



COUNTING ON YOUTH

Youth Policy Review Europe and Central Asia

DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

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for the

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PART 1

POLICY AND PROGRAMME DIRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION – UNFPA AND YOUNG PEOPLE: MANDATE AND APPROACH

It is acknowledged that United Nations agencies need to respond supportively but differentially to the needs of young people at national level as these relate to the core mandates of those agencies. In other words, UN agency programming, including that of UNFPA, should facilitate the development and implementation of comprehensive population, social, health, education, gender and family policies, which take into account young people in all their diversity.

In a discussion paper published in December 2005, the UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for Europe and Central Asia in Bratislava, Slovakia, (henceforth, CST Bratislava), observed that the prime strategic goal of UNFPA in relation to young people is the

“Attainment of the highest standard of health, development and equality, free of discrimination, coercion and violence for all young people in Europe and Central Asia ...”¹

In practice, UNFPA makes complementary youth friendly interventions for young people, regionally and locally (often with the cooperation of national counterparts) that

- seek to reduce poverty;
- provide health care and preventative education on health related risks, specifically in relation to sexuality and reproduction;
- support comprehensive sexuality education through a variety of formal and non-formal methodologies;
- help prevent gender based violence and other obstacles to gender equality and women’s empowerment; and
- enhance youth participation through the process.

To be effective UNFPA and its national and local operational partners (especially government authorities) need to better understand young people and the benefits of investment in youth, youth programming and youth policy development.

FIVE GOOD REASONS FOR INCREASED ATTENTION TO YOUNG PEOPLE

The Demographic Argument

Many aspects of the relationship between national policies and demographic trends are either disputed or not well understood. It remains difficult to disentangle the effects of specific policy initiatives from the effects of broader social, political and economic conditions. Nevertheless, ongoing demographic developments in Europe and Central Asia and globally, such as the development of youth bulges in the poorest developing countries, and the shrinking and ageing of populations in high- and middle-income countries, have highlighted the specific and often vulnerable position of young people in relation to the core concerns of UNFPA (especially with regard to their sexual and reproductive health and rights).

While becoming generally smaller, the size of the youth population in Europe and Central Asia is anything but insignificant. A majority of the countries in the eastern part of the region have lower

¹ Robert Thomson, “Comprehensive Attention to Young People – Situation Analysis and Direction Setting for further UNFPA contribution to Adolescent and Youth Health and Development in the countries of Europe and Central Asia”, Internal Working Document for the Workshop on Social and Population Policies – Youth and Population Policies, Bratislava, 27 December 2005.

fertility compared to Western Europe, while recent research indicates that fertility rates in some of countries covered by UNFPA programmes are higher in comparison to those of Western Europe.²

Notwithstanding the still significant human capital represented by young people in the region today, governments in various parts of Europe, not least in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, have become increasingly nervous about below-replacement levels of fertility and the increasing instance and lengthening of childbearing postponement. In fact, the youth and general fertility issue has generated something of a moral panic in national and European politics. The question of how to ensure health and pension coverage for future and growing generations of elderly people while the active, tax-paying workforce becomes smaller and smaller has become a particularly emotive issue. Parties and governments on the right have a tendency to see increased fertility as the only solution to this multifaceted problem, although research indicates that both immigration and social welfare reforms are potentially helpful in the long-term for addressing the problem of a shrinking labour force.³ Of course, political parties also respond to the thinking of their voters and it is indicative that “progressive” positions on issues like immigration, reproductive rights, labour market reform, sexuality, gender and fertility do not usually win large numbers of votes.

Government policy has also tended to focus on pro-natalist measures. There is growing consensus, however, that low fertility among young people cannot be tackled through pro-natalist policies alone. And there is growing concern among experts and practitioners that, in some cases, human rights in relation to reproduction are being put into question.⁴ The reasons underlying why young people are postponing union formation and childbirth are contested, but research does indicate that socio-economic factors and difficulties faced when combining work and childcare, as well as resistance to traditionally established gender roles, are a strong motive for young people, in particular young women, to delay making decisions about union formation, generally, and when to become parents, in particular.⁵

The Socio-Economic Argument

The overriding socio-economic condition of young people in Europe and Central Asia, national differences notwithstanding, is characterised by risk and vulnerability, with young people demonstrating frailty of lifestyles, social support networks and coping skills. Continuing political and economic transition in the countries of the region certainly bears some responsibility for this situation. However, young people in the established democracies and market economies of Western Europe are also significantly more vulnerable to unemployment and exclusion than their elders, so transition cannot explain it completely. There is evidence that a worrying proportion of young people lack good health and engage in risk behaviour, increasingly resulting in mortality, adolescent pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Further, in many of the countries considered in this review, the political transition remains to be fully completed and democracy remains at best to be consolidated and at worst embryonic. Government capacity to respond to the economic and social challenges of declining fertility in a youth friendly manner is often far from developed and is significantly exacerbated by gaps in financial and human resources and by the precedence given to other priorities.

² According to http://www.unfpa.org/daseca/countries_daseca.html, accessed 29 November 2007, the countries of Europe and Central Asia involved in UNFPA activities include Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

³ RAND Europe (2005) “Population Implosion? Low Fertility and Policy Responses in the European Union”, RAND Europe Research Brief, David E. Bloom and David Canning in “Europe’s Looming Population Bust”, in “Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health”, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 14 - 16.

⁴ Jane Gauthier, “Human Rights Considerations in Addressing Low Fertility”, in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 8-9.

⁵ Hans-Peter Kohler, “Determinants of Low Fertility in Europe”, in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 12-13.

Globalisation poses significant threats to young people in the fragile period of youth transition, including the threat of being trafficked, of being infected by HIV, of not being able to find legal and adequately protected work at the same time as having to assume financial responsibility for unemployed or unemployable parents and grandparents or a young family, of being caught in a conflict or of falling into chronic poverty. While many, if not most, young people are well able to take advantage of the opportunities globalisation offers, given their greater technological awareness, curiosity, sense of adventure and willingness to be mobile, a significant proportion of young people are not only missing out on these opportunities but are suffering adverse consequences of the globalisation processes.

At the same time, young people, as a group, are often seen in negative terms, perceived as taking unnecessary risks, irresponsible and ungrateful. This, in combination with ideological or religious approaches to the question of low fertility, can lead governments to choose hard-line pro-natalist policies that run counter to the human rights principles promoted by organisations like UNFPA. Such choices, however, are in contradiction with research, which shows that young people continue to enter into the stage of independent union formation in their twenties, even if this is not legitimated by marriage (religious or civil), and that most would like to have children eventually. In particular, research underlines that better social support to offset the socio-economic problems of young people, including being more likely to be unemployed or once employed not to be able to afford child care, can be crucial to the choices of young people about when and if to have children. Evidence from France and the Nordic countries suggests that progressive pro-natalist policies do help to stop, and in some cases have even reversed, the decline in fertility rates. Notable aspects of such equitable and empowering policies include supporting parents to continue working (including adequate access to affordable childcare); taking a progressive approach to gender roles (including providing for paternity leave) and increasing financial support for families which have more than one child.

Government policy can be ambivalent towards young people. Official authorities in most of the countries addressed by the study express concern about low fertility and the shrinking size of the working age population. This has had the positive side effect of stimulating interest in young people as a population group. But, recognition of what impedes young people from engaging in childbearing remains patchy at best and absent at worst. International agencies such as UNFPA have begun a process of awareness-raising by recognising the vulnerability of young people to such ambivalence and by recognising that low fertility and childbearing postponement have strong roots in economic and social factors.

The Normative Argument

Considering its mandate, there are also normative reasons for UNFPA to take an interest in youth policy development. Normative arguments make the case that all young people should have the opportunity to enjoy “being young” in full health and without fear or oppression. Young people should be guaranteed the means to remain “youthful”, to develop confidence that they have a *present* as young people and not just a *future* as adults, and to complete their transitions without experiencing the adverse effects of vulnerability. This, in fact, means and proposes that young people should get their “fair share” of development resources. Both governments and development agencies should, therefore, give young people their fair share of attention, relevant policy resources and support, taking into account established development frameworks such as the programme of action to implement the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), commitments made under the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme

of Action on Youth.⁶ UN Agencies and other advocates for youth must remind governments of their duties and provide support to national counterparts in living up to their legally binding and non-binding commitments. Unfortunately, reality often demonstrates that governments are willing to accept such normative arguments in principle only. As demonstrated by our research, getting governments to “walk the walk” and not just “talk the talk” (to invest real financial resources in youth) can be a significant challenge.

The Ethical Argument

Young people should have access to development and welfare because it is their human right. According to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (now in its 18th year) access to adequate and correctly adapted sexual and reproductive health information and services is a human right. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure that human rights are protected within their territory. The General Comment on Adolescence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (May 2005) describes the ethical argument more fully.

