National Youth Policy

Accra, Ghana
FORWARD

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It has been recognized the world over that the youth constitute the most important human resource potential that can contribute significantly to the overall development of a nation. Our ability to harness this tremendous potential will determine our strength and resilience in pursuing our social, economic and political development goals.

The youth, therefore, deserve to be accorded a lot more attention and opportunities than they are receiving presently. It is to achieve this objective that the National Youth Policy was conceived and formulated. This Policy was developed after several consultations with members of the general public including the youth themselves and other stakeholders.

The main aim of the Policy is to recognize the unique contribution that the youth can make in national development, provide a commitment to meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as the necessary impetus, structures and resource commitments needed to facilitate the development of the youthful human capital.

In many ways the future of the country rests with the youth, their vision, dedication, enthusiasm, skills and their ability to manage change and grasp opportunities to fulfill their potentials.

For the nation to derive maximum benefit from this major resource, aside of needing supportive, participatory and informative environment to help them move successfully from the dependency of childhood to the autonomy and responsibility of adulthood, the youth, in my opinion, will need to be imbued with such societal values or qualities as a high sense of responsibility, duty and service, truthfulness, integrity, courage and loyalty. These qualities are highly esteemed and are crucial to the building of a healthy and progressive nation.

It is my cherished hope that with the implementation of this Policy, the desired environment will be created to enable the young women and men of this country to realize their full potential to contribute meaningfully to the overall development of the nation.

E. T. MENSAH
MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS
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PREFACE
There are a number of issues which impact directly or indirectly on the development of the youth all over the world. These include issues peculiar to a continent, a region or sub-region, a people or a community.

In formulating the National Youth Policy, cognisance was taken of those issues which affect the Ghanaian youth. Thus, the National Youth Policy reflects their concerns and aspirations.

The Policy further emphasizes the multi-sectoral nature of youth development, and urges collaboration and joint efforts among stakeholders to avoid duplication and waste, and instead, ensure a common purpose and maximum utilization of resources.

This Policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect the changing needs of the youth and society.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Policy
The purpose of this policy document is to establish the identity and status of the Ghanaian youth within the framework of government policy and to provide a direction for youth activities and involvement in national development.

1.2 Guiding Principles of the Policy
The guiding principles of this Policy are to promote:
   a) National Integration and Unity;
   b) Cultural Identity; and
   c) Youth Empowerment

1.3 Rationale for a National Youth Policy
The youth constitute the driving force of society, the spirit of today and the hope for the future. In addition to constituting the largest segment, they are also the most socially active and productive sector of the Ghanaian population. An important feature of this population is its youthfulness and high rate of increase. It is estimated that young people aged between 5 - 35 years constitute over 26% of the national population (1995 World Youth Data). This segment of the population constitutes the bulk of our human resource potential which demands effective harnessing and mobilization to accelerate the rate of development of the country.

1.4 Definition of Youth
There is hardly any universally acceptable definition of youth. Youthfulness need not be exclusively determined by age. Other factors, like economic, cultural and environmental conditions may be equally important in defining youth. For purposes of this Policy, 'Youth' is defined as young women and men who fall within the age bracket of 15 - 35 years. Further, anyone who is acknowledged by deed as identifying with and committed to youth development may be recognized as youth.

1.5 Conditions Affecting the Youth
The youth profile in Ghana shows limited opportunities available to them. This has been aggravated by the following factors:
1.5.1 *Education and Employment*

The educational system has not adequately equipped young people with the relevant skills, knowledge and cultural values needed to face the challenges of after-school life. As a result, young people cannot find placement in the white-collar job market; neither are they able to create economic opportunities for themselves in the informal sector. There is therefore the need to relate the educational system to the job market.

1.5.2 *Health Challenges Facing the Youth*

There are numerous health problems and challenges facing the youth today which threaten their ability to live socially and economically productive lives in happiness and self-fulfillment. Some of the health problems which have been occasioned by negative behavioural patterns and life styles include:

a) Sexuality and reproductive health (including HIV-AIDS infections, teenage pregnancy, early marriage and parentage);

b) Drugs and substance abuse.

1.5.3 *Involvement of Youth in Violence and Anti-social Activities*

Problems like unemployment and the gradual breakdown of social support networks have predisposed young people to anti-social behaviours. Such deviant young people become marginalised and isolated from society and prone to violence and crime. There is also the growing incidence of civic, ethnic, religious and other conflicts in our society in which the youth are perceived to be both victims and perpetrators.

1.5.4 *Effect of Modernization on Youth*

The process of urbanization and modernization has brought about a situation in which the youth find themselves severed from their otherwise supportive indigenous social institutions which provided them guidance and ensured their stability. Technological advancement has also brought about new challenges which arise from the free flow of information. These changes are threatening the very fabric of our cultural heritage.

