

Table 1 Field Visits

Region	District
Far Western	Hill: Achham
	Plain: Dhangadi
Midwestern	Hill: Surkhet
	Plain: Nepalgunj
Western	Hill: Palpa
	Plain: Bhairahawa and Rupandehi
Central	Capital City: Kathmandu
	Hill: Dhading Besi
	Plain: Siraha
Eastern	Hill: Ilam
	Plain: Jhapa

To ensure that research questions were appropriate for relevant stakeholders, the Nepal team conducted an initial round of pre-testing with staff, as well as with a few partner organizations in Kathmandu. Once the questions were finalized, the entire team engaged in a secondary round of pre-testing in the Dhading Besi district for the questionnaire, checklist, and question guides. During this time, team members had opportunities to contextualize and improve their moderating and group facilitation techniques, as well as observe and correct for unintended biases that might come up in the review.

Given the limited time to cover the numerous locations for the country field visit, the Nepal team chose to split up the remaining locations into separate visits by team members. Team members traveled to the locations assigned to them for the remainder of the review process.

During the field visit, the research team:

- » Conducted meetings with relevant stakeholders¹ to test regional and local perspectives as appropriate
- » Conducted interview-style face-to-face discussions with individual experts
- » Conducted focus group discussions with relevant organizations, young people, donor representatives, government representatives, etc.²
- » Rationalized choice of whom to meet: why we should select particular groups, who they represent, and what they will talk about
- » Collected other supplementary information from people and groups met

The primary stakeholders for youth policy that the team met with during this review include: youth (males and females), government representatives, donor representatives, and staff from local and international organizations and agencies working with youth.

The interviews were conducted with youth, government officers, and representatives from civil society. Among the youth population, mainly the NGO-affiliated youth, politically affiliated youth, and youth unaffiliated with any NGO or political party were interviewed. Focus group discussions were primarily conducted with different cohorts of youth.

For this review, meeting with youth was crucial to adequately understand how they viewed their own policies and how involved they felt regarding the policy process. Youth were asked about their own perceptions of what “youth” meant; how the society viewed them; whether they felt empowered within their communities and were able to be active decision makers/participants; and what their involvement, consultation, and participation had been in the youth policy process. When possible, our team met with female and male youth separately to allow for open and honest conversations about different gender perspectives. Since opportunities available to youth in the community often varied according to which groups the young people belonged to, the team made sure to select youth from a variety of different groups, including NGO youth; youth working in media;

1. See Appendix IV for the list of stakeholders interviewed for this report.

2. See Appendix IV for the list of stakeholders interviewed for this report.

political youth; youth leading youth groups and organizations; youth from indigenous groups; youth of various religious affiliations; and youth from socially marginalized groups (Dalit, disabled, widows—otherwise known as “single women”), and *Janajati*³ youth.

Meetings with district officials and members of various government ministries were conducted to ascertain their involvement with, and knowledge of, the National Youth Policy. Through discussions with government officials, the team attempted to understand whether, and to what degree, district-level involvement and coordination existed between district ministries and the central government in the policymaking and implementation process. Additionally, interviews with government ministries provided insight on how community decisions influenced district programs, and which community members were involved in these decisions.

Stakeholders also included organizations and agencies that worked with youth policy, youth advocacy, or youth programs. While some organizations worked primarily with youth, others were involved with only a few programs for youth. When possible, the team met with both international and local organizations, as perspectives were likely to differ between the two. These organizations were also invaluable in helping to identify the following: what types of youth lived in each of the districts; where the most marginalized youth were located and who they were; what types of programs existed for youth and who had access to them; how organizations defined youth for their programs; and general perceptions of youth within communities. In areas where the team was unable to meet with specific groups of youth, team members found it useful to obtain secondary information from organizations that directly worked with these groups. For example, in situations where it was difficult to meet with “conflict youth” and sexually exploited and trafficked youth, the team met with organizations that worked directly with these young people.

The field visits validated, and sometimes invalidated, the results, observations, and inferences of interviews with stakeholders at the central level. During the field visit, the team sought support of local partner organizations for preparation and facilitation—including arranging appointments,

3. Janajati is the Nepali word for indigenous people.

travel, and translation—as well as for brief orientations on the local context for youth policy stakeholders.

In Nepal, the majority, if not all, of the people speak and understand Nepalese. Thus, nearly all interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Nepalese. In Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Dhading, and Kathmandu, interviews were conducted in both English and Nepalese, with the aid of a translator. The transcriptions of interview and focus group discussion notes in all regions were done by team members in English.

Finalizing Country Report

After the field visit was completed, the research team incorporated the information and perspectives that were collected into the country report. Through this report, the team attempted to accurately capture the current status of youth policy in Nepal, as well as form conclusions and recommendations for the youth policy process, implementation, and activities.

1.4 Team Reflections on Their Process of Drafting the National Report

During the course of the research and field visit, the team encountered a number of issues and challenges that, from the team’s perspective, are relevant to contextualizing the information collected from the field.

First, gaining access to female youth was a difficulty that the team did not expect. Aside from the few female youth working in local organizations, most female youth in districts outside of Kathmandu were culturally expected to remain at home. Thus, though the team was able to speak with females working in local organizations and political parties, it was often difficult to meet with females who had not been given economic opportunities and who remained at home. The team also found that even female youth working in local organizations were expected by their families to be home in the evening. Thus, meetings scheduled for the evening often had only male youth attending. Nevertheless, the team did meet with female youth in their communities when possible, and made every effort to include female youth in this research process.

A few unexpected events, such as an earthquake in the Eastern region during the review process and a strike in Surkhet, caused unexpected delays. These delays led to a few cancelled meetings and discussions, some of which team members were unable to reschedule.

A general lack of knowledge about the National Youth Policy (NYP) by stakeholders also proved to be an unexpected challenge. For example, government officials, including chief district officers and local development officers, knew surprisingly little about the NYP. Various groups of youth, as well as local youth organizations, were also unaware of the NYP. The general lack of knowledge about the youth policy was unexpected and presented challenges in collecting information about the NYP and its process. A few groups of youth working or associating with youth organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were aware of the policy, and, generally, international NGOs possessed more awareness of the policy than local NGOs. Some political youth also knew of the policy but were not always interested in what the policy had to offer—they claimed their lack of interest was primarily because of the government's failure to make tangible efforts to improve the status of youth. They believed that merely establishing a policy was hardly enough to make a substantive difference, and that implementation and ownership of the policy were more important. Questions to stakeholders in local districts therefore had to be revised after recognizing the general lack of knowledge regarding the NYP among stakeholders, which would obviously limit their capacity to have discussions on the current state of the NYP. To address this lack of NYP knowledge, the team also utilized this field visit as an opportunity to disseminate information about the NYP to stakeholders.

In addition to the challenges outlined above, the team faced slight difficulty in adapting certain parts of the original evaluation matrix to the context of Nepal. For instance, translation of the word “youth” into Nepalese did not always capture the full meaning of “youth” in English. Additional explanation was often required to ensure proper understanding of the term. Life stages in Nepal are typically divided into childhood, youth, and old age. Thus, any adults who do not consider themselves to be elderly often automatically consider themselves to be “youth.” During the research process, the team also discovered that a number of issues raised in the original

matrix were not relevant for Nepal; accordingly, some of those questions in the original matrix remain unanswered.

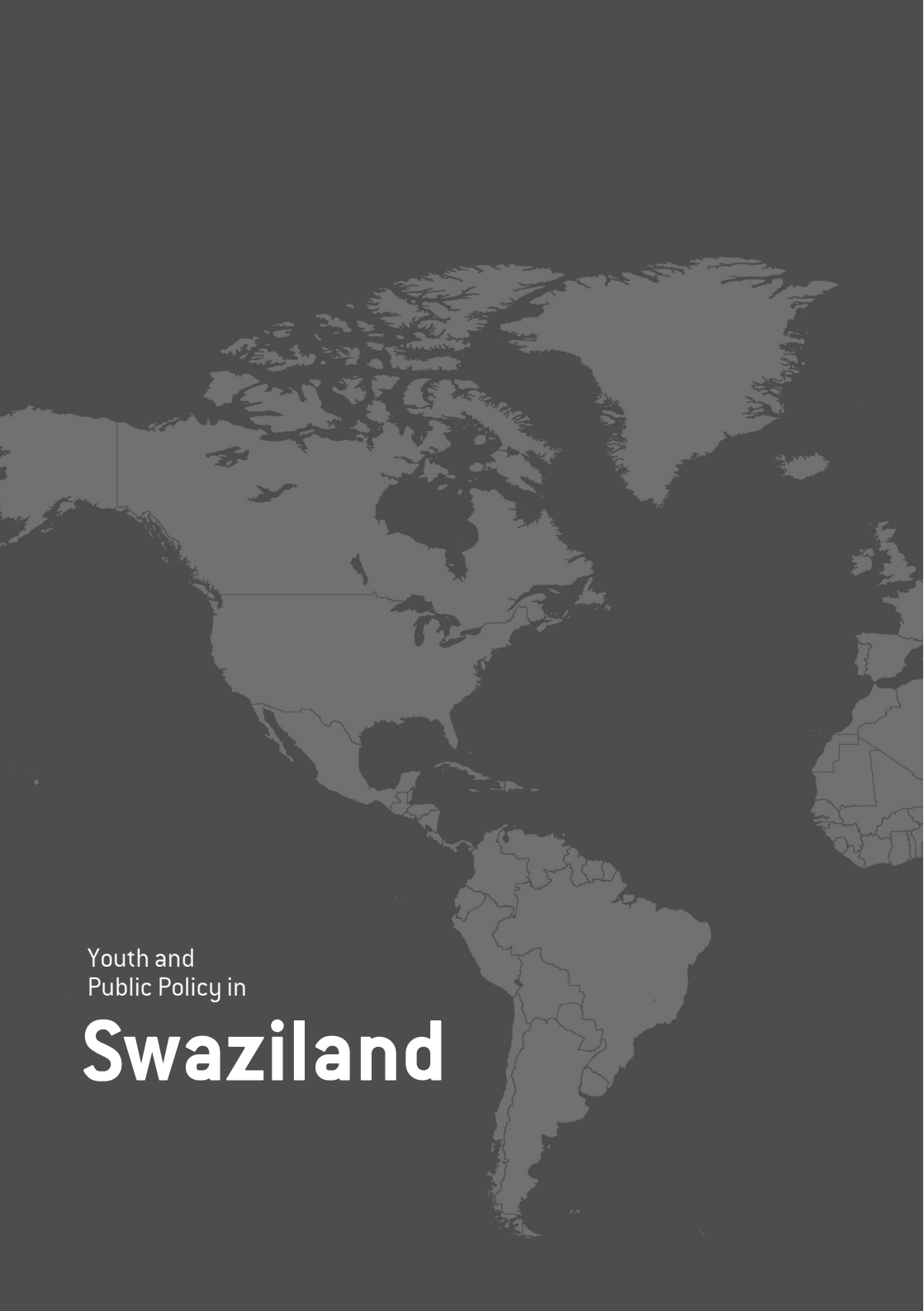
1.5 Assumptions and Research Limitations

Certain assumptions were initially made during the research process and influenced how some of the research was conducted. A number of these assumptions were challenged in the course of the research process, while others remained unchallenged.

First, one of the basic assumptions made was that the National Youth Policy was in the process of being implemented, that the various ministries concerned with youth policy were coordinating their efforts, and that work was being done by the Ministry of Youth. These assumptions initially underlay many of our research questions, interviews, and focus group discussions. The team quickly discovered, however, that there was less implementation of this policy than originally assumed; thus, the team had to reframe many of the questions. Another assumption was that government officials possessed some awareness of the National Youth Policy. This assumption also informed many of our initial interactions with government officials. Again, the team quickly discovered that this was often not true, and thereby had to reorient our discussion with officials on various occasions.

An additional underlying assumption was that geographical regions and ethnic and religious groups that the team would meet during this review process would be largely representative of all Nepali youth and stakeholders. Though the team made an enormous effort to include as many different groups of youth and stakeholders as possible, it must be acknowledged that youth and stakeholders in more remote locations may have been missed. Unfortunately, because of their remote locations and limited access to information and programs, these youth are also sometimes the most vulnerable within the society. Given the limited timeframe of the review, however, it was possible to meet with only a few stakeholders in more remote locations. And though it was initially assumed that female youth would be fairly easy to access for this review, cultural norms and practices created more difficulties in doing so than originally anticipated.

Another limitation to our research was that the team did not use a standardized definition and age range for “youth” in this study. Since the definition of “youth” often varied widely across groups of youth and youth stakeholders, the team chose to do this in order to fully understand people’s perceptions of the term “youth” without bias from our team. When arranging meetings with youth, rather than indicating a set age range, the team allowed organizers to select participants whom they considered as falling in the youth age group. Because of variations in the definition of youth among stakeholders, the age ranges of “youth” in the interviews and focus group discussions conducted often varied widely.



Youth and
Public Policy in

Nepal

The Situation of Young People

2



2.1 Nepal: A Brief Background

Nepal is primarily a rural country, with agriculture as the mainstay for the majority of the population. Approximately 74 percent of the country's total population of **26,494,504** million is involved in agriculture, with rice and wheat being the main food crops.⁴ The lowland Terai region produces an agricultural surplus, part of which supplies the food-deficient hill areas. On average, 52 percent of agricultural heads of household are literate—slightly lower than the overall literacy rate of all heads of households in the country. Additionally, the overall literacy rates of household heads relying on agriculture as their main source of income are lower in rural areas (50 percent) than in urban areas (70 percent).⁵

The country consists of more than one hundred ethnic groups—each with their own language, dialects, traditions, and history. With an increasing level of awareness of ethnic differences within the country, ethnic divides have become more pronounced now than any time in the past. These divides often make it difficult for the country to come together, thus leaving it more prone to critical challenges. In the past, attempts were made to unite diverse parts of the country in ways that would allow them to function as modern nation-states. However, after a decade of civil war that resulted in countless deaths, destroyed lives, and loss of the nation's resources, the sense of national unity has been lost and many Nepali people, particularly the youth, have migrated to foreign lands.

With the wealth of the country primarily concentrated among the rich, the economy remains weak, leaving millions to live in abject poverty. Currently, foreign aid accounts for more than half of the development budget. Since 1975, emphasis has been placed on the improvement of government administration and rural development efforts. Since then, government priorities within development have focused on building transportation and communication facilities, on agriculture, and on industry. Nepal has also utilized a series of five-year plans to advance its economic development.

4. Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal, *Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008* (Kathmandu: National Planning Commission Secretariat, 2008).

5. Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal, *Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010–11, Vol. II* (Kathmandu: National Planning Commission Secretariat, date).

With an annual real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 4.7 percent, Nepal's GDP stood at \$12.6 billion in the fiscal year 2009 (the period from July 2009 through June 2010). According to the World Bank, the per capita income for that year was \$427. Over the years, inflation has risen tremendously, with this figure soaring to 11.8 percent in fiscal year 2009. For a weak economy such as Nepal, this double-digit inflation has only added to the general population's woes.

Until 1990, Nepal was an absolute monarchy under the control of the king. Faced with a people's movement against absolute monarchy, King Birendra agreed to large-scale political reforms—promulgating a new constitution and creating a parliamentary monarchy with the king as the head of state and the prime minister as the head of the government. In February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) began a violent insurgency in more than 50 of the country's 75 districts. In July 2001 Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba announced a ceasefire, which the Maoists pledged to observe, as part of the government's efforts to seek a negotiated end to the conflict.

In October 2002, King Gyanendra dismissed the government, calling it corrupt and ineffective. He declared a state of emergency in November and ordered the army to crack down on the Maoist guerrillas. The bloodiest year since the start of the Maoist insurgency was 2002, when a total of 4,648 people were killed.⁶ In August 2003, the Maoist rebels withdrew from peace talks with the government and ended the cease-fire. On February 1, 2005, King Gyanendra suspended the parliament, appointed a government led by him, and declared martial law. The king argued that civil politicians were unfit to handle the Maoist insurgency. Telephone lines were cut by the government at that time, and several high-profile political leaders were detained. Other opposition leaders fled to India and regrouped there.

The Seven Party Alliance (SPA) of parliamentary parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) agreed on a historic and unprecedented 12-point memorandum of understanding (MOU) for peace and democracy on November 22, 2005. Nepalis from various walks of life and the international community regarded the MOU as an appropriate political response to the developing crisis. Against the backdrop of the sufferings of the Ne-

6. Naresh Newar, "10000+" *Nepali Times*, 13 August, 2004, Issue No 209, p. 1.

pali people and the enormous human cost of the past ten years of violent conflict, the MOU, which proposed a peaceful transition through an elected Constituent Assembly, created an acceptable formula for a united movement for democracy. As per the 12-point MOU, the SPA called for a protest movement, and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) supported it. This movement led to a countrywide uprising that began in April 2006. Some of the politicians, civil society, and professional organizations actively encouraged people to make their voices heard, resulting in massive and spontaneous demonstrations and rallies held across Nepal against King Gyanendra. Several weeks of mass protests were followed by several months of peace negotiations between the Maoists and government officials, culminating in the November 2006 peace accord and the promulgation of an interim constitution.

On May 19, 2006, the parliament assumed total legislative power and gave executive power to the Government of Nepal. The *Raj Parishad*, a council of the king's advisors, was abolished, and its duties were assigned to the parliament. The activities of the king became subject to parliamentary scrutiny and the king's properties were subjected to taxation. Moreover, Nepal was declared a secular state⁷—abrogating its previous status as a Hindu Kingdom.

Following a nationwide election in April 2008, the newly formed Constituent Assembly (CA) declared Nepal a federal democratic republic, and abolished monarchy at its first meeting the following month. The CA elected the country's first president in July of that year. The Maoists, who received a plurality of votes in the CA election, formed a coalition government in August 2008, but subsequently resigned in May 2009 after the president overruled a decision to fire the chief of army staff.⁸ The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Nepali Congress Party then formed a new coalition government with several smaller parties.

In November 2011, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and the leaders of the main political parties signed a formal agreement to begin the process of reintegrating former Maoist combatants into society. With this agree-

7. Interim Constitution Point 4 State of Nepal, p. 4.

8. Madhur Singh, "Nepal's PM Resigns, in New Crisis for Maoists," May 04, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1895650,00.html>.

ment, the tenure of the CA was extended for six months for the fourth time through the eleventh amendment of the interim constitution. Interestingly, these extensions were carried out against the backdrop of Nepal's Supreme Court allowing a final six-month extension. The CA, which had been elected in April 2008 to write the constitution of Nepal and bring the peace process to a close, was originally supposed to complete these tasks within the first two years.

Four years after it had been mandated to write the new constitution of Nepal, the CA was dissolved.⁹ The dissolution of the CA resulted in not only the failure to promulgate a new constitution but also a political vacuum in the absence of the legislative body. Although fresh elections were announced in the immediate aftermath of the CA dissolution, given the current political situation, the Nepali public remains skeptical about the possibility of elections in the near future.

2.2 Youth: An Introduction

Youth currently make up an important and growing part of the Nepali population. The population of Nepal as of the census day (June 22, 2011) was 26,494,504, with youths (age 16 to 40 years) comprising about 41 percent.¹⁰ In recent times, “youth” has gradually been recognized as priority in the development field, similar to other priorities such as gender, protection, child rights, environment, and HIV/AIDS. Concepts such as “youth participation,” “youth bulge,” “youth employment,” and “youth empowerment” have been steadily gaining prominence in the international development discourse. In line with these international trends, youth has now emerged as a separate area of attention and concern in Nepal.¹¹

9. Prashant Jha, “Nepal’s CA fails to write Constitution,” *The Hindu*, May 28, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nepals-ca-fails-to-write-constitution/article3463109.ece>.

10. Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal, *National Population and Housing Census 2011* (National Planning Commission Secretariat, November 2012).

11. Peter De Schepper and Bhoj Raj Poudel, *Generation in Dialogues, Youth in Politics: Nepal* (Kathmandu: Youth Initiative, 2010), p. 5.

Even among those working with youth, various definitions currently exist to categorize the term “youth,” depending on specific sociocultural, political, and economic factors. For example, the United Nations defines youth as “people from 15 to 24 years of age,” while the Nepali government views youth in Nepal to include women, men, and “third gender¹²” or LGBT, individuals within the 16-to-40 age group.¹³ In fact, there is no consistency in the definition of youth, even in our neighboring countries, because the age range varies according to each country’s youth policy. The National Youth Policy 2010 is the first instance where any policy in Nepal has spelled out a clear definition of youth in terms of age. Additionally, the policy has also specifically addressed the rights of “third gender” youth as equal to those of men and women.

Recognition of the “third gender” as equal to men and women can be traced back to 2001, when the recognition of sexual minorities movements began to take shape. Later, in 2008, Nepal’s Supreme Court ruled in favor of laws to guarantee full rights to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals, with all sexual minorities to be defined as “natural persons” under the law. Even in the 2011 Nepal Census, conducted in May 2011, the Central Bureau of Statistics officially recognized a third gender in addition to male and female.

In general, youth are regarded as agents of change. Even in Nepal we take youth as the pioneers of economic, social, political, and cultural transformation, and the backbone of the nation. They vitalize a stagnant situation; build networks, mutual support structures, and platforms for advocacy; and share resources and ideas. Youth also represent an asset upon which the future of any society depends; hence, it is important to ensure that needed interventions are created for youth’s overall development. To do this, it is crucial to frame and establish the necessary policies for youth, especially in the areas of livelihood and employment. The National Youth

12. The third gender in Nepal is an identity-based category for people who do not identify as either male or female. This may include people who present or perform as a gender that is different from the one that was assigned to them at birth. It can also include people who do not feel that the male or female gender roles dictated by their culture match their true social, sexual, or gender identity. Definition from the Blue Diamond Society, Nepal (www.bds.org.np).

13. *National Youth Policy 2010*.

Policy (NYP) 2010¹⁴ of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), in its attempts to address some of these concerns, is a step in the right direction. (The National Youth Policy and its context will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 of this report).

Youth hold the potential to contribute in a variety of constructive roles within society, and ensuring youth's societal participation enhances their capacity for, and encourages initiation of, meaningful engagement in sustainable development. Educating youth and incorporating their issues in poverty reduction also prepare them for creating sustainable livelihoods.¹⁵ The NYP 2010, the only document with an exclusive focus on youth with clearly delineated age limits, envisions "to prepare capable entrepreneur, creative and competent youth with scientific and positive vision and establish the youth of the country in the leadership role so that they can render a meaningful contribution to the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of the nation, while guaranteeing the basic rights of the youths and also taking into consideration the sensitiveness of the younger age through youth empowerment."¹⁶

The various challenges faced by youth have not gone unnoticed, and efforts have been made to address these issues through a number of programs. Nevertheless, a lack of policy directives, plans, and programs in the past that failed to provide explicit definitions of youth, have proven to be hindrances in addressing youth problems. Youth in Nepal also continue to face considerable hurdles in their development, including inadequate access to education and training. "Every year Nepalese youths between 300,000 to 350,000 enter the job market. Only ten percent of them are absorbed in the domestic market. More than 100,000 of these leave the country in search of jobs and the rest remain here."¹⁷

14. The National Youth Policy 2010 is a policy document with an exclusive focus on youth, with clear categorization as to which age cohort is to be referred to as youths; it has been adopted by government actors and line ministries.

15. Nepal ko Yatra, *Creating Peace: Case Studies of Youth Entrepreneurship of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Yatra, 2010).

16. *National Youth Policy 2010*.

17. Data Sources: National Planning Commission (NPC) and Employment Promotion Commission (EPC), YES Nepal Country Report.

In addition, lack of decent jobs, poor health, frequent armed conflicts, and fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making processes are hurdles that have contributed to the erosion of youth's abilities, and can be viewed as an impediment to their growth. Consequently, their engagement has not been meaningful in the country's social, political, and economic spheres. The lack of sufficient opportunities for youth carries psychological costs in society that are reflected in youth violence, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime.

