

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

**YOUTH
POLICY
DOCUMENT**

*PREPARED BY
The National Youth Commission*

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

PREAMBLE

The 1991 population Census, clearly identified some 39,626 persons (37.2% of the population who are 15 years but under 30 years. Cumulatively, these two categories account for 66.7% of the population. The ramifications of this reality is obvious and are far-reaching, especially when consideration is given to the need to create gainful employment for such a youthful population.

Youths, and Vincentian youths in particular, should be looked upon as more than depositories for information and mere recipients of services. To be sure, adequate conditions must be created, to provide for proper study, play and overall personal development. Of equal measure, is the need to create conditions and opportunities that encourage and facilitate youths active participation in the broader social, political, cultural and economic life of their country of abode.

National organisations like the National Youth Commission, the Youth Department, and the National Youth Council, have been intricately involved with varying degrees of success in promoting the participation of youth in the process of national development . This National Youth Policy paper, therefore, gives substance and sustenance to the national efforts. The policy paper provides guiding principles in accordance with what required to harness the opinions, talents, initiatives, resources and experiences of Vincentian youth, all in the noble cause of building a better St.Vincent and the Grenadines.

Investments in the youth of our country are investments for the future. Thus, it is felt that effective and genuine implementation of the recommendations propounded in the Policy document will benefit St.Vincent and the Grenadines in the short and medium to long run.

PREFACE

The National Youth Commission was established in 1988. It was appointed by the Government, through the Cabinet, and charged with the following responsibilities:

- (i) To monitor, review and advise Government on matters pertaining to youth and youth development;
- (ii) To advise on the setting up and maintenance of a referral and information systems;
- (iii) To recommend a practical, suitable and appropriate form of National Service for youths;
- (iv) To publish selected papers on matters related to youth and youth development among other things; and
- (v) To formulate a National Youth Policy.

This policy document, therefore, is in keeping with mandate five (v), as elucidated above.

The Youth Policy document is the result of a number of Consultations which involved the active, uninhibited and committed participation of a wide cross-section of young people and adults throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines – a process that began in since 1989. Emanting from the interaction and exchange of ideas and concepts, was the notion that a National Youth Policy document should be developed for the benefit of this, and other generations of youth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Recognition is here given the organisations and Government Departments that comprise the National Youth Commission, for their contributions to the Youth Policy Document. Those organisations/Departments include:

Commonwealth Youth Programme

Service Clubs (Youth Arms)
Uniformed Organisation
Social Workers Association
National Student Council
Adult Education Unit
Department of Women's Affairs
Central Planning Unit
Legal Affairs Department
Youth Department

Community Development Division

Youth for Christ

Honourable mention is here made, and thanks extended to the following personnel, whose contributions to the document were invaluable. They are:

Hon. Yvonne Francis Gibson-	Minister of Health and the Environment
Hon. Jeremiah Scott -	Minister of Communications and Works
Hon. Bernard Wyllie-	Minister of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs and Chairman of the National Youth Commission
Hon. Louis Jones- Youth	Ministry of Housing, Local Government, Community Services and Youth

Special thanks is also extended to other individuals who contributed consistently and unselfishly to the framing of the Youth Policy Document. They are:

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SECTION A

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this Youth Policy, youth is defined as that category of the population in the age range 15-30 years inclusive.

SECTION B

Youth Policy Goal

The purpose of this Youth Policy is to act as guide to policy makers and policy implementing agencies as to the role that youths should play, and the position they should occupy in the society. The paper acknowledges youths views, recognizes their current positive efforts and suggests strategies and programmes that will enhance their contribution to society as a whole.

SECTION C

OBJECTIVES

The National Youth Policy will:

- 1.1 Provide a framework that seeks to remove any constraints of a social, cultural, economic, political, religious or Administration nature, that inhibit the effective growth and development of youth, and prevent their full integration into the mainstream of national development;
- 1.2 Facilitate and enhance the work of local youth organisations and other organisations working to promote the interest of youth;
- 1.3 Provide impetus and direction for collaboration with regional and international organisations, in pursuance of Fulfilling the purpose/mission of the policy ;
- 1.4 Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines and structures to assist in the implementation of the principles and programmes set out in the policy.

SECTION D

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is a fundamental human right. It is enshrined thus in the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations, the august body of which our country is a full member. It follows therefore, that the provision of jobs that utilize the human resources of a nation, must remain the principal objective of any National Development Plan.

Meaningful employment of our youth would not only sustain but also improve productivity. At the same time it (employment) would dispel the tendencies toward social misconduct (eg. Drug use, crime, delinquency) which are inherent in idleness and unemployment.