The Institutional Argument

Banal as it may seem, young people are also primary beneficiaries of UNFPA and other UN programmes. Hence, young people should be considered, consulted and take an active part in the determination of policies developed by United Nations institutions that affect them directly. It is, in any case, commonly accepted that participative policy making is more effective and leads to more efficient use of scarce resources. Such arguments have become something of a standard discourse, especially in international institutions (see, for example, the policy declarations on youth of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union). These institutions accept that young people should be subjects and not only objects of policies affecting them and that these policies must be grounded in a profound respect for human rights. Nevertheless, institutions have demonstrated that they are differentially positioned in terms of will and capacity to involve young people in consultative and participative policy making activities, and in co-management of programmes.

THE UNFPA “COUNTING ON YOUTH” REVIEW PROCESS

United Nations agencies including UNFPA wish to facilitate the development and implementation of comprehensive population policies, which take into account young people in family and social policies. At the same time, various UN mandates seek to reduce poverty, improve access to a range of youth friendly services including health services, support comprehensive sexuality education through a variety of formal and non-formal methodologies, help prevent gender based violence and other obstacles to gender equality and women’s empowerment and enhance youth participation in the whole process. Meanwhile, for most of Europe and Central Asia, the over-riding politico-economic situation influencing social policy development is the decline in population size with its concomitant ageing. Making the link between youth policy and population and development is, therefore, a timely contribution of UNFPA to efforts that seek to ensure the human rights of young people are respected.

In July 2006 the UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for Europe and Central Asia, Bratislava, commissioned an environmental scan of the situations and needs of young people in seven countries of Europe and Central Asia, of youth and social policy provision pertaining to youth and of complementary UN programming in the field of youth. This was seen as a means of understanding

⁶ For more information consult the following website: http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd_poa.htm.

the youth policy development playing field in the region. In 2007, the research process was expanded to include seven further countries and the province of Kosovo, with desk research being complemented by field visits, providing for corroboration of the results of the desk work, thus improving the quality of data and impressions gained regarding the situations on the ground.

In the context of UN reform and the streamlining of activities on youth across the UN system, the “Counting on Youth” policy review process aims to provide relevant guidance to country- and regional-level UN/UNFPA activities in the medium- to long-term.

Objectives and Contents

The objectives of this review process were to

- conduct an environmental scan of existing social and youth specific policies in countries of Europe and Central Asia ;
- describe the situation of young people with a view to better understanding their needs in relation to UNFPA core programme areas (including sexual and reproductive health);
- assess the extent to which UN in-country programming is providing complementary responses to such needs, taking into account existing government provision;
- provide a basis of information on which experts in the area of youth policy development may be consulted on possible approaches to the improvement of UN support to policies on youth, as well as regional and in-country programming.

The content of the review covered several interlinked categories of information about young people relevant to their position in policy and programming, as follows

- Fertility and population dynamics
- Socio-economic conditions of youth
- Health
- Gender and the participation of young women
- Participation in social and political life
- Youth policies and programming

Two Rounds

There were two distinct phases in the review methodology. The first round of reviews (2006) covered seven countries (Armenia, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). It relied entirely on secondary source material gathered from a variety of sources, in particular governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies dealing specifically with youth issues, youth policy development, social policy, family policy, demography and issues related to fertility, at both national and international levels. This was followed by an interim expert meeting, to review, complement and validate findings at the end of the first round of research (December 2006). The 2006 background synthetic background study, based on the desk research on seven countries conducted in 2006, was prepared for discussion at this meeting, revised in light of its findings and recommendations and published on the UNFPA CST website at the end of 2006.

The second round, covering seven further countries and Kosovo, was undertaken in 2007 (Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Poland, Romania Serbia and Kosovo), comprised both desk research and field visits. This was followed by an extended expert review workshop (December 2007). Further information concerning the terms of reference of that meeting are provided elsewhere in this document.

Desk research aimed to:

- check the extent to which young people are considered in social policy as well as the extent to which specific youth policies exist for each location selected for the scan;
- assess how specific needs of young people are being responded to in the respective current (*circa* 2004 – 2007) UNFPA country programmes in relation to frameworks for action on youth and broader UN mandates to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;
- provide a preliminary assessment of situations encountered.

The field visits conducted in the second round aimed to corroborate the information collected during the desk phase of the research and to test interpretations made by the consultants against the realities met on the ground in each of the countries. To enhance local ownership of the process, UNFPA Country Offices were involved in the development of the programmes of the field visits, providing logistical support and arranging access to national counterparts. Many provided valuable report into the reports.

Outputs and Documentation

As mentioned above, at the end of round one an initial synthetic study identifying trends in youth development and policy provision was published.⁷ This served as the basis for preparing an integrated synthetic background study that takes into account round one and two research findings for submission to the extended expert review workshop in December 2007. As a complement to the synthetic background study, the country reports prepared in 2006 and 2007 were compiled into two separate annexes and provide specific information and examples from the countries studied.

This document is a concise summary of the study's main findings and an interpretation of the implications of this research for further UN and especially UNFPA action in the field of youth policy development. A draft of this document was submitted to the extended expert review workshop in December 2007. This is the revised final version which takes into account the discussions that took place at the extended expert review workshop and the suggestions and recommendations made by the experts who attended.

Expert Input

To build from the outcomes of the overall youth policy review process, CST Bratislava convened an expert review workshop in Budapest from 9 – 12 December 2007. The workshop aimed to

- validate findings of rounds 1 and 2 of the youth policy review in 15 countries of Europe and Central Asia;
- identify achievements, gaps and new directions in policy and programming
- summarise action points for strategy building that will help UN Country Teams in general and the future UNFPA regional office in particular to support youth policy development and to design and deliver comprehensive youth programmes.

Participating experts discussed directions for UN/UNFPA contributions to youth policy development and youth programming based on a policy orientation document summarising the policy implications of the accumulated findings of the review process. They provided additional input to that paper based on their respective interests and expertise. The consolidated policy orientation

⁷ Yael Ohana, Ditta Dolejsiova and Chris Grollman, Youth and Social Policy Review of Seven Countries in Europe and Central Asia: Environmental Scan related to UNFPA Core Programme Areas, UNFPA, December 2006. Accessible at http://www.unfpa.cst.sk/secured/cst_docs_RRA.htm (username: cst; password: welcome).

paper is in the process of being developed. The workshop further provided validation of the regional synthesis of research findings from the countries covered by the review.

Participants

The following institutions and experts attended the meeting

- Youth Policy Experts: University of Glamorgan, Wales, Prof. Howard Williamson, Independent Youth Policy and Training Expert, Hungary, Peter Wootsch
- Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, Assistant Minister Ivana Kovacevic, Aleksandra Mitrovic
- The Refugee Education Trust, World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Nicolas Servas
- International Planned Parenthood Federation: Doortje Braeken
- CIDA Balkan Youth Health Project (Bosnia & Herzegovina): Davorin Marinkovic
- European Youth Card Association: Marcel Hagmann
- Open Society Institute: Jerzy Celichowski
- Advisory Council on Youth of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe: Daniel Muller Thor (EYCE)
- Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport, European Youth Centre Budapest: Antje Rothemund
- European Commission, DG Culture: Anne Marie le Claire
- World Health Organisation: Valentina Baltag
- UNICEF: Paul Nary
- UNDP Regional Centre, Bratislava: Ben Slay and Agi Veres
- UNFPA Country Technical Services Team, Bratislava: Robert Thomson
- UNFPA Country Office Kyrgyzstan: Cholpon Asambayeva
- Youth Policy Review Consultant Team: Frankly Speaking – Training and Development, Yael Ohana, Ditta Dolejsiova and Chris Grollman.

Programme of the Meeting

Sunday, 9 December 2007

- Arrival of participants in Budapest
- Informal gathering at the European Youth Centre for introduction to participants, presentation of the workshop programme

Monday, 10 December 2007

- Presentation of the scope, purpose and objectives of the meeting
- Presentation of the main findings of round one (2006) and round two (2007) of the youth policy review and discussion of implications for national and regional UN contributions
- Enrichment of the findings based on the experience of the participants
- Identification of points for further discussion, enquiry or research in relation to the findings of the study based on the experience of participants
- Discussion of social policy implications based on orientation paper prepared by consultants.
- Identification of policy relevant issues for further discussion during the meeting

Tuesday, 11 December 2007

- Identification of policy challenges for UN agency involvement in youth policy
- Programmatic implications of policy discussion

- training and capacity building for UN and governmental staff – what do they need to know about youth policy?
- how to make the transition from research through policy to actual practice of effective programming – identification of relevant tools.