2.3 Education

Though the Nepal education system has been subject to immense criticism, the educational progress that has taken place within the country deserves some commendation. In particular, one area of improvement has been educational expansion throughout the country. In 1951, the enrollment rate of school-age children stood at just 0.5 percent. However, this number rose to 32 percent by the beginning of the 1970s, and by 2004–05, primary education enrollment stood at 90 percent for boys and 83 percent for girls.¹⁸ Despite this increased enrollment, the quality of education offered has improved very little, and, as a result, critics of the education system tend to concentrate on this weakness. An overhaul of the centralized teaching system—which currently focuses mainly on theoretical knowledge—is a recur-

18. Sharin Stash and Emily Hannum, "Who Goes to School? Educational Stratification by Gender, Caste and Ethnicity in Nepal," *Comparative Education Review* 45 No. 3 (2001): 361. See Myron Weiner, "The Political Demography of Nepal," *Asian Survey* 13, No. 6 (1973): 619, and Ministry of Education and Sports, *Nepal in Educational Figures* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Education and Sports, 2006). In 2007, a total of 28,919 schools reportedly provided education to 4,617,099 primary students. On the other hand, the national census projected that in 2006 there would be 3,112,108 children between the ages of five and nine (the target age for primary education), a difference of more than 1.5 million children. This discrepancy can be explained by a significant repetition rate in Nepal's education system, the tendency of schools to inflate the number of enrolled students to attract more government funding, and the fact that *Dalits*, who are entitled to scholarships, tend to be over-counted. For instance, schools report an enrollment rate of 19 percent *Dalit* in primary education against an estimated 12–14 percent *Dalit* among the general population, which, if true, means that *Dalits* are actually privileged in terms of education. See Department of Education, *Flash II Report 2064, 2007–08* (Sanothimi, Bhaktapur: Government of Nepal, 2008), 10.

ring argument to improve the quality of educational provision. One reason for the lack of quality improvement in education has been the tendency of successive education ministers to appoint their followers as teachers, rather than select teachers based on performance. This patronage system has brought politics directly into the classroom, which also helps explain the surprisingly strong political awareness of students throughout Nepal.¹⁹

Recent peace and political stability, combined with a growing awareness of the value of education, have contributed to a significant increase in the demand and expectations for public education services. Despite significant improvements in access and enrollment over the past decade or so, many children and young people leave school without developing their potential, without acquiring basic skills deemed necessary for raising their standards of living, and without the knowledge needed to function effectively in society. In addition, the Maoist conflict led to the loss and interruption of education for many school-aged children, who have since become the youth of Nepal. Given these current conditions, a strong need exists for higher-quality education within the country.

According to the early findings of the Nepal Living Standard Survey III, the overall literacy rate in 2010–11 was 56.5 percent. While the literacy rate among men is 71.6 percent, it remains at only 44.5 percent among women.²⁰ Furthermore, when looking specifically at youth, the Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008 reveals that literacy among the youth is 67.4 percent, with male youth at 82.84 percent and female youth at 56.5 percent. In comparing the literacy rates between urban and rural areas, the overall literacy rate of urban youth is approximately 85.7 percent, while rural youth literacy remains at a lower 63.1 percent.²¹ Disaggregating the rates by sex shows the literacy rate among rural male and female youth to be 80 percent and 51.7 percent, respectively, compared with 93.2 percent and 79.4 percent among urban male and female youth, respectively.

The Ministry of Education has been implementing various Technical Educational and Vocational Training (TEVT) programs in various districts.

19. Shanta Dixit, *Education, Deception, State and Society* (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2002), pp. 193–211.

20. *Nepal Living Standard Survey 2011, Early Findings*.

21. *Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008*.

The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) currently coordinates TEVT functions, particularly for the preparation of the middle and lower-level skilled workforce, and has been entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating with agencies such as Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, I/NGOs, and other local organizations. CTEVT offers training courses through its constituents as well as through its affiliated institutions. An example of a CTEVT program is the Skills for Employment Project, which is currently in operation and aimed at providing training to 80,000 youths.²²

With the aim of providing certain professional and vocational skills to those either unable to gain higher education or interested in acquiring skills to advance their professional careers, CTEVT has been running various short-term (39 hours to 1,500 hours) vocational training programs—done through its owned, managed, and affiliated technical schools and training centers. The courses offered are based on the demand and needs of the people, especially in the fields of agriculture, engineering, health, tourism, management, and computers. Most of the institutes have been running mushroom production, vegetable production, gardening, cooking, baking, and housekeeping programs. In theory, these short-term vocational trainings and other skill trainings are currently available to everyone.²³ However, most of the beneficiaries of these programs are youth who were unable to complete their higher education for various reasons, including the previous Maoist conflict. That event has resulted in an even greater need for technical and vocational education for youth if they are to become productive members of the workforce.

A National Skills Testing Board (NSTB) under CTEVT assesses skills of individuals in different occupations and provides individuals with certification. The occupations tested for include agriculture, automobile, business service, computer, construction, electrical, electronics, forestry, handicraft, health, hospitality industry, leather goods, mechanical, printing, renewable energy, and tailoring/marketing. To date, NSTB has developed National Occupational Skill Standards and Profiles in 237 different occupa-

22. Interview with Mr. Jaya Bahadur Tandon, Member Secretary, Council for Technical and Vocational Training.

23. See www.ctevt.org.np.

tions, 108,000 craftspersons have been skill-tested, and 72,730 are certified. Over the years, the number of people who have come for skills testing has increased. This increase can be attributed to a greater level of awareness among people, as well as the training conducted by donor agencies on the tests' usefulness. The majority of those who come for skills testing are youth.²⁴

2.4 Employment

Employment in Nepal has clear geographic divisions, with non-farming jobs almost exclusively located in and around cities.²⁵ While urbanization is on the rise, the vast majority of Nepal's population still resides in rural areas, with roughly 80 percent of the population dependent on agriculture for its livelihood.²⁶ Despite the overall importance of agriculture, the sector has suffered from weak policies, and, after initial increases in production in the 1960s and 1970s, production has grown negligibly—especially in comparison with the growing population.²⁷ Furthermore, while official figures maintain that unemployment rates are surprisingly low (at 3.8 percent in 2004, down from 4.9 percent in 1996), underemployment remains as high as 50 percent.²⁸

24. Based on interview with Chandra Bahadur Nakarmi, Skills Testing Board.

25. Marchel Fafchamps and Forhad Shilpi, "The Spatial Division of Labor in Nepal (May 15, 2002)," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2845*, pp. 18–20, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=636193, accessed May 6, 2012.

26. Ministry of Health and Population, *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2006* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Health and Population, 2006), p. 3. See also Lindsay Alexander, Canan Gunduz, and D. B. Subedi, *What Role for Business in 'Post Conflict' Economic Recovery?* (London: International Alert, 2009), http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/LEO_Nepal.pdf, accessed May 6, 2012.

27. Myron Weiner, "The Political Demography of Nepal," *Asian Survey* 13, no. 6, 1973, pp. 622–623. See David Seddon and Jahannath Adhikari, *Conflict and Food Security in Nepal: A Preliminary Analysis* (Kathmandu: Rural Reconstruction Nepal, 2003).

28. Underemployment is generally defined in Nepal as working less than six months in a year, according to page 2 of the *National Action Plan for Youth Employment Nepal (2008–2015)*. See also United Nations Development Program, *Nepal Human Development Report 2004* (Kathmandu: UNDP, 2004), especially the section called "Empowerment and Poverty Reduction" (p. 43).

In the 1980s, some officials acknowledged that a job in agriculture held little appeal for Nepal's youth.²⁹ Because of the low return in the agricultural sector and the growing attractiveness of modern lifestyles, many youth, especially males, decided to change their careers and migrated to urban areas or even abroad. Nevertheless, the majority of youth—approximately 85 percent of female youth and 50 percent of male youth—are still working as farmers, even if they do so reluctantly.³⁰ Those looking for work in the cities do not necessarily fare much better, with many taking on menial jobs that require little skill, such as pulling rickshaws, working as street vendors, or laboring in construction and transportation on a daily wage basis. Even skilled workers, including those in the carpet industry or in the tourism sector, still enter into unbalanced and often exploitative working relationships that favor the employer.³¹ Nepal's decade-long conflict further worsened the situation, forcing many young men to flee their homes out of fear of becoming a target of the Maoists or security forces. Although few figures are available on internal displacement in Nepal, it is widely believed that this movement has increased the presence of a mass of unemployed individuals around urban centers.

According to the Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008, the current labor force participation rate (the proportion of population aged 15 years and above who were currently active) decreased marginally from 85.8 percent in 1998–99 to 83.4 percent in 2008. The decline in the current labor force participation rate was more marked in urban areas (from 73.3 percent to 67.3 percent) than in rural areas. When broken down by sex, the figures reveal that more adult males (87.5%) are currently active compared with adult females (80.1%).³²

29. Dor Bahadur Bista, "Nepal in 1988: Many Losses, Some Gains," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 2, 2009, p. 226.

30. Ministry of Health and Population, *Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2006* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Health and Population, 2006), 51–53. See also K. B. Ghimire, "Social Movements and Marginalized Rural Youth in Brazil, Egypt and Nepal," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 30, no. 1, 2002, pp. 52–54.

31. International Labor Organization, *The Informal Economy and Workers in Nepal* (Kathmandu: ILO, 2004), pp. 5–23.

32. *Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008*.

Furthermore, the report states that about 2.3 million people aged 15 and above³³ who currently remain economically inactive, are unemployed, and not available for work. According to the data, around 83 percent of youth are economically active, which is defined as being involved in at least one hour of economic activity³⁴ during the month of the survey period. As might be expected, around 60 percent of the youth under 30 years of age were inactive due to school attendance. Similarly, a high proportion of inactive females, approximately 41 percent, in the same age group provided household duties as their reason for inactivity compared with only 3.4 percent of inactive males in the age group. This is likely in line with the cultural practice of sending boys to school but not girls.

According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, about 38 percent of the youth population is currently unemployed, with 400,000 young people entering the labor market every year.³⁵ Youth face several challenges to securing employment. Some of the major challenges are:

- » Urban-centric investment, especially around district headquarters
- » Political instability
- » Lack of economic resources
- » Nepotism
- » Lack of access to information about employment opportunities
- » Lack of employment-related counseling opportunities

33. The definition of a child in Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act is a person not at least 16 years of age. As per Section 3(1) of this Act, a child who is not at least 14 years of age cannot be engaged in work as a laborer. The Labor Act creates a distinction between a “minor” and an “adult.” According to the provisions in the Labor Act, “minor” means a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has not reached the age of 18. Likewise, “adult” according to the Labor Act, means a person who is at least 18 years old. Under Rule 43(2) of the Labor Rules, engaging a minor who has not attained the age of 16 years in work leading to adverse effects on health or with dangerous machines is strictly prohibited. Further, according to Rule 3(1) of the Labor Rules, a minor worker or employee of more than 14 years and less than 16 years of age shall not be deployed in work for more than 6 hours per day and 36 hours per week.

34. Economic activity is defined in the report as any productive involvement in agriculture, trade and business, handicraft and small or micro-enterprises, or employment in formal and informal sectors.

35. *National Youth Policy 2010.*

In a recent youth survey published by the British Council Nepal, youth themselves have emphasized political stability and peaceful environment as the minimum basic requirements for the unemployment number to decline. Such a peaceful environment would also result in the reduction of conflict-prone incidents and an increase in peace-building initiatives.³⁶

Many initiatives, at the national and international level, have been taken to bring the youth employment issue to the forefront. Grassroots activists, civil society, the private sector, entrepreneurs, education institutions, and donors have been involved in organizing workshops, rural and urban programs, and establishing connections to better youth employment.

In NYP working policy number 4, social security is also mentioned. In the policy, employment generation and counseling for career development are provisioned to encourage youth and help them support their families. Certain special groups are also prioritized in the establishment of a social security system.

Similarly, in the working policy number 45, provisions have been made for employment for youth. The policy states that youth shall be provided with entrepreneurship and other vocational training to develop rural and agricultural industries. For example, the Youth Employment Promotion Centers offer skills training that increases the individual's employability. The policy also addresses providing youth-friendly loans and seed money to encourage entrepreneurship among those young people with technical knowledge and skills. Additionally, the policy alludes to devising strategies for encouraging youth to work in public services, establishing cooperatives in rural and urban areas, engaging in agricultural employment, and becoming involved in traditional professions. In the meantime, creating an "enabling" environment for skilled youth to return home from abroad is called for. Currently, a plan for establishing mechanisms to resolve problems of Nepali youth in foreign employment does exist.

Discussions with youth revealed that unemployment remains one of the leading causes of male migration, and that female youth must often shoulder extra responsibilities in their families after the men have migrated. Unemployment is also a great source of emotional stress for youth,

36. British Council of Nepal, *Youth Survey of Nepal* (Kathmandu: British Council of Nepal, 2011).

which, coupled with idleness, can sometimes lead to youth violence. Youth need a proper forum to release the stress, frustration, and tension created by unemployment; in many communities, no such forum or activities are in practice or initiated.

Female youth also expressed that they frequently face discrimination in the workplace and thus have a difficult time securing a job. Even when female youth are able to secure jobs, they are often unable to receive the same opportunities within their jobs as their male counterparts. Furthermore, societal and cultural norms dictate that women should not be out in the evenings, making it challenging for female youth to work the long hours that their male colleagues do. Their inability to work late often creates an additional “reason” employers can use to discriminate against young women in the workplace.

2.5 Youth and Migration

The history of international labor migration in Nepal is a long one. Nepal has long been a population-exporting country or, more precisely, a man-exporting one. The first men migrated to Lahore—current-day Pakistan—in the 19th century to join the army of the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh. These men earned the nickname “*Lahure*”—which is still used today for Nepali employed by foreign armies abroad. In 1815–16, the first British army of India was then and still is called “Gurkhas.” Since that time, international labor migration of Nepali has never ceased. In recent decades, migration has greatly increased and diversified in pattern.³⁷ Globalization has opened new migration channels, particularly to the Gulf States and Malaysia. Though much has been written about the pros and cons of the so-called remittance economy, the overall feeling toward this development has generally been positive, and it has even been praised for mitigating unemployment rates and keeping the economy afloat.

In Nepal, youth constitute a large proportion of those who migrate to different countries for various reasons, including lack of opportunities in Nepal. The decade-long Maoist insurgency also triggered youth migration

37. Ganesh Gurung, *Patterns in Foreign Employment and Vulnerability of Migrant Workers* (Kathmandu: Nepal Institute of Development Studies, 2002).

to other countries because of the poverty and lack of opportunities.³⁸ More than 2 million Nepali youth are working as migrant workers in all other countries, including India.³⁹ In India specifically, the number of Nepali migrants is estimated to be even higher, since India and Nepal share an open border where the movement of people from both sides is undocumented. Youth who migrate to India for work are mainly from the Far Western region of Nepal, and this form of migration is usually seasonal. Seasonal migration means that the youth return home during peak planting and harvesting seasons, and then migrate back to India afterward. Thus, during these times, youth who have left school or college and have taken up employment are generally not present in their communities. Youth who migrate to countries other than India, however, tend to remain absent from home for even longer periods. Consequently, in some areas of Nepal, particularly areas that have experienced high levels of migration, very few youth remain in those communities.

In 2009–10, 26,948 students received a Letter of No Objection⁴⁰ from the Ministry of Education, paving their way to study abroad.⁴¹ “No Nepali citizen can go abroad for higher education unless the Ministry of Education and Sports issues permission,” states the Ordinance issued by the government in its Scholarship Act 1964, the Education Act 1970, the Technical Education and Vocational Training Centre Act 1988, the Sports Development Act 1991, and the Nepal Scout Act 1993.

While the public remains concerned about the financial loss and the burden of students needing to finance their studies abroad themselves, the loss of youth capacity is probably most concerning—because only a fraction of foreign-bound students return after completing their education. It is no

38. ILO-DFID, *Managing Foreign Employment in Nepal: Issues, Challenges and Strategies* (Unpublished advisory report, 2002).

39. International Labor Organization, *Labor and Social Trends 2010*, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/publication/wcms_151322.pdf.

40. A letter of No Objection is a mandatory document issued by the Ministry of Education to every foreign-bound Nepali student. This document provides an individual student with the approval to go and study abroad.

41. Manjima Dhakal, “Nepalese students going abroad for studies declining”, *Gorkhapatra Daily*, http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/rising.detail.php?article_id=55233&cat_id=4.

coincidence that countries with flexible employment rules such as Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom are the most popular “study” destinations. Some express the hope that, with the end of the conflict and the signing of the peace accord, students will come back with sorely needed advanced capacities, bringing vigor to Nepal’s economy. At present, however, a return movement of youth is not visible in Nepal.

For some, migration has been a benefit, but for many others, it means passing from one difficult situation into another. Migration for work occurs often in rural areas and has created new challenges for its rural youth. Unemployed rural youth frequently assume that better work opportunities exist in larger cities, and so many of them flock to urban areas. However, their qualifications and experience may be inadequate to meet labor market needs. Unfortunately, many rural youth also lack the necessary proficiency in English, or the required marks, to pursue studies abroad, further increasing their migration toward urban areas in Nepal. After migrating to urban cities, these rural youth often end up accepting harsh and exploitative working conditions because they lack qualifications and experience, and many remain unemployed.⁴² The few professional opportunities available around urban centers are too limited to accommodate the large surplus of educated youth, and youth sometimes have to resort to manual labor. Whether abroad or in Nepal manual labor for youth offers little pay or satisfaction. So, while youth might not all be destitute, and some may have the option of falling back on a family-based security net, these youth accepting harsh, exploitative, or manual labor may be more likely to lead a difficult and possibly unsatisfactory life.

The migration of youth in the emerging economies of Asia and the Gulf countries have created a new remittance-based economy⁴³ in Nepal, which has helped to ensure that the slackening growth in Nepal’s manufacturing, agricultural and tourism sector does not cripple the nation’s economy. Employment abroad has not only helped Nepal minimize its ever-growing unemployment problem, but also has injected much-needed foreign

42. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/nyin/wyr10.htm>, accessed November 22, 2011.

43. Remittance contributes 25 percent of the GDP in Nepal, see <http://www.ekantipur.com/2013/10/06/national/remittance-keeping-economy-afloat/379016.html>.

currency into the economy.⁴⁴ Recognizing the importance of remittance in sustaining the country's economy, Nepal has undertaken a strong policy and legislative initiative to encourage the foreign-employment sector. Foreign Employment Act was passed in 2007 for this purpose. Among others the statute establishes the Foreign Employment Promotion Board entrusted with the responsibility to "carry out acts required to promote the foreign employment business and make this business safe, systematic, and decent; and protect the rights and interests of workers going for foreign employment and the foreign employment entrepreneurs."⁴⁵ The 2007 Act also makes clear the government's intention to systematize the process of foreign employment as well as protect the rights and interests of Nepali migrant workers even though the effectiveness of such institutional and legal frameworks is yet to be fully demonstrated.⁴⁶

Yet numerous cases of intolerable suffering have been found among Nepali workers who work abroad. Newspaper reports claim that three corpses of workers going to the Gulf States, Malaysia, and other countries for foreign employment are brought to Nepal daily and that only two are entered into the government records. This report does not include those going abroad through illegal channels.⁴⁷ Another major cause of concern is the lack of favorable working conditions as mandated by international human rights law and instruments of International Labor Organizations in these countries. A bitter reality is that Nepali workers are often viewed and accepted in East and Southeast Asia, as well as the Gulf countries, as cheap labor, and their willingness to accept whatever job they can get renders them vulnerable to "4D" jobs, that is, jobs that are dangerous, dirty, difficult, and demeaning. Most of these youth include educated males and females from middle- and lower-middle-class families in Nepal who go abroad in hopes of earning a lot of money within a short time.

44. Bamdev Sigdel, *An Overview of Remittance Economy of Nepal*, p. 26.

45. Section 38(1) of the Foreign Employment Promotion Board.

46. Bandita Sijapati and Amrita Limbu, *Governing Labor Migration in Nepal*. <http://www.ceslam.org/docs/publicationManagement/Governing%20Labor%20Migration.pdf>.

47. <http://en.karobardaily.com/news/2013/01/Corpses-of-three-workers-brought-to-Nepal-daily>.

The working policy 5 of the NYP, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3, addresses the notion of protecting youth who go abroad for employment. The following provisions have been mentioned with regard to foreign employment:

- » Programs to send youth for foreign employment after providing them with formal and technical training within the country, and according to the demand for human resources prior to their foreign employment, shall be promoted.
- » Necessary mechanisms shall be built to resolve various problems of youth abroad, as well as to prevent youth from being cheated by foreign employers.
- » Security and employment-generating programs shall focus on ensuring quality and decent foreign employment for women.
- » Appropriate actions shall be taken for the provision of compensation to youths who die, become disabled, or are subjected to physical or mental exploitation and discrimination in the course of foreign employment. Programs to rescue these youths and rehabilitate them in Nepal shall be established.
- » Actions shall be taken to provide legal services through the relevant Nepalese embassy for youth who face injustice for various reasons, who are imprisoned, and who are evicted from work and deprived of facilities, in order to protect their labor rights.

The field visit revealed that the majority of migrating youth tend to be males, although in some cases, wives do migrate along with their husbands. Youth also commented that those youth actively involved in political parties were less likely to migrate. Youth engaged in political parties often possessed a strong desire to establish their political reputation in their regions, which would later allow them to participate in and run for office in future local elections. Thus, migration out of their political districts could negatively impact their capacity to engage effectively in political activities in that region. As mentioned previously, various districts also indicated that youth seasonally migrated to India, returning to their communities in time for harvest. In other districts, however, youth who migrated out of that region did not return at all.

2.6 Trafficking and Exploitation of Youth

Given the invisible nature of trafficking and exploitation, it is difficult to fully assess the number of Nepali youth affected. Nevertheless, this issue remains a grave concern in Nepali society, particularly in the country's border regions. Although the number of female youth migrating overseas tends to be significantly less than the number of males, those who do migrate tend to be more vulnerable to trafficking, because they lack education and awareness about safe and legal migration channels. Female youth are often unaware of the procedures for obtaining visas and other travel documents, and subsequently are more likely to be tricked by agents offering "easy options" to migrate overseas. Male youth, however, have also been deceived by exploiters when they lack information about safe migration from reliable representatives of employment agencies.

Human and drug trafficking have become major concerns in regions within close proximity to the Indian border. The lack of border regulation between the two countries contributes to this concern. For example, some of the border areas have no checkpoints or only maintain loosely patrolled checkpoints (e.g., Bardiya); these areas have now become the main exit points for trafficking females. An estimated 7,000 girls⁴⁸ are trafficked to India each year.

Occasionally, female youth are also kidnapped on the road and forced into prostitution. Although these numbers are undocumented, the percentage of females who experience this situation is not thought to be high. In these situations, female youth are often told that they are being taken for marriage or employment overseas. Because of the clandestine nature of such practices, it is difficult to verify actual numbers of female youth forced into prostitution. For example, in border areas, hotel owners have been known to keep young sex workers in exploitative situations, where they may only receive a minimal percentage of their client earnings. Additionally, young sex workers are exposed to higher rates of HIV/AIDs and STDs than other female youth. According to Sahayatra, a local youth-led organization based in Nepalgunj of the Banke district, located in the Mid-

48. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/may/08/nepal-struggles-human-trafficking-problem>

western region of Nepal, the rate of HIV/AIDs among clients of sex workers in certain regions of Nepal is nearly 50 percent, placing young female sex workers at high risk of HIV/AIDs infection.