1.5.5 *Vulnerability*

Young people tend to have less life experience and often limited access to resources, information and control over their lives than older people. This makes them more vulnerable to various forms of abuse, exploitation, harassment and neglect.

1.5.6 *Sports and Recreation*

Sports and recreation promotes positive and healthy life styles. Further, sports are now identified as an important means of developing human potentials, particularly of the youth. Inadequate recreational facilities for use by young people has exacerbated their susceptibility to crime, and jeopardized their holistic development.

1.5.7 *Environmental Protection and Conservation*

There is no gainsaying the fact that young people who are the custodians of the future have a high stake in the protection and conservation of the environment. Yet, they are not fully involved in activities to protect the environment. Today, there are major environmental
problems which include:

- Uncontrolled logging and lumbering;
- Widespread bush fires;
- Uncontrolled mining activities;
- Pollution of water bodies; and
- Unsatisfactory sanitary practices.

1.5.8 Streetism
There is growing homelessness among young people, particularly in the urban areas. The phenomenon manifests itself in a large number of youth who are having to live on the streets owing to their socio-economic conditions such as unemployment and parental neglect. Such young people are deprived of family love, which is basic for their full development into responsible adults.

2.0 NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY GOALS
The National Youth Policy seeks to inculcate in the youth strong spiritual and moral values that will enable them to be responsible, self-reliant and patriotic citizens. The Policy therefore seeks to achieve the following goals:

2.1 Youth Empowerment
The concept of youth empowerment derives from the need to enable young people to have a say in decisions which affect them. Commonwealth Youth Ministers in a Communiqué issued at the end of their conference in Trinidad and Tobago in 1995 noted that pursuing the objective of youth empowerment gave young people the maximum opportunity to contribute to the economic, social and cultural advancement of their families and countries and to gain self-fulfillment.

Youth Empowerment may be viewed from two main dimensions:

a) Young people are empowered when they are convinced that they can create alternative choices in life and are fully conscious of the implications of such choices, freely make informed decisions, take action based on such decisions and accept responsibility for the outcomes of such decisions and actions.

b) To empower young people also connotes the creation and sustenance of the enabling conditions for young people to act on their own behalf and on their own terms instead of relying on the discretion of others. Such enabling conditions may be categorised into four main areas, viz,

i) Economic and social base;

ii) Political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative framework;

iii) A stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; and

iv) Access to knowledge, information and skills, and positive value system.

2.1.1 Rationale for Youth Empowerment
Youth development has been the concern of the entire society, and the major stake-holders are Governments, inter-governmental, educational and religious institutions, the private sector,
the family and community networks, peer groups and the young people themselves. Efforts to address youth development concerns have been by the social welfare approach which perceives young people as passive objects who should be guided and managed by older and more experienced people.

The participatory approach, which is an improvement on the welfare approach, provides for consultation and listening to young people and then taking decisions on their behalf. Again, this approach does not actively involve young people in the decision making process on issues that affect their lives and development.

Youth empowerment as a concept and approach to youth development holds that "young people are themselves the best resource for promoting their development and that they must be both architects and agents in meeting the challenges and solving the problems faced in today's world and in the new millennium."

2.2 Coalition and Partnership Building

The absence of a co-ordinated approach to youth issues has resulted in our inability to initiate and implement effective youth-focused programmes beneficial to the youth. The Policy therefore seeks to create a forum for all stakeholders to participate in youth development programmes and activities from the grassroots through to the national level.

2.3 Institutional Framework

The Policy is also aimed at developing structures that will be supportive of young people's initiatives in promoting social responsibility and national pride.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

In pursuit of the above-stated goals, the National Youth Policy seeks: -

3.1 To strengthen the National Youth Council as the statutory body charged with responsibility for the facilitation and co-ordination of youth development activities in the country. To this end, all youth associations and youth service agencies or groups whose aims, objectives and activities are not in conflict with national aspirations of unity, peace and development shall be recognised by the National Youth Council which is the lead agency for:

3.1.1 Promoting and safeguarding the rights of young people and the responsibility that the broader community has for the youth;
3.1.2 Promoting healthy lifestyles amongst the youth;
3.1.3 Promoting sporting and physical activities for the youth;
3.1.4 Promoting the spirit of patriotism and nationalism amongst the youth;
3.1.5 Ensuring that the youth have equal access to opportunities necessary for their self-development and that of society at large; and
3.1.6 Promoting international friendship and co-operation to enable the youth understand and appreciate global issues, especially those that affect the African continent.

