



NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY 2010



Department of Youth and Sports
Ministry of Education

Vision & Prayer...

Generations of Bhutanese young men and women, boys and girls, sons and daughters, nurtured with love and care, the benign image of the useful and the graceful, the living, flowing breath of the ideal of Gross National Happiness, at peace with themselves, at peace with the society.

Whenever and wherever your name is mentioned, may it be done so with honour...

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DYCS	Department of Youth, Culture and Sports
ECCD	Early Child Care and Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GNH	Gross National Happiness
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JDWNRH	Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Government Organization
RENEW	Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
STC	Save the Children-US
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TV	Television
<i>Tsa-Wa- Sum</i>	King, Country and People
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
YDF	Youth Development Fund

Foreword

I have counted my years following the benign intensities that define the lives of youth. As the days go by, each moment becomes ever more precious as it records the progress of our life. When the day draws to a close, it is time to count the jewels that are our deeds. Next morning, we are off on a new journey. I often wonder what joy of a good turn, what reason for calm, what hope for tomorrow accompany Sonam, or Divya or Wangmo as they call it a day and put their head on the pillow.

Within the limits of a developing economy and constrained by the inexorable logic of a difficult terrain, the Royal Government has always known one thing – that our people are our greatest wealth. It is, therefore, crucial to empower and engage the genius, the imagination and the resourcefulness of our people to take our country to her rightful destiny. The positive values of our traditional family structure have had their own share of creative influence on the integrity of our social life.

As an educator, my principal concern has been with protecting the integrity of the child, my pupil. It is not always easy to balance the austerity of love with the need to ensure the sanctity of the learner in front of you. It is much the same thing when governments formulate development plans - balancing the possible and the desirable.

Over the years, however, the advent of modernization and exposure of our sheltered society to an array of aggressive influences have been taking a toll on the innocence and goodness of our people. Our precious youth are particularly vulnerable to a range of media influences that often do untold damage to the integrity of the life of our young people.

It has become necessary, therefore, to formulate a broad policy guideline to support our youth as they attempt to realize their many promises and dreams that they all carry as our future leaders. *The National Youth Policy*, developed by all relevant stakeholders and professionals, is expected to provide the required direction to the different agencies to mount youth-related services in the country.

I would like to commend the excellent work done by the members of the Task Force and my colleagues in the Department of Youth and Sports to develop this fine document. It is my hope that this instrument will help all of us who care for our youth and, therefore, for the future of our country to do what we can as parents, teachers and citizens to support the most precious part of our society – our youth.

Tashi Delek!

Thakur S Powdyel.

1. Introduction

“I have always believed that a nation’s future is mirrored in the quality of her youth and that it is the government’s sacred duty to provide a good education and a conducive environment for young people to become strong, capable leaders for the future”

His Majesty, the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck; Royal Address to the Nation. National Day, 17th December 2007

Young people in every country are viewed as major human resources for development and are recognized as key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. They are the greatest source of hope for a nation’s future. It is thus imperative to prepare young people as future guardians and custodians of the country by addressing their current and future needs. In recognizing this, Bhutan, like many other members of the global community has invested immense resources to ensure that all young people are provided with opportunities to grow, develop and prosper as fully engaged, responsive and productive citizens. For generations they have been accorded priority and commitment through concerted efforts as envisioned by Their Majesties, the kings of Bhutan. His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, ushered in an era of unprecedented change and development that the youth of his generation can today, not only reap the benefits but also shoulder their responsibility for ensuring the continued well being and security of the nation.

In this new age of globalization and constitutional democracy, Bhutan continues to receive the same attention and focus for its youth through the leadership of His Majesty the King, **who** asserted that the “the future lies in the hands of our children”, His Majesty has repeatedly emphasized the role of the youth and the government in his royal addresses. In his coronation address in 2008, he highlighted youth as the most important citizens and pledged to give them inspiration, knowledge and skills so that they would take the future of the nation based on their worth and capabilities. Accentuating the importance of youth, he reminded the nation again in 2009, that a strong, motivated youth would guarantee a secure and bright future for Bhutan and that “*a nation cannot fool herself into thinking of a bright future when she has not invested wisely in her children*”.

It is within this context that Bhutan’s social development approach to public Policy must adopt and create an enabling environment in which the lives, work and success of our young people are placed at the center of growth and development. This **National Youth Policy** seeks to respond to those needs by providing a broad framework within which all stakeholders can contribute comprehensively and in a coordinated manner to youth development. It builds on the foundations and programmatic interventions implemented by all existing agencies since the inception of development in Bhutan. In keeping with our developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), this Policy is aligned towards the four pillars of GNH and has identified key areas for youth development around them. It has been written within the context of all existing

sectoral policies, national development plans as well as international policies and charters to which Bhutan is a signatory.

2. Rationale

Youth constitute a unique group within our society who represent a positive force with enormous potential to contribute to development. However, as they transit through the major stage of moving from the dependency of childhood to the autonomy and responsibility of adulthood, they are faced with many aspects of vulnerability. In contrast to their parents, young people in Bhutan, today grow up in a different and complex world because of globalization and the rapid spread of mass communication, multimedia, changing global economy, political crisis, global violence and increasing access to drugs and alcohol. In addition, with limited life experience, inadequate resources and decision making skills, they are exposed to the risks of neglect, abuse and exploitation. Recent statistics indicate that they are most at risk from major socio-economic challenges including unemployment, low income, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, crime and violence and a wide range of health issues, significantly HIV/AIDS and reproductive health with young women being most disadvantaged. The rising trend in these areas reported every year, necessitates greater and renewed impetus for synergized efforts in the planning, implementation and evaluation of youth programmes.

