

2008

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY E-CONSULTATION REPORT

A report of the 4-week long online consultation on the National Youth Policy

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY E-CONSULTATION

FINAL REPORT

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I. Acknowledgement

The e-consultation team would like to thank the 122 young people and adult allies from all over Nigeria and beyond that joined and participated in the 4-week long e-consultations. The robust contributions and discussions have formed the crux of this report. We also express our gratitude to the Federal Ministry of Youth Development for initiating the overhauling of the National youth policy whose review has long been overdue.

Finally, our thanks goes to UNFPA who has maintained a strong institutional support to youth development over the years, without their support, this e-consultation would not have been possible.

II. Introduction

The National Youth Policy represents a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that a country intends to provide for the development of its young men and women. It is a concrete and bold step to put the development and participation of young people at the centre of national development efforts. It is indicative of the readiness of the Federal Government to meet the needs and aspirations of the youth as well as seek solution to their problems. It sets guidelines and provides the framework for all stakeholders to empower the youth to realize their potentialities and take advantage of the opportunities available to make positive contributions to the well-being of their communities across the entire countryⁱ.

In response to the dire need for the review of the 2001 National Youth Policy, which was long overdue; the UNFPA in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Youth Development commenced the review process with the provision of the draft policy and implementation strategy as well as holding consultations over the documents.

In order to ensure meaningful youth participation in the review process, UNFPA spearheaded the online consultation to serve as a platform for those who may not attend the policy's zonal consultations to contribute their ideas. Thus this report presents the thoughts and recommendations of participants recognizing that young people are partners of today; leaders of tomorrow.

III. About the Participants

In order to get a wide scope of opinions and ideas from young people, persons/agencies working with youths, etc ; the e-consultation team disseminated information about the consultation through friends, email linkserves of coalitions and networks and groups. Participants were active youth leaders in their communities, adult allies and development workers.

There were 122 participants in the e-consultation from the 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and also a number of young Nigerians in the Diaspora and non-Nigerians participated in the discussion.

IV. Process

The E-consultation was held on the platform of TakingITGlobal(TIG)ⁱⁱ an online community that connects youth to find inspiration, access information, get involved and take action in their local and global communities.

The consultation lasted for a period of 4 weeks; each week the facilitators posted 2-4 questions for participants' response. The following week, the facilitator posted a weekly summary of responses and the questions for the next week.

The first week of the e-consultation focused on the new youth age definition being (18-30), the priority groups and activities slated for these groups, participants also suggested excluded groups for inclusion in the final draft of the policy.

During the second week, participants addressed the priority themes and strategic interventions in the policy, making recommendations for new themes and a re-phrasal existing ones.

The discussions in weeks 3 and 4 were centered on policy implementation and resource mobilization; institutional framework as well as monitoring and evaluation. Opportunity was also provided for additional thoughts on issues that may have been missed during the previous weeks.

This report summarizes the discussions that took place during the consultation. The outcomes of this e-consultation would be presented at the zonal consultation for the youth policy and would be incorporated into its final draft.

V. E-consultation Results

The following section reflects the responses, thoughts and recommendations of the 122 participants. Responses are categorized based on the questions for each week. Quotes were employed to capture respondents own words, attempts was also made at minimizing paraphrasing.

WEEK 1

YOUTH AGE DEFINITION

Question 1: Do you support the new youth age definition?

The new youth age definition of (18-30) was resoundingly accepted by participants stating that is more realistic and it is in line with the UN definition of Youth. *“I think it implies that we are preparing to standardize our youth development, making it higher and can begin to expect that youth should have reached the peak of their development before or by the age of 30. If we can work to keep this target in view and ensure its attainment, it will be one way of aiding national development - a major way for that matter”*- Abdiel Kude, Kaduna State. Others who were in contradiction stated the need for a line to be drawn between chronological age and mental age.

PRIORITY TARGET GROUP

Question 2: What activities do you think the National youth policy can propose to improve the lot of the priority groups?