Historically, girls were trafficked from areas such as Sindhupalchowk (a mid-hill district approximately 114 kilometers from Kathmandu) and Makwanpur (a mid-hill district approximately 200 kilometers from Kathmandu), as well as from the indigenous nationalities including the *Tamang*, an indigenous inhabitant of the Himalayan regions and constituting 5.8 percent of the total country population.⁴⁹ Over time, however, the trend has spread, and now females of all castes and ethnicities are trafficked. In conversation with the interviewees it was revealed that incidents of trafficking occur more frequently during the period Dashain and Tihar, the two major festivals of Nepal. During this time, many people leave their towns as part of their cultural tradition, and female youth who remain behind in border areas are at greater risk of trafficking. Though numbers of male youth being trafficked are reportedly lower than female youth, some males are also trafficked for body parts. Female youth who are able to escape from their traffickers often have difficulty reintegrating into their communities because of negative assumptions and social stigma about them. Furthermore, youth who do attempt to return to their communities often suffer additional physical and emotional trauma from their trafficking experiences.

2.7 Youth in Politics and Conflict

Historically, youth involvement in politics has been prominent during times of political change: Nepali youth have rendered an outstanding contribution to the founding of democracy in the country, and other social movements in Nepal.⁵⁰ The decade-long Maoist armed struggle introduced a large number of youth to conflict and politics at the same time. The movement used “revolutionary rhetoric to excite the young adults and prepare them

49. *National Population and Housing Census*, 2011.

50. A number of past movements that strove for identity and recognition, including the democratic movement of 1990, the decade-long armed struggle, *Madhesi* Movement, *Tharuhat* Movement, and others, have highlighted the demand to specifically address the current situation of youth.

for war, proclaiming the idea of social justice using the tools of violence.”⁵¹ This rhetoric legitimized the use of violence against the existing power relationships, unequal distribution of wealth, and the exclusion of target groups.⁵² Thus violence became the weapon of the weak and the vulnerable since it projected muscle and power that was previously beyond their grasp. The Maoist conflict provided credence to the idea that “violence pays.”

In legitimizing violence, the Maoist conflict cemented both the idea and importance of the “violent youth” in such a way that political parties, armed forces, and armed groups are now seen to be competing for the loyalty of young people. However, their importance has been specifically tied to violent activities, as was in the conflict period. During the insurgency, the youth were mobilized as combatants; now, they are valued for their participation in rallies and strikes. The formation and promotion of youth wings in major political parties⁵³ show that young people continue to be lured into fighting against each party’s opponents.

Besides being involved as muscle for political parties, youth have also taken initiatives to get directly involved in politics. The Maoist insurgency, whatever its faults, did bring the country’s youth to the forefront. Thus, even after the end of the conflict, it provided impetus for youth, especially those interested in *janajati* politics, not only to encourage but also to spearhead *janajati* politics.⁵⁴

Despite the importance associated with the country’s youth, political power is still highly centralized and mostly unattainable to them. In spite of their involvement and commitment, those youth who persist and do as-

51. Kanak Mani Dixit, *Peace Politics of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2011

52. *Nepal in Transition*, p. 53. They had raised the question of regional disparity to bring about an end to “discrimination towards people living in the Terai and remote areas” while also calling for an end to “discrimination against oppressed people and the dalits” and “equal opportunity in the media, including radio and TV, for all languages.”

53. The involvement of the Young Communist League (YCL), affiliated with Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN-M) and Youth Force, affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (CPN-UML) are some examples of youth wings that have garnered a great deal of attention for acting at the forefront of these various parties.

54. Kumar Lingden of the Limbuwan Movement and Laxman Tharu of the Tharuwat Movement are examples of young leaders involved in ethnic politics.

pire to a role in politics often do not wield any significant political power. Instead, patron–client bonds characterize relations between youth and mainstream politicians. Idealism, enthusiasm, and a willingness to act and to engage in physical expression often render youth as valuable assets to politicians. Thus, politicians have appealed to and depended on exactly these characteristics to mobilize youth to support their strategies.⁵⁵

For youth participating in politics, their involvement in the sister organizations of various political parties has allowed them to grow into a strong and organized group in Nepal. Youth leaders also take on roles outside of youth politics. Because of their personal and often close relations with politicians, youth leaders regularly act as important intermediaries between these leaders and other players. Thus, while youth might not be considered powerful players or hold decision-making roles, they do possess some influence, and clearly hold some valuable trump cards.

Despite their role in politics, youth generally receive little recognition or appreciation for their role in politics. Additionally, critics often claim that “youth politics” is nonexistent and youth are merely a tool in the hands of senior politicians. The most convincing yet least-heard argument to back this claim is the fact that, despite the massive mobilization of youth in politics, political youth wings have only marginally raised youth-related issues such as education and employment. On the other hand, political issues—for example, appeals to the government to adopt a more inclusive approach to a certain ethnic group—as well as other short-term concerns, such as demanding an investigation into the killing of one of its members, dominate most youth organization appeals.

Youth in Nepal have been affected by the country’s conflicts in various ways. Many young people have been victimized, suffered direct violence, lost education and vocational opportunities, or have been displaced. Many combatants, as well as youth associated with the armed forces (e.g., porters, sex slaves, and others within the armed forces that are not combatants) are reported to be facing difficulty in returning to formal education. Although a few NGOs and government initiatives have introduced rehabilitation programs such as free adult education, vocational training, and seed

55. See De Schepper and Poudel, *Generation Dialogues – Youth in Politics: Nepal*. Kathmandu: Youth Initiative, 2010.

money for initial investments to help former combatants, few youth have actually benefited from these programs.

2.8 Youth as Peace Builders


In the aftermath of the People's Movement 2006, the peace process in Nepal was initiated, and the country has been moving toward peace building. The Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006 opened doors for everyone to participate in reforming the country. Many national and international nongovernmental agencies are actively seeking youth engagement in peace building through the design and introduction of useful livelihood and skills-based programs and interventions. This engagement with youth by both national and international actors points to the growing recognition of youth as a category. Their political and social contributions are slowly being acknowledged and, over the years, mainly after the popular movement of 2006, youth as a category has gained currency in the policy discourse of Nepal, evidenced by the case of the NYP and the National Action Plan for Youth Employment Nepal (2010–17).

Youth participation in conflict resolution at the local level has greatly increased through local peace committees, mediation groups, and civil society activities, and even through local indigenous practices. Currently, youth are utilizing different tools—games, songs, festivals—to promote peace and social harmony. The government has also formulated bills to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Disappeared Commission, but none of these bills has yet been passed by the parliament.

The British Council's Nepal Youth Survey⁵⁶ reveals that youth's involvement in Nepal's political transition has been aimed at addressing key issues in inequity of opportunities and access, fighting decentralization of power and resources, and overcoming social discrimination, inequality, poverty, and unemployment. However, the situation has yet to come to a logical conclusion. Most young people desire good governance, peace, equality, economic prosperity, and opportunities for personal growth as primary outcomes of the engagement with the recent political transition.

56. British Council Nepal. *Youth Survey of Nepal*. Kathmandu: British Council Nepal, 2011.

Nepal is currently a country in transition, and reconciliation, repatriation, and resettlement are some of the key issues it faces. Providing opportunities to youth for meaningful work will help to decrease the risk of young people being recruited into or voluntarily joining hostile forces. Through youth-led initiatives in assuring the security, identity, participation, recognition, and the access of fellow youth to opportunities, it is possible to maintain national integrity and social harmony and evade civil unrest and war.



Youth and
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Nepal

A grayscale world map is shown in the background. The map uses a light gray color for landmasses and a darker gray for oceans. The country of India is highlighted in white, making it stand out from the rest of the map. The map is centered on the Indian subcontinent, showing the surrounding continents of Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

The Policy Context

3

In recent years, Nepal has made substantive progress in drawing focus to the rights and needs of youth through policy. As these youth-related policies move toward implementation, it is helpful to first examine the nuances and contexts within which these policies were first created. This chapter looks at some of the contextual environments surrounding the creation of the National Youth Policy of Nepal, as well as other youth-related policies.

3.1 Policy Context of Nepal

Over the years, policymaking in Nepal has been heavily influenced by the country's role as an aid recipient. Since the 1950s, when Nepal embarked on a five-year development plan, the country has continuously received aid. Development often translates directly to policies, and, in an aid-recipient country like Nepal, it is also tied to international aid. The story of foreign aid in Nepal can be depicted by the image of a trickle turning into a torrent—when speaking about foreign aid, this illustration can be viewed as more than literal in Nepal. For example, the grant of NRs 22,000 in fiscal year 1951–52 from the United States government was the modest beginning of a multimillion rupee enterprise on which the particulars of Nepal's development would be contingent.⁵⁷ The three major types of aid components in Nepal include grants, concessional loans, and technical assistance. The development budget that comes to Nepal from bilateral and multilateral donors either goes through the Finance Ministry or the Social Welfare Council to NGOs and civil society groups.⁵⁸ Hence there are currently two channels of influence for donor agendas: directly with the government and in collaboration with the NGOs and the civil society.

Policies have been predominantly, if not exclusively, designed utilizing a state-centric model, where state interest, rational actors (bureaucracy), and bureaucratic politics set the agenda for particular policies. This agenda-setting was evident after the reinstatement of multiparty democracy in

57. Chaitanya Mishra, "Foreign Aid and Social Structure: Notes on Intrastate Relationships," in *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal*, ed. Chaitanya Mishra (Kathmandu: FinePrint Books, 2007).

58. Sunir Pandey, "The Politics of Foreign Aid," *Nepali Times*, <http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=19592>

1990. In the history of Nepal, only two private bills have been put forward in the parliament.⁵⁹ Though the government personnel of the National Planning Commission (NPC) claim that state interest, rational actors, and bureaucratic policies determine policymaking in Nepal, other actors have also been known to come into play during the policymaking process.

Various conventions, treaties, and international frameworks that have been ratified by Nepal also influence the country's policymaking. From the 1990s on, Nepalese policy-making practice was met with a clear change—primarily because of external pressure. Currently, a number of factors, including the government, research institutes, university departments, professionals, and the private sector, are also seen to be interacting during the country's policy-formulation process.⁶⁰

While multiple stakeholders' representation in Nepal's policymaking continues to increase, international donors also play an important role in the formulation of plans and policies, especially since Nepal still remains a donor-driven country. Within this country, one of the poorest in the world, development policymaking is governed by two contradictory processes: the democratic process and the imperatives of foreign aid. The first requires development policies to be mandated by the people of Nepal; this is what has been stated in the constitution of the land. The latter is governed by the demands of the aid system as it operates domestically and internationally.⁶¹ As such, the reality of an aid-dependent country is that the donors are likely to exercise huge influence on policymaking. This issue is not new. It has remained pertinent from the beginning of the country's development campaign in the early 1950s, the period in which Nepal also had its first dealings with democracy. With or without the structures of a democratic regime in place, Nepal has been the recipient of substantial aid from its external benefactors; the latter inevitably exercised a degree of influence

59. Interview with Gopi Nath Mainali, NPC.

60. <http://www.fesnepal.org/reports/2006/.../Paper%20by%20PRLigal.pdf>, accessed January 28, 2012.

61. Devendra Raj Panday, "Matching Democracy and Development Policy Making in an Aid-Dependent Country: An Illustration from Nepal," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 4, no. 1 2000.

on which policies and programs were adopted.⁶² For instance, Nepal has been using foreign aid in its education sector from the initiation of planned development in the 1950s. The first education plan was formulated with the financial and technical support of American aid. From multilateral donors such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Commission, and UN organizations to bilateral donors including international nongovernmental organizations, all have some programs in the education sector. The ups and downs in foreign aid financing of the education sector demonstrates how various programs are designed and implemented whenever a donor provides aid; however, as soon as the donor stops providing financial support, these programs quickly end.⁶³

Likewise, historically, the domain of recipient-donor engagements was limited to government-international donors. Now, donors not only work with the national government but also with the local communities in the districts. Accordingly, policy initiatives coming from the local communities are also influenced by the engagements of donors with local-level stakeholders, and the donors can now transcend the state in policy decisions in the name of engaging civil society and grassroots communities.⁶⁴

The policy context became more complex with the emergence of structural adjustment interventions in the 1980s, and with the growing prominence of the economic liberalization and related reform measures in the aid agenda. The donor intrusion in policymaking has become further intensified in degree, as well as in substance, with the more recent emphasis on governance. Donors, in their role as direct partners in Nepal's development, often bring along both developmental and humanitarian concerns. In addition to providing financial support for specific issues, they may also bring and mobilize their own trained and experienced personnel, adding value and relevance to development policies and programs. Having brought even more of their own personnel, donors then end up having more say in the

62. Ibid.

63. Laxman Acharya and Bidya Nath Koirala, *Foreign Aid and Education in Nepal: Some Critical Issues* (Kathmandu: Alliance for Aid Monitor Nepal, 2011), <http://aidmonitor.org.np/publication/13.pdf>

64. Panday, *ibid.*

policy process and sphere. Donors therefore exert great influence in the policy-making process of Nepal.

When examining specific policies—such as the Technical Educational and Vocational Training (TEVT) Skills Development Policy 2007, Non-Formal Education (NFE) Policy 2006, Labor and Employment Policy 1999, and National Health Policy 1991—however, the rationale for why these policies are needed for specific populations, including youth, is often explicitly stated. For instance, the TEVT Skills Development Policy 2007⁶⁵ recognizes the fact that the majority of Nepal's youth who are of school age leave school without completing their studies through grade ten. Additionally, this policy also takes into consideration the effects of conflict on the populace, with the intention to expand training programs that would ensure access and inclusion of women, *Dalits*, ethnic groups, *Madhesi*, and other deprived communities. This policy also recognizes that underemployment and unemployment are major issues affecting youth. Nevertheless, the policy fails to specify how the youth referred to in this policy are to be defined.

Likewise, NFE Policy 2006⁶⁶ arose out of a shared need to address the concerns of various target groups, including illiterate persons living in remote areas, persons living below the poverty line, and wage laborers working in factories and farms. For its target groups, the policy has included adults, women, and youth. However, apart from adults who are defined by the legal sector, both youth and women as a category remain undefined. Another policy, the Labor and Employment Policy 1999,⁶⁷ was designed so that the Nepali labor sector could take on a concrete shape, and efforts for organizing and streamlining the labor sector could proceed along the International Labor Organization's (ILO) basic guidelines. This policy takes into account Nepal's membership in the World Trade Organization and is thus cognizant of the fact that globalization of capital, goods, labor, and service markets, growing competition, rising importance of foreign investments, increasing non-formalization of the organized sector, and emerging forms of organizational behavior are continually bringing about changes in industrial relations. In this context, the Labor and Employment Policy 1999

65. *TEVT Skill Development Policy 2007.*

66. *Non-formal Education Policy 2006.*

67. *Labor and Employment Policy 1999.*

has been promulgated in response to the shared need for attaining the goal of alleviating poverty through the creation of income-generating employment (as put forth as a priority by the Ninth and Tenth Plans).

In the National Health Policy 1991,⁶⁸ priority was given to preventive, promotional, and curative health services that directly helped to reduce infant and child mortality. Services were to be provided in an integrated manner throughout the healthcare system to local sub-health posts. The policy had aimed at making available curative health services at all health institutions—central, regional, zonal, and district hospitals; primary healthcare centers; health posts; sub-health posts; and health institutions at all levels of the healthcare system. The definition of health in this policy was based on that in the World Health Organization's Constitution.⁶⁹ However, the objectives and strategies outlined for health services in this policy were not village-oriented, and thus some deficiencies existed in using the available resources, since the rural plans and programs were not designed according to the needs of the rural population. Additionally, there were weaknesses in the implementation of plans and programs. The supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of the programs were not conducted in a regular manner, the resources were centralized, and the posts sanctioned for district-level health organizations were not filled.⁷⁰

Despite much effort to improve the public policy process, Nepal's policy decision making has been rather ad hoc, as well as hasty and haphazard. Often, policies are made with limited discussion and without full understanding of what the policy entails, despite the active roles played by several international agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. Nepal's success in policy implementation has been rather unsatisfactory. This policy failure is primarily attributable to the lack of a comprehensive and systematic policy framework; inadequate public participation in policy decisions; the lack of quality information for policy decision making; fragmented policies; the

68. *National Health Policy 1991*.

69. Health is not only the absence of infirmity and disease but also a state of physical, mental, and social well being, according to the Constitution of the World Health Organization, 1946.

70. *Health Policy Design and Implementation in Nepal: A Policy Discussion*. http://www.ncf.org.np/upload/files/490_en_health_policy_design_and_implementation_in_nepal_by_narendra_raj_poudel.pdf, accessed February 5, 2012.

lack of policy coordination; inadequate focus on priority issues; political instability; corruption; misuse of policies by political leaders to win voter interest; and frequent changes in senior staff with the changes of the government.⁷¹

3.2 Youth as a Category

Prior to the formulation of the National Youth Policy 2010, the age group of youth in Nepal was not legally defined, and often varied from circumstance to circumstance. Though there may not have been a set definition and age range for youth, the laws of the country did often categorize the population by age. For example, per Nepal's legal regimes, a girl and a boy can marry with parental consent once they have reached the age of 18. If they fail to gain parental consent, however, the boy and girl may then only marry after they reach age 20. With respect to the adolescent population, no explicit rules were formulated; however, per the National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy program undertaken by the government in 2000, adolescents were categorized as comprising the age group of 10 to 19 years. Likewise, the age definition of a child in the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act is a person who is younger than 16 years of age. This Act further classifies its regulations by age in stating that children who have not yet reached 14 years of age cannot be engaged in work as a laborer. The Labor Act of Nepal also creates a distinction between who is considered a "minor" and an "adult." According to the provisions in the act, "minor" refers to a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has yet reached 18 years of age. An "adult," according to the Labor Act, refers to a person who is 18 years or older. The Constitution in Nepal grants voting rights to Nepali citizens of 18 years of age, and any person who wants to stand as a candidate for political office, whether male or female, needs to be at least 25 years of age. During the team's field visit, the interviewees generally did not have any strong opinions about these age classifications for minors, adults, and adolescents, though some youth did object to the voting age for candi-

71. *Nepal: The Asta-Ja Policy Framework for Sustainable Development.* <http://www.telegraphnepal.com/views/2010-07-14/nepal:-the-asta-ja-policy-framework-for-sustainable-development>, accessed February 5, 2012.

dacy in election. These youth maintained that since, in Nepal, individuals had the right to acquire citizenship certificate at the age of 16, then voting rights should be given at age 16 as well. This reservation was consonant with the debate that had occurred between the major political parties of Nepal when the Maoist Party came surfaced after the successful political change of 2006–07. Some youth also argued that since one could decide to marry at the age of 20, the minimum age to stand for election according to the current law was quite high. They suggested that the threshold should be 20 years of age since marriage in itself is a major decision; thus, if a person is capable of making such a major decision, he or she should also be allowed to stand for election at age 20. Among existing policies, the age of youth is currently only explicitly defined in the National Youth Policy 2010.

Although Nepal came up with a National Youth Policy in 2010, youth as a category was first spelled out in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975–80) of Nepal.⁷² This Fifth Five Year Plan—drawn up by the National Planning Commission (NPC)⁷³—acknowledged that youth and sports were intrinsically linked, and addressed the establishment of region-specific National Sports Councils in three development regions of Nepal.⁷⁴ However, until the Fifth Five Year Plan’s acknowledgement of youth as a group of interest, prior policy emphasis had been placed on building infrastructures as a prerequisite for “development.” Similarly, the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980–85), Seventh Five Year Plan (1985–90), and Eighth Five Year Plan (1990–95) also carried out different mandates related to youth, including literacy, youth leadership trainings, income-generating programs, temporary family planning services, public health, sanitation activities, and re-forestation programs. The Youth Welfare Fund was set up during the Sixth Five Year Plan and was continued in the Seventh Five Year Plan. The main idea behind establishing a Youth Welfare Fund was to support the interests of the youth social

72. Interview with Badri Nath Koirala, Undersecretary of the National Planning Commission.

73. NPC is the advisory body for formulating development plans and policies for the country. Nepal has embarked on Five Year Plans since 1956.

74. Nepal is currently divided into five development regions that have been demarcated geographically.

workers in cases of unforeseen circumstances and to provide financial assistance to social welfare works.⁷⁵

The overall thrust of the Ninth (1997–2002) and Tenth Five Year plans (2002–07) were on poverty alleviation, and the Ninth Five Year Plan mentioned that a nation’s development, national priorities, resources, and means should all be channeled to the development, progress, and mobilization of youth. In the Ninth Five Year Plan, text in the section on Youth and Sports stated that in Nepal, youth between the ages of 15 to 29 years made up approximately 27 percent of the country’s total population. Youth makes up a significant portion of the population; hence they are being mobilized effectively in social development, community progress, rural development, or, on the whole, the nation’s socioeconomic development.⁷⁶ The Ninth Five Year Plan envisaged the existing challenges to youth development as being mostly related to education, culture, employment, health, sports, crime, and drug addiction. As such, the Ninth Plan’s objective was to move youth to the fullest extent into the national mainstream by mobilizing them in the socioeconomic development of the nation.⁷⁷ In this regard, different programs, such as youth mobilization for rural development, establishment of rural development centers, youth personality development, and youth self-employment, were proposed. The Ninth Plan also sought to establish coordination among agencies of the Government of Nepal for the involvement of youth in youth development programs and other sectoral programs such as population, environment, tourism, education, sports, health, local development, and women’s development. To promote youth employment, vocational education and training programs were also conducted.

Furthermore, the Ninth Plan put forward a special program on adolescents and youth in its population policy, citing the high number of adolescents and youth in Nepal. The Tenth Plan also focused on preparing youth to become capable citizens that could contribute to the advancement of the country and to fight poverty, “backwardness,” and distortions. Credit programs specifically targeted to unemployed rural youth that received skill-oriented training were also envisaged in the Tenth Plan. In addition,

⁷⁵ *Sixth and Seventh Five Year plans.*

⁷⁶ *Ninth Five Year Plan.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

the government had plans to provide loans to economically disadvantaged and remote-area youths aspiring to seek foreign employment. However, the Tenth Plan ended prematurely because of the country's popular movement of 2006, which culminated in converting Nepal into a republic after the Constituent Assembly, formed in 2008, voted overwhelmingly to abolish the monarchy.

3.3 Youth Provisions in New Draft Constitution, Interim Constitution, and Three Year Interim Plan

Specific youth provisions can be found in the new draft Constitution, which was prepared by the Fundamental Rights Committee of the Constituent Assembly. For example, Article 27(1) in the fundamental rights chapter of the draft, prepared by the Fundamental Rights Committee, states that “every youth shall have the right to special privileges in sectors like education, health, employment, to personality development, and to proper opportunities for contributing toward the all-round development of the State.” Similarly, the chapter on the directive principle of state policy outlines that the state will take a policy measure “to provision for a proper policy and structure for youth mobilization and participation while making necessary investments in the all-around development of the youths in tandem with family and society, enhancing youth participation in national development, and creating an environment conducive to full use of political, economic, social, and cultural rights.”

As part of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, which was prepared in 2007 after the popular movement, Article 35(20) requires the government to “pursue a special policy of mobilizing the youthful human resources for the development of the country.” The drafters of the Interim Constitution were driven to insert this clause because of the contributions made by youth in all major political movements and struggles for democracy in Nepal. Thus, there was an increasing impetus to formulate policies related to youth at the time. The Three Year Interim Plan also addresses youth in a number of different areas. For the first time, this periodic plan in Nepal devoted a separate section to youth that specifically addressed youth issues—employment in particular. The long-term vision for youth development in this plan is “to make youth major partners in nation building by emphasizing their role in

the social, cultural, and economic development of the nation and establishment of sustainable peace.”⁷⁸ As stated by this Interim Plan, its main objective for youth is to make them active participants in the reconstruction and social and economic transformation of the nation by providing all Nepali youths with opportunities to develop their full potential.

At the time of writing, the Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/14) had been officially endorsed, and included a chapter that focuses on youth and development. However, the current plans and programs being designed by all line ministries are still based on the previous Three Year Interim Plan (2008–10) since this more recent Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/14) was only officially endorsed in June 2011.