These youth related issues also impinge upon GNH, our philosophy of “development with values” and place pressure on our traditional culture and way of life. Rather than viewing these rapidly changing youth lifestyle and culture as threats or youth deficiencies, the concept of GNH must be harnessed and employed to build a strong culture incorporating both the traditional and modern views. A GNH guided youth Policy will enable the drawing together of our unique heritage and identity within the context of change and will empower young people to prepare themselves for the future and provide direction and inspiration for the society as a whole.

Recognizing the significance of youth in the development of the nation, the Royal Government of Bhutan has made substantial investments in youth development. Significant among them have been the establishment of the Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) under the Ministry of Education, the provision of free education and health care and a myriad of other programmes implemented through various national agencies in partnership with international organizations. While these initiatives have resulted in far reaching transformation and in achieving many of the set objectives, the process has also revealed Policy gaps and challenges. Resource constraints, unclear and uncoordinated youth programmes, expanding youth population and absence of a national coordinating body have all limited the progress of these investments. The National Youth Policy will specifically aim at closing these gaps by addressing the challenges and recommending measures so that all Bhutanese youth can assume their rightful place in building a happier, prosperous nation and are fully prepared to lead the country into the future.

The rationale of the development of the National Youth Policy is thus, to provide a broad framework for youth engagement that endeavors to ensure that all young men and women are provided with support and meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential as they actively participate in society. The Policy addresses major concerns and issues critical for young Bhutanese and gives direction to youth programmes and services provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations. As a strategic document, the Policy will provide a common goal; set Policy priorities; propose recommendations for key interventions; and position Policy implementation within the context of institutional responsibilities and processes, emphasizing cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders. It will further provide a basis for identifying a dedicated and responsible organization to synchronize, mainstream, monitor and evaluate youth development programmes in the country.

3. Definition of youth and priority target groups

This National Youth Policy is directed towards young people in the age group of 13-24 years of age, which could be accepted as the official definition of Bhutanese youth. This age group has been carefully chosen after considering a number of national legislations, international mandates and respective sectoral policies. The Penal Code of Bhutan, 2004 has set the age of criminal responsibility at 10 years and the Judiciary is currently considering raising it to 13 years to decriminalize those in the age group of 11-12 years. The Labour Act of Bhutan, 2007 allows young people from the age of 13 years to undertake work in certain categories and in specified work places. Consideration has also been made on the definitions of the United Nations and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that sets 12 years and below as the primary school age group. Therefore, the lower age limit has been set inclusive of 13 years while the upper limit of 24 years is in keeping with the standard definitions set by the UN and World Health Organization (WHO).

This age group encompasses that period of life when the greatest change takes place and young people are confronted with innumerable challenges as they move from dependence to independence. It is also a period characterized by youthful vigour, enthusiasm, ambitions and building relationships. While acknowledging the general experiences of Bhutanese youth, this Policy also recognizes that they are by no means a homogenous group. Like any age group within the society, this wide age group of 13-24 years also consists of subgroups with diverse experiences, needs and risks depending on age, gender, geographical location, region, culture, marital status, education, socio-economic background and work status. Situational analysis and youth assessments carried out in 2005 and 2009 have confirmed the existence of these subgroups and have identified priority target youth groups whose experiences are unique, multifaceted and require specifically targeted Policy interventions. This Policy thus adopts a differentiated approach and while addressing the needs of youth in general, it also recommends unique and diverse interventions to be instituted for prioritized target groups.

Priority Target Youth Groups

- Out of school youth
- Under-employed and unemployed young people
- Young people engaging in risky sexual behavior
- Young people using drugs and alcohol
- Youth with disabilities
- Orphans
- Young Monks/Nuns
- Domestic workers
- Girls working in drayangs
- Uneducated young women in urban and rural areas

Given the diversity of youth and the various challenges, needs and interventions required especially for the priority target groups, this Policy calls for mainstreaming youth programmes across all sectors in-order to design unique and diverse interventions to address those needs and to work harmoniously in an integrated, multi-sectoral and sustainable manner.

4. Guiding Principles

The National Youth Policy is guided by the national development philosophy of Gross National happiness and the principles and values associated with the Policy blend along with the four pillars of GNH as depicted in the table below:

<p>Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development</p>	<p>Equity and accessibility The Policy promotes principles of equal opportunity and equitable distribution of programmes, services and resources</p> <p>Human and Civic Rights Commitment to extending the benefits of development within a framework of respect for human and democratic rights</p> <p>Integration and holistic development Focus on the integrated, cross sectoral; and interdisciplinary approach to the issues of young people’s development and the mainstreaming of youth issues within national goals and programmes</p>
<p>Conservation of Environment</p>	<p>Environmentally sustainable development The value of environmental sustainability is promoted to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs</p>
<p>Preservation and promotion of culture</p>	<p>Respect for Culture, Belief systems and Ethical Values The Policy promotes respect for culture & traditions, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the people and conforms to universally recognised human rights without discrimination based on gender, race/origin, age, ethnicity, creed, sexual identity, political affiliation or social status</p>
<p>Promotion of Good Governance</p>	<p>Youth participation Promotion of young people’s participation in democratic processes, as well as in community and civic decision making and development</p> <p>Youth Empowerment A commitment to the processes of capacity building that enables young men and women to participate effectively, responsibly and fully in society</p> <p>Gender Inclusive The Policy notes that any discrimination on grounds of sex violates the basic rights of the individual concerned and it, therefore, stands for the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination.</p> <p>Partnership Acknowledges that it is crucial for different stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate together for the development of youth.</p>

5. Vision

Generations of Bhutanese young men and women, boys and girls, sons and daughters, nurtured with love and care, the benign image of the useful and the graceful, the living, flowing breath of the ideal of Gross National Happiness, at peace with themselves, at peace with the society.