Wednesday, 12 December 2007

- The concept of a lead agency on youth in the UN system – what does it mean to take a lead on youth in the UN system? What are the tasks and responsibilities of such an agency? What is the role of the lead agency?
- Next steps in the current process (finalisation of the documentation, further communication with participants of the meeting)
- Next steps in the overall process (how the recommendations and suggestions of the meeting will be used by UNFPA, in youth policy development and youth programming)
- Closing and departures

Outcomes

Presentation of the research and strategic proposals led to the identification of three broad areas of discussion:

- Policy challenges for UN contribution
- Substantive programmatic implications
- Tools for the translation of research into policy and programming practice

Main discussion points included:

Challenges for youth policy development:

- Common (European) indicators for youth policy development
- Defining and achieving representation of young people
- Matching the level of will from young people to participate in decision making with the level of will of policymakers to involve them
- Translation of research into policy and programming/practice
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for interventions and policies
- Complementarity of contributions from different agencies and institutions

Challenges for youth policy implementation:

- Translation of policy into programming/practice
- Reaching all groups of young people, including mainstream non-organised youth as well as members of minority groups and young people who are particularly vulnerable to poverty or harmful behaviour
- Determining the location of information in order to reach all young people, including mainstream young people
- Developing partnerships with non-traditional actors (for example, organisations with a commercial/consumption dimension) in order to better understand young people's lived realities

Substantive considerations for the UN family:

- Integrated and aligned policy making at the level of in-country UN interventions and government initiatives
- Opportunities presented by the existing legal, policy and standard setting frameworks, including:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the General Comment on adolescents
- The EU White Paper on Youth, and subsequent communications related to young people
- The Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life
- Indicators for youth policies in Europe (Curriculum and Quality Development Group, 2002 & 2003)
- A European Framework for Youth Policy, Council of Europe, 2005
- The Synthesis Reports of the Council of Europe's National Youth Policy Reviews (2004, 2008 forthcoming)

SHARPER YOUTH POLICY FOCUS AND IMPROVED YOUTH PROGRAMMING WITHIN UNFPA

As a result of the strategic positioning exercise undertaken by the UNFPA Adolescent and Youth Cluster in 2005 to 2006, in which CST Bratislava took part, UNFPA is actively contributing to the emergence of a clearer policy direction in relation to youth and its place in UN programming. This exercise asks if youth concerns and experiences are integrated dimensions of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes and if so, whether the generations of young people and older people benefit equally. In this respect, it is an exercise to assess the visibility and support UNFPA gives to young people and to predict the results in terms of health benefits, social and personal improvements.

There is an evident parallel with similar deliberate attention given to women, the disabled and indigenous peoples. While it appears that UNFPA programmes in Europe and Central Asia assume that youth will benefit equally from policies and programmes, thus ignoring the differential impact on age groups, there is, nevertheless, growing recognition at the level of Country Offices that youth-specificity in social, economic and health planning is potentially advantageous for overall human development.

Several key sources of policy have been influential in the initiation of this exercise and have pushed forward awareness in UNFPA for the need to develop capacity for the delivery of youth friendly policy. These include the Cairo Youth Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action, The UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth. "The Case for Investing in Young People As Part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy"⁸, commissioned by UNFPA, points to the extensive potential advantages and benefits for overall development, if the youth dimension is sufficiently taken into account in the elaboration of national development tools like Poverty Reduction Strategies. It is notable because its starting point and basic assumption is that young people are a positive force in society and that with support they can determine the course of development for the better. It marks a change in attitude to previous policy approaches in institutions at global, European and national levels that see young people as the recipients of development rather than as its actors.⁹

⁸ An exemplary case for this has been made in the one or two Human Development Reports that focus on youth, for example Croatia in 2004. See Review of aspects of missions undertaken in 2005 to countries of Europe and Central Asia by CST Bratislava, Robert Thomson, 24 March 2006.

⁹ Cairo Youth Declaration <http://youth.unesco.or.kr/youth/english/resources/sub1.asp?no=75&id=2#img> and Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd_poa.htm, "The Case for Investing in Young People As Part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy", commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund, New York prepared by Richard Curtain http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/424_filename_Investing.pdf. See also UNFPA and the Alan Guttmacher Institute, "Adding It Up – The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care", Washington and New York, 2003, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/addingitup.pdf>.

The UNFPA “Counting on Youth” process in the Europe and Central Asia region builds from the positive initiative and forward-looking direction that UNFPA globally has already taken in this regard, as set out in the UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth.¹⁰

Transversal Elements for Policy and Programme Development

The results of this review process point to several transversal elements that should be part of further UNFPA policy-making and integral to programmatic interventions in the field with youth. Experiences of other institutions, such as the Council of Europe youth policy reviews conducted by the Directorate of Youth and Sport, would seem to bear out these conclusions, as do other policy development initiatives UNFPA has undertaken recently in the youth field.¹¹

a/ Advocacy for a Human Rights-based Approach

Looking at social policy issues from a youth perspective in the way this study has attempted to do, demonstrates the unfortunate extent to which the human rights of young people are a marginal concern in the context of broader policy making efforts in any given country, developing, transition or industrialised, and this despite the existence of several frameworks which governments have agreed to respect, including the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the World Programme of Action for Young People (WPAY). In terms of UN action, it is noteworthy that individual Development Assistance Frameworks (DAF) at country level poorly take into account young people and do not link up significantly with the provisions of the WPAY. This study demonstrates the extreme need for advocacy for a human rights-based approach to population, social and family policy making and even, youth policy-making. Advocacy is required at all levels within UNFPA (country level, regional level and headquarters) so that the youth perspective is taken into account in the areas of its work that are significantly influenced by health concerns. Advocacy towards sister UN organisations in each country is required to make sure that young people are adequately represented in UN in-country programming beyond UNFPA and in negotiations with government concerning its orientation on the rights of young people.

b/ Transparency, Coordination, Information Sharing and Knowledge Management

Coordination and information sharing between the different actors engaged is crucial for the effectiveness of youth programming. This interdisciplinary field of policy and programming touches overlapping mandates and fields of responsibility, whether at local, national or international level – crucial also because transparency leads to legitimacy. The UNFPA “Counting on Youth” process came across an enormous wealth of good practice – the examples outlined in the next section demonstrate the excellent work of a whole variety of types of actor engaged in the youth field. But, it also demonstrated the extent to which three typical and connected problems of transparency plague the field.

Avoiding duplication

In relation to youth, there is a large degree of duplication that could be overcome with greater attention to communication and coordination. Within UN programming, it is not uncommon that instead of working with existing structures, organisations and networks, new ones are created. This happens even when prior experience and existing structures could form a basis on which to build.

¹⁰ The full text of this document can be accessed at <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=341>.

¹¹ Howard Williamson, “Supporting Young People in Europe”, Council of Europe publishing, 2002, Lasse Siurala, “A European Framework for Youth Policy”, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005. See also the UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth (<http://www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=341>).

Instead of developing local, home-grown practice, translations of internationally developed materials are commissioned. Locally implanted UN agencies, NGOs and universities are doing excellent specialised research on young people's problems and needs, which governments are not aware of or prefer to ignore, and therefore, cannot use in policy making. UN agencies and international organisations develop methodological guides, training materials and standards in educational practice that local NGOs outside of the close circle of UN implementing partners know nothing about and, therefore, do not use and disseminate. The lack of communication and the overlaps between projects is striking. Better efforts of coordination within the UN in any one country, between governmental agencies working on youth related programming within national authorities and between third sector organisations, as well as between all three, are required. Structures that could take the lead in such coordination efforts (such as a national youth council or a youth minister) are often missing, too weak or lack legitimacy.

Mitigating sectoral tunnelling

It is illustrative that in the experience of this study, UN agencies have their traditional partners. If UNFPA is working on the theme of sexual and reproductive health among young people, it can happen that the Ministry of Health will be a sole interlocutor rather than any other, even if youth related policies in the field of sexual and reproductive health are being developed by several ministries of a given government, or indeed ignored by the Ministry of Health. Sometimes good relationships are also developed with the Ministry of Education, but rarely is the Ministry for Youth or a ministry responsible for youth considered a key partner. The same goes for the non-governmental sector. UNFPA tends to work almost exclusively with NGOs specialised in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and health education, even if many youth organisations and representative structures are working on promoting healthy lifestyles of young people. This exclusive approach can also create relationships of dependency.

Among UN agencies active in a country, work related to children is rightly seen as distinct and different from work related to adolescents or youth. However, the notion of continuity and linkage between age-specific interventions is sometimes missing. Examples of common programmes on youth related issues established by two or more agencies working in one country among those studied in this project were few and far between.

Overcoming competition

In the UN system, several departments and agencies are responsible for work related to young people. In principle, this should ensure that young people and youth issues get their fair share of attention in UN programming. But, it can and often does lead to fragmentation. And, the fact that some agencies or departments have consistently been seen or have seen themselves as "youth agencies" also leads to competition, something that gives the UN a bad reputation as being more concerned with positioning and survival than with the mission. Further down the "food chain", many NGOs in the countries studied are severely under-funded and have to compete for funding from UN agencies. This can and does weaken third sector effectiveness.