Participants endorsed the activities already stated in the policy and suggested that programme contents for these priority groups should focus on value re-orientation. There was also a call for the review of the objectives and contents of the NYSC programme a participant from Lagos state, Kola Osinowo puts it this way *“I think the FG should revisit the intent and content of the NYSC programme, Imagine if you spend the 3 weeks mandatory orientation camp in entrepreneurship classes and afterwards the state government through SMEDAN gives loans to viable business plans, do you know how many businesses will be created in our states”*

Question 3: Is there any priority group that has been left out that you think deserves to be included?

They asserted that though the policy is comprehensive in the categorization of priority groups; some groups were exempted, so they suggested however, they strongly suggested that Men having sex with Men (MSM) and Women Having Sex with Women (WSW} as well as Nigerian Youth in Diaspora for inclusion in the policy. Victor Gotevbe from Lagos State stated that *“this Class of young people are a critical mass, whose contributions are extremely important and should not be ignored”*. The

Policy was also called to address the xenophobic attacks faced by this group in South Africa, Spain and other countries.

Question 4: Please suggest activities for these group (Illiterate Youth, Youth addicted to drugs and chemical substances, Domestic servants/helpers, Sex Workers)

For the following priority groups(Illiterate Youth, Youth addicted to drugs and chemical substances, Domestic servants/helpers, Sex Workers)Participants suggested second chance programmes which may include Rehabilitation, Reintegration and skills development activities for these categories to enable them to move them from their present status to that of normalcy and independence.

WEEK 2

PRIORITY THEMES AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

(Amongst the 18 priority groups mentioned in the draft policy)**Is there any priority theme that has been left out? Please propose any priority theme that you think should be included?**

Most participants were of the opinion that there is need to rephrase some of the priority themes in order to make it more encompassing, Fatoki Timmy from Osun State noted *“Youth in decision making should also encompass governance; I think it’s better to say youth participation in decision making and governance”*. While others demanded that the goals

and strategic intervention be apt and clearly spelt out “*stating actions*” in order to enhance implementation tracking. Nkiruka Nnaemego A participant from Abuja puts it this way “*one of the strategic interventions under Youth and Conflict Prevention and Peace Building is effort should be made to prevent youth involvement in thuggery, and those who sponsor youths as political thugs directly or indirectly should be severely penalized*”. I do not take this to be a strategic action. The question is - who will make the effort? What is the desired action? The penalty should be spelt out, or referred to the law to take its full course.

Question 6: Please suggest strategic interventions for each of the priority themes. Some strategic interventions have already been proposed in the draft document.

- Youth and Leadership development,
- Youth and Food Security,
- Youth and Value System,
- Youth and community development were the priority themes suggested by participants for inclusion in the final draft of the youth policy.

The intervention areas were endorsed by participants; however they strongly demanded that the intervention efforts be clearly stated, in line Ministries/policies be mentioned and their role clearly stated. Under the Youth and Education theme- Kilanko Adeolu from Abuja asserted that “*The education of females should be given priority, especially as it concerns their personal hygiene and menstrual health; I propose incentives in the like free sanitary towels, clean toilets and other necessities for the female children to be given to them for free in schools*”

WEEK 3

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Question 7: How do you think that the federal Government can demonstrate political will and support for the National youth policy?

Participants were of the view that government's political will can largely be demonstrated by the annual budgetary allocation to youth issues and the Federal Ministry of Youth Development (FMOYD); it could also be seen through the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies, projects and programmes.

The FMOYD was also called upon to spearhead structural reforms in the National Youth Council to enable it function effectively and represent the views of Nigerian youths as well as address the challenges facing them. Rotimi Olawale from Lagos state said *“As far as i am concerned, the powers bestowed on the national youth council is too much weight for a single organization to carry on its head. The national youth council has swum against the tides in recent times and trust and respect by young people across Nigeria in the council is at sub-zero. A lot of young people have approached the ministries of youth and different states ministries in charge of youth only to be turned down because they do not belong to the national youth council and efforts to join and meaningfully participate in the national youth council are at best frustrated or an exercise in futility.”*

Question 8: In what areas and ways can resources (human, material, technical and financial) be mobilized for the implementation of the National youth Policy?