6. Goals of the National Youth Policy

- To instill in young Bhutanese an abiding awareness of, and adherence to, the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan, with unswerving commitment to the *Tsa Wa Sum*, patriotism, national security, and to uphold our traditional values of *Driglam Namsha, Tha Damtshi & Ley Jumdrey*
- To develop qualities of citizenship, pride in our national identity, foster unity, practice a culture of non violence, build a strong sense of social justice and dedication to national and community service amongst all sections of the youth;
- To create a greater understanding in Bhutanese society of the needs, interests, issues, opinions, ideas, potentials and aspirations of its young people and sensitize national Policy makers to identify and mainstream youth issues into national development
- To promote awareness, amongst the youth, in the fields of Bhutan history and heritage, arts and culture; diversity of our people; preservation of the environment and our common shared goal of Gross National Happiness
- To provide the youth with proper educational and training opportunities and to facilitate access to information in respect of employment opportunities and to other services, including entrepreneurial guidance, financial credit and strengthening of the private sector to promote a strong and vibrant Bhutanese economy;
- To ensure that all agencies working with young people are cognizant of the health and development needs of young people and therefore should ensure that these youth health and development needs are met.
- To facilitate access for all sections of the youth to health information and services that are youth-friendly; promote a social environment which strongly inhibits the use of alcohol, drugs and other forms of substance abuse, wards off disease (like HIV/AIDS), ensures measures for de-addiction and mainstreaming of the affected persons and enhances the availability of sports and recreational facilities as constructive outlets for the abundant energy of the youth;

- To sustain and reinforce the spirit of volunteerism amongst the youth in order to build up individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of national developmental programmes; and recognizing contributions and unique assets of young Bhutanese in the country's socio-economic development
- To develop skills and leadership qualities among the youth in various socio-economic and cultural spheres that is relevant to both national and international perspectives so as to involve them in promoting peace and understanding and the establishment of a just global economic order.
- To encourage the involvement of Government & Non-Governmental Organizations, Co-operatives and non-formal groups of young people; assist in strengthening the capacity of these key youth development institutions and ensure all youth related programmes are integrated and coordinated while providing new and effective mechanisms to build collaboration between all youth development stakeholders;
- To promote a major participatory role for the youth in the protection and preservation of nature, including natural resources, to channel their abundant energies in community service so as to improve the environment and foster a scientific, inquisitive reasoning and rational attitude in the younger generation

7. Key Sectors of Policy concern

The Policy encompasses eight key sectors, which have been identified through extensive consultations with stakeholders as well as based on critical reviews of past studies and assessments. These eight key areas of policy concern align perfectly along the four pillars of our developmental philosophy of GNH which indicates that addressing these key sectors for the development of youth would be a major step towards attaining our national goal of GNH.

Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education• Health and well being• Employment and training
Conservation of Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental awareness and action
Preservation and Promotion of Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social environment• Culture and identity• Recreation and sports
Promotion of Good Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth civic participation and empowerment

The Policy therefore, has been drawn to ensure that the critical issues affecting youth within these eight sectors have been listed along with their strategic policy objectives. In addition, priority interventions for each of the objectives have been recommended and are included as an Appendix. The priority interventions listed are suggestive guidelines to assist in the development of the National Youth Action Plan. These interventions will change based on youth issues and priority and can be finalized during the development of the national youth action plan with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders working for youth.

8. Critical Issues and Strategic Objectives for each Key Sector

8.1 Socio-Economic Sectors and Youth

8.1.1 Education

Education remains one of the key Policy areas where young people can develop livelihood values, skills and attitudes that will prepare them to successfully engage with the changing global environment and contribute to national development and prosperity.

Young people in Bhutan appreciate the opportunities that they are given to access education and desire to make best use of these opportunities they have towards greater development of the country.

The education system in Bhutan falls under three main categories: general education, monastic education and non-formal (continuing) education. General (formal) education represents the largest and most common form in Bhutan's educational structure. Basic education (defined as primary plus four years of secondary) is provided free but incidental costs including uniforms can inhibit access to education for young people.

Progress in terms of access to education over the last five years has been considerable. While there have been extensive resources provided to deliver basic education, there are still issues in relation to provision, access and quality of education across the country particularly for young women. These issues include literacy levels (lower for women especially in rural areas), access to higher secondary school and tertiary education (lower rates of access for young women), costs of education and the delivery of life-skills and livelihood skills within the curriculum.

Critical issues

Formal education (school and tertiary)

- Mismatch between education outcomes and employment needs
- Quality of education (academic focus)
- Limited integration of life skills into the curriculum
- Limited opportunities for civic participation in schooling process
- Costs of education – especially for rural poor
- Knowledge and skills of pre service teachers and practicing teachers
- Access to higher education especially for young women
- Literacy levels for women

NFE and continuing education

- Opportunities for continuing and re entering education for early school leavers
- Opportunities for gaining literacy and numeracy in English

Monastic education

- Opportunity to gain literacy and numeracy in English
- Adequate resources and facilities for education and training.

Strategic Objectives

1. To prepare young people for the world of work throughout the education process
2. To develop the skills and capabilities of young people including young monks/nuns to effectively negotiate a globalised world and participate in society
3. To provide equal access and support to complete education up to Class X for all young people
4. To increase the access of all young people not in formal schooling to further education (NFE) and continuing education
5. To improve the quality and relevance of the educational experience
6. To review the curriculum to ensure that the educational outcomes are relevant.