Using the results of evaluation and monitoring

The requirement of evaluation and monitoring of programmes implemented by the United Nations system is well established and evaluations are regularly commissioned to establish good practice and make recommendations for the improvement of effectiveness. Recently, there has been a proliferation of evaluations related to young people. Unfortunately, however, there is little evidence that the results of these evaluations are being used to adapt or change programmes that have not reached their best potential. Evaluation seems to have become something of an end in itself. The effective integration of the results of evaluation and monitoring activities requires political will, especially when a programme has not lived up to its promise, or wasted time, energy and resources. It involves open and honest discussion and capacity for implementation once decisions concerning

what should be done next have been taken.

c/ Inclusion of Young People in Decision-Making

One key conclusion of this review is that young people are marginalised and disenfranchised from decision-making that affects them. In the UN system this is all the more surprising because the involvement of beneficiaries in the development of policies and programmes increases the chances of success when it comes to implementation. Programmes will benefit from a deeper level of ownership, they will not meet resistance from those they seek to help and they will have been developed fully taking into account the needs and concerns of the people they shall address. Both UN agencies and governments need to learn more about and better understand the nature of real youth participation, the kind which provides young people with a say in how policies that affect their lives are made and how the programmes they are supposed to benefit from are run. Direct youth consultation processes have become a popular mechanism for international institutions to overcome problems of representation or tokenism. But, as this study points out, there is a profound difference between being consulted and participation in decision-making processes. The study points to the fact that inclusion of young people, not to be confused with participation, remains as much of a challenge for UN and other international agencies, regionally and in in-country contexts, as it does for governments.

d/ Partnership with Other Institutions and Youth Organisations

The Council of Europe and the European Union have invested heavily in the establishment of standards for youth policy making at national and regional level over the last thirty years. Many national governments have made significant progress in creating and institutionalising co-managed systems for youth participation and representation and specific youth policies. In this European context, inter-institutional partnerships can create momentum for increased effectiveness with limited resources. To national governments, such partnerships demonstrate international political will for the human rights based approach to policy development and channel attention to youth needs and issues. Institutions can also become overly specialised – the opportunity to learn from the differing perspectives of other institutions can provide valuable insight into one's own mission. Finally, coalition building makes the mission easier to sustain, even when there is resistance. Banal as it might seem, there is strength in numbers. This is especially so, when those partnerships involve young people, their organisations and representative platforms as key providers of expertise and knowledge and as drivers of youth policy development.

Possible Lines of Action within a Newly Defined Strategic Framework

In addition to considering the transversal elements outlined above, a strategic framework for further action should cover the following:

More and better targeted youth research

Research is crucial in that it provides an evidence base for policy-making. UNFPA has supported some research activities which touch on needs and concerns of young people in relation to its mandate, but often it is not “youth research” *per se*, focusing on a specific theme – sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, gender equality, etc. Young people may be referred to in passing or not at all. Youth specific research to underpin programming is therefore required.

In addition, while UNFPA has supported research on changes in attitudes among young people in responses to programme interventions, it is clear that the sexual and reproductive health and parenting choices of young people are complex and often made in consideration of more general factors including the socio-economic outlook of the country where they live. Hence, a broader

understanding of the motivations and concerns of young people is required, even if policy and programming focus on health and fertility. Of further concern, is that comparative research across countries and regions and longitudinal research are almost wholly missing.

Knowing the facts about young people means to contextualise them. This creates an important role for in-country activities in the field of youth research. At country level, UNFPA and other UN agencies could partner with government, academia and youth organisations to identify the youth research agenda and develop the youth research capacity locally and to coordinate the use of research resources to better effect. Regionally, UNFPA should act as a clearing-house for managing and disseminating the knowledge produced locally and for the preparation of comparative analyses. Internationally, UNFPA should tap into existing youth policy and research activities undertaken in the context of established youth research cooperation networks (Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of Youth Research, International Sociological Association Research Committee 34, etc) adding the specific insight of its agenda to the field.

Training and capacity building in youth policy

As mentioned, it is striking the extent to which youth policy is a marginal field of policy development. This study reveals significant gaps in capacity in relation to youth policy among governmental authorities, non-governmental organisations and even international agencies, all of which are busy with their youth programmes and policies, necessarily with varying degrees of success. Knowing what you are working on (i.e. youth policy) is essential to its success. Training and capacity building are required to help operational staff responsible for youth programmes in UN agencies, in governmental authorities and in youth organisations understand better the purpose and implications of youth policy and the different kinds of interventions that can be effective with different kinds of beneficiary. UNFPA at both the regional and national levels is well placed, along with other agencies, to facilitate the development of experience and capacity in the youth field, starting internally and working outwards. It can lead by example through mainstreaming good practices (by involving young people in policy making, by experimenting with research based policy making, by respecting established youth policy development standards) in its own internal programming and procedures.

Active support to government policy making

UNFPA can make a significant contribution to the health, social development, integration and well-being of young people by speaking up for respect of young people's human rights in processes of policy making where they are actively involved, especially when it comes to sensitive policy areas such as family policy, sexual health and comprehensive sexuality education. This study has revealed that the human rights and especially the reproductive rights of young people are far from assured where pro-natalist policies have been put in place to increase fertility. How does a human rights based organisation, admittedly working within a limited mandate, respond to such situations? In the face of governmental resistance, the response is quite often to ignore the "controversial issue" and look for ways "neutrally" to conduct population and development surveys and meet sexual and reproductive health targets, whether through data collection, information and education, reproductive health service provision ¹²or commodity security. This can have the unfortunate side effect of "letting government off the hook" when it comes to the human rights of young people. Hence, UNFPA and other UN agencies must take a more active role in supporting "youth friendly" policy making (through a variety of activities including research and capacity building) in relation even to those sensitive issues that can make family and social policy delicate to tackle with government. Confrontation and condemnation does not have to be the approach taken, but resolutely taking a stand when necessary is important.

¹² WHO/EURO document forthcoming

Provision of youth information

Youth information has taken several big leaps forward with new information and communication technologies (ICT). In Europe today there are established standards for the provision of quality youth information and there is a lot of good practice to learn from in the governmental and non-governmental sectors.¹³ UNFPA and other UN agencies have some experience and expertise through large-scale media campaigns for the prevention of HIV, the social marketing of sexual health commodities and local youth sexual health information and counselling centres, even if the ICT component is not exploited to its best potential in programming observed. This study has nevertheless revealed the general lack of integration of sexual health related messages into general youth information and counselling services and the tendency to establish new services rather than working with established youth information structures. In partnership with established youth information providers and relevant governmental and non-governmental partners, UNFPA could make a more efficient contribution by initiating efforts to integrate sexual health messages into existing provision, whether through dedicated youth information services or through more general youth work provision such as youth centres (see below). It can be observed that young people have an increasingly symbiotic relationship to ICT. Further research into how youth meeting places defined or determined by ICT (many of them virtual) can be used for the effective provision of sexual health messages to young people and for other information purposes is, therefore, required.¹⁴ In this relation, the digital divide, even in the European context, must be taken into account. Many young people do not have regular access to high quality Internet access and computer equipment because it is beyond their means. Nevertheless, mobile phones are almost universal in many countries, even among young people with fewer opportunities.

Provision of youth friendly services

UNFPA has excellent experience and expertise in the field of youth friendly services, having established both pilot schemes in the field of sexual and reproductive health and having elaborated standards for design and implementation. Nevertheless, gaps still exist, especially when it comes to the capacity of services to deliver to a large number of young people, their location and when it comes to government support for, and the sustainability of, services. It is noteworthy that very little information exists about the extent of use of youth friendly services. The location of services in hospitals and polyclinics rather than in locations where young people meet and hang out seems to be something of an issue in relation to the extent that they are used or not by young people. Many countries surveyed have an established system of youth centres where young people and youth organisations can meet (even if admittedly, they are often severely under-resourced). Youth workers rarely if ever are trained in the delivery of sexual and reproductive health messages and information. By focusing support to existing structures within established systems of youth work provision UNFPA and other UN agencies working with pilot youth friendly service schemes could meet many objectives with one activity – increasing local capacity, mainstreaming good practice in-country, local adoption of standards and the provision of services.

Provision of non-formal education

Through the Y-Peer programme, UNFPA has established itself in some countries as a credible provider of non-formal education with young people in the field of sexual and reproductive health. Nevertheless, in several of the countries surveyed in this review, Y-Peer has higher potential than it is currently achieving. More often than not, this is the result of a lack of resources and a lack of capacity to involve more volunteers. Y-Peer could benefit significantly from cooperation with locally and regionally implanted non-governmental youth organisations and initiatives that often also have

¹³ Eurodesk and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) are just two. See <http://www.eurodesk.org/cdesk/Welcome.do> and <http://www.alli.fi/euro/eryica/>.