3.4 National Youth Policy: Genesis

A cursory review of past plans and policies adopted by the Government of Nepal indicates that identifying youth as a category has been done for the last 36 years. However, though youth might be mentioned in these plans and policies, no clear declaration was ever made to define a clear age span for youth. Successive programs in education, training, rural development, health, family planning, and other such programs also included a youth category, but similarly, these programs did not work with a clearly defined age cohort because there was no definition of youth in existence. Although the age category was mentioned in the Ninth Five Year Plan, this was done for the purpose of the USAID-funded National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000, rather than to categorize the age cohort that makes up youth. And though having policy with an exclusive focus on youth in Nepal was a long-standing issue voiced by both youth NGO activists⁷⁹ and

78. *Three Year Interim Plan 2008–2010.*

79. NGO activists are those youths who are affiliated with NGOs. Most of these NGOs operate with donor money and, as a result, also need to abide by the interests of the donors in areas where they intend to provide grants. However, youths affiliated with sister organizations of various political parties get no funding from international donors and, thus, work according to the directives of their affiliated party. Although both the activists from NGOs and the youths affiliated with political parties are committed to changing the balance of power in the society, in the report, political youth means those youths who are members of sister organizations of various political parties.

youths in youth political organizations,⁸⁰ it was not until 2010 that the National Youth Policy was created to accommodate and address the interests of the youth within the country.

In the case of the National Youth Policy, youth NGO activists and youth affiliated with political organizations indicated that they were primary stakeholders in prioritizing the need for a youth policy, as well as setting the agenda for this to take place. Even though it was only recently created, youth policy has, in fact, been a long-standing issue that was previously voiced by youth-centric NGOs and youth NGO activists. These NGOs are often funded by different international donors who pushed for this agenda after the proliferation of NGOs post-1990. The NYP has also been influenced by UN General Assembly Resolution on World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY).⁸¹ Although the NYP was largely influenced by donor initiatives through partners working in Nepal and by WPAY, the National Youth Policy 2010 also acknowledges youth's contribution in the policy process, and states that "the youth have rendered an outstanding contribution to every political change, founding of democracy and other social movements in Nepal."⁸² In addition, the National Youth Policy 2010 recognizes that youth are an important human resource of the nation, indicating that national youth policy must be intensified in order to encourage involvement of youth in nation building, and develop their capacity in all spheres of life.

The formulation of the National Youth Policy 2010 gained momentum after the 2006 political change took place in Nepal. This movement for political change saw a huge participation of youth from all spheres of life. Before the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2006 was established, youth and sports issues were previously relegated to the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Social Welfare. However, this relegation of youth and sports issues to the Ministry of Education did not produce favorable outcomes for either of these issues in Nepal. Amidst the growing concern about the lack of sports development, and the lobbying from Nepali youth, a separate Ministry of Youth and Sports was finally established in August of 2006 after

80. Interview with AYON and Kalyan Gurung.

81. Interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

82. *National Youth Policy 2010*.

the political change in that year. Additionally, the Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), an umbrella organization representing 73 youth organizations of Nepal, had also been lobbying since its inception in 2005 for a separate youth policy in Nepal.⁸³

Thus, the National Youth Policy 2010 was formulated with the participation of various representative groups of youth, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports taking the role of coordinator.⁸⁴ The committee to draft the youth policy consisted of a 23-member taskforce of youth representing the youth organizations of Nepal, various political youth outfits in Nepal, youth Constituent Assembly members, and representatives from the government. After the draft was prepared, youth from various political organizations took on the task of bringing this draft to the five development regions⁸⁵ of Nepal for consultation, while youth from nonprofit organizations documented the process. The policy was finally adopted and released by decision from the Council of Ministers and the Government of Nepal on February 23, 2010. This policy currently remains under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

3.5 Youth in the National Youth Policy 2010

In the National Youth Policy 2010, youth have been categorized as those between the ages of 16 to 40 years, which roughly equals 42 percent of the total population.⁸⁶ Furthermore, this category of youth incorporates not only males and females but is also inclusive of the “third gender.” Youth in the youth policy have also been divided into six categories based on their various distinctions. These categories include:

1. Priority Group—women, indigenous nationalities, *Dalit*, *Madhesi*, or youth living in undeveloped regions

83. Interview with Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON).

84. Interview with Badri Nath Koirala NPC.

85. Nepal is currently divided geographically into five development regions: Far Western, Midwestern, Western, Central, and Eastern.

86. *Nepal Census Report 2011*.

2. Special Priority Group—youths who are victims of conflict, vulnerable, disabled, or members of marginalized minority groups
3. Youth Victims of Conflict—youth who belong to those victim families who have died, who have been disabled, and who have been displaced because of the 11-year armed conflict
4. Vulnerable Youth—youth who are infected with HIV/AIDS, who are narcotic drug users, who are involved in the sex trade, youths living in the streets, youth who belong to bonded-labor families, and youth who are involved in foreign employment in countries of unsafe destination
5. Youth with Disabilities—youth with all kinds of physical and mental disabilities
6. Youth of Marginalized Minority Groups—youth who are deprived of state and non-state services and facilities, who are marginalized, and other youths who remain out of the mainstream of national development because of geographical remoteness or because of ethnicity, language, culture, region, class, and gender

This youth policy with its categorization of “youth” incorporates all the key contextual domains of the country. The policy also incorporates the social, political, cultural, and economic costs that youth in this country bore as a result of the Maoist conflict in which the country was embroiled for 11 years. The youth policy has also taken into account the aspirations of sexual minorities, which has gained currency in the social discourse of Nepal. By categorizing the youth according to various labels, the policy has encompassed the diversity among youth. Thus, the policy from the youth lens has incorporated the post-conflict situation of Nepal, cross-cultural, regional, and social variations, and has included the country’s physically challenged youth as well as vulnerable youth groups.

3.6 National Youth Policy 2010: Issues of Contention

Even among those working on issues of youth, there is currently no uniform age definition for youth. The same is true for Nepal’s South Asian neighboring countries, where youth policies have varying age definitions of youth. For instance, Bhutan classifies its youth population as falling within the

age range of 13 to 24 years of age, India considers the youth to be 13 to 35 years, and Bangladesh classifies the age group as 18 to 35 years. Even within Nepal, though the National Youth Policy 2010 considers youth to be 16 to 40 years of age, the working definition of youth among youth stakeholders in Nepal remains fluid. The Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON) considers youth as those aged between 16 and 35 years, while other organizations, including Youth Action Nepal, prefer to limit youth to those in between 15 and 29 years. The Three Year Interim Plan of Nepal has also chosen to categorize youth as belonging to the age group of 15 to 29 years.⁸⁷ These differences in age range categorizing youth were also apparent in the districts where the field work was done. Those who were cognizant of the youth policy in the district had variations in their opinions about the youth age cohort. For instance, youths affiliated with an NGO in Dhading stated that the 16 to 40 age group needed further classification, breaking it into “prime youth” and “adult youth.” This age cohort division into distinct categories was also noted in Ilam; however, discussions with youths in Jhapa found that the upper limit of 40 years was at the higher range of the youth category. In Achaam and Dhangadi, the youths were satisfied with the age cohort that defined them, but also stated that the definition of youth is psychological. Obviously, variations exist among different sets of people regarding which age cohort should be used to classify individuals as youth.

Although the National Youth Policy 2010 clearly defined the age group of youth, many youth representing various youth-specific NGOs are hesitant to define what constitutes the age range of youth. In contrast, many youth leaders of various political youth organizations deem this age definition as proper.⁸⁸ Youth NGO activists, who were part of the task force formulating the youth policy, argue, however, that the whole issue of age cohort was hijacked by political youth leaders, who made up the majority in the taskforce.⁸⁹ The political youth leaders disagree and contend that the social and cultural context is different in Nepal compared with Western countries. They argue that Nepal lags behind both physically and intellectually because the country cannot afford to provide the access to services

87. *Three Year Interim Plan.*

88. Interview with AYON, Kalyan Gurung, and Ram Kumari Jhakri.

89. Interview with AYON.

and nutrition present in Western countries, and that the population in Nepal also generally has longer periods of dependency on their parents.⁹⁰ And although the various understandings of youth can be attributed to the lack of a clear global youth definition, this refrain of the political youth leaders reflects the bottleneck that they face in the broader political stage. Since the majority of senior leaders occupy the rank and file of the political parties, political youth leaders often hold very little chance of making it to the higher echelons of their parties. Thus, if these political youth leaders were no longer considered as “youth” due to their age, they would be forced to join the mainstream of their parties and lose their current status as “youth” leaders. This tension has been reflected within the National Youth Policy as tightening the age range and would leave political youth leaders without the much-needed space that this policy offers for their visibility.

Another reservation about the National Youth Policy is about the policy itself. Youth activists’ common criticism toward the document is that it presents only generalized concepts.⁹¹ While this may be true, youth leaders associated with various political parties point out that the National Youth Policy still serves as a foundation that has established youth as a separate target group, and has recognized youth as having unique needs that must be addressed.⁹² The lack of programs to give direction to the National Youth Policy can be traced to the inaction on the part of the ministries concerned and the government. Even nearly two years after its formulation, the strategy paper worked out by the Ministry of Youth and Sports has not been endorsed by the ministerial cabinet meeting. The youth strategy paper spells out the provisions of how to implement the National Youth Policy, with both short-term (three years) and long-term (five years or more) targets for implementation. The paper also outlines the timeline and budget required for implementation of the National Youth Policy.⁹³

Additionally, youth NGO activists and political youth leaders also differ in their concerns about the institutional arrangement for the policy’s implementation. The policy explicitly states that an autonomous and executive

90. Interview with Kalyan Gurung.

91. Interview with AYON.

92. Interview with Ram Kumari Jhakri and AYON.

93. Interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

national youth council would be formed by a separate act to implement the policy.⁹⁴ In theory, this council would be formed on the basis of proportionally inclusive representation, which means that it would include women and assure representation of all diverse youth groups in the nominated body. NGO youth activists, however, argue that the youth policy also clearly mentions that it will be implemented through the political youth parties, which do not have inclusive representation. Therefore, participation would include only of political youth and would disregard other groups of the youth. Youth who are not involved in political parties would, therefore, likely have no chance to participate.⁹⁵ Given these competing interests, youth leaders of political wings insist that the youth council will provide direction to the National Youth Policy.⁹⁶

Although it has long been argued that youth issues are a priority issue, NGO activists allege that the ministries are making very little effort to collaborate and cooperate on facilitating them. The policy, unfortunately, does not address the collaboration that will be needed to enforce the policy-related activities.⁹⁷ At present, the Ministry of Youth and Sports handles all issues of youth. However, an example of this lack of coordination can be seen as the Ministry of Finance does not currently coordinate with Ministry of Youth and Sports when formulating programs and appropriating budget.⁹⁸ One concerned official at the Ministry of Youth conceded that they face numerous challenges in implementing the National Youth Policy and harmonizing it with other ministries. The challenges, according to the official, are that the problems of youth have not been brought to the forefront until now. Because youth problems are kept at a low priority, there is a shortage of manpower to raise awareness.⁹⁹ In theory, provisions exist for youth focal points in 17 ministries. There is certainly the need for these ministries to coordinate with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in regard to programming for youth. In addition, these ministries have also been tasked

94. *National Youth Policy 2010.*

95. Interview with AYON.

96. Interview with Kalyan Gurung.

97. Interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

with keeping an eye on the budget. Nevertheless, this system is not functioning properly. One of the reasons stated for lack of coordination is that there are no additional monetary incentives for those ministers or officials charged with the youth brief to add these responsibilities and roles to their current workload. As a result, many see this coordination on youth issues as an added burden, and little incentive exists for those in other ministries to include youth issues on their agenda.¹⁰⁰

3.7 National Youth Policy 2010: Realities from the Field

Field research from this study revealed vast differences in overall knowledge of the National Youth Policy 2010 between the capital city and the other districts. In Kathmandu, youth affiliated with political parties, youth activists, and those working with youth were generally aware of the National Youth Policy 2010; however, interviews and focus group discussions conducted in other districts of Nepal indicated a general lack of knowledge surrounding the NYP 2010, even among youth and youth organizations. Additionally, the committee that drafted the NYP 2010 claimed that consultations with youth and all relevant stakeholders were carried out in all five development regions. However, the research team's discussions with youth and stakeholders in the districts reveal that these "consultations" were not as broad-based as represented by the committee. Most youth and even youth organizations that the team spoke with were completely unaware of any such consultations having taken place in their districts. This information reveals that these consultations were not very inclusive of all youth, and that there is a high likelihood that they failed to reach the various categories youth, particularly those youth who were not affiliated with NGOs and political parties.

Surprisingly, the majority of the district government officials outside of Kathmandu were unaware of the National Youth Policy. For example, some of those affiliated with the District Administration Office, the District Health Office, and even the District Sports Office were unaware of the National Youth Policy. Likewise, focus group discussions carried out with youth working in media and other general youth in locations such as Dhading

100. Interview with Badri Nath Koirala.

revealed that they had only vaguely heard about the policy, but had no other knowledge about it. This was also the case in Palpa, where focus group participants indicated knowledge that the policy existed, but did not know any details beyond that.

In Nepalgunj, focus group discussions indicated that participants were unaware of the National Youth Policy 2010 at all. Youth groups that participated in these discussions included female youth, *Dalit* groups, and *Jana-jati* groups. Information solicited from Jhapa indicated that groups affiliated with NGOs, youth belonging to youth political parties, and *Dalit* youth occasionally had knowledge of the policy, but youth representing youth conflict widows, those female youth between the ages 18 and 40 who lost their husbands during the conflict, and other female youth had never heard about the policy. Similarly, discussion with an indigenous youth group in Rupandehi and a youth group in Surkhet revealed that these groups had heard about the policy, but did not know about the policy's provisions. In Lahan (Siraha), discussions with youth groups also revealed that they knew nothing about the NYP 2010.

Similar results were found in Ilam and Achaam. Youth focus group discussions in Ilam demonstrated youth only had superficial awareness of the policy. In Achaam, however, there was even less awareness in the groups, and one out of nine youths in the focus group had not heard anything about a youth policy. Government officials in Achaam, as well as youth affiliated with political groups and media in Dhangadi, both revealed they knew of the National Youth, but had never read the document or knew anything about the policy's details. When the team asked youth about their interest in learning more about the National Youth Policy, they received various conflicting reactions. Some of the youth expressed positive interest in learning more, and mentioned that they would love to become more involved if they had more access to information. However, other youth expressed apathy, indicating that there was no point in learning more about these policies until the new Constitution was finally established and the country was more stable and out of transition. They felt that the country was in such political transition, it was difficult to know whether any promises made on this policy would carry through past this political transition time. Additionally, youth also shared their perception that, often, promises made in policies do not trickle down to districts outside of Kathmandu, and thus have little

impact on programming in their districts. Because of these realities, they felt that there was little point in learning more about any policies made in Kathmandu, since such policies would not impact them anyway.

Youth in the capital city of Kathmandu showed significantly higher levels of awareness on the National Youth Policy than youth in the other field districts in Nepal that were visited. They were generally much more knowledgeable about the policy; many of the more educated youth could even articulate their personal opinions about it. In addition, stakeholders were also much more aware of the policy, and many had even personally participated in consultation, drafting, or advocacy related to the National Youth Policy. Through this field research, it was thus apparent that while those in Kathmandu are likely more informed about the National Youth Policy, information regarding this policy has not yet been widely disseminated in all parts of the country. Field consultations carried out during the drafting of the policy only included a certain set of youth, such as NGO activists and youth wings of the political parties. Consequently, the involvement and participation of youth in the drafting of this policy was not broad based and inclusive of all youth.

3.8 Visibility of Youth in Society

Historically, Nepali college and university students have been at the forefront of all the democratization processes of Nepal. For example, during 1950, students were at the forefront to end the Rana Regime. Even the party-less Panchayat system that lasted for 30 years in Nepal was given a serious jolt by the university and college students in 1979. At that time, the monarch of Nepal had to call for a referendum on the existing system because of the student movement. College and university students have always taken over spearheading the movement for change—whether it was in the 1990 movement, which marked the end of 30 years of the Panchayat system, or the April 2006 movement that brought an end to the 238-year-old monarchy. Through all the significant changes in Nepal, the university and college students, mainly the youth, very often provided the impetus.

In recognizing these contributions of youth, the National Youth Policy 2010 highlights that youth are pioneers of economic, social, political, and

cultural transformation, as well as a driving force for change.¹⁰¹ Owing to Nepalese youth's history of participating in their country's political changes, the visibility of youth can clearly be seen. The high participation of youth in different political youth organizations was evident in the districts in which this policy review was conducted.

However, with the reinstatement of multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal witnessed a proliferation of nongovernmental organizations. Many of the youth of Nepal are now a part of these youth-led NGOs that have their own offices not only in the capital but also in the far-flung districts of Nepal. Post-1990, it can be argued that youth now have a significant presence in the nongovernment sectors that have been successful in establishing networks with youth representing different sociopolitical and geographic groups. Another arena where youth are engaged is in sports. Various plans and policies of Nepal, including the Five Year plans, have sought not only to engage youth in sports but also to promote sports as an area wherein youth can participate for their overall development.¹⁰²

For more than a decade, Nepal was embroiled in a protracted internal conflict, with warring sides being the state and the political group commonly known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Without doubt, the overwhelming majority of Maoist combatants were youth. This high number of youth is consistent with a well-established phenomenon that links internal conflict with a "youth bulge." What is also notable in Nepal is that the majority of those who have immigrated to other countries—mostly to Gulf countries and to India—to work are from the youth cohort.¹⁰³ There is no systematic documentation of people leaving to go to India for work because of the open border that Nepal shares with India, and seasonal migration to India has been a historical process. Immigration increased greatly during the conflict period, particularly among Nepal's youth population, who also often faced problems of unemployment. Additionally, the youth are still the activists who remain at the forefront of the conflicts and violence that have

101. *National Youth Policy 2010.*

102. *Fifth Five Year Plan.*

103. According to the National Population and Housing Census 2011, the "total number of absent population is found to be 1,921,494 against 762,181 in 2001. The highest proportion (44.81 percent) of absent population is from the age group 15 to 24 years."

been taking place in various parts of Nepal. For example, the post-conflict period in Nepal has been characterized by the emergence of armed outfits in the Terai region, where they have been carrying out intimidation, extortion, kidnapping, and killing. What is significant about such groups is that the majority of them are comprised of youth. And, despite youth immigrating to other countries for work, youth still remain the greatest percentage of the population in Nepal.

Nepal Census Report 2011 shows that the population between the ages of 16 and 40 is approximately 42 per cent of the total population, an increase from 38.8 percent since the earlier census of 2001. The recent census clearly confirms the demographic position and current existence of the youth bulge in Nepal will remain for the next few decades as the population of age groups between 10 and 14 is 13.12 per cent and between 5 and 9 years is 12.10 percent.¹⁰⁴

The growing youth bulge is the result of changing fertility and mortality standards of the country over time.¹⁰⁵ Further validation of the youth bulge from the recent census report is seen in social indicators such as the decrease in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and an increase of Total Fertility Rate (TFR).¹⁰⁶

Table 2 Social Indicators¹⁰⁷

Indicator	Year	Result	Year	Result
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	1990–91	97/1000	2006	48/1000
Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)	1996	539/100 thousand	2010/11	281/100 thousand
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	1996	4.6	2010/11	3.4
Average Life span			2008	64.1

104. See Kanchan Kharel, *Current Youth Bulge in Nepal: Demographic Bonus or Challenge*. <http://kharelkanchan.blogspot.com/2012/12/current-youth-bulge-in-nepal.html>.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

Youth bulge can both be a challenge and opportunity, but in a country less developed because of fewer capital resources, a rigid and monopolistic social structure, and limited educational facilities, an overwhelming majority of human talent remains unrecognized and goes to waste.¹⁰⁸ In the context of a growing youth population the government has to be sensitive to the need to educate and employ the youth, as the youth bulge is often associated with an increased risk of political violence.¹⁰⁹ The Youth Policy Formulation Manual, United Nations, 1999¹¹⁰ states that one of the reasons for the Maoist conflict and political violence occurring in Nepal is the country's larger demography of youth.¹¹¹ There is strong likelihood that youth conflict will rise in the future because of the failure of the constitutional process in Nepal and the strong political indoctrination of youth in some of the political parties. Hence it is imperative for the government to pay attention to these issues.

Various differing perceptions toward youth were found among youth stakeholders. The large pool of youth available in the country and level of education and consciousness that is rising are positive signs. Youth bulge can offer potential demographic dividend. The stakeholders from the government consider youth to be the harbingers of change and most of them view youth in a positive manner. This stance has been reflected in the National Youth Policy 2010. However, these stakeholders also add that youth in Nepal are ideologically divided, and sometimes youth are the ones who act violently. This observation arises from the violent activities that the politically affiliated youth carry out in times of protest. Nevertheless, stakeholders still agree that youth remain an untapped resource that could be harnessed for the betterment of the country.

108. Weeks J R and Fugate D L (eds). *The Youth Bulge: Challenge or Opportunity* (New York: Idebate Press: 2012).

109. Urdal, Henrik. *A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence*. Population Division, Expert Paper No. 2012/1. (New York, UNDESA: 2012).

110. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Youth Policy Formulation Manual*, New York: UN, 1999. http://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/1999_Youth_Policy_Formulation_Manual_Eng.pdf

111. CD Bhatta, *Youth Bulge*, <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/04/05/oped/youth-bulge/220267.html>. Also see Ryan Bennett, Sameer Karki, and Nitu Nepal, *Youth and Peace Building in Nepal*, http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/NEP_CA_Jan12_Youth%20and%20Peacebuilding.pdf.

Stakeholders from I/NGOs and NGOs shared that, within communities, perceptions toward youth were often divided. On one hand, youth who were employed, or actively involved in community programs and other constructive activities, were often viewed positively by their communities. These youth were regarded as having the potential to effect great change for the communities. However, a large number of youth in communities were often unemployed and idle, with their idleness sometimes leading to violence or drug use. These unemployed youth were often looked upon as lazy and as financial burdens to their families and to the society at large.

The youth themselves, and particularly the NGO youth, stressed that, overall, they do have a sense of unity. They also have a positive image of themselves, often regarding themselves at the forefront of change in Nepal. This view was true of youth in all districts where field work was carried out. The youth also stated that they felt they were an asset to the country, but that their potential had yet to be recognized by the state, and that their energy needed to be harnessed appropriately. Although youth made positive assertions about themselves, they also acknowledged that many of the youth in Nepal were engaged in crimes and drugs. Additionally, because of the lack of opportunities for gainful employment, youth felt that they were often misused by political parties, who direct them conduct violent activities.

There was also a marked contrast between how youth in general viewed urban and rural youth. For example, rural youth indicated that one difference between urban and rural youth was that urban youth were generally more up-to-date with information, more knowledgeable, and more able to access opportunities than rural youth. These youth stated that since they came from Nepal's rural areas, they did not enjoy the same facilities in terms of education, communication, leisure, and access to information as their urban counterparts.

3.9 Rights and Responsibilities Addressed by Policies

The Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), Pathways to Peace Campaign, Youth Action Nepal, Youth Initiative, and Search for Common Ground—nongovernmental organizations with a youth focus—have identi-

fied four policies as pertaining to youth: the National Youth Policy 2010, National Youth Employment Work Plan 2010–17, National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000, and Three Year Interim Plan (2008–10).¹¹² Even though these NGOs have named the National Youth Employment Work Plan 2010–17 as a policy focusing on youth, this plan has been awaiting government approval for the last year. And, though the National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000, put forward by the Ministry of Health, was also suggested as a youth policy, in reality, it is more of a program than a policy.

Adhering to the spirit of the Three Year Interim Plan, the National Planning Commission, with assistance from the International Labor Organization (ILO), developed a National Action Plan for Youth Employment Nepal covering the period from 2010 to 2017. This plan presents rather ambitious goals, such as increasing the number of vocational training programs for youth by 50 percent and creating at least 185,000 productive employment opportunities every year. Not surprisingly, an estimated budget of slightly more than NRs. 14 billion would be needed to implement these proposals.¹¹³ Currently, none of the several proposed activities has been started, although the kick-off was envisaged for 2010. This particular program was also not mentioned by anyone in the districts where fieldwork was carried out. It seemed that only youth who were affiliated with NGOs in Kathmandu knew about this program.