8.1.2 Health and Well Being

The strong family system that exists in Bhutan normally affords young people protection in regard to their health and well being. Young people in general report a satisfaction with both their physical and mental health.¹ Of particular concern though in regard to health issues are young people who lack a permanent, stable home, live in poverty and are not engaged in education, training or employment. These young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors including the use of drugs and alcohol. They are also at greater risk of mental health issues and involvement in violent behaviour.

In comparison to other Asian countries, the Bhutanese society has a relatively open approach to sex and sexuality with less stringent practices and views about sexuality for both men and women. Premarital sex is not taboo in many rural communities² with an early onset of sexual

¹ YDF and MOE (2006) *The Situation of Bhutanese Youth in Bhutan*

² Royal Government of Bhutan/ Ministry of Health (2008), *Adolescent Health and Development – A country profile*

activity (especially in rural areas) occurring for some boys and girls increasing their risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

The consumption of alcohol is widely prevalent in Bhutan and a significant part of Bhutanese life. In recent years there has been a consistent rise in alcohol-related morbidity and mortality with the proportion of alcohol-related death being one of the leading causes of national mortality and the most common killer of Bhutanese males.^{3 4} There is also increasing concern about other drug use including marijuana, solvents, inhalants, prescription tablets and substances that are being injected.

Access to youth-friendly health centers and health education provide opportunities for preventative activities and timely intervention. Currently, the most common way to access information about health and other related issues is through the TV and radio, while the vast majority of young people would turn to their parents or friends for advice if they had a problem.

Critical Issues

- Substance abuse and misuse
- Injuries including drink driving
- Knowledge and awareness of sexual and reproductive health especially among most at-risk young people
- Translating knowledge into practice
- Possible increase in rise of obesity leading to increased rates of non-communicable diseases including cardio vascular disease, diabetes, hypertension
- Violence including physical, mental, sexual, bullying and domestic violence
- Mental health
- Lack of awareness and information on young people with a disability
- Access to services such as youth friendly health centers, counseling and rehabilitation services
- Unreliable health information sources from peer and parents

Strategic Objectives

7. To inform and educate young people, through school and other sources, on a range of health and well being related issues affecting young people
8. To shift from a disease to patient centered approach for the well-being of all young people
9. To provide access for all young people to health and information services that are youth friendly
10. To further understand the situation of disabled young people throughout the country.

³ Royal Government of Bhutan/ Ministry of Health (2008), *Adolescent Health and Development – A country profile*

⁴ National Statistics Bureau Royal Government of Bhutan Statistical Yearbook of 2007 <http://www.nsb.gov.bt/publication/pubs/syb2007.pdf> accessed Aust 20th (pp34)

8.1.3 Employment and Training

Young people in Bhutan are committed to take up acceptable employment so that they can serve the country and honour the sacrifice that their parents have made to ensure their education. Despite this, the opportunity of gainful employment for young people presents one of the key challenges in Bhutan today. Factors affecting youth employment, unemployment and under-employment can be attributed to demand and supply and include: rapid population growth (youthful demographic profile), significant growth of school enrolment, limited employment absorption capacity in the public sector, underdevelopment of the private sector, rising trend of rural-urban migration, limited employment-relevant education and training that results in young people leaving school without the skills needed for employment and the expectations of high salary on the part of the educated youth entering the economy.

Unemployment in Bhutan disproportionately affects young people. The highest rates of unemployment are in the ages between 15-19 and 20-24. The youth unemployment rate has increased from 9.9% in 2007 to 12.9% in 2009. Although youth unemployment has been increasing, there has been strong demand for skilled workers and those with market-relevant education. In contrast, many early school-leavers who enter the labour market are regarded as unemployable since they lack necessary skills and functional literacy.

Critical issues

- The mismatch with the education process which leaves many young people with limited job ready skills and available jobs
- The mismatch between the aspirations of educated young people and available jobs
- The limited opportunities for employment for out of school young people
- Unemployment for young people leaving education
- Limited alternative employment in rural areas
- Lack of apprenticeship training with accreditation
- Underpayment and lack of regulation in payment of young people
- No source of living for unemployed young people

Strategic Objectives

11. To enable all young people to actively participate in the world of work
12. To enable young people to attain vocational skills commensurate with their abilities and aptitudes
13. To promote entrepreneurship capacity in all young people (both in and out of school)
14. To support and assist employable youth for a certain period of time before they are gainfully employed
15. To encourage young people to take up farming as an acceptable form of self-employment

8.2 The Environment and Youth

8.2.1 Environmental education, awareness and action

Bhutan has always given high priority to the preservation of its environment, which is reflected as one of the pillars of the nation's overarching developmental philosophy of GNH. Getting every citizen including young people to take responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of our fragile environment for future generations is of utmost importance. Therefore providing information to young people on environmental issues and involving them in community and national conservation projects could help in furthering environmental conservation.

Critical issues

- Enhancement of environmental awareness and action by young people at local and global level

Strategic Objectives

15. To educate young people on local and global environmental issues, create awareness and develop action oriented plans to tackle national environmental concerns.
16. To promote environmental national service programmes throughout Bhutan for young people.
17. To raise awareness on the national natural resources and ways to conserve these resources e.g. water, forest etc.

8.3 Culture and Youth

8.3.1 Culture and Identity

The distinctive Bhutanese identity has always been a key to our survival and independence as a nation. The unique culture, age old traditions, beliefs and sacred values continue to positively influence our development, especially in this ever changing globalized world. There are concerns that Bhutanese youth today are unaware of this rich cultural heritage and are being affected and influenced by the negative aspects of westernization, materialism and exposure to unhealthy lifestyles. There is thus a need to actively create awareness and appreciation of the relevance of our traditions and culture and the importance of promoting them.