¹⁴ Robert Thomson "Competing for Attention: Sexuality education and the commerce of sex" CST Bratislava paper on behaviour change communication, March 2006.

an interest in healthy lifestyle education and sexual and reproductive health promotion. Many youth organisations are working with similar pedagogical approaches to peer and non-formal education with young people. Hence, exchanges of good practice could lessen duplication in the development of methodological tools and improve the dissemination of those developed. Methodological development could also be an area for joint projects. A higher degree of investment will be required to ensure that Y-Peer reaches a significant proportion of young people where it is active, even if it does rely heavily on the principle of multiplication. Integration with other UN educational projects would also be appropriate, especially where Y-Peer has so far not been welcome in schools. And, a higher degree of integration with the broader youth civil society in any given country will be beneficial for the initiative's long-term sustainability and relevance.

Suggestions for Concrete Action

In relation to the above, and in specific relation to possible follow-up to the review process now completed, the participants of the expert review workshop suggested that UNFPA could make an important contribution to raising the profile of youth in its own programming and within the UN system as a whole by investing further resources in several key programme areas where gaps are evident:

- the translation of research findings into guidance for policy development and programming
- Scaling up from the experience of Y-Peer and mobilising formal education
- Scaling up in country experience in social marketing of commodities, youth friendly (sexual) health services and mass media initiatives, creating sustainability by accessing and mobilising established youth information and service provision (in country and Europe wide)

A UN contribution would be useful in developing pilot activities in the areas of:

- partnership building with the youth civic sector (at European and country levels)
- partnership building on specific areas of common interest with other institutions (European Commission, Council of Europe) where there is clear evidence of the potential for complementary action

Capacity building for UN officials to provide support to governmental youth policy making for:

- research into areas currently not adequately covered by existing studies of good practice in joint development of national youth policies with national youth councils, equivalent platforms and other representative coalitions of young people and the practice of co-management in the field on national and local levels;
- understanding the values and attitudes of young people in relation to key issues facing the world today;
- understanding the motivations of young people to postpone parenthood;
- understanding the developmental benefits of youth risk taking (and youth mental health) and how to work with those potential benefits
- using community-based, non-formal education as a means for providing life and livelihood skills¹⁵ and other income-generation opportunities aimed at linking young people to the workplace
- enhancing effectiveness of peer education in relation to behaviour change – identification of best practices and areas where other kinds of peer based interventions than those currently being implemented might be more effective

¹⁵ The Partnership on Youth Research between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of Youth recently published results of a study on the socio-economic scope of youth work in Europe at: http://www.youth-knowledge.net/INTEGRATION/EKC/Research/Socioeconomic_scope1.html.

- understanding the role of ICT in the lives of young people – new forms of engagement and social interaction, the influence of ICT on adolescent sexuality, etc

TAKING A LEAD ON YOUTH IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Taking a lead on youth in the UN system seems to be rather a difficult task, given the complex youth agenda within and among the different agencies concerned and despite a division of responsibilities concerning certain specific aspects of youth work (such as HIV/AIDS prevention). In light of this, it may be at the in-country level that UNFPA has the best chances of demonstrating leadership on youth programming.

Nevertheless, UNFPA also has regional and UN system-wide possibilities and it may be at those levels that UNFPA could demonstrate leadership by initiating and coordinating debate and exchange on how to move the youth agenda forward given latest developments in UN reform. In particular, in relation to existing practice and programming, the role of the region in coordination, dissemination of information, exchange of experience and knowledge management could be significantly strengthened. This will require increased responsibility for and investment in comparative youth research, regional identification of research and training needs, provision of training and capacity building to in-country programme staff in youth policy and permanent advocacy across the UN system, to regional inter-governmental forums and other relevant youth policy development institutions in Europe. This will also require significant opening up to partnership with established European youth representation and participation structures. The establishment of a dedicated UNFPA Division for Europe and Central Asia will facilitate region-specific relationships and cooperation on youth policy and programming.

In this relation specifically, the participants of the extended expert review workshop suggested that UNFPA could improve its current contribution to youth policy development by advocating for the delegation of responsibility for the coordination of youth related policy making and programming in any given country and at regional level to a “lead agency”.

In addition to discharging its responsibilities in relation to its core business, a lead agency on youth in the United Nations System (whether at global, regional or country level) would:

- map the institutional landscape, partnerships, synergies, policies and programmes that determine the youth sector in the geographical context (global, regional, country)
- take the initiative to convene a UN theme group and a youth advisory panel
- provide coordination for the exchange of experience between different UN agencies and programmes in relation to youth, to ensure effective knowledge management, to mitigate duplication and to use funds to best potential
- sensitise members of UN theme groups to the need for effective internal monitoring and evaluation activities to be undertaken in relation to youth programming, taking into account key frameworks relevant for youth – WPAY, DAF, MDGs – and for their results to be communicated to other agencies
- support the setting of youth sensitive agendas by individual members of the theme group and the theme group as a whole
- provide expertise to the best of its capacity to support the work of the theme group and its members
- act as an advocate for attention to be paid to youth (in terms of political will and budgets) inside the overall youth system
- sensitise theme group members to the need for youth sensitive budgeting

- act as a clearing house for all youth related issues, policies and programmes being dealt with by the UN by publishing relevant youth reviews, research, web-resources and maintaining an overview of key knowledge and policy practice in relation to youth
- empower both UN agencies and youth organisations to partner where common agendas can be identified
- provide capacity building to other UN agencies in relation to youth policy development and their youth programmes on request

In this relation, other UN agencies have an important role to play and could support action by:

- sharing information and research results, coordinating actions and informing about good practices and relevant tools relating to youth where there is a clear overlap in expertise or mandate
- supporting advocacy for the establishment of (extended) UN theme groups on youth and youth advisory panels at the regional and in-country levels and for the designation of a lead agency on youth
- considering youth policy principles and good practices in the development of programming that has youth as beneficiaries
- partnering with other UN agencies, youth NGOs and other institutions with experience in youth policy development on new youth related programming they wish to undertake

At country level, efforts to create enlarged United Nations theme groups on youth could be led by UNFPA at the country level, as a contribution to mainstreaming the youth agenda and to improving the capacity of the UN to provide complementary support to government policy concerning young people, including in attainment of developmental goals such as those outlined in the World Programme of Action on Youth, the MDGs or national poverty reduction plans.

The role of such theme groups would be to:

- stimulate interest in youth issues and programmes by ensuring youth related activities are discussed and agreed by all concerned, including partners from outside the UN system;
- develop support mechanisms to ensure that the fundamental principles of co-management in youth programmes are respected;
- discuss the joint or complementary funding of a youth advisor to a senior level political functionary within the state government in order to ensure synergy between governmental and UN interventions;
- improve the dissemination of information and knowledge gathered within the process, and its comparability, through common approaches for the collection of information and the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards common objectives;
- ensure reporting on research undertaken in preparation for programming can be adequately verified and supplemented by the different agencies concerned and documented for further use in the evidence based youth policy making process.

At the same time, UNFPA could advocate strongly among UN agencies and national governmental counterparts for the recognition of youth advisory panels and for their inclusion in a consultative and participative policy and programme development process, in the short-term and for establishment of co-management in the long-term.

The results of this review process also suggest that the following programming steps could be integrated into UN Country Team initiatives concerning young people:

Identify actors influencing youth policy and those implementing youth related initiatives

This implies undertaking research to identify actors involved in youth policy development processes and the activities they conduct in relation to young people. Then, with the involvement of all United Nations agencies concerned, this implies the initiation of mapping exercises, to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations, state institutions and partners in the non-governmental sector in relation to current and projected youth issues.

Identify concepts of youth underlying current government policy

This implies developing an understanding of concepts of youth that commonly determine models of youth work in the society concerned. In addition, this also implies understanding how youth is perceived in contemporary society and how young people are accompanied (or not) through the transition process (for example, in legislation or policy). In order to do so, it is essential to identify and assess the roles of the different actors concerned, meeting points between those different actors, normative laws prescribing budgets to be allocated to youth related policies, etc.

Identify concepts of young people as agents of change within societies in transition

This implies understanding the role actually played by young people in the transition from state socialism or any other regime to democracy, the market economy and the rule of law, as well as the gains or benefits they may or may not have gleaned from being involved in their society, or from migrating out of their country or region of origin.

Assess the status of specific youth policy making in the country concerned

Check the following indicators for assessing the role of the state: the presence and role of national government, local and regional authorities, NGOs, relevant sectoral public institutions. Try to find out what is happening in the intersections between the different ministerial responsibilities and the place that youth has in the inter-sectoral domain, if any. Gather evidence of young people's channels of access, level of participation and opportunity for consultation in policymaking. Check the extent of political will for the active participation and involvement of young people in the design of youth policy.

Assess the status of youth-specific budgetary allocations in the country concerned

Check the availability of budgets and the structure of funding for youth policy, as well as the youth share in the budgets of relevant government sectors – social affairs, health, education, justice, etc. Apply the principles of youth budgeting alongside those of gender budgeting in determination of the fair share of resources.