The Technical Educational and Vocational Training (TEVT) Skills Development Policy 2007 was formed to address those youth who have neither been to school nor have had an opportunity to obtain a technical education or vocational training. This policy strove to address the problems of underemployment and unemployment of youth. Recognizing this need, the government has opened up technical schools in many districts of Nepal. However, in Achaam, one of the field sites for this research, the government has yet to open a center. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction post-2007 has also created a platform for community youth through local peace

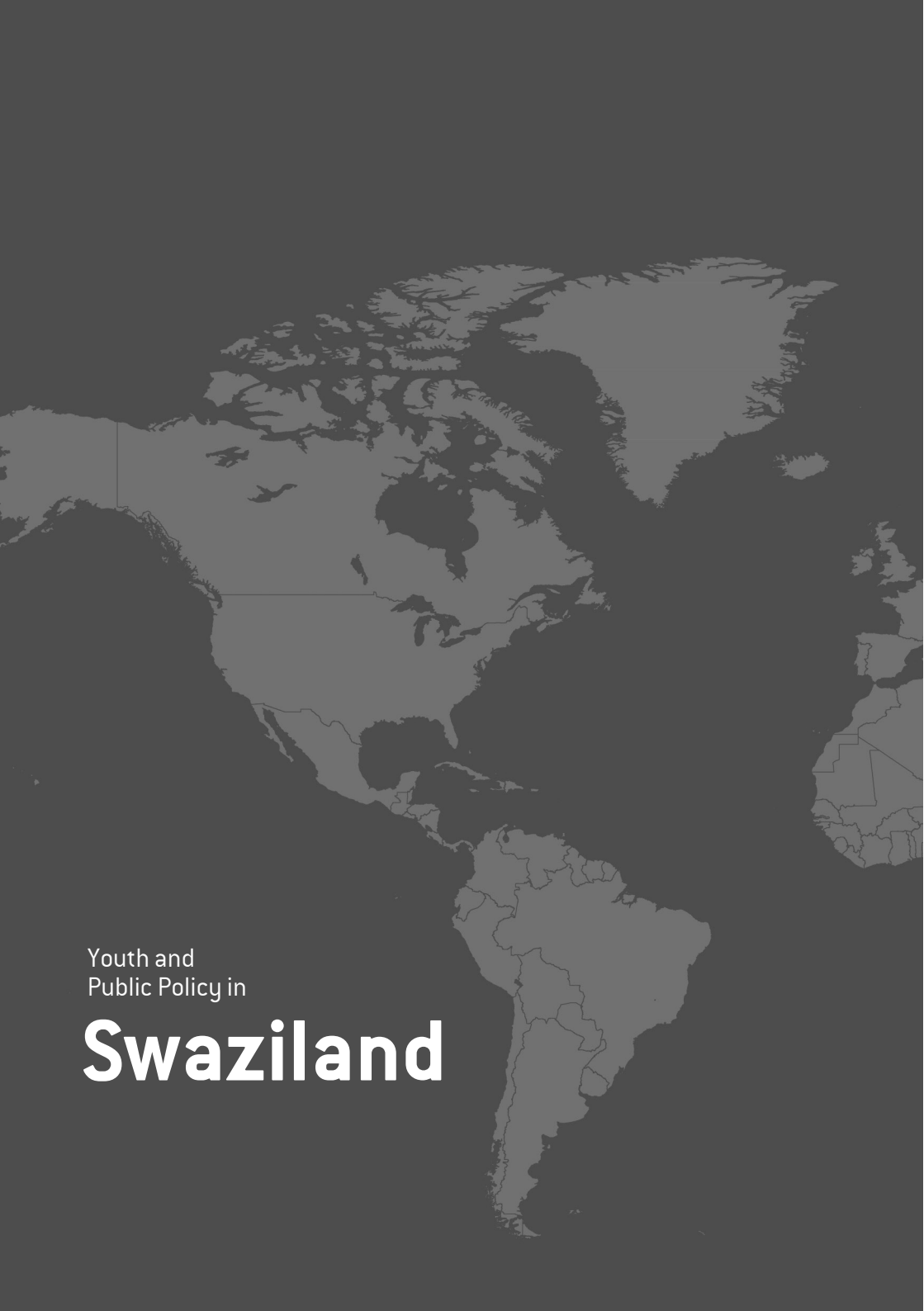
112. *The Charter of Nepalese Youth, 2010.*

113. National Planning Commission, *National Action Plan for Youth Employment Nepal (2008 to 2015)* (Kathmandu: National Planning Commission), Annex I: Logical Framework.

committees to encourage youth to engage in community-level peace-building activities. However, these activities are considered to be programs, not policies. Apart from the National Youth Policy 2010 and TEVT Skills Development Policy 2007, the main policies that reference youth are the Non-Formal Education Policy 2006 and Labor and Employment Policy 1999. The Non-Formal Education (NFE) Policy 2006 came about as an expansion of education to provide academic and practical knowledge, skills, and information to different ages and levels of learners. According to the NFE policy, the goal is to make adults, women, and youth literate. This policy also envisions the development of community learning centers, where youth will be tutored on adult life skills. The Labor and Employment Policy, on the other hand, has tried to address the issues of youth mainly in terms of enhancing their employability. For instance, the policy envisages launching a micro-credit program for generating employment of youth, providing youth with vocational training programs, and developing entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. However, the Labor and Employment Policy 1999 fails to address the issue of emigration of youths for employment. In practice, both of these policies have also yet to be implemented in the form of programs in all of Nepal's districts. TEVT is a move in the right direction, along with the NFE programs. However, TEVT centers are currently not in all districts of Nepal. And, even when they are in the districts, such centers are only in the district headquarters or are concentrated in urban areas, where youth from rural areas do not have access. The same is the case with NFE centers, and for NFE centers, many youth are often unaware of such programs in their area. This points to the lack of information dissemination as well as to the structural deficiency in the government system of not having an institutionalized practice of disseminating information about programs.

Currently, only the National Youth Policy has an exclusive focus on youth of Nepal. In theory, the National Youth Policy 2010 is much more than a policy document. It also serves as a charter on the human rights of youth, since it goes beyond the bill of rights enshrined in the Interim Constitution of Nepal by emphasizing the rights of youth more concretely. The NYP also has put in place institutional arrangements consisting of both government and nongovernmental sectors. As part of the policy, an autonomous and executive national youth council would be formed by a separate act. Moreover, youth organizations, national and international nongovernmental

organizations, and private sector, civil society, and local bodies would be encouraged and then mobilized for the operation of programs relating to youth. However, this act has yet to be considered and passed by the legislature. Thus, even though the working policies of the National Youth Policy 2010 have identified 17 areas that could benefit Nepal's youth, these working policies are currently bereft of any programs or action plans. The policies, as they now stand, are only on paper and not yet a reality.



Youth and
Public Policy in

Nepal

A grayscale world map serves as the background for the page. The map is centered on the Indian subcontinent, which is highlighted with a white outline. The rest of the world's landmasses are shown in a dark gray tone, with country borders indicated by thin white lines. The text 'Policy Realities' is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the map.

Policy Realities

4

4.1 Existence of Policies

Policy documents that directly or indirectly affect young people exist concomitantly and at various ministries and levels of the government. Two types of policies concerning youth currently exist: categorical and inter-sectoral.

Categorical

Categorical policies include the national policy framework as well as the government programs that directly identify young people as a separate constituency and outline provisions impacting youth. These policies include:¹¹⁴

- » National Youth Policy 2010
- » National Plan of Action for Youth Employment Nepal (2010–17)
- » The Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/14)
- » National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000
- » Youth Partnership Program 2008
- » Youth and Small Enterprises Self-employment Fund 2008
- » Provisions in the draft of the new Constitution

National Youth Policy 2010

Although the National Youth Policy was explained in previous chapters, this chapter will explore this policy and how it came into existence in even further detail. To begin, it was initially argued that a single ministry having the authority over three different and unrelated areas—education, youth, and sports—was incapable of appropriately dealing with youth issues. Accordingly, education was separated from youth and sports and a new ministry, Ministry of Youth and Sports, was established. The NYP was adopted and released by a decision of Council of Ministers, Government of Nepal, on February 23, 2010, and is currently under the aegis and implementation of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (see Chapter 3 for details).

114. *The Charter of Nepalese Youth, 2010.*

Long-term Vision and Goals

The long-term vision of the National Youth Policy is to prepare capable, entrepreneurial, creative, competent, and prosperous youth to have a scientific and positive vision by guaranteeing their fundamental rights, considering the sensitivities of youth, empowering them, and instilling in them leadership capability so that they can meaningfully contribute to the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of the nation.¹¹⁵

The primary goal of the National Youth Policy is to mainstream youth in the nation's development through their meaningful participation and by increasing the competence and leadership skills needed for building a prosperous, modern, and just Nepal.

Aims

The youth policy specifies seven objectives. These objectives focus on the overall development of youth, duties, and responsibilities of youth toward the nation, ensuring the participation of youth in the policymaking and implementation processes.¹¹⁶ The objectives of the National Youth Policy are succinctly summarized by AYON as follows:¹¹⁷

- » **Empowerment:** To work for the all-around development of youth. To enhance capacities, entrepreneurial skills, and mental and physical development for youth, and to prepare them to acquire capacities to compete in the global market;
- » **Opportunity:** To create, provide, manage, and search for possible opportunities for youth employment;
- » **Impact:** To ensure opportunities for increased representation of youth in economic, social, political, and development processes.

¹¹⁵. *National Youth Policy*, para. 4(a).

¹¹⁶. Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal, "National Youth Policy: Issues and Concerns," *Youth for Peace* 12, 2009.

¹¹⁷. *The Charter of Nepalese Youth*, 2010.

As previously mentioned, the National Youth Policy is much more than a policy document and is, in fact, a charter of human rights for youth. Although the Interim Constitution has a chapter containing a bill of rights, the National Youth Policy moves a step further to emphasize the rights of youth more concretely. By emphasizing the right to life and the right not to be discriminated against, it states that “rights of youth to live with dignity in an environment free from fear and discrimination on the grounds of class, ethnicity, profession, language, religion, region, gender, and disability shall be ensured.” Further, for the realization of social and economic rights, the National Youth Policy calls for the launching of “coordinated” programs to establish “the rights to food, shelter, clothing, education, health, employment, and security of youth.” In addition to enjoying these rights, the youth can establish their rights by gaining access to opportunities available to them in the areas of education, health, family welfare, social security, and employment.¹¹⁸

National Plan of Action for Youth Employment Nepal 2010–17

Policymakers in Nepal have recognized the need for quick action in responding to the challenge of youth employment. A national employment strategy and an action program were seen as necessary for the execution of the government’s Three Year Plan. Accordingly, the National Planning Commission, with support from the International Labor Organization (ILO), drafted a National Plan of Action for Youth Employment 2010–17. Approval of this National Plan of Action, however, has been pending for more than a year.¹¹⁹ The National Plan of Action for Youth Employment is geared toward strengthening or developing real action on youth employment in accordance with the ILO’s integrated approach to youth employment. The National Plan of Action intends to provide a set of policy objectives that can contribute to the creation of decent jobs, thereby reducing unemployment, underemployment, and the numbers of young people living and working in poverty. It also intends to link youth employment to other national-level

118. Laxmi Gautam, “Rastriya Yuwa Niti ko Marma ra Bhawana,” *Yuwa Aawaaj*.

119. United Nations, *Nepal Peace and Development Strategy, 2010–2015*. See also National Planning Commission, *National Action Plan for Youth Employment—Nepal (2010–2017)* (Kathmandu: National Planning Commission). This is an unpublished report submitted by the Task Force for the Development of the National Action Plan, December 2009.

policy issues as well as demonstrate how youth is a priority issue that is integrated within all policies.¹²⁰

The action plan proposes a comprehensive set of activities and emphasizes employment-intensive growth; more intensive involvement of youth in national reconstruction; mobilization of youth in productive sectors; developing the spirit of voluntarism and social work; employment generation through large-scale infrastructure development projects; enhancement of livelihood skills; and promotion of self-employment, entrepreneurship, and small and medium enterprise partners.¹²¹

Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/14)

The Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/2014) was developed by the National Planning Commission following the expiration of Three Year Interim Plan (2008–10). It is the most recent plan for national development, and youth development has a separate chapter in this Three Year Plan. The objective of the Three Year Plan is to ensure participation and mainstreaming of youth in nation-building through youth development and youth involvement. Accordingly, the Three Year Plan prescribes four strategies and 14 working policies, including an increase in youth employment opportunities; youth participation in abolishing discriminatory social customs; social and economic empowerment of youth; administration of all scattered youth-related programs in a unified and planned manner; and execution of youth programs as defined by the National Youth Policy.

National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000

This policy document outlines the government of Nepal's aim in providing health and development services for the country's adolescents.¹²² The Department of Health Services Ministry of Health has been identified as the focal point for implementation and coordination of this policy. The goal of the strategy is to improve the health and socioeconomic status of adoles-

120. Employment Sector, Employment Working Paper No. 10, "School-to-work transition: Evidence from Nepal," (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 2008).

121. Pilot Country Youth Overviews: Uganda and Nepal, <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/78897819/uganda-nepal-youth-overviews>.

122. See *National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy*.

cents. Its main objectives are to increase access to information on adolescent health and development; provide opportunities to build skills among adolescents, service providers, and educators; increase accessibility and utilization of health and counseling services among adolescents; and promote a safe and supportive environment for adolescents to improve their legal, social, and economic status.

Youth Partnership Program 2008

The Youth Partnership Program (YPP) is implemented under a policy directive—Youth Partnership Program Operation Directive 2010— issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It is the first program launched by the Ministry of Youth and Sports that directly refers to the National Youth Policy.¹²³ The YPP reiterates that any program to be launched under this directive should consider the 27 working policies of the National Youth Policy. The main objective of YPP is to provide grants to youth and youth-led organizations or youth-focused groups for running programs in any of the 18 areas outlined in the directive, thus building the capacity of youth or youth groups for their own development.

Youth and Small Enterprises Self-employment Fund 2008

On February 5, 2009, the government of Nepal, through the Ministry of Finance, launched the Youth and Small Enterprises Self-employment Fund (YSESEF) program in order to provide self-employment opportunities to unemployed youth and to small businesspeople. The YSESEF program includes four steps:

1. Applying and registering at Chambers of Commerce and Industries (CCI),
2. Receiving orientation training on small business management and entrepreneurship provided by CCIs,
3. Obtaining loans up to 200,000 NRs through banks and financial agencies, and
4. Using loans to establish new or strengthen existing small-scale businesses.

123. *Youth Partnership Program Operation Directive, 2010*, Section 3.

The vision of this program is to develop the entrepreneurial skills of unemployed youth and small businesspeople in order to provide employment and achieve optimum utilization of productive labor and local resources; to alleviate rural poverty; to relieve rural unemployment; to minimize the increasing trend in rural-urban migration; and to contribute to the development of peace and the lessening of social injustice. To attain its vision, the government's strategy was to make use of banks and other financial institutions to provide short-term collateral-free loans of up to NRs 200,000 at low interest rates.¹²⁴

Provisions in the draft of the new Constitution

In the draft of the new Constitution prepared by the Fundamental Rights Committee of the Constituent Assembly, Article 27(1) in the fundamental rights chapter of the draft reads: "Every youth shall have the right to special privileges in sectors like education, health, employment, to personality development, and to proper opportunities for contributing toward the all-round development of the State" (See Chapter 3).

Intersectoral

These are policy initiatives within other policy arenas, and programs of governments and I/NGOs that affect young people.

National Planning Commission¹²⁵

The National Planning Commission has been providing opportunities to new graduates of different universities in Nepal through the National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS) program. The provision is set to support the poverty alleviation program as outlined in the Ninth Five Year Plan, principally to meet human resources needs in the remote districts of Nepal. The rationale behind its establishment was to disseminate and revive the spirit of volunteerism among the general public and in youth, to identify and utilize skills and experience of professionals and citizens for the coun-

124. Binod Prasad Humagain and Depesh Chackalamuriyi, *Survey of Financial Institutions for the YSESEF Program in Chitwan and Palpa* (Kathmandu: GIZ / INCLUDE, 2010).

125. This is sourced from a research paper prepared by Youth Action.

try's developmental works, and to supplement the human resources of the District Development Committees and Village Development Committees. The main objective of the program is to encourage youth to consider remote parts of the country for service, to obtain field experience in the living conditions of rural Nepal, and to gain exposure to the realities of the country. NDVS started its volunteer mobilization in 1998–99, selecting 25 districts. In FY 1998–99, 220 volunteers were recruited in those 25 districts in different working sectors and worked as engineers, overseers, agriculturists, geographers, demographers, health workers, social mobilizers, teachers, herbal plant specialists, and solar energy specialists. Now, NDVS activities have been expanded into 72 districts of Nepal, with 7,211 volunteers mobilized so far.

Ministries

The MoYS has the primary responsibility to initiate, manage, conduct, and deliver programs relating to youth. Additionally, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and the Ministry of Finance have had a role in supporting youth victims of conflict and youth employment generation, respectively. The programs of various other line ministries also have some relevance to the youth policy context.

Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction¹²⁶

The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is providing technical and financial support for conflict victims, conflict-affected persons, family members of the disappeared, martyr families, and other related categories of persons. The ministry is creating a platform for community youth through local peace committees (LPCs) to encourage youth to engage in community-level peace-building activities. The ministry has formed 74 LPCs in all districts except Gorkha. LPCs are also expanding to villages, providing opportunities such as training, exposure, and outreach to local youth.

The ministry has collected information about conflict-affected and disappeared persons and found that youth were highly impacted. Thus, the ministry started providing relief packages to conflict victims, family mem-

126. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

bers of disappeared persons, martyrs' families and injured persons, single women (most of whom are young) who lost their husbands during the conflict, and those who have lost their personal property and belongings. The ministry is also providing rehabilitation packages for 4,008 qualified Maoist combatants, and providing care and technical support for 19,541 cadres who are in temporary cantonment. To date, the majority of the Maoist combatants are youth.

Through past plan and policy formulation, the ministry has prepared the action plan of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820. The action plan focuses on the participation of women and girls in the entire peace process. It has also prepared the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Disappeared Commission bill and forwarded it to parliament.

A budget (2011–12) has been allocated for financial support of the rehabilitation and livelihood program for family members of disappeared persons, martyrs, the displaced, and conflict-affected persons. Youth were among the largest group of people severely affected by the armed conflict.¹²⁷ The majority of the support currently goes to the Midwestern and Far Western regions.

Ministry of Finance

The budget speech for fiscal year 2011–12, delivered by the former Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary, calls for implementation of the National Youth Policy, which will use the capacity and innovativeness of youth for nation-building. Funds are allocated for the formation of the National Youth Council. Similarly, according to the budget speech, some funds will also be allocated for launching special programs to encourage youth to avoid both drug addiction and entering the sex trade.

The budget also stated that the Youth and Small Enterprises Self-employment Program will be expanded nationally. Concerted efforts will be made by the government, cooperatives, and the private sector to provide self-employment opportunities to youth. Youth will be mobilized in the na-

127. Although the exact number of youth affected by the conflict is unavailable, several news articles and reports indicate that youths, along with women and children, were the most vulnerable during the time of armed conflict.

tion-building movement by launching a national slogan of “National Prosperity through Youth’s Employment.”

Ministry of Labor

Realizing the imperative need for labor sector policy, the government of Nepal has implemented the Labor and Employment Policy 1999. This policy was promulgated in response to the “felt need for attaining the goal of alleviating poverty through the creation of income-generating employment ... to face the existing challenges by exploring and tapping the new opportunities and potentials of the labor and employment sectors, to promote production-oriented employment by eliminating forced labor practices, including bonded labor, to make the just, healthy, and cordial labor-related development a subject of common initiative and interest of all sectors and agencies concerned.”¹²⁸

The key strategies for generating youth employment as set forth in this policy are:¹²⁹

- » Launching of microcredit programs for generating employment among enterprising youth
- » Guiding educated employed youth toward self-employment by providing them with vocational and entrepreneurial training and loans at concessional rates
- » Giving priority to youth in skill-development and vocational-training programs
- » Formulating and implementing targeted programs for creating self-employment opportunities by developing entrepreneurial qualities in youth

This policy, however, does not address the issue of intra-country migration or even foreign immigration of youth for jobs. Even the Foreign Employment Act, 2007 lacks provisions specifically dealing with youth labor movement to foreign destinations.

128. *Labor and Employment Policy, 1999.*

129. See *Labor and Employment Policy, 1999.*

Although very late, the government has eventually realized a need for a policy to promote safe migration. Foreign Employment Policy 2068, released in 2012, asserts that “foreign employment is a [...] significant contributor for national development of Nepal.”¹³⁰ The Foreign Employment Policy admits that since the Nepal’s economic position is less than favorable, the foreign employment sector can provide “an opportunity for Nepalese youth.”¹³¹ The policy recognizes the significant contribution migrant workers make to both home and destination countries and mentions the need for ensuring greater security for migrants in both places.¹³²

The Foreign Employment Policy released in 2012 spells out seven specific policies to achieve its goals and objectives:

- » To recognize and promote employment opportunities in the international labor market;
- » To produce a competitive labor force that maximizes the benefits of foreign employment;
- » To make the entire process of foreign labor migration simple, reliable, organized, and safe;
- » To address issues faced by women labor migrants and to secure their rights in the entire cycle of migration;
- » To ensure good governance with regard to the management of foreign labor migration;
- » To utilize regional, national, and international networks to promote regional cooperation in managing foreign employment; and
- » To mobilize remittances for human development and in the manufacturing sector.

The policy can be effectively implemented only by amending the provisions of the Foreign Employment Act 2007. The policy also seeks the cooperation of the destination country in its implementation and, for that, prudent diplomatic initiatives will be needed.

130. See Foreign Employment Policy 2012.

131. See Foreign Employment Policy 2012.

132. See Sijapati and Limbu.

Ministry of Education

The former Ministry of Education and Sports had formulated and released an outline of its Three Year Interim Education Plan (2008–10) in 2008. This plan was announced when the Department of Youth was still an integral part of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The plan focuses primarily on education for youth in technical subjects to ensure that they will be able to market themselves in the “world of work.” The plan sets out a vision of professional education for youth to enable them to lead a life in which they can sustain themselves financially. Furthermore, this plan also focuses closely on civic education because it helps in the physical, intellectual, and social development of youth. The plan also calls for mobilization of youth for reconstruction, rehabilitation, and social inclusiveness. One of the plan’s youth-related objectives is to prepare competent, able, and disciplined youth; to realize this objective, the plan proposes three specific programs. First, it calls for the running of a “youth auditing” program.¹³³ Second, it envisages alternative education programs for those youth who were unable to continue their education for various reasons. Last, it talks about integrating the youth development-related programs and sports at the school level. This plan expired in 2010.

Another important policy of the Ministry of Education is the Non-formal Education Policy 2006. This policy, adopted by the government of Nepal on February 8, 2007, aims to strengthen the capacity of the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC), which is an integral part of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education. The Non-Formal Education Centre has been delivering non-formal education services for various target groups (including illiterate people living in remote areas), those living below the poverty line, and wage laborers working in factories and farms. NFEC conducts basic literacy, post-literacy, and awareness-raising programs,¹³⁴ and helps out-of-school youth by providing training and support for developing technical and vocational skills useful for earning a livelihood. The primary objective of this policy is the expansion of non-formal education to provide academic and practical knowledge, skills, and information to different ages and lev-

133. The plan does not detail the meaning and content of a “youth-auditing” program.

134. See *Non-Formal Education Policy 2006*.

els of learners. According to the NFEC, to achieve this policy goal, “adults, women, and youth will be made literate.” Another objective of this policy is to develop Community Learning Centers, where youth will be tutored on adult life skills.