Youth culture is evolving and undergoing constant change. It is important that this change is not seen as a deficit in young people. The acknowledgement of both traditional values and evolving youth cultures will ensure the firm belief and confidence of the youth in the society at large.

Critical issues

- Erosion of traditional values
- Explosion of the media
- Impact of negative aspects of modernisation on youth
- Perceived loss of interest in traditional culture/ festivals
- Perceived loss of interest in community life

Strategic Objectives

18. To inform, impart and educate young people on the values and importance of maintaining culture and traditions of Bhutan

8.3.2 Social environment

As a consequence of globalization, one of the biggest challenges facing our society today is the connection between two generations of parents with strong traditional values and communal ties and their children (youth of today) with less connection to family and community. This has fuelled rural urban migration, with many youth settling into cities for better economic opportunities, lifestyle, comradeship and independence. This has also given rise to the increasing trends of crime and other psycho-social problems involving youth.

Critical issues

- Connection to family and community – break down of tradition family support system
- Diminishing parental responsibility
- Generation gap between parents and children
- Conflict with the law
- Gender concerns

Strategic Objectives

19. To promote a family value system that nurtures a closer bond between men and women, and ensures equality, mutual respect and sharing of responsibility between the sexes.
20. To develop understanding between parents and children about the changing global world and implications for young people
21. To promote media literacy among the youth to minimize the negative effects of both global and local media
22. To support young people who come into contact with the law

8.3.3 Recreation and sports

Sports and recreation is a valuable means for personal development of young people. Besides promoting health, it enriches social relations, builds team work and leadership qualities, teaches personal discipline and develops fair play which are essential for life in society. In Bhutan, sports have been encouraged by the government and a number of agencies have been established, however limited financial support and great variations in the adequacy and standards of sporting facilities has inhibited its growth. This Policy therefore promotes the participation of young women and men in healthy recreation, responsible leisure and sporting activities through better coordination and provision of accessible facilities and services.

Critical issues

- Limited facilities to engage in sports/recreational/cultural activities
- Loss of interest in physical activity
- Limited activities for young people to do during the winter break in urban areas.
- Limited physical education currently provided in schools

Strategic Objectives

23. Encouragement of young people to participate in sports, cultural (the arts, both traditional and modern) and recreational activities
24. To provide adequate facilities for sports, cultural and recreational activities.

8.4 Governance and Youth

8.4.1 Youth civic participation and empowerment

Providing opportunities to people from all walks of life and from different levels to participate fully and effectively in the progress of the nation is an essential ingredient of Good Governance. It is more so if decisions are being made that have a bearing on their lives, their livelihoods, their future, their families, communities and their peers. Young people thus need to participate and be included in all forms of decision making. They need to be made aware of their role, the nation's expectations from them and also educate them on the broad policies and directions taken by the government. All of these will contribute towards strengthening youth participation and empowering them in nation building.

Critical issues

- Limited knowledge/opportunity in regard to civic education/participation

- Limited female participation in decision making processes particularly at the higher civic level
- Lack of participation in decision making by young people

Strategic Objectives

25. To promote an environment that encourages young people's participation in decision making.
26. To provide a platform for young people of all ages to contribute their views through the development of youth leadership and civic duties and involvement in programmes and activities pertaining to national development
27. To eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in every sphere.
28. To facilitate young women's access to decision-making processes, professional positions and economic opportunities

9. Youth Rights and Responsibilities

All Bhutanese young men and women enjoy the citizenship rights, responsibilities and obligations as outlined in the Constitution.

Further, this National Youth Policy advocates that all young people irrespective of their gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, geographic location or disability have the right and an opportunity to:

- Enjoy their youth;
- Contribute to Policy and programme formulation and implementation, regarding youth development;
- Enjoy protection from all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation and degradation; and
- A secure future through relevant education, training, employment, healthcare, recreation and shelter.

In equal measure, young men and women have a responsibility to contribute positively to building a peaceful, prosperous and caring society that is guided by the philosophy of Gross National Happiness [GNH]. This should be achieved by young people through: -

- Honouring the traditions and customs through the preservation and promotion of cultural values
- The maintaining of a distinct identity

- Promoting good governance
- Advancing national unity, social harmony, law and order;
- Actively working towards a peaceful, stable, secure and sustainable society and world;
- Promoting human dignity and respect for adults and fellow young people and adhering to positive family and community values;
- Promoting equitable and sustainable socio economic development
- Pursuing self development, self reliance and creativity to the best of their abilities;
- Protecting public property and the property of all others;
- Ensuring a secular society, free from violence, crime, exploitation and intimidation;
- Building and encouraging gender equality;
- Promoting positive and healthy lifestyle choices and behaviours by young people;
- Promoting conservation of natural environment and sustainable development; and
- Actively participating in community and national development processes.

The Government, Society and individuals from all walks of life have a profound duty towards ensuring the success that is envisioned for youth development in this policy and towards this end all Bhutanese must;

- Support the psychological, religious, moral, cultural, emotional and physical well being of young men and women;
- Create positive environments around youth by encouraging and reinforcing those factors that act as positive stimuli and to restrict and discourage those that produce negative stimulus.
- Act as positive role models;
- Encourage the active participation of young men and women to look into their issues and concerns both at the community and national level.
- Assist young people to reach their full potential
- Respect the contribution that young people can make through their talents, energy, creativity and ideas to the society of today and tomorrow.
- Recognize and reward young achievers and heroes, not only to applaud their achievements but also to value their talent and be an inspiration for others.
- Ensure that the media reports stories/news related to young people in a responsible manner especially those that are sensitive. They should also highlight and report on positive issues.