3.2 To ensure that adequate resources are made available from Government sources for youth work. Non-governmental organisations will also be encouraged to support youth development programmes;
3.3 to design a comprehensive, multi-sectoral response to the major concerns and aspirations of the youth in Ghana;

3.4 to establish mechanisms that ensure collaboration and co-operation amongst relevant Government, non-governmental and community stakeholders;

3.5 to address the specific social, economic and health problems that confront the youth in their effort to develop their capabilities;

3.6 to assist the youth to acquire knowledge, skills, and experience which will enable them to effectively participate in national development

3.7 to involve the youth in decision-making;

3.8 to promote the harmonization of other policies, programmes, strategies and youth-related research; and

3.9 to integrate youth work into the functions of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies.

4.0 REGISTRATION AND CATEGORIZATION OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

4.1 Registration
The National Youth Council shall register youth organizations, Clubs and Associations at three levels, viz.

a) **District Level Registration**
Associations and Clubs which exist and operate within a particular district shall register with the District Youth Council.

b) **Regional Level Registration**
Associations and Clubs operating in 60% of the districts in a particular region shall be registered by the Regional Youth Council.

c) **National Level Registration**
Youth Clubs and Associations which have a national spread i.e., have an effective presence in 60% of the regions shall be registered by the National Youth Council at the national level.

Youth organisations shall be encouraged to focus their activities on particular sectors of our national socio-economic life, for example, in the agricultural, scientific, cultural and environmental sectors.

5.0 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION
5.1 **Strengthening Linkages**

The National Youth Policy will encourage the strengthening of linkages between education and training and the world of work. Apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training schemes will be promoted to enable young people acquire skills and experience relevant to the labour market and self-employment.

5.2 **Increased Accessibility of Health Service to the Youth**

This will involve the following:

a) Promotion of healthy life-styles;

b) promotion of youth-targeted family planning services; and

c) promotion of service to the youth with specific problems, e.g. Young people living with HIV/AIDS infection, pregnant young women and those with physical disabilities.

5.3 **Promotion of Sporting and Recreational Activities**

This will involve:

5.3.1 Encouraging rehabilitation of existing facilities and the construction of new ones to meet the ever-increasing demand for sporting and recreational activities by the youth;

5.3.2 establishing and encouraging the establishment of Youth Centres and hostels by Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies, Communities, Churches, Islamic institutions and other Non-governmental organizations throughout the country to serve as rallying points for youth activities in the communities; and

5.3.3 promoting domestic and international tourism among young people.

5.4 **Partnership and Collaboration**

Youth development would best be undertaken through the inter-ministerial approach. The need for the active involvement of all other stakeholders is necessary and therefore should be encouraged.

5.5 **National Youth Week**

A National Youth Week will be instituted during which period the situation of the youth will be assessed and programmes and projects to emphasize their contribution to national development will be highlighted.

A forum will be organised to deliberate on topical national issues and matters of common concern to young people.

5.6 **National Youth Service Award**

There shall be instituted a National Youth Service Award Scheme that shall include the Head of State's Award Programme and other awards to encourage self-discovery, self-reliance, perseverance, individual responsibility and service to the community.

These awards shall be made to the youth who exhibit exemplary qualities in various areas of human endeavour and individuals and organisations who distinguish themselves in promoting youth development.

5.7 **Youth Clubs**

The National Youth Council shall encourage the formation of Youth Clubs throughout the country to
5.8 Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance and Counselling services shall be provided to help the youth make informed choices and to address the multiple social problems that confront them. Such services shall also equip the youth to gain emotional maturity and to develop appropriate inter-personal communication skills and moral values.

5.9 Youth Work Camps, Festivals and Anniversaries

Work camps and festivals shall be organised to foster participation in community development activities and to promote cultural integration among the youth. The youth shall also be involved in the celebration of important national events in order to promote patriotism and national pride among them.

5.10 Seminars, Lectures and Conferences

Seminars, lectures and conferences will be organised to focus attention on pertinent issues.

5.11 Youth Leadership Training Institutes

The National Youth Council shall establish and administer Youth Leadership Training Institutes throughout the country to give training in basic vocational, entrepreneurial and leadership skills to the youth.

It is expected that graduates of these institutes will utilise their acquired skills through the establishment of co-operatives and other self-employment initiatives to become self-reliant.

5.12 Participation in National Environmental Programmes

The youth as individuals or groups will be encouraged to participate in national environmental programmes within the framework of the National Environmental Policy.

5.13 Cross-Cultural Exchange and Networking

The Policy will promote cross-cultural exchange programmes and networking among the youth of various socio-cultural and religious backgrounds to enhance national integration and international understanding and co-operation.

6.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has, in this policy document, endeavoured to formulate the necessary guidelines for youth empowerment and development in Ghana. The Policy has been designed to create space for the active involvement of all who have interest in youth development. It also attempts to address the negative perception of people regarding youth matters. Government believes that it is only through a collaborative effort by governmental and non-governmental organisations and civil society that the desired objectives of this Policy would be achieved.