Toward attainment of the national goal of ensuring or providing employment for our youth, the following action are proposed:

1.0 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

- 1.1 That on going assessments (through manpower surveys) of employment needs be instituted so as to provide a basis for meaningful policy development and preparation and placement of youth for the job market;
- 1.2 That the existing Youth Department, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, be upgraded so it can function as an effective agency of job placement for youths, as well as being equipped to offer guidance on preparation for and availability of jobs for youths;

2.0 CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 That, given the dominance of Agriculture in the productive sector of our economy, incentives be created so that more youths are encouraged to become involved in agricultural endeavors:
 - (i) The National Land Reform Programme be modified to allow for an equitable distribution of lands to youths, reflecting the demographic composition of areas under consideration;
 - (ii) Increase, organized efforts should be directed towards locating and securing markets and better prices for agricultural produce, and
 - (iii) Serious exploration of linkage industries.
- 2.2 That conditions be created for the growth and development of the cooperative sector and self-employment initiatives among youths:
 - (i) credit facilities must be established with consideration given to lowering interest rates below prime commercial levels;
 - (ii) consideration be given to the provision of subsidies (eg. For inputs, raw

- (iii) materials, tools, machinery);
 - (iii) training in appropriate management (styles, modes, etc.) must be provided or encouraged;
- 2.3 That a sustained effort be undertaken to encourage local private sector investment in manufacturing, and service industries so as to widen the employment base, thus providing increased opportunity for youths;

3.0 **TRAINING**

- 3.1 That a structural National Youth Service (programme), spanning two (2) years, be introduced as a means of teaching skills and creating a pool of expertise, while at the same time inculcating healthy attitudes to work, productivity and nation building in general. The national youth service (N.Y.S) (programme) will strengthen existing skills training programme and create new ones where none exist
- 3.2 That an in- service system be introduced in the work place, so that young workers especially, can be exposed to relevant advanced technology, consequently improving their capacity, productivity and confidence.

SECTION E

EDUCATION

Education is the preparation of the human resource as an integral part of the National Development process. Faith in the education of our youth is a fundamental part of our democratic tradition of preparing our youth for the world of work and for life in general, the latter including how to live as good citizens who can promote the welfare of all.

Acceptance of the afore-mentioned must lead to action guided by the fact that there exists an inter relationship between the education system and the existing and potential jobs markets. Action so motivated will ensure that a genuine basis is created, at the school level, for the preparation of youth for their place in the sphere of production and service to their country. Activity within the education system will then respond to the reality of national development, which requires the output of rounded professional and technical personnel attendant on corresponding growth in the productive sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, servicing industries) defined role for the University of West Indies School of continuing studies in consultation/deliberation with the Ministry of Education:

ATTENDANT SERVICES/OBLIGATIONS

- 4.1 Reduce the cost of education generally by giving advanced consideration to: subsidizing the cost of text books and other school materials; or producing text books locally;
- 4.2 Establish a proper decentralized library service to complement the studies of students and encourage their general and personal development;
- 4.3 Create within the mainstream system, opportunities for disabled, to prepare them for pursuit of useful and productive lives:
- 4.4 Provide out reach programmes to those who have dropped out (of school), especially adolescent girls who might have become pregnant while attending school:
- 4.5 Collaborate (i.e Government) with non-government organisations to develop and improve programmes to address the reality of illiteracy and its consequences.
- 4.6 Make greater use of the media (particularly television and radio) in the promotion of programmes that seek to support and advance education as a tool used in the process of attaining broader national goals.

SECTION F

HEALTH

The development of healthy minds and bodies is a fundamental prerequisite to the process of nation building. Any significant percentage of one population (especially the youth sector) that cannot contribute to national productivity because of unhealthy minds and bodies, exerts strain on the rest of the population and society in general – thereby adversely affecting our efforts to maximize productivity.

For the individual to be mentally and physically capable of playing his/her role in nation building, the provision of adequate health services, training and education in healthy habits/lifestyles, must be given priority consideration and active support.

Toward the objective of developing healthy minds and bodies among our youth, the following should form of the national effort:

The structuring of the education system for the holistic development of the individual, is necessary

This situation can be addressed through, though not exclusive to, the following action

1.0

POLICY/LEGISLATION

- 1.1 Ensuring that education is compulsory up to 15 years throughout the country and that mechanisms are in place to provide basic knowledge and skills, that will serve as the foundation for the future of the individual:

2.0

SCHOOL – CURRICULUM/ACTIVITY

- 2.1 Expanding the career guidance and counseling programmes to students at the Primary, Secondary and post-secondary levels, using the expertise of trained professionals:
- 2.2 Facilitating the equipping of schools for proper and meaningful education in sciences and languages;
- 2.3 Including moral and spiritual education in the schools curricula
- 2.4 Including studies in Civics, Family Life and Human Sexuality and Environmental Issues in the schools curricula:
- 2.5 Including in all schools a quality Physical Education programme:
- 2.6 Linking schools with community groups, e.g 4-H Clubs:
- 2.7 Creating favourable conditions for the growth of students bodies as instruments for enhancing the participation of students in the decision making process of education in the country:
- 2.8 Including as an integral part of the education system (including the primary level), technical vocational and technological education:

3.0

LINKAGES

- 2.1 Defining and enforcing the link between the different levels of educational institutions (i.e Pre-primary, primary, secondary, and post-secondary) and ensuring proper preparation for the transition through the different levels especially between primary and secondary:
- 2.2 Providing secondary education opportunities through: the establishment of a Community College: increase training abroad and a greater and more clearly.