PART 2

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

SOME GOOD PRACTICES ENCOUNTERED DURING THE REVIEW

This review process revealed a multitude of good practices. In some way or another, they tackle the variety of needs implied by the diverse youth realities encountered in the countries under consideration, but especially those related to the sexual and reproductive health of young people. This section describes just some of the very specific good practices encountered during the research process. The examples here cover several of the key thematic and transversal areas the authors consider relevant for future UNFPA policy and programme development in the field of youth. Each is based in a profound belief in the value of young people as a resource, respect for the human rights of young people and is an example of youth friendly programming that has relevance beyond its specific niche or context.

INFORMATION AND COMMODITIES THROUGH SOCIAL MARKETING

KOPF (Kosovo Population Fund) Social Marketing, Kosovo

In cooperation with UNFPA and the Y-PEER network, KOPF developed youth targeted social marketing of contraceptives, such as condoms and pills, distributed through specifically designed vending machines. This strategy has improved both access to and affordability of contraceptives for young people. KOPF is further involved in providing information on sexual and reproductive health through in-school training. KOPF has been successful in introducing discussion of reproductive health issues to different local communities.

TRAINING AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Y-PEER Network, Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, the Y-Peer network is a platform of six youth NGOs and more than 150 youth volunteers. Y-PEER aims to empower young people through networking, exchange of information and experiences, and by building skills and capacity to change risky behaviours. It creates the opportunity for the young people involved in peer education to engage in dialogue and provides capacity building activities enhancing the quality of youth education practice on the themes of sexual and reproductive health. It has also contributed to setting up of standards for peer education. Y-PEER provides links between service and information providers in the area of sexual and reproductive health. Through interactive non-formal educational training programmes, Y-PEER has also succeeded in multiplying healthy lifestyle messages to rural communities.

YOUTH FRIENDLY SERVICES

H.E.R.A., Macedonia

The Health Education and Research Association (H.E.R.A.) was founded in 2000 with the aim of promoting sexual and reproductive health in Macedonia with special focus on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Supported by WHO and UNICEF, voluntary, confidential, counselling and testing (VCCT) centres were developed providing training for counsellors, as well as free HIV tests. In the period of November 2004 to October 2005, 162 pre-test counselling, 147 HIV tests and post-test counselling were provided. Today H.E.R.A.'s main activities are prevention through education and peer learning, publishing and social campaigns as well as care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PWHAs), VCCT and Youth Friendly Services.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WITH MINORITY WOMEN

Roma Health Mediator Training Programme, Romania

In Romania, young Roma women suffer particular lack of access to reproductive health services. The general lack of integration of the Roma community with state health service provision combines with early marriage and a common resistance from Roma men to the use of contraceptives; additionally for rural inhabitants, travel to services located in urban areas is expensive. In its 2005 to 2009 country programme, UNFPA supports the Ministry of Public Health to train Health Mediators to work in Roma communities. These women are chosen from within local communities and trained

to provide reproductive health information to their peers, thus ensuring trust and enabling women to make informed choices. They work as a connection between the communities and the medical services. Injectable contraceptives have proven particularly popular as they protect privacy and only require a visit to a clinic once every three months.

YOUTH RESEARCH

Youth Human Rights Group, Kyrgyzstan

The Youth Human Rights Group was founded in 1995. The mission of the organisation is the protection of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child in the Kyrgyz Republic. Among the main activities of the Youth Human Rights Group are education and raising awareness in the sphere of Human Rights. This work comprises the provision of training on Human Rights and the Rights of the Child in schools and high schools and the publication of methodological textbooks and films. Furthermore, training seminars for teachers, the representatives of NGOs, students and volunteers are run within the educational programme. Awareness raising activities include the publication of the bulletin on the Rights of the Child “Chaika”, radio programmes on Human Rights and various information leaflets. The Group undertakes an extensive programme of monitoring of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child. At present, the group is preparing research on Juvenile Justice, which includes analysis of the activity of the Juvenile Affairs Commission, of the work of the special boarding school for children in the care of the state. The Group also makes recommendations for the creation of a Juvenile Justice System (the administration of law for young offenders). In 2006, the Group published the results of survey research conducted on youth policy in the Kyrgyz Republic, with analysis of young people’s concerns and motivations for participating in civil society.

YOUTH SPECIFIC STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The National Youth Strategy, Serbia

In the wake of strong advocacy on the part of the youth civic sector in Serbia, a Ministry of Youth and Sport was established. One of its main tasks has been to establish the national youth strategy in consultation with non-governmental youth counterparts. While the consultation process has not yet been completed and the action plan for the implementation of the strategy has not yet been drafted, the policy development process has been established taking into account some of the best practices in the field of youth policy development documented by the Council of Europe in their national youth policy reviews, including the active inclusion of non-governmental youth organisations, the provision of resources for a full consultation process and the creation of oversight mechanisms. While no process is perfect, and some non-governmental actors have mentioned that the process has been rather rushed, something that may have limited participation, the open attitude of those responsible in the Ministry to work with non-governmental and international partners is remarkable. In this respect, the positive complementary role of UN agencies has been noted. UN consultants have been embedded in the Ministry to provide additional capacity and specific expertise.

The National Council on Reproductive Health, Georgia

The National Reproductive Health Council was established in early 2007. This body consists of 18 people representing the health ministry, medical professions involved in reproductive health, UNFPA, UNICEF, USAID and the church and civil society (one general representative). When working on specific activities the NRHC establishes technical working groups, which routinely invite participation of non-governmental organisations including youth organisations. These technical working groups make recommendations to the NRHC, which in turn publishes those recommendations with its imprimatur. Although youth and youth-friendly services have not to date been much discussed on the council, the NRHC did participate in the regional reproductive health forum organised by UNFPA (see the UNFPA programming section below). The NRHC is the best regional example of an initiative to include all interested parties in the development of reproductive health policy.

REGIONAL COOPERATION ON YOUTH SEXUAL HEALTH

Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)

With European Commission support, UNFPA in Georgia leads the Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in South Caucasus (RHIYC). This is a large-scale initiative to meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of at least half of the 2,850,000 people aged 15 to 24 in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. In Georgia, for example, the project supports a range of activities including local capacity-building, the introduction of youth-friendly reproductive health services, the opening of youth reproductive health centres, media campaigns for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness and the youth-oriented re-branding of condoms. As well as its other areas of operation, the RHIYC peer education programme has provided sexual and reproductive health education to adolescents in the government's "Patrioti" summer camps.

Balkan Youth Health

The Balkan Youth and Health Project, implemented by the Canadian Society for International Health, aims to improve health of youth, young women and other vulnerable groups in Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. This initiative is working towards the harmonisation of delivery services among public health institutions, health providers and youth groups in order to increase access to primary healthcare for vulnerable young people such as drug users, returnees, the very poor and marginalised ethnic minorities like Roma.

MUNICIPAL LEVEL SUPPORT TO YOUTH INITIATIVE

Kraków City Government Youth Department, Poland

Despite the appearance of Poland being quite centralised, municipal governments at city and commune level are relatively autonomous in deciding priorities and implementing projects. The political environment can vary dramatically between local and central level. In Kraków, the city government has a department and an ombudsman for youth. They have conducted a city-level review of the needs of young people and aim to meet youth needs both in and out of formal education. Out of this process have come several positive actions, some initiated by young people themselves and all responding to youth concerns and involving young people in implementation. Pupils in Kraków complained that their self-governments were weak and not satisfactory. The city council encouraged the strengthening of student self-governments through the Kraków Academy of Self-Government (KASG) project, in which young people from half the schools in the city trained as young 'leaders', learning to conceptualise projects and apply for their funding. Another initiative begun by the Kraków city government is the "young citizen's handbook", given to each Kraków citizen at age 18, and containing a wide variety of useful information on topics ranging from education funding to crisis hotlines and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (although there is a notable absence of any information relating to sexual and reproductive health or issues of sexuality).

Local Youth Policy in Tartu, Estonia

In Estonia, decentralisation is particularly evident in the field of youth work, where the aim is to provide youth work services for young people as close as possible to their place of residence. While the Youth Work Strategy 2006 to 2013 defines national youth work trends, these are broad and the identification of needs and specific priorities takes place at municipal level. This makes policy responsive to real needs and can encourage a feeling of effective participation among young people locally. In Tartu, the Youth Service and the recognition of young people as a distinct and important social group is probably the best in the country. The Youth Service itself conducts research and analysis of the local situation of 7-26 year-olds, and funds youth work centres and youth camps. The city government has a broadly positive view of youth structures in the city, and takes the participation of young people in decision-making seriously – the Tartu Youth Council and Parliament and representatives of school students participate in working groups relevant for young people. Through the Child-Friendly City scheme in Tartu, supported by UNICEF, young people also participate in other decision-making exercises.