Similar to the Non-Formal Education Policy, the Ministry of Education has also adopted Technical Educational and Vocational Training Skills Development Policy 2007. This policy was formulated in response to studies that concluded that a “majority of Nepal’s youth of school-age leave school without completing the study of class ten.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, these youth have failed to obtain technical education and vocational training and are unable to find employment or participate in other income-generating activities. Thus, the policy aims to create an environment more conducive to providing opportunities for education and training to those persons who lack the opportunity for employment or self-employment. To that end, the policy focuses on expanding training opportunities and services for all citizens residing in different areas of the country.

Ministry of Health and Population

In 2008, the Ministry of Health and Population adopted a Three Year Interim Plan on Health and Population (2008–10). Although this plan was in effect only until 2010, it contains youth-related policies that are of some relevance to this research. This Three Year Interim Plan was divided into two sections: health and population. The health section contains two major youth-related policies. The first policy is about youth reproductive health and aims at increasing youth reproductive health services at the village level.¹³⁶ The second policy urges youth to lead healthy lifestyles and calls for providing technical support and facilities to I/NGOs involved in sports medicine.

The programs for youth under the population section of this policy are specifically targeted to youth between the ages of 10 and 24.¹³⁷ These programs talk about organizing awareness programs on population-related issues among the youth for controlling population growth.

135. See *TEVT Skills Development Polic*, 2007.

136. See *Three Year Interim Plan on Health and Population (2008–10)*.

137. This was formulated before the adoption of the National Youth Policy.

Other Line Ministries¹³⁸

Various other line ministries and government institutions are also working in the youth sector with their own programs. For instance, the Ministry of Science and Technology is managing provisions that allow youth to take advantage of international web-based opportunities (such as call centers, medical transcription, and account businesses) by extending Internet services.

Similarly, the Ministry of Agriculture is providing free skills-development training, and working to get low interest rates for 100 youth who want to take out loans to run their businesses. The ministry is also organizing a national campaign with the slogan “Gau Laai Maya Garau: Aadharbhat Sewa Subidha Gaum Mai Puryau” (“Love village and extend basic services and facilities to the village itself”) in the coming fiscal year. Through this initiative, the ministry plans to form one model village each in district.

A budget has been allocated to mobilize youth for development and construction, entrepreneurship, and programs against social taboos. Additionally, the current government has also allocated a budget to run special youth programs to act against drug and sexual abuse and violence.

The Ministry of Education has signed a contract with the World Bank to run a Vocational Education and Training Enhancing Project that will provide training for 75,000 youth. The total funding of this project is NRs 500,000.

Different Nongovernmental Organizations¹³⁹

In partnership with AYON, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been organizing a monitoring and evaluation program on the local implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development and World Program of Action for Youth (WPAY). Several organizations are establishing advocacy programs to measure the effective implementation of the National Youth Policy.

138. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

139. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

The Education for Income Generation (EIG) program, run in collaboration with Winrock-EIG and Save the Children, has been instrumental in teaching skills and providing opportunities to youth in regions that were highly affected by conflict. Efforts to provide income-generating opportunities for youth have shown results that refute notions about youth and conflict. The EIG program has succeeded in providing economic opportunities for youth, which, in turn, have helped to improve economic conditions and maintain peace. Employment is central to all transition economies—EIG has helped to foster youth’s development, provide skills for self-employment, and promote entrepreneurial ventures.

4.2 Policy Implementation and Delivery

Most of the aforementioned policies and programs are either less extensive or not fully fledged. Therefore, the following section examines and discusses only those policies and programs that are comprehensive and youth-specific.

National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy was developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but the responsibility for implementation and execution of the policy does not lie with this ministry. It is a public policy paper,¹⁴⁰ aimed at all government ministries and departments, who share the responsibility for implementation. However, because it speaks to the concerns of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, this ministry has a duty to act as the prime coordinator among all the ministries.¹⁴¹ The Ministry of Youth and Sports must serve as a monitor to evaluate whether the outputs and objectives of the National Youth Policy and its implementation have been achieved, completed, or fulfilled—fully or partially.¹⁴²

140. See excerpts from interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

141. Ibid.

142. *National Youth Policy*, Section 9.

To fulfill the objectives of the National Youth Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is preparing a “youth strategy paper,”¹⁴³ which has been sent to the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Law and Justice for further consultation and feedback. The Cabinet of the Government of Nepal will have final approval of this strategy paper. The youth strategy paper spells out provisions about how to implement the National Youth Policy and includes both short-term (three years) and long-term (five years or more) targets for implementation. It also establishes a timeline and the budget required for implementation.¹⁴⁴

The National Youth Policy envisages a National Youth Council for the implementation of the policy. It will be a statutory and autonomous entity comprising “representatives of concerned bodies, representatives of youth organizations of political parties and office-bearers [office-holders] appointed by the Government of Nepal.”¹⁴⁵ It will have a highly devolved organizational structure, with offices at both the central and local levels. The council will have the authority and responsibility of coordinating, harmonizing, and facilitating programs relating to youth-launched initiatives by the government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. The council is not established yet; however, the draft statute on National Youth Council was submitted to the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Ministry of Finance and is awaiting their approval before it can be taken to the parliament.

The National Youth Policy also envisions a role for youth organizations and youth civil society. Youth organizations, national and international nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society are seen as partners for youth empowerment and development.¹⁴⁶ Such organizations are to be encouraged and mobilized for operating programs relating to youth, and an appropriate environment is to be created for this function.¹⁴⁷

143. See excerpts from interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

144. Ibid.

145. *National Youth Policy*, Section 8(a).

146. *National Youth Policy*, Section 8(b).

147. Ibid.

Currently, the budget for the implementation of the National Youth Policy is not clearly allocated. In addition, no allocation has been made for a specific budget for youth-related programs.¹⁴⁸ From the country's annual budget, only approximately 6–7 crores (NRs 60–70 million) are earmarked for the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The MoYS has realized that such a minimal amount is in no way sufficient. Therefore, with the support of UNFPA, the Ministry of Youth and Sports will initiate this year a youth-responsive budgeting system.¹⁴⁹ Under this system, the ministry is required to identify all youth-related programs that promote youth empowerment. This list would enable the government to respond more quickly than it currently can to requested budget allocations for all youth-related activities.

Youth Partnership Program

Primary responsibility for implementing the Youth Partnership Program lies with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which implements the program in collaboration with NGOs and youth clubs.¹⁵⁰ The Ministry of Youth and Sports supplies 60 percent of the cash required for running any of the youth-related activities outlined in the Youth Partnership Program Operation Directive; the remaining 40 percent is supplied by the partner organization.¹⁵¹ Such partner organizations must be established in accordance with prevailing law, must include youth participation, and must run youth-centered activities.¹⁵² Under this program, the Youth Information Centers, which were established under the District Sports Councils in 40 districts, are implementing 18 such youth-related programs as identified in the directive.¹⁵³ The partner organization has to submit a program proposal to the Ministry of Youth and Sports or to the Youth Information Centers, and programs are chosen using competitive selection criteria.¹⁵⁴ The Minis-

.....
148. See excerpts from interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

149. Ibid.

150. *Progress Report of Sector Ministries Fiscal Year 2008–09 & 2009–10* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Finance).

151. Section 2(1), Youth Partnership Program Operation Directive.

152. Ibid., Section 2(3).

153. *Youth Partnership Program Operation Directive*, Section 3.

154. Ibid., Section 4.

try of Youth and Sports can also conduct local youth partnership programs through District Development Committees.

Since the last fiscal year, the MoYS has implemented Youth Partnership Programs in 62 districts of Nepal. For these programs, NRs 10.93 million has been disbursed through 148 youth organizations in these 62 districts. The ministry has plans to reach all 75 districts in the current fiscal year with the YPP at the local level.¹⁵⁵ Under the purview of the Local Youth Partnership Program, the MoYS is partnering with 150 national youth organizations to run the youth-related programs outlined in the directive.

Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund 2008

This flagship program of the Ministry of Finance was launched in collaboration with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) to generate self-employment through micro- and small enterprises, particularly for unemployed and underemployed youth in rural areas.¹⁵⁶ The program provides loans for activities like commercial agriculture, animal husbandry, agro-forestry, cottage industries, and small businesses.¹⁵⁷ A Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund Secretariat, based in Kathmandu, was established for the smooth and effective running of the program; a committee of 14 members headed by a finance minister is responsible for managing and running this program.

The ministry simplified the process to obtain a loan. Now an applicant, submits to the ministry a business plan as well as a copy of the citizenship certificate and other documents required by the financial institution that would provide the loan. After submission of all the required paperwork, the applicant could receive up to NRs 200,000.¹⁵⁸ The interest rate for loans under the program is 10 percent for agro-based ventures and 12 percent for other categories.

155. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

156. Uma Shankar Prasad, "Youth at Work," *The Kathmandu Post*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.kantipuronline.com/2010/04/26/oped/youth-at-work/313086.html>

157. *Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund Directive 2008*, Section 4.

158. Prasad, *Ibid.*

4.3 Policy Coverage and Equity

The course of action and the youth who are targeted in the above policies are discussed below.

National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy addresses a host of issues crucial for providing direction to youth programs and services. The National Youth Policy has identified 17 such domains or working areas:¹⁵⁹

1. Basic rights and livelihood
2. Education
3. Health and family welfare
4. Social security
5. Employment
6. Youth empowerment and leadership development
7. Participation and mobilization
8. Arts, culture, sports, and entertainment
9. Control of narcotics addiction
10. Control of human trafficking
11. Youth participation in environment protection and sustainable development
12. Access of youth to science and information technology
13. Free youth from involvement in crime and violence
14. Participation of youth in sustainable peace building and conflict resolution
15. Equitable development
16. Special group priorities
17. Partnership

The National Youth Policy holds that, irrespective of class, ethnicity, profession, language, religion, region, gender, and disability, all youth of the

159. See excerpts from interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.

nation are equal. To overcome the prevailing inequity of youth in Nepalese society and to provide special privileges to certain group of youth, the National Youth Policy divides youth into several categories. Therefore, to address the realities of Nepalese society and the needs and situations of different categories of youth, the policy segregates youth into: priority groups; special priority groups; youth victims of conflict; vulnerable youth; youth with disabilities; and youth of marginalized minority groups.¹⁶⁰

Youth Partnership Program

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been mobilizing youth by implementing Youth Partnership Programs in 18 different areas of activities under the collaboration and cost-sharing mechanism with different nongovernmental organizations:¹⁶¹

1. Agriculture
2. Conflict victims and disabled youth
3. Entrepreneurship and employment
4. Youth capacity development
5. Sensitization against gender violence
6. Health
7. Programs for ending detrimental social practices
8. Programs for single woman
9. Protection of traditional arts, culture, sports, and entertainment
10. Prevention of human trafficking
11. Disaster mitigation and management
12. Science and information technology
13. Street and vulnerable youth
14. Peace establishment and conflict management
15. Programs for minority and marginalized youth

160. *National Youth Policy*, Section 3.

161. Ministry of Finance, *Report of Sector Ministries Fiscal Years 2008–09 & 2009–10* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Finance, 2011). See also *Youth Partnership Program Directive*, Section 3.

16. Indigenous technology conservation and development
17. Orientation and awareness campaign against drug addiction
18. Rehabilitation for youth affected by HIV and AIDS

The geographic dispersion of these programs is not very encouraging, but it is not completely disappointing either. So far, youth of 40 (out of 75) districts of Nepal have taken advantage of this program. Furthermore, the Youth Information Centers at District Sports Councils have established the following six programs:¹⁶²

1. Youth capacity development
2. Agriculture
3. Environment protection/disaster mitigation
4. Entrepreneurship and employment
5. Traditional arts, culture, technology protection and development
6. Orientation and awareness campaign against drug addiction and HIV and AIDS

Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund 2008

This fund and program have a basic plan for promoting social equity for, in order of priority, *Dalits*, *Janajatis*, women, and other vulnerable people, and for business plans that utilize local resources.¹⁶³ Under the program, a collateral-free loan facility up to NRs 200,000 per person, with concessional interest, will be provided targeting the economically depressed classes, women, *Dalit*, *Adibasi*, *Janajati*, conflict victims, and educated unemployed youth to conduct business and services, such as commercial farming, livestock, agriculture-based industries, cottage industries, hair cutting, and soil testing. The development of traditional skills and occupations—such as Dom, Chamar, and Mushar for those residing in the Terai; and Kami, Damai, Saki, Chepang, and Raute for Hills residents—into modern occupations is given priority and is based on the relevance of the context and interest of the “*Badi*” youth—a group of youth encouraged to purchase taxis

¹⁶². Ibid.

¹⁶³. Prasad, *Youth at Work*.

with low customs duty and at a low interest rate.¹⁶⁴ A major coordinator of the program, FNCCI, believes that this program can contribute to generating employment opportunities for youth, utilizing local resources, relieving rural unemployment, alleviating rural poverty, and strengthening peace development.¹⁶⁵

To advance the principles of inclusion adopted in the Interim Constitution, various reservations initiatives have been in place to bridge the “inequity: prevailing in Nepalese society. The government has established a reservation quota for pursuing higher education and provisions in the Civil Service Act 1993 that have specifically allocated a quota for women, Adibasi/Janjati, Madhesi, Dalit, the disabled, and people from underdeveloped regions. The inclusion agenda is now firmly placed in the development discourse, and several efforts have been initiated at the policy, legal, institutional, and programming levels.¹⁶⁶

4.4 Recognition of Youth in Policy

Youth as a priority issue has been addressed in other national policies, for example, in those concerning education, women, and health. But the National Youth Policy 2010 was an immediate and direct response to the issues affecting and benefiting the youth. The policy has tried to identify youth not as just a number but instead as a quality.

National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy covers all youth of the country within the age range of 16–40 years.¹⁶⁷ Because of the influence of youth political wings in the drafting of this policy, the policy conceptualizes all within this age cohort as a homogeneous and monolithic group. In fact, youth political wings

164. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

165. Baburam Ranabhat and Carl E Krung, “How Do We Enhance Entrepreneurial Skills of MFI Clients?” (Presentation of GIZ Program INCLUDE, 16 February 2010, http://www.includenepal.org/alluploads/GTZ_Presentation_Entrepreneurship_Final_20100304.pdf)

166. Asian Development Bank, *Overview of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Nepal*, available at: <http://www.ncf.org.np/upload/files/cga-nep-2010.pdf>.

167. *National Youth Policy*, Section 3(1).

were initially in favor of having the upper age of the group set at 45, but after several rounds of discussions, it was agreed to cap the age bracket at 40.¹⁶⁸ However, this definition of youth fails to address the realities of young people's needs and situations. Undoubtedly, those who fall within this age group are unlikely to be a homogenous group that shares common concerns and needs—rather, this conglomeration of subgroups will have differing social roles, responsibilities, and requirements.¹⁶⁹ The National Youth Policy does break down the youth population into various subgroups for addressing needs and concerns; however, it sticks with the age bracket definition of youth and does not create any age subgroups.

National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000

This document recognizes that because of a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors, adolescents face various different health risks and problems that include sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and AIDS, early and frequent pregnancy, substance abuse, accidents, and violence.¹⁷⁰ According to the strategy, the term “adolescents” refers to individuals between the ages of 10 and 19 years and the term “youth” indicates individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. The definition of “young people” covers the entire age range, from 10 to 24.¹⁷¹

Youth Partnership Program

One of the major programs run by the Ministry of Youth, the Youth Partnership Program explicitly refers to the National Youth Policy; accordingly, the program follows the definition of youth provided in the National Youth Policy.

168. See excerpts from interview with Ram Kumari Jhankri.

169. See *National Youth Policy of India*.

170. *National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy*.

171. *Ibid.*

Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund 2008

Although the name of this program incorporates “youth” and “youth” is mentioned in its bylaws, the term “youth” is not specifically defined. According to Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund (Operation) Bylaws 2008, the targeted group is unemployed youth.

4.5 Policy Coherence

Because the National Youth Policy was approved just over a year ago, it is still early to comment on the overall coordination and coherence among policies devised for youth. One positive aspect, however, is that programs devised after the adoption of the National Youth Policy now make clear reference to the policy. Examples include the Youth Partnership Program and Three Year Plan. Both of these policy documents reference the objectives and major working areas of the National Youth Policy in implementing relevant youth programs.

To integrate the National Youth Policy into a larger national framework and plans for youth, the policy states that “the working policies shall be adopted in harmony with the sectoral policies of the State for implementation of the policy.”¹⁷² Furthermore, the government of Nepal has made a policy-level decision and issued a directive to give due regard to areas identified under the National Youth Policy for formulating and implementing any policy and programs affecting youth.¹⁷³ Thus, in the future, any cross-sectoral plans and policies pertaining to youth must originate from the National Youth Policy. The Three Year Plan further emphasizes the central role of the Ministry of Youth and Sports for administering all youth-related activities and programs. Until now, though, there has not been a well-coordinated, coherent, and integrated national framework for youth. Initiatives concerning youth within other policy arenas are currently not well integrated into the National Youth Policy.

¹⁷² *National Youth Policy*, Section 7.

¹⁷³ Koirala, “Niti, Yojana ra Samidhan ma Yuwa.”

National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy is the Nepal government's first and most comprehensive policy framework focused on youth development across the country. It focuses on national youth policies and charts out different sectors—namely education, health, employment, and entertainment—for achieving the full empowerment of the country's youth. It is, at times, commended for its comprehensiveness in addressing the needs, problems, and aspirations of the youth.¹⁷⁴

However, the text of the National Youth Policy has one major drawback. While the policy identifies several subgroups within the youth population as priority groups, it does not specify the measures to be undertaken to address their concerns. A sweeping definition without mention of specific policy interventions does not have any meaning and cannot address the realities of youth falling within these subgroups.

4.6 Policy Alignment with Regional and International Frameworks

Nepal's regional and international treaty commitments are regulated by the Nepal Treaty Act, 1990. Section 9(1) of the Nepal Treaty Act says: "In case the provisions of a treaty to which the Nepal or Government of Nepal has become a party following its ratification accession, acceptance or approval by the Parliament conflict with the provisions of current laws, the latter shall be held invalid to the extent of such conflict for the purpose of that treaty, and the provisions of the treaty shall be applicable in that connection as Nepal laws." Accordingly, the treaty provisions prevail over Nepal's domestic statutes when there are any inconsistencies.

Although no international framework exists that deals with youth rights and youth empowerment, the following have a direct or indirect impact on youth:¹⁷⁵

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

174. See excerpts from interview with Ram Kumari Jhankri.

175. Ibid.

2. UN General Assembly Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples 1965
3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966
4. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966
5. The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1979
6. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979
7. United Nations Guidelines for Further Planning and Follow-Up in the Field of Youth 1985
8. United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) 1985
9. Declaration on the Right to Development 1986
10. United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty 1990
11. United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) 1990
12. The Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development and Agenda 21, 1992
13. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action 1993
14. Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development 1994
15. Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development 1995
16. World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond 1995
17. Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995
18. The Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) 1996
19. Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action 1996
20. Braga Youth Action Plan 1998
21. Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programs 1998

22. ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998
23. Special Session on Social Development (Copenhagen+5), Geneva 2000
24. Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy 2001
25. UN General Assembly Resolution on World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, 1995
26. UN General Assembly Resolution on Policies and Programs Involving Youth: Tenth Anniversary of the World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, 2005

Unfortunately, with the exception of the international conventions on human rights, child rights, and women's rights,¹⁷⁶ none of the above-mentioned instruments have binding force in Nepal. Additionally, a convention on youth rights has not been adopted by the world countries to date, probably because of 1) the current international debate over whether youth rights should be recognized separately from basic human rights, and 2) the varying definitions of youth around the world.

Among the international policy frameworks listed above, the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples 1965 and UN General Assembly Resolution on World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY) are the most important ones for youth. As early as 1965, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples to exhibit international commitment in the field of youth. The resolution stipulates six key principles; most importantly, principle number 1 states that "young people shall be brought up in the spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect and understanding in order to promote equal rights for all human beings and all nations, economic and social progress, disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security."¹⁷⁷

176. Nepal is state party to all major international human rights treaty instruments, child, and women's rights conventions.

177. United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideal of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples* (New York: UNGA, 1965).

Later, in 1995, the UN General Assembly formulated and adopted WPAY. WPAY is a plan that encompasses commitments related to youth that were made by signatory governments at numerous international gatherings. In short, WPAY calls upon nations to seek remedies for the various phenomena that “contribute to the increased marginalization of young people from the larger society, which is dependent on youth for its renewal.”¹⁷⁸ WPAY identified ten priority areas for the international community to consider for policies and strategies related to young people: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure time activities, girls and young women, and the full and effective participation of young people in the life of the society and decision making.

According to principles of international law, such UN General Assembly (GA) resolutions are not directly binding in law on members of the United Nations; however, the members have a duty to provide every amount of assistance possible for carrying out those decisions incorporated in the UN GA resolutions.¹⁷⁹ The WPAY was very influential in the drafting of the National Youth Policy in Nepal,¹⁸⁰ but Nepal strayed from the definition of youth incorporated in the WPAY. While youth are defined by the United Nations as between the ages of 15 and 24, the definition provided under the National Youth Policy is much broader, referring to youth as persons between 16 and 40 years of age. Otherwise the National Youth Policy is consistent with the WPAY in the style of its drafting and in the identification of the key priority areas.

At the regional or national level, no initiatives or policies have been framed for young people. Additionally, there currently are no international instruments specifically focused on youth to which Nepal is obligated to adhere. All instruments on youth are either declarations or UN General Assembly resolutions, which, unfortunately, are not automatically binding upon Nepal.

178. International Center for Research on Women, *Global Change: International Agreements on Youth* (Washington: International Center for Research on Women, 2001).

179. *UN Charter*, Article 2(5).

180. See excerpts from interview with Ran Bahadur Shrestha.



Youth and
Public Policy in

Nepal

Impact of Policies on the Achievement of Human Rights of Young People

5



Human rights are also protected under a host of international legal instruments. Nepal has acceded to these international human rights treaty instruments. The Interim Constitution of Nepal also has an extensive bill of rights chapter that is aligned with international human rights law. Rights included in the Interim Constitution *inter alia* are the right to a dignified life, to liberty, freedom of speech, and the freedom to join with others in gatherings or associations. Everyone is equal, and there must be no discrimination because a person is of a certain sex, or ethnic group or caste, or speaks a certain language, or believes in a certain religion.¹⁸¹

The United Nations (UN) Charter, 1945, the foundation of international human rights law, states that, “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,”¹⁸² The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),¹⁸³ accepted as declaratory of customary international law, proclaimed fundamental normative principles of international human rights law. While UDHR is not a treaty in itself,¹⁸⁴ a host of binding universal and regional human rights treaties have supplemented this proclamation of rights.¹⁸⁵ Nepal is a state party¹⁸⁶ to almost all international human rights treaty instruments. Two such key international treaty instruments are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). ICCPR enumerates civil and political rights, which include but are not limited to the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the vote, and to due process and fair trial. On the other hand,

181. UNDP Nepal, An Introductory Material on the Interim Constitution of Nepal (UNDP Nepal, 2010).

182. Charter of the United Nations, 1945. (<http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/uncharter.pdf>).

183. United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (New York: UNGA, 1948), Res 217A (III) (December 10, 1948), UN Doc A/810 at 71.

184. Since the UDHR is not a treaty and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in the form of a resolution, it does not have force of law and does not create binding obligations.

185. Apart from ICCPR and ICESCR, other regional human rights treaties have been developed in the United States, Europe, and Africa, along with specialized conventions on the rights of children and women and the elimination of racial discrimination.

186. It implies that Nepal has ratified the stated international instruments.

ICESCR confers the following economic, social and cultural rights: rights to health, work, adequate standard of living, social security, and education.

Besides these treaty rights, no departures are permitted from the following human rights included in the catalogue of *jus cogens* norms¹⁸⁷: genocide, slavery, murder, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, and systematic racial discrimination.