10. Implementation

10.1 Policy Coordination and implementation

The Policy recognizes that an inter-sectoral approach is a pre-requisite for dealing with youth-related issues. An issue that is manifesting in one area (e.g. drug use as a health and legal

problem, or mental health as a specific health issue) may be most powerfully addressed by investing energy in other areas (eg. at the level of education, employment, spirituality and meaningful role for young people in communities). Although a number of existing agencies have programmes targeted at youth, they are often duplicated, work in isolation and become unsustainable. Therefore while the involvement of all agencies/organizations concerned with youth matters is necessary, they must complement each other and be responsive to the needs and opportunities of young people. Given the existing strong political commitment for youth by the government, the agencies within it will act as the main agents, however the role and contributions of the non-governmental organizations, youth groups and the private sector is equally essential. A strong sense of ownership for the Policy must be generated by all parties through intense advocacy and establishment of appropriate collaborative mechanisms. Towards this end the Policy makes the following recommendations:

1. An integrated, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to the issues of young people's development and the mainstreaming of youth issues within national goals and programmes including, but not limited to programmes in education, training, health and employment
2. The Department of Youth and Sports, MoE, to be the lead agency for facilitating convergence in youth related schemes. It must be provided with adequate government authority, strong financial backing, appropriate human resource support and be positioned strategically to fulfill its mandate for developing youth as outlined in this Policy. It should therefore undertake the following activities:
 - a. Promote and popularize the Policy to reach all major stakeholders, create awareness among a mass audience and use innovative means to mobilize and garner support from young people.
 - b. Create and establish appropriate mechanisms and structures for coordination and implementation of the Policy including units for monitoring and evaluation, research and information.
 - c. Formulate a national youth action plan and develop specific projects in partnership with all stakeholders and define respective spheres of work that complement and enhance each other.
 - d. Advise other agencies and organization on timelines and indicators for meeting commitments as outlined in the national youth action plan.
 - e. Collaborate with other relevant agencies to evaluate youth programmes and projects, prepare regular reports on programme performance and disseminate findings among stakeholders.
 - f. Ensure youth participation in the planning and implementation of the projects
 - g. Advocate for and mobilize resources in partnership with other relevant agencies to support and fund youth programmes and activities
 - h. Act as the voice and bridge between the government and other decision makers such that the former is kept informed of the views and aspirations of youth who in turn are made aware about programmes and initiatives that affect their lives.

- i. Set standards and quality assurance for services and personnel that work with young people
3. Establish a networking group of crucial stakeholders in youth development including government ministries, departments, non government organizations, the private sector and young people that will provide the necessary cooperation, coordination and collaboration that is critical for effective youth development. This group will also monitor and review the implementation of the youth activities periodically.
4. An ongoing Youth Advisory Committee that includes all sectors of young people to provide DYS with 'Youth Voice' feedback on the implementation of the National Youth Policy.

10.2 National Youth Action Plan

Every three years, a National Youth Action Plan will be developed to provide a practical statement on the implementation of the National Youth Policy reflecting its priorities and strategic themes. The National Youth Action Plan will build upon the goals, strategic objectives and priority interventions of the National Youth Policy.

The plan will clearly define the specific strategies and actions to be undertaken, when they will be undertaken, by which organization(s), and the financial and human resource implications.

It will also clearly state expected outcomes and the performance indicators with timelines through which effectiveness will be assessed.

Although the Department of Youth and Sports will take the responsibility for developing the National Youth Action Plan, it should be designed as a cooperative expression of all stakeholders concerned with youth development.

10.3 Monitoring and Review

10.3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation is an integral part of a process to ensure that progress on the achievements of Policy objectives is tracked. It is necessary to ensure that targets are reached and key stakeholders are accountable for the delivery of those targets.

Activities relating to monitoring and evaluation should be:

- Carried out at all levels (local, regional and national)
- Systematic so that comparisons can be made across programmes and over time
- Planned at the time of the programme's development
- Adequately funded at the beginning of the project
- Based on a standardized set of baseline data allowing for interregional and international comparisons

- Published so that they can be learnt from, but also to ensure transparency and public accountability⁵

The National Youth Action Plan will specify targets to be reached in the short, medium and long term. Evaluation tools will be developed to specify indicators to be reached within those time frames. Available base line data should be recorded and used to provide one source of information to set indicators.

The key stakeholders will use these evaluation tools to gather data and provide regular reporting on Policy and programme performance. Emphasis will be on assessing relevance, performance, challenges, successes and impact of various recommended Policy objectives and priority interventions in developing youth, particularly those targeted by this Policy. Evaluation will also need to include facilitators and barriers to reaching targets as well as identifying strengthening and mitigating measures respectively.

Appropriate budget allocation should be made to ensure meaningful monitoring and evaluation processes. Young people should also be involved in the processes by both conducting and responding to surveys, impact assessments and opinion polls.

10.3.2 Review of the Policy and Youth Action plan

This Policy is not intended to be a resolute permanent document; rather it should be reviewed and revised with changing times and be responsive to emerging new challenges, issues and aspirations of the youth. Therefore both the Policy and the action plan is proposed to be reviewed and amended according to the following schedule.

- Develop and review the National Action Plan every three years; and
- Review the National Youth Policy every five years

The DYS will be responsible for conducting a consultative process with the national networking group for this task.

⁵ UNESCO (2004) *Unesco's contribution: Empowering youth through national policies*. Paris. Section for Youth of the Bureau of Strategic Planning

Appendix 1

Recommended Priority Interventions

The following section provides possible priority interventions recommended for each of the strategic objectives outlined in Section 8 of the National Youth Policy. The Department of Youth & Sports (DYS) along with all concerned agencies can take them up according to the relevance of the recommended interventions in relation to the mandate of the respective agency.



Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development and Youth

Education

Priority interventions related to **Strategic Objective 1**-To prepare young people for the world of work throughout the education process

- Revisit the existing curriculum to improve the overall quality of education
- Integrate vocational education into the school curriculum from Class IX onwards
- Provide young people with accurate information about possible choices, needs and constraints that they may face when making choices in life and in the workplace
- Strengthen and expand a work experience/shadowing programme for all students in Class X
- Develop internship programmes for students in tertiary education

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 2** - To develop the skills and capabilities of young people including monks/nuns to effectively negotiate a globalised world and participate in society.

- Provide life skills education for all young people
- Provide high quality pre service teaching that includes developing knowledge in regard to life skills, health and well being
- Provide on going professional development for teachers in regard to the teaching of life skills, health and well being
- Provide basic education in English literacy and numeracy for young monks/nuns
- Assign adequate resources including curriculum/facilities/teachers for educating young monks/nuns

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 3** -To provide equal access to education to Class X level for all young people

- Provide continuing education to young people who have left school prior to completing Class X
- Offer flexible pathways for young people who have left school early to be able to continue their education.

- Develop partnerships with relevant organizations to promote access to basic education to Class X (both through school and continuing education) through the provision of scholarships and bursary schemes.
- Explore providing funding to schools for the provision of uniforms and books to students from low socio economic background.

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 4**-To increase the access of all young people not in formal education to further education (NFE)

- Offer NFE at flexible times to accommodate out of school young people

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 5**-To improve the quality and relevance of the educational experience

- Attract high performing tertiary and Class XII graduates into the teaching profession
- Provide ongoing teacher professional development

Health and Well Being

Priority interventions related to **Strategic Objective 6**-To inform and educate young people on a range of health and well being related issues affecting young people

Health promotion

- Deliver health education and promotion through the school curriculum for at least one period a week from Class VII – X
- Integrate health messages through other areas of the curriculum including science and physical education
- Deliver health education that provides strategies for avoiding, reducing and ceasing alcohol and other drug use.
- Train peers and parents in the areas of health and well being. This should include both in school and out of school young people
- Develop sensitization programmes on issues of domestic violence, substance abuse, bullying, injury prevention (including drink driving) and sexual and reproductive health
- Design programmes that target male adolescents, through education and counseling so that they are oriented to respect the status and rights of women.
- Provide teachers with professional development in sexual and reproductive health and life skills, for themselves and to teach these skills in the schools
- Target the provision of HIV and STI information to out of school young people and monks/nuns. This could include programming in the media and the development of peer based information services

Service provision

- Provide access to youth counselors who can provide advice in regard to mental health.
- Provide drug and alcohol counseling services
- Offer identified police with counseling skills to work with young people engaged in substance abuse
- Establish more rehabilitation centres for young people engaged in substance abuse
- Design and provide day programmes for young women engaged in substance abuse

Priority Intervention related to **Strategic Objective 7** -To shift from a disease to patient centered approach for the well being of all young people and **Strategic Objective 8**-To provide access for all young people to health and information services that are youth friendly

Health promotion

- Provide education to health providers about what constitutes a youth friendly health centre and dispense health services in a youth friendly manner
- Include subjects on sexual and reproductive health and life skills for pre service teaching in teacher training institutions

Service provision

- Develop one stop shop centres across Bhutan that provide young people with access to youth friendly health services in a facility that provides access to other youth services
- That women will have access to adequate health services (including reproductive health programmes) that are youth and women friendly.
- For the Ministries of Health and Education to work together to provide a professional counsellor in each district to be based with the district education officer in each Dzongkhag

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 9**-To further understanding in regard to what is happening for disabled young people throughout the country

- Conduct a national survey/study on young people with disability in Bhutan
- Establish a national education/skills centre for young people with a disability

Employment and Training

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 10** -To enable all young people to actively participate in the world of work and **Strategic Objective 11**-To enable young people to attain vocational skills commensurate with their abilities and aptitudes

- Develop a National Youth Employment Strategy

Training and job readiness

- Develop a national programme for volunteerism/national service across the areas of education, health, employment, environment, armed services and culture.
- Provide a youth allowance for young people on the service programme
- Promote the attractiveness of blue collar work through providing higher pay, and career paths such as apprenticeships with accreditation

Employment opportunity

- Explore and promote job opportunities for young people in potential areas such as IT, eco tourism, and social work.
- Develop localized opportunities for the employment of out of school young people (Class X) for example eco tourism, development of handicrafts and souvenirs
- Prioritize the employment of Class X graduates when qualifications for employment state Class X as desired level

Employment information

- Provide one stop shop Youth Centres across Bhutan to provide youth friendly services including, complete and accurate information on employment

Wage support

- Develop a minimum wage for young people
- Provide advocacy for young people in regard to employment conditions through the provision of an Office for Youth Advocacy on Employment

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 12**-To promote entrepreneurship capacity in all young people (both in and out of school)

- Promote youth entrepreneurship through provision of soft loans in rural and urban areas
- Design the courses in the VTIs to target the development of business skills, and provide mentoring of budding entrepreneurs in future high growth industries
- Provide entrepreneurship learning and opportunities in educational settings
- Provide leadership opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 13**-To support and assist employable youth for certain periods of time before they are gainfully employed

- Expand the pre-employment programme engagement programme to include Class X graduates

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 14**-To encourage young people to take up farming as acceptable self employment

- Promote viable and sustainable farming methods including mechanization and increased land holdings to attract educated young people to farming



Environment and Youth

Environmental awareness and action

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 15**-To develop young people's awareness and action in regard to environmental concerns and **strategic Objective 16**- To promote environmental national service programmes throughout Bhutan for young people.