SECTION G

CULTURE

Culture is the force that binds people together as they grapple with the challenges of adaptation and development. It is the single and strongest force that promotes and sustains a people's identity and purpose. Political leadership without genuine cultural leadership will not create an honest understanding of our place of pride among the peoples of the global village.

The acceptance and promotion of its culture is invaluable to any nation. Investment in such endeavors must be given priority status, but this investment must not be evaluated in purely materialistic terms: the results are better measured in attitudinal and aesthetic terms.

Promotion of culture will result in the creation and sustenance of numerous initiatives/ activities on the part of young people in this country. This would provide the youth with an indigenous alternative to foreign values, tastes and fashion, and provide them with local role models to serve as an inspiration.

Measures toward achievements of these ends, inclusive of encouraging youth's recognition of the positive contribution of the arts (i.e local music), are:

Training and Facilities

- 1.1 The training of persons to conduct research in and documentation of our various art form;
- 1.2 Exposing young artistes to advanced training and cultural exchanges so as to improve their quality of performance and appreciation of cultural expressions;
- 1.3 Providing centres for the Performing Arts, to facilitate the staging of local productions;
- 1.4 Provision for relevant training facilities distributed throughout the State according to population clusters; and
- 1.5 The guarantee of certification for training so that same can be recognised so as to facilitate further training.

2.0 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

- 2.1 The development of linkages between culture and other sectors of national life, especially the tourism industry;
- 2.2 Encourage and promote the preservation of all articles, artifacts and other relevant aspects of our culture and history;
- 2.3 Encourage the promotion of local music in the life of our people.

3.0 SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

- 3.1 Formalize cultural and artistic programmes in schools through the teaching of art and art forms in schools, so as to instill an attitude of striving for excellence and appreciation of beauty and the aesthetics;
- 3.2 Provision for participation of disabled persons in all aspects of cultural life;

- 3.3 Expanding the use of Popular Theatre as a means of community education and entertainment.

4.0 **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

- 4.1 Provision of Government's on going financial and material support;
- 4.2 Encouraging greater financial support by the private sector
- 4.3 Encouraging greater financial support by the private sector;
- 4.4 Vigorously accessing resources from relevant international (eg UNESCO) and hemispheric (e.g OAS) organisations with a view to maximizing the benefits to youths.

1.0 **POLICY/ LEGISLATION**

- 1.1 Free medical services be made available to all children and youth from birth to the end of formal school system, as well as to unemployed youth and those within the low-income bracket;
- 1.2 Legal and other measures be used to combat the production and use of drugs; narcotics, alcohol and other harmful substances that hamper the growth of a healthy people. Action in this regard should include **the vigorous enforcement of the laws, governing the sale of alcohol to minors.**

2.0 **SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

- 2.1 Continuous upgrading of health facilities and services throughout the state, with urgent attention being paid to rural areas and the implementation of a sustained Primary Health Care Programme;
- 2.2 Government and related Agencies to ensure that there are trained personnel and adequate institutions, including counseling and rehabilitation centres, to address the problems of mental health, drug abuse, child abuse and all other forms of abuse;

3.0 **THE ENVIRONMENT**

- 3.1 Government to ensure that sanitary and environmental conditions are improved through the passage and enforcement of appropriate legislation;
- 3.2 Cultivating proper attitudes to sanitation and the environment through mass/popular education programmes.

4.0 **SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

- 4.1 Specific Health Education Programmes catering to youths, with special attention being paid to education on AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), since the age group 14-30 years is a high risk group to STDs.
- 4.2 Continuous research into specific health needs of youths.

5.0 **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 5.1 Encourage the involvement of community-based organisations, especially youth organisations, in the planning and delivery of Primary Health Care.

SECTION H

SPORTS, RECREATION AND LEISURE

The development of a proper sporting, recreational and leisure programme is critical to the overall development (physical, social, mental and spiritual) of our youths. A programme of such intent will foster the realization of their true potential. At the same time, it offers a positive outlet for the natural enthusiasm, energies and creativity of youth, acting thus as a deterrent to non-productive, anti-social activities, such as drug abuse and crime.