Although prolonged academic and political debate has surrounded the hierarchy between first-generation human rights—civil and political rights—and second-generation human rights—economic, social, and cultural rights—for the purposes of this report, all rights understood as falling under the umbrella of fundamental human rights are treated equally, unless otherwise indicated to be general human rights.

Nepal is a state party to major international human rights treaties and, because of the provision under its Treaty Act 1990, all human rights enshrined under international human rights law can be enforced under the laws of Nepal to the extent that they can be decided in court, such as in the case of second-generation human rights.

In spite of Nepal's participation in the aforementioned human rights laws, no separate international treaty, covenant, or domestic Nepali statute exists on the human rights of youth. The Fundamental Rights Chapter of the Interim Constitution has separate provisions that guarantee rights of children and women. Youths in the Interim Constitution are not accorded special fundamental rights. From a youth perspective, this omission demonstrates the unfortunate extent to which the human rights of young people are a marginal concern in the broader policymaking efforts both internationally and nationally. Accordingly, there is a need to advocate a human rights-based approach in youth policymaking.

187. *Jus cogens* norms are norms accepted under international law as principles against which derogation by the states is not permitted.

5.1 Observations on the Outcomes of Policy Implementation

The National Youth Policy has an extensive list of provisions, the objectives of which have already been discussed in the preceding chapters. The National Youth Policy identifies objectives, categorizes groups of youth requiring special attention, and specifies education, employment, health, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports as priority issues. However, the National Youth Policy fails to accommodate some of the concerns of certain categories of young people that are set forth below:

1. Disabled Youth: The National Youth Policy includes youth who are victims of conflict, vulnerable, and disabled, as well as marginalized minority groups in “special priority groups.” During the field visit, concerns were raised by youth with disabilities that distinctions need to be made between youth born disabled and youth who acquired or developed some kind of physical or mental disability during their lifetime. The disabled youth who were born with their disabilities felt that their problems would not be addressed properly if they are kept in the same category of youth who were victims of conflict, as the needs the two groups have are very different.¹⁸⁸

2. Single Youth: Widows The National Youth Policy also fails to embrace the special needs of single youth widows. The problems of single youth widows and other single girls are completely different. The society sees them differently than it sees other single female youths. Most of the time, these views are negative. Unfortunately, their needs and requirements have not found a meaningful place in the National Youth Policy.¹⁸⁹

3. Dalit Youth: Although the National Youth Policy at first seems to provide detailed provisions for youth into special priority groups and priority groups, it inadequately charts policy interventions for the youth included in these groups. For example, it does not mention any specific policy interventions for *Dalit* youth¹⁹⁰ or for *Madhesi* or indigenous youth.

188. See excerpts focus group discussions at Apanga Ekata Samaj, Ilam, field visit.

189. See excerpts from focus group discussions at Ekal Yuwa Bidhuawa Samuha, Jhapa, field visit.

190. See excerpts from focus group discussions with *Dalit* youths, Jhapa field visit.

4. Gender-based Concerns: Additionally, interventions required for female and male youth often need to be different, given that males and females have different needs, societal roles and responsibilities, and access to finances, education, and jobs. The National Youth Policy does not address these differing needs and is, therefore, incomplete.

5. Regional Differences: Finally, the National Youth Policy doesn't distinguish between the needs of urban, semi-urban, and rural youth. Combining all these youth into one geographical category is the wrong way to pursue policy framing for the youth. Differences in age, sex, experience, marital status, interests and preferences, family background, income, and religion can also create a wide gap between the needs, aspirations, and expectations of youth.¹⁹¹ Although the National Youth Policy identifies different categories of youth, it treats all youth as a homogenous group when it comes to policy intervention. Separate policy interventions for the different groups have not been identified.

5.2 Access to Rights and Opportunities Guaranteed by Policy

Not all young people have equal access to rights and opportunities. There are several impediments in accessing these rights and opportunities: gender, rural versus urban youth, caste, class, disability, region, and other factors. Although the National Youth Policy has considered these impediments, in practice, barriers exist to accessing both rights and opportunities for youth.

The National Youth Policy places young people into groups of special concern; however, it does not spell out specific measures or place entitlements to guarantee the rights of special concern groups of young people. These special concern groups are defined as a separate constituency only by segregating them, but the National Youth Policy limits itself to acknowledging that these groups exist. The National Youth Policy does not provide access to opportunities for these special concern groups.

191. ILO, *Joining Forces with Young People* (Geneva: The Youth Employment Network), http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yen/downloads/youthguide/part2_why.pdf.

5.3 Effectiveness of Policy Implementation

National Youth Policy

The creation of the National Youth Policy in 2010 began a movement toward providing rights to and empowering young people. The National Youth Policy is a formal declaration of the nation's policy toward youth, but in order for it to be implemented, an action plan and the establishment of a formal institution such as a youth council are necessary. So far, the government has failed to come up with an action plan to carry the process forward. Furthermore, the statute for establishing a National Youth Council is also currently in limbo.

For guaranteeing the right to information for youth, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has requested that other ministries and government departments establish a section that would act as focal point¹⁹² for youth. There are a total of 17 youth focal points in all ministries. Youth focal personnel are nominated by specific ministries; they are currently present only in ministries that work directly in the development sector.

These focal points share information relevant to youth with the Ministry of Youth and are also obligated to inform youth about various activities being carried out by the ministries. However, in most government agencies and departments, the focal personnel have not received training in youth issues and are not even aware of all the policies affecting young people and are therefore constrained in their effective implementation of the National Youth Policy.

Additionally, Youth Information Centers are not fully operational in all districts of Nepal. Even in districts where they have been established, no clear operator exists, because this responsibility switches between the District Development Committee and the District Sports Council. This lack of a uniform agency often restricts the flow and access to information. Youth are also unaware that youth-related information can be found at Youth Information Centers. To date, Youth Information Centers have been established

192. This refers to either a government individual or a desk that handles the issues of youth in these various ministries and departments.

in 47 districts of Nepal.¹⁹³ Currently, the District Sports Council is entrusted with the responsibility of functioning as a Youth Information Center. District Sports Councils are constituted under Section 12 of the Sports Development Act 1992 and function under the National Sports Council. Officers of the District Sports Councils are generally politically appointed. Thus, every time the central government changes, the committee is disbanded. Political bickering affects the appointment of officers; in many districts, the District Sports Councils are dysfunctional because of government instability; in other districts, the District Sports Councils have been dissolved.¹⁹⁴

While there is a provision for a Youth Information Center (YIC) in all of the country's 75 districts, the centers were barely functioning in the 10 districts visited by the team members. The YICs are marred by a budget crunch that severely limits the funding they receive from the central government. The budgetary constraints impact the administrative, human, and program costs that are available to these centers. The Youth Self-Employment Program that was previously under the YIC has now been moved under the District Development Committee (DDC) on the pretext that YIC did not have sufficient human resources to handle the workload. This transfer of responsibility not only reflects the incapability of the central government to provide the necessary human resources but also minimizes the position of the YICs in the districts. If implemented properly, the YICs could be effective in relaying information on programs and in raising awareness among youth on issues of drugs, HIV and AIDS, foreign employment, and others.¹⁹⁵

Not much information was actually disseminated to youth in these centers, but this lack of dissemination could be attributable to the centers not having been operational, and youth not being aware of their presence. Some districts, however, have functioning YICs currently being run by NGOs and local organizations that have access to youth. In these districts, the government needs better coordination with the existing organization-led YICs to avoid duplication of effort.

193. Ministry of Finance, *Progress Report of Sector Ministries Fiscal Years 2008–09 & 2009–10* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Finance, 2011).

194. See excerpts Jhapa and Ilam field visits.

195. See excerpts interviews in Jhapa and Ilam.

Youth Partnership Program

The field visits identified the following as the major problems in implementing the Youth Partnership Program:

1. The Local Youth Partnership Program was run and managed by District Sports Councils for two years before a policy-level decision, made at the central level, shifted the responsibility to the District Development Committee. Because of this shift, some of the experience and lessons learned by District Sports Councils will likely be lost.
2. The budget allocated for the Youth Partnership Program is much less than what is needed.
3. Only the youth and youth groups from urban areas are currently being awarded projects under the Youth Partnership Program. Youth from rural areas are not taking advantage of the program because they do not have the required training and knowledge to draft good project proposals. Either the format or form of the proposal should be revised so that rural youth can access these opportunities. In addition, classes in proposal writing should be established for rural youth, and a standard template for proposals should be developed and introduced.
4. Some groups of youth, alleging favoritism or nepotism, complain that the same youth organizations are receiving funds under the Youth Partnership Program, to the exclusion of other youth organizations.

All in all, the Youth Partnership Program is little more than tokenism. Owing at least in part to the evident lack of funds, the program does little more beyond supporting the notion that the government does support young people. Allocating NRs 300,000 for the youth of one district is hardly sufficient: this amount can shape a one-time small solution at best. Once divided among at least six NGOs, the investment can by no means benefit the youth of an entire district.¹⁹⁶ In addition to a lack of funds, young people who do not work for NGOs had no idea these programs even existed. Even youth who were actively involved in youth political organizations

¹⁹⁶ See excerpts from Accham and Dhangadi field visits.

were completely unaware of this program. Last but not least, this program was run through NGOs that used the fund as another small grant with their existing groups. Thus, the fund ended up benefiting mainly groups that the NGO is already working with instead of youth who do not have access to such funds or NGOs.

Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund

The Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund is one of the most controversial government programs. Developed to create entrepreneurship opportunities for youth, it is currently floundering; the lending program had not been implemented during the time of the field research. Applications were called for and many youth submitted the form and the required application fee, but, during the field visit, it was found that not a single person had received any kind of loan under this program.¹⁹⁷ In fact, news reports alleged misappropriation of the state funds by the government through this program.¹⁹⁸ Reportedly, Prime Minister Bhattarai has assured the public that he will form a committee to probe irregularities of this program.¹⁹⁹ Also, the lack of positive attitude, entrepreneurial skills, and vocational experience of youth applicants are some of the problems encountered in running this program. Most applicants are unable to develop bankable proposals to get loans for their businesses.²⁰⁰

Other Policies and Plans Relating to Youth

The Ministry of Education (Non-formal Education, TEVT Skills Development Policy 2007, Three Year Interim Education Plan) and the Ministry of Health (Three Year Interim Plan on Health and Population) have plans and policies that outline policy targets for youth. However, during the field visits, there was no mention of TEVT Skills Development being in place.

197. See excerpts from field visits.

198. "Youth Self-Employment Program Suspended," *The Himalayan Times*, December 4, 2011, <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Youth+Self-Employment+Program+suspended&NewsID=311624>.

199. "Bandh Called Off," *The Himalayan Times*, December 6, 2011, <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Bandh+called+off&NewsID=311745>.

200. Prasad, *Youth at Work*.

In fact, focus group participants and interviewees gave no indication that they were aware of such programs being run in their districts. This lack of awareness was also true for the youth affiliated with various youth NGOs both in the districts and in the capital, which is surprising since they are considered to be a group who are generally aware of such plans and policies formulated for youth. The Interim Education Plan and Interim Health and Population Plan ceased to exist after their implementation end date of 2010. Unfortunately, no effects of these policies on youth could be identified by the youth themselves or even by stakeholders who participated in this review. This may be because youth as a category with a clear demarcation in Nepal is a recent phenomenon, and, since other policies were a priority and not fully implemented, it was difficult for the youth who were consulted to describe the impact the policies had on them. The problem is further compounded in the far-flung districts of Nepal, where the youth have less access to information and to district headquarters, where the government offices are situated.

5.4 Efficiency of Appropriated Resources

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for moving the youth development and empowerment agenda forward. It is also the axis for implementation of objectives and working policies outlined in the National Youth Policy. The interviews conducted showed deep apprehension about the workings of this ministry. Many of the interviewees believe that because it is so new, the Youth Ministry of Nepal is not fully organized. Additionally, it was frequently argued that the seven to eight personnel in the Youth wing of the MoYS do not adequately meet the needs and requirements of youth.²⁰¹ Some youth also pointed out the need to appoint a young person as a youth minister. In all the governments formed after the Constituent Assembly elections, the youth ministers appointed have been older. Such leaders are unlikely to be able to relate to the problems of youth.

Even in the allocation of the annual budget, the youth wing of the MoYS has been and is currently being neglected. Out of NRs. 0.56 to 0.57 billion (approx. USD 550,000) allotted to Ministry of Youth and Sports for the last

201. See excerpts from the interview with Rana Bahadur Shrestha.

fiscal year, only 0.06 to 0.07 billion were ultimately utilized for youth. This amount is not sufficient to implement the National Youth Policy or support and fund youth activities.

5.5 Youth Participation in Policy

In Nepal's national politics, youth participation is abysmal. There are only a few prominent youth leaders—and even they are on the verge of aging out of the youth category. Youth leaders have not received any opportunities to lead important ministries within the cabinet. Thus, youth in Nepal have not been properly represented in different policymaking and decision-making positions.

On a positive note, however, youth were part of the National Youth Policy drafting committee and were actively involved in that significant process. But, at some level, even the task force was not completely inclusive because different groups of young people were not properly assimilated and consulted. The task force relied only on youth organizations and political youth.

The impediments to meaningful participation of youth in decision-making and policymaking processes are:

- » A ubiquitous political culture of not trusting the country's youth. During focus group discussions, a lot of the participants referred to the general tendency to think of youth as a group that is carefree and ill-suited for responsibility.²⁰²
- » Ideologically and politically segregated youth.
- » *Youth unemployment.* Youth participation in various programs that are run in the districts is uncertain and inconsistent, because many youth go abroad in search of jobs and cannot participate in these programs.²⁰³
- » *Youth violence.* Through discussions with Youth Action, an NGO working in the area of youth, the team learned that youth are often perceived by others as violent and characterized as impulsive and volatile. They have

202. Focus group discussions from the field.

203. See excerpts from Accham and Dhangadi field visits.


also been characterized as perpetrators of violence and, unfortunately, only occasionally viewed as agents of peace.²⁰⁴ A common refrain of many people is that during strikes, the youth and students affiliated with different political parties go on street rampages. The research team witnessed these demonstrations during a *bandh* strike, when community members quickly explained that the violence was likely caused by political youth, since that was usually the case with such strikes. Youth and students have also been involved in the burning of government vehicles and physical high-handedness and intimidation to enforce strikes, thus further promoting the perception of community members that youth are prone to violence.

- » *Lack of political vision.* Many politicians, community leaders, and others are far from convinced that encouraging the active involvement of youth is an effective strategy for achieving better outcomes.²⁰⁵
- » Lack of education and training in understanding complex policy and legal issues
- » Failure to recognize the value of a more democratic relationship with youth. Youth are usually presumed to be incompetent and lacking sufficient experience.²⁰⁶
- » Apprehension that the youth will usurp the role of older people in the society
- » *Disenfranchised adults.* Adults who were never empowered themselves are often reluctant to empower young people.

204. See National Youth Policy, Programs and Progress, Youth Action.

205. *Youth Participation in Decision Making, World Youth Report, 2003.*

206. Ibid.



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Intersectoral Coordination and Cooperation in the Youth Policy Field

6

6.1 Existence and Implementation of Action Plans for Youth Policies

Various action plans guide the policies pertaining to youth, including the National Youth Policy. More than a year has passed since the National Youth Policy was formulated, but, unfortunately, it has not yet been put into effect. The Strategy Paper prepared by the Ministry of Youth and Sports that lays out the provisions for the implementation of the National Youth Policy currently awaits the endorsement of the Cabinet of Ministers. The government's delay and lack of prioritization reveal their lack of strong interest in youth and the National Youth Policy.

Similarly, the National Action Plan for Youth Employment Nepal 2010–17 has also been pending approval for the past year. The action plan envisages contributing to the creation of jobs, thereby reducing unemployment, underemployment, and the number of youth living in poverty. Although this action plan is geared to addressing one of the most pressing issues of youth, it has also been left waiting for implementation.

Generally, policies in Nepal have not been backed by clear-cut action plans—which makes the implementation of the policies weak. And, even when action plans are made, the authorities often delay for a long time before approving them. Especially with the policies pertaining to youth, this lack of attention and the delay of approval are vivid testimony of the authorities' interest in the issues and concerns of youth.

6.2 Existence and Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

The National Youth Policy 2010 spells out its own monitoring and evaluation framework. According to the policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports will serve as an overseer to monitor and evaluate whether the planned outputs and objectives have been achieved or fulfilled in full or in part. The policy also addresses the issue of adopting a participatory system for monitoring and evaluating, as well as regularly reviewing, revising, and improving the policy every five years. However, whether these suggestions are followed or not is yet to be seen.

The Youth for Self-Employment Program, under the auspices of the District Development Committees (DDC), has a monitoring mechanism whereby anyone who is part of the Selection Committee can be involved in the monitoring process. The officers visit the project site three times. Occasionally, an officer from the central level also does monitoring and submits a report to the central level. Unfortunately, the central monitoring does not take place too frequently. Although these reports are accepted by the DDCs, it is not practical for the officers to go on site visits for small projects, in light of the fact that the DDCs are understaffed for the amount of work they are assigned. As one of the officers rightly pointed out, “There are more than 1,800 plans in DDCs. We have not been able to do monitoring of all projects. However, we try look at their activities through their reports, and site visits as well, but we have not been able to do it effectively since we have a human resources crunch.”

Similarly, with regard to the programs of the Ministry of Education, monitoring is done through the Zone desk under the leadership of the Joint Secretary of the Department of Education. During an interview with one of the officers at the District Education Office, he stated, “Despite the existence of this system, monitoring has not been very effective. There is no proper evaluation.”

Thus, it can be said that while monitoring and evaluation systems do exist, they are not very effective, primarily because of a resource crunch and a lack of interest from the central government. Monitoring and evaluating are important steps in every program; it is the responsibility of the concerned agency to make sure that this step is followed. Since it is a specialized task, not just a site inspection, training should be provided to ensure more effective monitoring and evaluation.

6.3 Existence and Effectiveness of Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms

Some policies, as previously mentioned, directly identify young people as a separate constituency, while other policies are not directly youth-centric but have some youth dimension in them that affect young people in one way or another. This section looks at the existence and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms between sectors for these policies.

To begin, we first re-identify the various policies that address the rights and needs of youth. The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 and the Three Year Interim Plan have a number of issues that deal with youth and have, in fact, devoted a separate section on youth that addresses youth issues, including employment. The main objective of the National Youth Policy is to make youth active participants in the reconstruction and social and economic transformation of the nation by providing them with opportunities to develop their full potential.²⁰⁷ The Three Year Plan (2010/11–2013/14) has been officially endorsed and includes a section on youth and development, but because it was only recently publicized, the line ministries have yet to design any plans and programs.

Another policy document, The National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy 2000, outlines the government's goal of providing health and development services for adolescents in Nepal. Its main objectives are to increase access to information on adolescent health and development; to provide opportunities to build skills among adolescents, service providers, and educators; to increase accessibility and utilization of health and counseling services among adolescents; and to promote a safe and supportive environment for adolescents to improve their legal, social, and economic status.

Other than these few sectoral policies, there are currently no other policies that explicitly identify youth as a separate category. Since youth remains a priority issue, other policies may indirectly benefit youth overall; however, youth are not targeted or acknowledged separately in these policies.

While some programs have made vague reference to youth as an independent identity or group, youth still remain overlooked by the authorities. In the formulation of policies, other ministries do not have representation from the Ministry of Youth and Sports in their committees, although they do have representation from other concerned ministries. And although all the ministries have a youth focal point (YFP) member, this person often has other responsibilities, and their YFP responsibilities very frequently are not their priority.

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207. *Three Year Interim Plan.*

The coordination, cooperation, and collaboration among ministries remain insufficient. Currently, all issues pertaining to youth are explicitly placed into the domain of the MoYS, despite the fact that youth is clearly a priority issue. For instance, while formulating the national budget, the Ministry of Finance does not consult with the MoYS about youth aspects of the budget. Similarly, coordination between the MoYs and other ministries, of which many have programs and projects targeting youth, remains weak.

The most relevant observation is the lack of information dissemination with several line ministries about the National Youth Policy. In the course of the field study, the team discovered many officials had no idea that the country even had a youth-focused policy—even among the ministries that clearly had responsibilities related to the National Youth Policy. This ignorance reveals how disconnected the ministries are in general, as well as the lack of proper information dissemination. To address the problem, it will be paramount to have effective communication and coordination between central ministries and district offices and among the line agencies themselves. Effective communication and coordination will help to bring about better programs and activities for youth at the local level.

On the other hand, coordination of national and international nongovernmental organizations with the MoYS has been improving. Organizations have been coordinating with the ministry to identify current needs and to try to design programs accordingly. For instance, Helvetas Nepal has been coordinating with CTEVT to conduct technical trainings and to provide the participants with certification through the National Skill Testing Board.²⁰⁸ Similarly, UNFPA is coordinating with the MoYS to design a Youth Responsive Budgeting System, which is scheduled to be implemented in the next fiscal year and thereafter.²⁰⁹ However, in some regions, the coordination among the I/NGOs still remains weak, and there is not always sufficient communication between the various local organizations. Duplication of programs can also be found in some regions. To address this issue, a one-door system is imperative so that such duplication can be minimized through proper coordination and collaboration.

208. Interview with Chandra Bahadur Nakarmi, NSTB.

209. Interview with Ms. Aradhana Gurung, UNFPA.

Unfortunately, the participation of youth in drafting policies pertaining to youth has generally been limited to consultations. For example, the team learned that if the Ministry of Education needs to frame a policy, it will conduct consultations with various groups, including teachers, youth, and students. Through these consultations, the policymakers try to gauge the needs and aspirations of young people, their expectations about the policies, and their hopes for the future, and these judgments provide them with a roadmap for developing their policies. However, though youth may be asked to provide their opinions, the Ministry of Education still holds the decision-making power. Thus, youth are not directly involved in any decision making about policies that will affect them, or in the process of drafting these policies, at least, not as “youth” per se.

In the drafting of the National Youth Policy, youth, as well as youth groups and organizations, were more directly involved than they were in previous policies. The 23-member committee that drafted the youth policy consisted of youth representing youth organizations, political youth outfits, and youth CA members, among others. This is perhaps the first time in Nepal’s policy history where the stakeholders have taken the initiative not only of drafting the policy, but also of carrying out consultations on the draft of the policy in all five development regions of the country. However, while consultations and youth involvement did take place, this process was not inclusive of all groups of youth. The youth who participated often came from more privileged backgrounds and had more access to political parties and the political process, as well as youth who were involved in NGOs. Nevertheless, the act of more directly involving youth in this process is a step forward, whether or not it was inclusive of the various groups of youth. It remains to be seen if the policy is effective and will actually be implemented through appropriate measures and mechanisms, as currently this policy does not include any concrete action plans.

When examining the coordination between NGO youth and political youth, these linkages have generally been fairly weak. Changes have occurred, however, since the success of the People’s Movement 2006. During this movement, both groups understood that they were fighting for a common cause, working for a similar vision, even if each group had different approaches. Each of these groups possess their own unique strengths and have the capacity to achieve greater progress for youth if their strengths are

combined. For instance, while youth from NGOs have more influence at the grassroots level, those from the political field possess higher levels of influence at the policy level. This realization is very important for the youth, since it will help in directing their energies and utilizing their strength to achieve more tangible results and coordination. A need remains for even greater collaboration between these various groups of youth.



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Conclusions and Recommendations

7



While the issues of Nepal's youth permeate many different sectors, certain themes have more weight than others. The first half of the chapter outlines specific problems of Nepal's youth, while the second offers specific recommendations to solve them.