- Develop student action teams for example the watershed action project throughout Bhutan (community action project on water quality in villages)
- Develop national service programmes for young people based on environmental activities in communities



Culture and Youth

Culture and Identity

Priority interventions related to **Strategic Objective 17** -To inform and educate young people on the culture and traditions of Bhutan

- Design and provide curricula on traditional culture and traditions, for example, festival and spiritual meanings.
- Promote positive image of young people in the media engaged in cultural activities
- Develop a cultural national service programme, for example, to collect oral stories from around the country unique to particular areas
- Create a multi media/website to promote these stories among young people

Social environment

Priority Intervention related to **Strategic Objective 18** - To promote a family value system that nurtures a closer bond between men and women, and ensures equality, mutual respect and sharing of responsibility between the sexes and **Strategic Objective 19**-To develop understanding between parents and children about the changing global world and implications for young people.

- Provide peer and parent information and counseling sessions

Priority intervention **Strategic Objective 20**-To support young people who come into contact with the law

- Establish rehabilitation centres for young people (male and female)
- Provide counselling skills to police on working with young people
- Expand and promote Police-youth partnership programs

- Review the laws in regard to statutory rape for young people under the age of 18 when sex is consensual,...
- Review licensing of bars, drayangs, dance clubs and institute regular and more vigilant monitoring through coordinated and concerted efforts
- Establish an age for sexual consent

Recreation and sports

Priority intervention related to **Strategic Objective 21**-Encouragement of young people to participate in sports, cultural (the arts, both traditional and modern) and recreational activities and **strategic Objective 22**-To provide adequate facilities for sports, cultural, arts and recreational activities

Sports

- Deliver physical education curriculum through the curriculum in primary and secondary schools
- Offer and promote sports as a career option through reliable information to school counsellors
- Provide adequate and appropriate recreational facilities throughout Bhutan including the use of school facilities during out of school hours.
- Provide trained coaches/ youth workers in the recreational/sport area
- Develop a national training scheme for unemployed young people to train as personal trainers, coaches, administrators and players
- Develop sporting organizations in each dzongkhag with a focal person who organizes activities and produces a calendar of events for all sports (traditional and modern)
- Develop and promote both local and national sporting competitions

Cultural activities

- Promote cultural activities including arts and drama through the schools recreational clubs and cultural activities



Governance and Youth

Youth Civic participation and empowerment

Priority interventions related to **Strategic Objective 23**-To promote an environment that encourages young people's participation in decision making and **Strategic Objective 24**-To provide platforms for young people of all ages to contribute their views through the development of youth leadership and civic duties and involvement in programmes and activities pertaining to national development

- Enhance opportunities for young people in civic participation in the schooling process, for example, by promoting youth fora and initiatives
- Design interactive internet sites where young people can provide comments and suggestions on relevant policies and programmes.

Priority interventions related **Strategic Objective 23**- To eliminate of all forms of gender discrimination in every sphere and **Strategic Objective 24** -To facilitate women's access to decision-making processes, professional positions, and economic opportunities

- Develop targets for the number of young women in decision making roles in parliament, government ministries, agencies and organizations

Appendix 2

Acknowledgments

The development of this Policy was initiated by the Department of Youth and Sport in the Ministry of Education. UNICEF supported the development of the Policy. A consultative and participatory process to develop the Policy has been conducted by two international consultants (Dr Helen Stokes and Dr David Stephens) from the University of Melbourne, Australia and the national consultant (Dr Tandi Dorji) from the Centre for Research Initiative.

An initial assessment project was carried out in regard to at risk young people in Bhutan. This project included an extensive literature review and analysis of the data collected. Both the literature and the analysis of the data have informed the Policy.

Thank you to all stakeholders who have provided input to the development of the framework and the Policy. Policy related interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in youth development including personnel from:

- Government ministries, departments and programmes;
- Non Government Agencies
- Other national organizations; and
- Young people.

Stakeholder meetings were conducted to present the draft framework for the Policy, the draft Policy and the assessment. Copies of the draft framework and draft Policy have been widely circulated for comment.

Appendix 3

List of Stake-holders consulted and involved in the development of the Policy

1. **Ministry of Education**
 - Department of School Education
 - Department of Adult and Higher education
 - Department of Youth and Sports
 - Planning and Policy Division
2. **Ministry of Health**
 - Department of Public Health
 - Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital
3. **Ministry of Labour and Human Resources**
 - Department of Labour
 - Department of Employment
4. **Ministry of Agriculture**
 - Department of Agriculture
5. **Royal University of Bhutan**
6. **Royal Court of Justice, High Court, Thimphu**
7. **Royal Bhutan Police**
 - Women and Child Protection Unit, Police
 - Thimphu Division
8. **National Commission on Women and Children**
9. **Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency**
10. **National Statistical Bureau**
11. **Dratshang Lhentshog**
12. **Centre for Bhutan Studies**
13. **Non Governmental Organizations**
 - Bhutan Olympic Committee
 - Bhutan Football Federation
 - Youth Development Fund
 - Tarayana Foundation
 - RENEW
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Nature
 - Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
14. **Media**
 - Kuzoo FM Radio
 - Bhutan Observer
 - Bhutan Broadcasting Service
15. **Donors**
 - Save the Children, Bhutan
 - World Health Organization
 - UNICEF
16. **Youth Groups**
 - Representatives from Graduates of 2009
 - Youth Advisory Group
 - Newlee and Norbuling Drayang
17. **Schools**
 - Druk School
 - Yangchenphug Higher Secondary School
 - Changbangdu Primary School