PART 3

MAIN FINDINGS

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE UNFPA “COUNTING ON YOUTH” REVIEW PROCESS

In relation to the mandate of UNFPA, the research reveals three main conclusions. In the first place, fertility is rapidly declining in the region due to a complex of factors determined *inter alia* by the poor socio-economic conditions of young people and their perception of even poorer future perspectives. In the second place, improvement of the current trend is not foreseeable without significant efforts to increase the socio-economic confidence of young women, young men and young families. In the third place, investments in sexual and reproductive health education and services, including significant investments in comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education, reproductive health commodities, youth specific sexual health services and services that support young families in combining work life and parenting, are necessary.

In general, this review confirms that social and economic inequality is a significant challenge to human dignity and the human rights of young people, especially of vulnerable groups. If one, therefore, considers the demographic importance of young people in the countries reviewed and in the region covered by UNFPA as a whole (amounting to some 75 million human beings), then one can conclude that young people are generally under-represented and, more worrying, disenfranchised. It is unfortunate that more often than not, public perceptions of young people tend to be negative and awareness of the “positive” role young people can have as partners in social change and development is limited. In the political sphere, youth issues are often referred to, but political promises rarely translate into actions. Furthermore, the existence of youth policy or legislation is still not a guarantee for functioning youth policy mechanisms and measures.

Inter-generational dialogue, in the sense of two-way, mutually negotiated and facilitated communication on issues of common concern and priority, from positions of equality, is not yet visible in the countries covered by this study. Nevertheless, young people demonstrate significant resilience in the face of their many challenges. The time is now opportune for strategic public investment in young people to help them live up to their “human capital” potential. There are examples of good practice that could be developed and multiplied as part of more coherent youth policy development strategies. Reform of legislation, in line with the provisions of international conventions and regional best practices, can be a good starting point for youth specific policy development. Capacity building of governmental officials and UN staff is needed to ensure social policy takes into account the youth dimension.

In relation to the six thematic foci of the review, the following main findings have been observed.

1/ Fertility and Population Dynamics

In the first place, the evidence base for adequately informed policy making in relation to fertility and population is often not available. In some parts of the region (mostly those affected by conflicts) the statistical systems collapsed, and efforts are needed to ensure an adequate evidence base for policy making. Common methods for gathering population information, such as household surveys, though appreciated by those who conduct them, may be perceived by sector professionals as not well adapted to the changes taking place in the nature of social and family relations. Longitudinal surveys and repeated cross-sectional designs are rarely taken in the region (even if several countries have already taken such surveys, and some countries even participate in international longitudinal survey programmes, such as the Generation and Gender Survey). Household surveys can have the disadvantage of making young people invisible, where they do not adequately take into account the age of the household members or the changing nature of their positions in relation to family members of other age groups. Especially in regard to young people living in poverty, including youth headed household, they need to be complemented by other data collection methods such as narrative methods.

Youth demography is also changing at such a rapid pace that the ten-year time frame for collection and analysis of census data in relation to population change is far too slow. By the time the data becomes available to policy makers, the trends have in fact already changed and policies taking into account the “evidence” will be obsolete.

The question of who should be responsible for the collection of relevant population data is a problem. There is clearly a lack of experience and capacity at both local and national levels in the countries covered in relation to how to conduct relevant and methodologically sound census and survey activities that take into account the youth dimension of population dynamics. UN agencies have a certain level of capacity in the field of population dynamics but not to the need for specific youth related research to be integrated into the standard activities. Their mandates are not always adapted to lending a practical hand.

In relation to the question of low and ever decreasing fertility, two trends may be observed, both of which demonstrate that young people consider primarily their perspectives for the future, or lack thereof, in making decisions about whether and when to have children. In the first place, and particularly among traditional, rural and ethnic minority communities in the region, young people, especially young women, who have little or no perspective of studying or finding a job, whether because of poor social perspectives or because of traditional female roles, continue to start families early, if compared to Western Europe. This is, to some extent, commensurate with the situation in “developing” countries, where children are seen as the guarantee of economic and social security and where, therefore, one witnesses significant population growth. Nevertheless, if one looks at urban areas throughout the region, the trend towards postponement of having children is clearly visible. Young people indicate that they postpone decisions on becoming parents to a later stage of life because they feel their socio-economic situation is not conducive to having children at a younger age.

It can, therefore, be concluded that if young people had more confidence in their life chances, they would potentially be amenable to having children sooner. It is not possible to say if this would encourage them to have more children in the long run, because the ability to afford having children and the costs that go with it, seem to be an important factor. This also implies that limiting access to contraception and social constructions to keep young women in the home (e.g. not providing adequate services to support the combination of educational or professional activities with childbearing) may not have the desired effect of increasing fertility. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that limited access to contraception can have negative side effects, such as increasing the vulnerability of young people, young women in particular, to contracting STIs with concomitant impact on fertility, and increases in unwanted pregnancy and abortion.

2/ Development and Socio-Economic Conditions

Poor socio-economic conditions and even poorer socio-economic perspectives affect a large proportion of young people in a disproportionately negative manner in the countries concerned by this study.

In the first place, there is a lack of recognition of the structural nature of the exclusion of young people. This is linked to a lack of specific policies for improving young people’s socio-economic conditions. It is also evidenced by the fact that the youth dimension is almost entirely ignored as an indicator in standard tools of poverty measurement. Often, young people’s poverty is not studied as a category in its own right and, therefore, poverty statistics tend to be “blind” to the specificity of youth poverty.

Secondly, structural exclusion of large numbers of young people from the labour market and from socio-economic opportunity is extremely worrying from the perspective of social cohesion. There is significant evidence of a growing gap between rich and poor in all the countries surveyed. The majority of the poor are drawn from the ranks of those unable to access or to maintain participation in the formal labour market, which puts young people, especially, young women, at the frontline.

Thirdly, education is seen as something of a panacea for correcting such disparities, but in all the countries surveyed the lack of available employment seems to be the true underlying cause for the continuing marginalisation of young people from the labour market. Turning out ever larger numbers of highly qualified and mobile young people only exacerbates the problem of there not being enough correctly paid and protected jobs to go around. At the same time, the levelling effect of education is consistently being undermined by difference in enrolment and completion of girls in both primary and secondary education and by the generally lower quality of education available to inhabitants of rural areas, as well as by the commodification of education (the process by which education becomes a commodity subject to market forces like any other). The benefits of non-formal education, defined here as the development of social communication and citizenship skills rather than as second chance education, are not fully understood in the countries concerned. Although it is useful for the preparedness for the labour market of young people, it cannot help young people get jobs that do not exist and it should not be subordinated to employability logics exclusively.

Four issues that deserve special attention in relation to socio-economic condition of young people also came to the fore, as follows:

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking, especially of girls and young women for use as slaves in the sex industry, most often in Western Europe and tourist zones in Southern Europe and the Gulf Region, exists and in some cases has grown worryingly. The socio-economic condition of young women, often marginalized from mainstream education and employment opportunities, and not being sufficiently informed about the risk of being trafficked, leads many to be unwittingly tricked into leaving their home countries supposedly to become waitresses, maids or other service personnel in hotels. Others voluntarily enter the informal economy to earn some money and are involuntarily subjected to criminal activity, becoming embroiled in the seedy underworld, eventually ending up in prostitution.

Juvenile Crime

In some of the countries covered by this study juvenile crime is on the rise and foreseen to grow. However, the extent of actual juvenile crime in comparison to its social perception is hard to assess. It is acknowledged that idleness and a lack of opportunity for employment are major contributory factors to youth involvement in crime. In many of the countries of the region young men especially are idle. Furthermore, the extent of organised crime in some societies and its importance for the local economy makes it more likely for young people to be involved in illicit activities. Young people are both perpetrators and victims of crime. It is also noteworthy that young men, most often those with a history of school failure and unemployment, are disproportionately represented among perpetrators of juvenile crime.

Migration

The international migration of young people has become a kind of “exit strategy” for getting away from what a lot of young people consider to be their “hopeless situation” or for accessing higher wages in Western Europe. However, this kind of economic migration, while often chosen, cannot be considered truly “voluntary” even if it shows that in the most adverse and risky situations young people have an extraordinary resilience and ability to cope. The saddest aspect of vulnerability of migrants to trafficking is amply described in relation to the Europe and Central Asian region in the

UNFPA “Moving Young” publication, in its focus on trafficking.¹⁶ Clearly, violence and fatal risks are well known, especially in the case of so-called “illegal” migration. Despite any paradigm shift in the way the interrelations between migration and development are viewed as a positive force for development if buttressed by the right policies, a large proportion of international migrants are young people who would likely have stayed at home, got a job and founded a family, if they had the choice and means to do so. The root causes of youth migration in the countries of origin, rather than only the negative consequences in the countries of destination, need to be understood and taken into account. In addition, dealing with economic migration at source would strengthen local economies, by lessening brain drain, and break the vicious circle of only the least qualified and able remaining in the country of origin. In addition, many of these countries demonstrate important levels of rural to urban internal migration amongst young people seeking education and employment, further entrenching developmental disparities between regions. Little is known of developmental effects on young people of long term parental absence as a result of their labour migration, which has become a reality for a proportion of young people growing up in the new European Union member states.