Youth and Violence

The ten-year armed conflict in Nepal brought youth and their issues to the forefront and normalized the use of violent practices to make voices heard. The youth wings of political parties have become synonymous with violent hooligan forces at the disposal of senior politicians. Whether using physical or psychological threats for forced donations or their outright acts of vandalism during strikes and bandhs, the country's youth have become entrenched in a culture of violence. The youth wings provide the political parties with "muscle for everyday politics."²¹⁰ The involvement of political parties, police, and administrative officials in sanctioning such uses of violence made the society in general more tolerant of overt uses of force and also institutionalized violent tactics.²¹¹ The rising rate of unemployment for the youth has generated a lot of frustrations²¹² but there aren't proper outlets for the youth to vent. This lack of voice has also embroiled many youth in violent politics in the hopes of addressing their concerns. Reorienting youth away from violent tendencies that undermine political space, development, and public security requires an institutional effort that is difficult to achieve, especially during periods of political vacuum.

Youth and Migration

Increasing numbers of youth leave the country either in the hopes of studying abroad or for employment. Although migration in itself not new to Nepal, approximately half a million Nepalis (excluding those in India)

210. 4 International Crisis Group 2010, "Nepal's Political Rites of Passage" *Asia Report* N° 194, pp. 4-5 and 7-10.

211. Ibid.

212. Anurag Acharya, "Wounds that won't heal" *Nepali Times*, No. 565, August 2011.

currently work abroad.²¹³ The growing trend of migrating youth has both positive and negative aspects. The remittances account for more than 20 percent of the GDP²¹⁴ and thus can be seen as a huge contribution to the national economy. Although remittances have greatly assisted in bringing down the poverty line, its impact on national development is very limited. Eighty percent of the total is spent on consumption, in sharp contrast to the two percent used for capital formation in the country.²¹⁵ Since most of the contributors of remittances are youth, the youth within and outside the country can collaborate to direct their money to increased investment and economic growth. This would not only create opportunities for the present but also set the foundation for better prospects for the future.

Youth and Leadership

Although a significant number of youth are involved in politics, only a handful have been able to assume leadership roles in politics. With the rise of ethnic politics and the issue of federalism, a few young leaders have stepped up to more prominent roles. However, these numbers are not representative of the mass of youth involved in party politics. On the other hand, youth have risen in the society as social entrepreneurs and leaders. Youth initiatives have been encouraged both by the government and also by the nongovernmental sector to provide impetus for young social entrepreneurs at the grassroots level. Youth activities at the community level have been encouraged through debates, trainings, and workshops on critical thinking and leadership, and young faculty development. In the post-conflict context, youth need to rise up to the occasion and serve as the conscience of their society. At a time when federalism has strained ethnic ties and divided the country, it is Nepal's youth who hold the key to communal harmony. In order for youth to bridge these strained relations, they need space to interact with other youth from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

213. Prakash Bhattarai, *Migration of Nepalese Youth for Foreign Employment: Problems and Prospects*, p. 8.

214. "Remittance: the lifeline of the Economy", *The Kathmandu Post*, 18 February 2013.

215. Ibid.

Intersectoral Coordination

As a priority issue that straddles all levels of society, youth is relevant to different sectors. Any policy that focuses on the youth will involve not only the Ministry of Youth but also other ministries, as exhibited by the NYP 2010. While there is no doubt that proper policymaking, implementation, and monitoring when it comes to youth requires inter-ministerial cooperation, evidence from the field research showed that it is not easy to achieve. For any policy to function properly, intersectoral cooperation needs to start at the policy-formulation stage.

Specific Recommendations:

After analyzing results from desk and field research, as well as from discussions with stakeholders, the research team has identified the following gaps and recommendations for moving forward:

Ministry of Youth and Sports

- » Local presence of the Ministry in various districts should be ascertained. Local presence will not only increase the ownership of the National Youth Policy at the local level but will greatly help in the implementation process, too. Besides the local presence, the district-level officials should be made aware of the policies, as field visits clearly indicated lack of knowledge about the National Youth Policy and other policies affecting the youth.
- » Detailed action plans, rules, regulations, and formal legislation should be designed for effective implementation of the National Youth Policy or any other policies affecting youth. Once activities and programs are established through the action plans, it is equally important to commit a budget in the amount necessary to implement and sustain each activity or program.
- » Ensure full participation of youth at the policymaking and implementation level. There should be proportional participation of youth in projects to ensure all groups are represented, because currently only certain groups of youth have access to the process. Inclusion will not only generate youth-centric programs but will also direct efforts toward

integrating priority groups into programs for general youth, and ensure greater access of these priority groups to those programs.

- » Youth Information Centers should be strengthened in order to function effectively and government should coordinate with local organizations and NGOs from the districts who run parallel “youth information centers.” These centers are potential venues for youth to receive information on opportunities available to them and other necessary information, including, but not limited to reproductive health, migration, and foreign employment. Most Youth Information Centers referenced in the National Youth Policy were discovered to be nonfunctional and very few youth were aware of them.
- » A monitoring and accountability system should be designed to check the progress of the NYP at the district level. When putting this system in place, officials should take into account reasonable expectations and workload of the staff.
- » Currently, many youth remain idle in their communities, and this lack of activity often leads to drug use, violence, and other negative consequences. Therefore, investment should be made in youth development, thus enabling them to start their own enterprises. Technical training should become a priority, as lack of education and unemployment is one of youth’s greatest challenges. In addition, information regarding these technical trainings needs to be properly disseminated to youth, so that they know of its existence. For example; with the majority of the nation’s population involved in agriculture, the government should focus on promoting agricultural enterprises among youth by providing them with the latest technologies, fertilizers, and seeds.
- » Currently, the official age of youth defined by policy in Nepal is 16 to 40. This is a particularly wide age range that encompasses various different stages of life. It is thus recommended to subdivide this age category when creating programs and projects to ensure that the specific needs of the age groups are addressed for those who need them. Furthermore, Nepalese youth should not be addressed only as a homogenous group when creating programs, as they often face varying types of circumstances. Programs should thus be created to address needs of various groups of youth, depending on their education, skills, knowledge, and interests.

Line Ministries

- » Youth's issues need to be recognized and addressed by all ministries, and youth themselves should be involved in decision making at all levels—from the local to the central. Currently, many Youth Focal Points from various ministries have not been properly oriented on youth issues; thus, advocacy and trainings should be conducted with Youth Focal Points from these ministries to ensure they have the capacity to incorporate youth as a priority into the planning for respective ministry programs.
- » Collaboration and coordination between various ministries, as well as with districts, in implementing policies remains weak, and there is much room for improvement. While some organizations have been effective at coordinating programs and advocacy with policy, other organizations still struggle with effective coordination in these areas. Greater coordination between line ministries, youth organizations, civil society entities, and other stakeholders needs to be established for effective implementation of policies and to avoid duplication. For instance, the Ministry of Finance should coordinate with the Ministry of Youth and Sports for appropriation of needed budget for the implementation of youth-related programs for every fiscal year.

National Youth Council

- » If a National Youth Council is to be created, the roles and responsibilities of the MoYS and the National Youth Council should be clearly differentiated and defined. This will help avoid duplication of effort, as well as gaps that emerge when there is a confusion of roles.
- » The member secretary and other officers of the National Youth Council should be selected through consideration of qualified individuals who are subject to a competitive process. Political appointees will create a bungling council. In addition, the qualifications for the appointment to the council should be clearly defined. Regional-level and district-level Youth Councils should be established under the National Youth Council.

Youth Organizations

- » Youth organizations need to be proactive and inquire about their rights and responsibilities with the local government institutions to establish two-way communication and coordination between the groups. Youth organizations should also coordinate with politically active youth and try to bridge the ideological gap by emphasizing that both groups are working toward a common goal.
- » Youth organizations should conduct advocacy and lobbying with the ministries and other stakeholders for the timely and effective implementation of the NYP, and to create accountability for these stakeholders.

Other actors

- » Currently, stakeholders and communities hold both positive and negative views on youth. Media, given its wide reach, can be utilized to promote the positive role of youth. Local and national media can also be used to promote best practices, testimonials, and youth-led activities to inspire a new generation of progressive thinkers.
- » The current policy is filled with vague concepts and generalizations. For effective implementation, the policy needs to focus solely on a few areas (i.e., education, employment, and immigration, during initial implementation), and define these areas more thoroughly through concrete action plans.
- » The Youth Partnership program has been considered a “sham,” and its implementation modality has failed to incorporate the many different groups of youth. It is administered by various NGOs, which work only with their own networks—thus denying access to youth not affiliated with NGOs in their districts. Also, the Youth Partnership Program did not have sufficient budget to implement all activities promised. It is recommended that budget allocated for this program be increased in order to implement programs realistically.
- » Although the Youth and Small Enterprises Self-Employment Fund program was designed for youth in general, funds are currently being “misappropriated” and channeled for use by youth cadres of political parties. More monitoring and accountability mechanisms need to be established for this program to ensure equal access by all youth.

- » Currently, agencies, government ministries, and organizations all utilize different definitions of the age of youth in their policies and programs. For more effective coordination and implementation of the NYP with other youth policies and programs, stakeholders should define the age group of youth.
- » Government programs and the National Youth Policy currently fail completely to address the needs, rights, and aspirations of migrant youth workers. Given the size of Nepal's migrant youth population, making plans and establishing programs for these youth are imperative. Youth representation in Village Development Committees (VDCs) is nonexistent or minimal in many districts, and youth activities are often the first to get cut from VDC budgets. The review revealed that youth were only present in VDCs of a few districts; even in those districts, youth did not have a strong voice. More youth should thus be encouraged to actively participate in VDCs in order to have more youth representation, as well as a voice when allocating VDC budget.

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Appendix I: Initial Field Research Plan

Schedule

Date	Activities	Remarks
12 Sept 2011 (Monday)	Meeting of the team members	
13 Sept 2011 (Tuesday)	Field Visit to Dhading Besi	Khushbu, Semanta, Sanju, Deborah, Nabin
14 Sept 2011 (Wednesday)	Return to Kathmandu and meeting of team members	(Nabin will plan his own field visit)
15 Sept 2011 (Thursday)	Departure to assigned district	
16 Sept 2011 (Friday)	Field Visit	
17 Sept 2011 (Saturday)	Field Visit	
18 Sept 2011 (Sunday)	Field Visit	
19 Sept 2011 (Monday)	Field Visit	
20 Sept 2011 (Tuesday)	Return to Kathmandu	Khushbu, Deborah, and Sanju will return
21 Sept 2011 (Wednesday)	Organization visits in Kathmandu	Semanta will return
22 Sept 2011 (Thursday)	Field visit to Kavre	
23 Sept 2011 (Friday)	Organization visits in Kathmandu	

24 Sept 2011 (Saturday)	Discussion of the information collected from field visit and how to move forward
25 Sept 2011 (Sunday)	Organization visits in Kathmandu
26 Sept 2011 (Monday)	Departure of Deborah

Field Area and Responsible Person for the Visit

Region	District	Responsible person
Far Western	Hill: Achham Plain: Dhangadi Besi	Nabin
Midwestern	Hill: Surkhet Plain: Nepalgunj	Sanju and Deborah
Western	Hill: Palpa Plain: Bhairahawa	Khushbu
Central	Hill: Dhading Plain: Siraha	Dhading: Semanta, Khushbu, Sanju, Deborah Siraha: Semanta
Eastern	Hill: Ilam Plain: Jhapa	Semanta

Appendix II: Research Tools

Initial Guiding Topics and Questions for Field Research

During the course of the field research, these questions were revised a number of times to adjust to field realities.

1. Movement of youth (Migration: if recorded—are data available and is this movement temporary or permanent: History and preferred destination, how to integrate youth who have returned to Nepal)
2. What effect does this movement of youth have? (On youth and on the broader society)
3. Role of authorities: Do they figure and, if so, how?
4. Social, political, and economic effects, as well as effects on sense of identity, of People's War on youth
5. Conflict: How has it affected the delivery of programs catering to youth?
6. National Youth Policy (Are they cognizant of it, and, if yes, how? If not, why? Which youths are knowledgeable about it?)
7. Programs: Accessibility (Are they informed? If informed, what kind of youth? If informed, how do they avail themselves of the opportunity?)
8. Programs: What kind of youth is focused on? What has been the outcome/effect (If positive, why? If not, why?)
9. Programs: Centrally driven or region specific? Whichever, how does it work?
10. Programs: Do they cater to the needs of the youth in your region? (If yes, why and how? Which youth do they target, what kind of youths are left out?)
11. Programs: Beneficial or not? If so, how? If not, why?
12. Programs: Are youth active participants (If yes, how and in what capacity?) or passive beneficiaries? Are they consulted and involved in the

- process or in policy implementation? Do youth perceive that they are being consulted in the process? How do stakeholders plan to involve youth moving forward?
13. Programs: Are targets set? If targets unmet, then what happens?
 14. Programs: What is the process for determining which youth to target within your program communities, and what criteria used? How are these youth/individuals selected? Who makes the selection? (Look at whether selection is fair or biased and if gender-inclusive.)
 15. Programs: Participation of youth (Are there any barriers? If yes, what kind and how can you overcome that? If no, why?)
 16. Programs: How are they implemented, and what units/structures exist? Does inter-sectoral harmonization exist or not?
 17. Programs: Who are the responsible authorities?
 18. Programs: Human and financial resources (Adequate or inadequate: Why?)
 19. Programs: Monitoring?
 20. (Do make a list of programs and their focus)
 21. Stakeholders: How do they define youth/their perception/who are youth? Any region-specific nomenclature? What age range do these stakeholders define as youth?
 22. Where are youth more visible in the areas of your fieldwork? (What kind of youths and why?)
 23. How do the youth view themselves? (e.g., NGO youth vs. non-NGO-affiliated youth). Any significant differences in terms of life chances among various categories of youth? What age ranges do youth define as youth?
 24. How are youth perceived? (Positive or negative, and why?)
 25. Prioritization of youth issues: What do you perceive as the priority issues for youth? Which groups of youth do you think are priority groups to address through the National Youth Policy?
 26. Overall recommendations: What will be some of the barriers/challenges to implementing the National Youth Policy? What are some of the gaps that need to be addressed?

Appendix III: List of Interviews and Focus Groups Conducted

Achaam

Interviews

1. Bharat Rawal, District Youth Network
2. Keshab Rawal, Chair, NGO Federation of Nepal
3. Khadga Bahadur Bista, Social Development Officer, District Development Committee
4. Milan Bahadur Budha, Chief, District Sports Council
5. Naina Bahadur Rawal, Member, Young Communist League (YCL)
6. Prakash Bahadur Saud, Tarun Dal

Focus Group Discussion

1. Nine (9) Youth from Timilsin Youth Club—ages 21–28

Dhading

Interviews

1. Dipendra Raj Poudel, LDO, Narayan Prasad Acharya, CDO
2. Shiva Regmi, Section Officer, DEO and Laxman Pant, Engineer
3. Bhogendra Raj Dotel, District Health Officer
4. Damodar Aryal, President, NGO Federation of Nepal
5. Ek Raj, Executive Director, Focus Nepal
6. Binod Rijal, Program Coordinator, ICDC
7. Nawaraj Chhatakule, Aawaaz Abhiyaan

Focus Group Discussions

1. Six (6) Youth from NGOs—ages 22–31
2. Eight (8) Youth Working in Media—ages 21–33
3. Seven (7) Dalit Youth—ages 17–28

Dhangadi

Fewer meetings were conducted in this area due to the unavailability of government officials and longer distances between locations.

Interviews

1. Tapa Raj Joshi, District Coordinator, Youth Action Nepal
2. Top Bahadur Bista, Head, District Sports Council

Focus Group Discussions

1. Six (6) Youth Employed in Media—ages 24–29
2. Four (4) Political Youth—ages 29–40

Ilam

Interviews

1. Amrita Ghimire, Office Chief, District Sports Council
2. Prem Pandey, District Development Committee

Focus Group Discussions

1. Three (3) Youth—ages 21–47
2. Eleven (11) Youth from Youth Group—ages 18–31
3. Five (5) NGO Youth—ages 18–20
4. Four (4) NGO staff from Mahila Jagaran Sangh—ages 27–51

Jhapa

Interviews

1. Nawaraj Prasad Dulal, Acting CDO, District Administration Office

2. Hemraj Subedi, Program Officer, District Development Committee
3. Prahlad Mainali, Office Chief, District Sports Council

Focus Group Discussions

1. Three (3) NGO staff from Yuwa Bidhawa Mahila Samuha—ages 29–40
2. Eight (8) NGO staff from Youth Action Nepal—ages 20–24
3. Ten (10) Female Youth—ages 18–26
4. Eight (8) NGO & Political Youth—ages 22–23
5. Seven (7) Dalit Youth—ages 17–27
6. Six (6) Staff from Yuwa Bidhawa Samuha—ages 28–48

Kathmandu

Interviews

1. Officers of Association of Youth Organization of Nepal (AYON): Pradip Pariyar, President; Brabim Kumar KC, General Secretary; Bijay Raj Poudel, Treasurer
2. Tulsi Poudel, Ministry of Education
3. Kalyan Gurung, Past President, Nepal Students' Union
4. Badri Nath Koirala, Under Secretary, National Planning Commission
5. Ram Kumari Jhankri, Past President, All Nepal National Free Students' Union
6. Ran Bahadur Shrestha, Under Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports
7. Jaya Bahadur Tandon, Member Secretary, Council for Technical and Vocational Training
8. Chandra Bhakta Nakarmi, National Skill Testing Board
9. Bhoj Raj Poudel, Vice President, Youth Initiative
10. Sanu Lal Maharjan, Save The Children
11. Gopi Nath Mainali, National Planning Commission

Focus Group Discussion

1. Five (5) Male and Female Youth—ages 20–26

Nepalgunj

Interviews

1. Political Youth/Campus Chief at university
2. Surya Rokha and Chatra Milan Chandra
3. Planning and M&E Officer, District Development Committee and Buddhi Bahadur, Information, Monitoring and Administrative Officer
4. Dhan Bahadur Nepali, Village Development Committee secretary, Chisapani
5. Raj Bahadur Oli, Sports Council
6. District Officer, District Domestic and Small Factory Office (Garelu)
7. Jivan Kumar KC, Planning Officer, Agriculture District Office
8. Daman Singh Chaudhary, Planning Officer, District Education Office
9. Gentel Gautam, Center Chief—Vocational Skills Development Training Center, Bheri Zone, Ministry of Labor and Transport Management
10. Dharmendra Dhital, NGO Federation of Nepal
11. Maiti Nepal
12. Save the Children Youth Program Staff
13. Shiva Kumar Rai and Kamala Rai, Plan Nepal
14. Rajan Tamang, Sahayatra Nepal (Youth Organization)

Focus Group Discussions

1. Female Youth—ages 17–20
2. Dalit and Janajati Male Youth—ages 18–27
3. BAS (Bageshwari Asal Shasan Club) and Other Youth Club Staff
4. Disabled Male and Female Youth—ages 22–36
5. Tharu Male Youth—ages 20–30
6. Conflict-Affected and Single Women Staff

Palpa

Interviews

1. Chief District Officer
2. Tek Raj Panthi, Planning and Monitoring Officer, District Development Committee
3. Krishna Gaire and Leela Aryal, District Education Office
4. Ram Janam Kurmi, Information Officer, District Health Office
5. Bhesraj Timalsena, Secretary, NGO Federation of Nepal
6. Mohan Bashyal, Branch Manager, FPAN
7. Dev Pachwaiya Magar, Journalist, Radio Shreenagar FM; President, Janajati Patrakar Mahasangh
8. Dhan Bahadur Dahal

Focus Group Discussion

1. Seven (7) Political Youth—ages 21–24

Rupandehi

Interviews

1. Assistant Chief District Officer
2. Narayan Gyawali, Local Development Officer
3. Sushila Bashyal, Secretary, Local Peace Committee
4. Lila Ram Basnet, Youth Information Center
5. Sumitra Sharma, President, NGO Federation of Nepal
6. Bhawani Pandey, Chandani Nepal

Focus Group Discussions

1. Eight (8) Political Youth—ages 22–29
2. Two (2) Madhesi Youth—ages 21–23
3. Five (5) Indigenous (Janajati) Youth—ages 19–27

Siraha

Only one focus group was conducted in this area because of an earthquake.

Focus Group Discussion

1. Nine (9) Youth from Youth Groups

Surkhet

Interviews

1. Indira Gautam, Awaz (youth organization)
2. Lalit Bhattari and Krishna Shahi, Bhairab Youth Empowerment Center
3. Binod Lamsal, Environment Conservation Forum (youth organization)
4. District Officer, Garelu Office
5. Mukunda Gautam, District Health Officer
6. Ram Parad Gautam, District Agriculture Office
7. Ramesh K.C., Local Development Officer
8. Nilmadi Sapkota and Amar Chand, Sports Council
9. Ratna BK, Program Officer, Safer Society
10. Tej Adhikari, Education and Child Rights Protection Officer, SAC Nepal

Focus Group Discussions

1. Fourteen (14) Male and Female Youth Working in Media (radio and newspapers)
2. Fifteen (15) Political Youth from various parties—ages 20–35
3. Nine (9) Male and Female NGO Youth—ages 17–20
4. Nine (9) Muslim Youth—ages 16 and above

Appendix IV: About the Authors

Khushbu Agrawal, Country Researcher

Khushbu Agrawal is a researcher with special interest in the fields of youth, gender, and economic development. She holds a degree in economics from Tribhuvan University, Nepal, and is a writer and editor for the online magazine *Voices, Expressions, 'n Tales* (www.ventzine.com), a youth-centric magazine with a focus on alternative grassroots journalism.

Semanta Dahal, Country Researcher

Semanta Dahal is a practicing lawyer specializing in international economic law. He teaches international trade law at Tribhuvan University's Nepal Law Campus. He also contributes articles regularly for the op-ed columns of English-language daily newspapers on topical issues relating to the interplay between the law and the judiciary, on the one hand, and society and politics on the other. He holds a B.A.LL.B. degree with honors from National Law School of India University, Bangalore, and an LL.M. from the University of Nottingham, UK.

Nabin Rawal, Country Researcher

Nabin Rawal is associated with the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Tribhuvan University. His research interests include pharmaceuticals, labor migration (especially to India from the Far Western Hills of Nepal), and ritual practices. He holds an M.A. in Anthropology from Tribhuvan University.

Sanju Koirala, Local Coordinator

Sanju Koirala is a Ph.D. candidate in Human Geography at University of Otago, New Zealand. Her doctoral research focuses on livelihood and resettlement issues in local communities affected by macro hydro projects in Nepal. She holds an M.A. in Regional Development Planning and Management from Purbanchal University, Nepal, and a B.A. in Development Studies from Kathmandu University. She has worked with Alliance for Social Dialogue as a youth program officer and as a critical-thinking program officer. She has also worked with Caritas Nepal as a program assistant. Her fields of interest are development planning, livelihood generation, micro enterprise, and involuntary resettlement.

Archita Pant, Local coordination

Archita Pant is the Youth Program Officer at ASD. She closely coordinates with the Open Society Youth Initiative Program in Nepal. Prior to joining ASD, Archita worked as a Consultant Researcher for Save the Children Nepal and UNICEF, and Research Coordinator for Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN). Archita completed her Masters in Social Work, specializing in Social Development, from Jamia Millia Islamia, N-Delhi, India.

Deborah Tsuchida, International Advisor

Deborah Tsuchida has over ten years of experience in child protection programming, humanitarian response, and gender and youth issues. In 2002, she received a Master's Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, where she created the first child protection course of the school in 2004. Deborah has worked in various countries for organizations that include Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, Child Protection in Crisis Network, Action Contre La Faim, Food For the Hungry, and Médecins Sans Frontières. She has served as a consultant to the Open Society Institute on issues of youth policy, and has also conducted research on child protection, girl mothers, and babies associated with armed forces (also known as "child soldiers," or CAAFAG).

Srishti Adhikari, Editorial consultant

Srishti Adhikari is the Program Associate responsible for the Scholarship Program at ASD. She closely coordinates with the OSF Scholarship Programs in advertising the offered scholarships and conducting outreach programs, and facilitates the application process for the applicants. She also acts as a liaison for the OSF Scholarship Programs and assists the scholarship grantees with their procedural preparations and queries. Srishti has a Bachelor's Degree in Politics and Critical Social Thought from Mount Holyoke College, USA.

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