Participants were of the view that Nigeria is blessed with enormous resources both human and financial; so the Federal government through the MOYD should work towards recognizing and supporting youth networks that are working on specific issues relating to young people e.g. HIV/AIDS, Employment, ICTS etc; so young people's perspectives and experiences could be integrated and harnessed thereby building their leadership capacities through these platforms. A participant from Cross River State, Esther Eshiet puts it this way" *our voices and opinions are very vital in addressing issues that concern/ affect us; we don't want to be project beneficiaries and token collectors rather we want meaningful Adult-Youth partnership"*

The Federal government was also called upon to establish a "Youth Development Tax or Levy" where corporate organizations and multi-nationals are mandated to pay a certain amount of money as part of their corporate social responsibility; thereby affirming their commitment to youth development.

WEEK 4

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Question 9: How can the national youth policy be institutionalized in such a way that the impact is felt at the federal, states and local government levels.

Participants were of the opinion that institutionalizing the National Youth Policy can be done through concretizing the existence of the policy through legislation; suggestions were strongest that the Policy should be upheld by the Nigerian constitution. Other suggestions were that in view of the diverse values, culture and orientation; The Federal Government and the FMOYD should create Youth Development indexes and trend monitoring schemes that are aligned to every thematic areas in the Policy. This report should be disaggregated by both age and gender; it should comprise educational background, location: both rural or urban, employment status and average income.

This should be encapsulated in an annual State of The Nigerian Youth Report that will be developed annually using a multi-stakeholder platform that will include the Federal Ministry of Youth development, relevant ministries, the National Planning Commission, selected youth leaders, UN agencies and development partners. The report will monitor yearly progress made in the implementation of the youth policy, highlight challenges and gaps; and profer recommendations on filling

the gaps identified. Toluleke Obadimu; A participant from Ogun State summarizes that *“ The lack of disaggregated data at local level, especially in poor and densely populated areas limits the availability of strategic analysis to study, measure and evaluate the impact of the various policies.”*

Question 10: How can the progress made be monitored and evaluated?

On monitoring and evaluation; participants recommended that the Ministry should institute a multi-sectoral monitoring and evaluation team comprising the staff of the various in line Ministries, Youth Networks, NGOs, and development partners. They suggested that these M & E team should be created based on each thematic area billed for evaluation, e.g Education, Health, ICTS, Employment etc. The report of the annual evaluation exercise should form the crust of the State of the Nigerian Youth Report.

VI. Conclusion

Youths are critical stakeholders in the development process, they possess skills, passion and energy as well as the ability to lead and create positive change in their society. Therefore their engagement in policy making processes and in tackling issues that concern them is an essential step to achieving progress.

The outcome of this e-consultation will be presented to the Federal Ministry of Youth Development who have committed that the recommendations will be integrated into the final version of the policy.

Getting the policy right is a major step in the right direction. However, we urge the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, development partners, youth leaders and other stakeholders to claim ownership of this policy and spearhead its implementation as a tool to fast-track youth development across the nation.

VII. Facilitators

Esther Eshiet is the West African Regional Focal point for the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS. She is the lead author of the 2008 UNGASS National Youth Shadow Report, a member of the Mexico Youth Force and ICASA Youth Front Advocacy sub-committees (a coalition of youth-led and/or youth-serving HIV/AIDS organizations who are working to empower young delegates and promote youth participation around HIV/AIDS before, during and after the XVII Mexico City International AIDS Conference, 2008 and the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa, Senegal 2008). She can be reached on esther@youthaidscoalition.org

Rotimi Olawale is the task force member of the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS. Over the past three years he has been involved in leading youth advocacy efforts mainly around the Millennium Development Goals. Rotimi in 2005 was selected to represent Nigeria at the United Nations pan-African Youth Leadership Summit in Ifrane Morocco. Also, in the same year, he was selected to represent Nigeria and the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS on United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Global youth Advisory Panel in New York. In 2006, he was selected as one of 2 Nigerian youth delegate to the United Nations Global youth leadership Summit which held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. (www.unyouthsummit.org)

Very recently, due to his work on youth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), he has been selected to the Global reference team for

young people and PRSPs convened by the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). He has worked extensively with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Global Peace Initiative for Women (GPIW) and the Africa Leadership Forum (ALF) on various youth development initiatives. Rotimi maintains a blog on www.rotexonline.tigblogs.org

IX.Appendix

Total number of participants: 122

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i Second Draft Review of the National Youth Policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

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