Once the appropriate support structures and opportunities are put in place, the nation as a whole will benefit from the contributions of the youth. In this respect the following are essential:

1.0 **TRAINING AND FACILITIES**

- 1.1 Implementation of mechanisms that will ensure the upgrading of current facilities;
- 1.2 Providing additional suitable recreational facilities (playground, picnic sites, parks etc.) and sporting facilities with emphasis on aquatic sports, primary school games, etc.
- 1.3 Encouraging the active involvement of youth in the development and maintenance of these facilities;
- 1.4 Providing training at all levels for sports personnel-players, coaches, administrators, etc.

2.0 **CONCESSION AND REWARDS**

- 2.1 Granting duty free or partial concessions to recreational, leisure and sporting bodies, on gear appropriate to their activity or discipline;
- 2.2 Offering tangible rewards (financial support, scholarships, etc.) and due recognition to outstanding sportsmen and women and sports personnel.

3.0 **POLICY-MAKING AND ADMINISTRATION**

- 3.1 Encouraging the active involvement of youth in the planning process through representation on policy-making and influencing bodies;

3.2 Making it obligatory that Administrations of sporting facilities provide and publicize comprehensive sports.

4.0 **SPECIAL AREAS OF ATTENTION**

4.1 Fostering closer collaboration between the Government Sports Department and national sporting organisations;

4.2 Facilitating participation in regional and international sporting events;

4.3 Providing for the special needs of disabled youths and encouraging their involvement in the following areas:

- (i) Mobility/Access- At Planning Division all new plans for public buildings should provide for access of the disabled.
- (ii) Education- To extend the school life of the disabled beyond the normal school-age, depending on the nature of the disability;
 - To provide sufficient facilities for the disabled, nation wide;
- (iii) Health Care- To ensure the early detection of developmental disabilities and And provide for continued evaluation and medical attention.
- (iv) Communication- To communicate information to the hearing impaired through the use of sign language, especially in areas such as news, weather, etc. and in fora with disabled audiences.
- (v) Sports- Adequate provision for the disabled in reference to coaching and sporting facilities to aid their full participation in special events, such as Olympics.
- (vi) Employment- To provide concessionary measures to businesses operated by the disabled.
- (vii) Organisation- To make provision for a National Association which will act as an advisory body to ensure the implementation of the policy guidelines in relation to the disabled.

4.4 Facilitating the participation of youths in healthy outdoor activities, through their membership in appropriate community organisations;

4.5 Using the mass media to educate the youths about the importance of fitness for life.

SECTION I

YOUTH PARTICIPATION & REPRESENTATION

Youth constitute the largest single chronological group or cluster of our population. The 1991 Population and Housing Census Report reveals that young persons below 30 years constitute 66.7% of our population of 106,499 person. It is reasonable to expect therefore, that the youth would be involved in and consulted on issues of national concern. This can be achieved thus:

1.0 PARTICIPATION

- 1.1 Making available to young citizens appropriate decision-making for a, that encourage active, meaningful and sustained participation at community, parish/constituency and national levels;
- 1.2 Re-introduction of Local Government or the putting in place of some other comparable and appropriate local administration arrangements.

2.0 REPRESENTATION

- 2.1 Consultation between Government and the National Youth Commission, to decide on the National Boards and Bodies upon which youth should be represented.

SECTION J

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

While the ultimate responsibility for coordination and implementation of the National Youth Policy rests with the Government and the National Youth Commission, an integrated, intersectoral, approach must be utilized in order to make optimum use of available human and material resources and to maintain a common (national) focus.

1.0 ROLE/FUNCTION OF IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

- 1.1 To review, assess and report on issue related to and affecting youth;
- 1.2 To monitor and advise Government on the processes of implementation, especially where such processes are pursued by/through Government Departments;
- 1.3 To promote, all levels, the aspirations of youths, to include active participation in international programming, policy formulation and implementation;
- 1.4 To create, facilitate, strengthen the networking between the Youth Department and the National Youth Council; between Government (Departments) and regional and international organisations.

2.0 **NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION**

2.1 To be comprised of representation from:

National Student Council	National Sports Council
National Youth Council	Service Clubs
Uniformed Organisation	Youth Department
Social Workers Association	Community Development Division
Adult Education Unit	Youth for Christ
Department of Women's Affairs	Central Planning Unit
Ministry of Finance	Legal Affairs

2.2 Each organisation represented on the Commission must have the right/privilege to access information on, assistance for and speak on behalf of their (youth) membership.

3.0 **NATIONAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME**

3.1 The Youth Policy provides the frame-work for the signing of international treaties and conventions that relate to the development and welfare of youth,

3.2 The policy should be subject to a mandatory review every three (3) years;

3.3 Financial and material support must be guaranteed for the effective implementation of programmes, aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the Policy.

R E F E R E N C E S

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