Vulnerable Groups

While it is possible to observe disparities in opportunity and perspective available to young women compared to young men, it is evident that some groups of young people fare worse than others. Therefore, special attention and maybe special measures to ensure that they enjoy human rights to the full are necessary. While from country to country such vulnerable groups may differ, and specific intra-national situations notwithstanding, it is possible to conclude that Roma young people, disabled young people, sexual minority youth (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender) and refugee or displaced young people are particularly hard hit by the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the majority of the countries covered and are least able to compensate for the discrimination they face as a result of intolerance on the part of the general population and public authorities.

3/ Health

The health situation of young people in the countries covered by the study is complex. Young people are in general strong, physically more capable than their elders and have not yet developed chronic health problems that will impede their professional or social activity, by simple virtue of their age. On the other hand, young people are more prone to certain health risks in the period of adolescence and youth exactly because that life phase is characterised by curiosity, experimentation and risk-taking.

Two issues come to the fore in this study concerning the health of young people:

Risk taking and risk management

Young people in these countries, as with young people everywhere, are likely to engage in *de facto* risky behaviour in the process of experimentation. Despite investment in better and more information related to sexual and other health risks, young people are still prone to unprotected sex, multiple partners, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The development of more liberal lifestyles, with the decline of both state and family control of behaviour, has not been accompanied by any significant spread of knowledge of how to be safe (in the case of sex) or to minimise danger (in the case of drugs). Evidence suggests that this is largely due to denial of a problem by those responsible for public health and education, and limitations on access to commodities that reduce harm.

Comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education

Recent research attests to the fact that in many countries where mobile telephone communications and Internet are widespread, young people are receiving informal sexuality education through information and communication technologies and at an ever-younger age. At the same, and even if in

¹⁶ UNFPA “Moving Young” http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/655_filename_yswp-en.pdf

recent years, some form of reproductive health education has become more available in schools, it is clear that comprehensive sexuality education has been missing in most of the countries surveyed. Comprehensive sexual health and sexuality education covers all aspects of sexual development, and is essential to helping young people manage risk and lessen their vulnerability. Despite the growth of interest in providing sexual health messages to young people, having appropriate knowledge does not necessarily lead to behaviour change among young people. This needs to be considered in the development of educational interventions and curricula.

It is important to acknowledge that young people's risk is often not within their control especially if that young person does not benefit from the constructive support of a family, a significant adult or a safe community. The discourse of risk-taking and prevention has the unfortunate tendency to stigmatise and even criminalise those concerned. It is an inherently paternalistic discourse because it assumes that young people's behaviour can and should be changed. The majority of young people do not engage in high-risk behaviour deliberately. To encourage healthy lifestyles among young people requires targeted and comprehensive sexuality education, relevant youth specific sexual health services and adequate sexual health information delivered in an attractive, friendly and easily accessible setting. Those young people most vulnerable to substance use, STIs and early and unplanned pregnancy are often marginalised and require support mechanisms rather than criminalisation and stigmatisation. For sustained effectiveness, governments must take an increased share of responsibility for the health of their young people, including through public health and education policies that consider the specific needs of youth and acknowledge risk-taking as an integral part of being young.

4/ Gender and the Participation of Young Women

The issues that confront young women are in many cases not different from those confronting young men: both sexes are at risk of STIs through low levels of public knowledge and public health services and both suffer the consequences of poor quality education and preparation for working life. The aspirations of both sons and daughters and young citizens both male and female are frustrated by sceptical and controlling attitudes among those who are older and in positions of authority and who are prone to reinforce rather than break down distinctions between generations.

However, while many interventions on behalf of youth will benefit both sexes, it must be remembered that men and women have different experiences of everything from poverty to sexual ill health. It is imperative, therefore, to disaggregate data by sex, as well as by age in order to reveal the deep nature of gender inequality in what may seem like simple results. Some problems, such as violence, long-term economic dependence and exclusion from education, disproportionately affect women including young women. Low levels of public participation and unacceptable levels of violence cut across the experiences of all the countries studied, even those in the European Union.

Finally, it should be remembered that decisions to include gender concerns at the vital formative stage with which youth policy is concerned will have positive consequences throughout women's lives, for subsequent generations of young women and for both sexes in society as a whole. Programmes that already apply gender mainstreaming approaches, and many of the good practices developed by the UN in this respect, will benefit greatly from equal sensitivity to the sometimes very distinct concerns and aspirations of young women and young men.

5/ Participation of Young People in Social and Political Life

This study observed significant disenfranchisement of young people from policy making on matters that concerns them. In many countries, participation channels for young people exist on paper and in policy declarations, but in fact young people rarely get the opportunity to make real decisions about

real policies that command real budgets. It has to be questioned whether this disenfranchisement could be seen as underpinning youth disengagement from politics and the public sphere.

Nevertheless, youth apathy in relation to politics is often over emphasised. In some countries the participation opportunities of young people are improving. European integration (in its widest sense, as not just being invited to join the EU but as being involved in broad based forms of European cooperation) is helping this process along. Efforts are being made to develop youth participation channels all the way up to global level and United Nations agencies including UNFPA are experimenting with youth activities with a participative dimension, rather than a representative one. However, inter-agency cooperation in this field is relatively weak and there is a lot of duplication, especially when it comes to the question of representative youth platforms. The discourse of youth apathy also plays down significance of youth participation in all kinds of activities (youth and non-youth led) that cannot be considered party political or political in the sense of belonging to the domain of formal politics (like participation in political parties or standing for election), but which nonetheless have political motives and political results, such as being involved in a single issue social movement (anti-racism, environmentalism, etc) or purely social and charitable activities that raise awareness about the “haves and have-nots” of the society.

It is notable that at the country and continental level there has been something of a tendency to create new structures rather than working with or trying to empower existing ones, for example, National Youth Councils or regional youth platforms that already exist and have difficulty to develop without support. Cooperation with the international non-governmental youth sector is also improving. But, it remains difficult that the tendency of UN and other international agencies is to work only with the biggest of the international non-governmental youth organisation (such as the political party youth wings, the Guides, Scouts or the Red Cross/Red Crescent Youth). While this is not a problem *per se*, diversity of forms of youth participation goes far beyond the representativeness of such organisations. Consultation with such organisations, while necessary and important, cannot claim to be participative in the true sense. At the same time, representative organisational platforms of young people usually do not involve more than a very small proportion of young people and care must be taken to develop channels for the participation of so called “non-organised young people”, those who do not want to commit to membership in an organisation.

6/ Youth Policies, Strategies and Legislation

All of the countries covered by this study have a basis for the elaboration of a youth policy or are in the process of developing one, through national action strategies or action plans. This said, the elaboration of relevant legislation and declarative policy papers do not mean that a country is actually implementing a youth policy or even that it has a youth policy agenda. In the countries studied, youth policy is primarily understood as support to youth NGOs or as the organisation of youth-specific actions. This clearly indicates the need for a broader and more integrated understanding of the functions of youth policy among government policy makers. Inter-sectoral or inter-ministerial cooperation on youth related policy or concerns remains weak, if it exists at all, in all the countries covered in the study. An understanding of the transversality of youth policy and the need for its articulation in a comprehensive manner is basically missing. International actors, including UNFPA, have the potential and capacity to assist government in filling this clear gap.

As mentioned above, in the area of youth policy making, co-management or other participative and consultative mechanisms for involving youth civil society in the elaboration of policy are largely missing outside of the European Union member states covered by this study. Where they do exist, including in some of the European Union member states, they remain weak, although there is one notable exception, that being Estonia. The process of decentralisation of youth policy and, therefore, its horizontal coverage, is extremely weak in most countries, although through the pilot initiatives of

some local authorities and youth civil society, it has begun to emerge in some of the countries covered by this study. Positive examples of bottom-up developed local youth action plans being developed independently from the national level are to be observed in several cities. Still, where decentralisation of youth policy making has taken place in a top-down manner, extensive bureaucratisation and a chronic lack of financial resources have been observed.

To generalise about what the character of youth policy will look like in the future is very difficult and would be artificial. Nevertheless, tendencies towards the institution of “intergenerational dialogue” (as a euphemism for the replacement of the financial responsibility of the state for the social welfare of ever growing ageing populations by that of families) and towards the instrumentalisation of youth work for the purposes of the employability of young people (in a highly liberalised model of youth policy, according to which equality of opportunity is guaranteed, but where the state has little or no responsibility for ensuring the human rights of young people are respected) are already visible in several countries. At the same time, in relation to “deviant” young people, tendencies towards prescriptive policy and control, including a strong focus on “prevention” are also visible.

UNFPA and other concerned international agencies can advocate for another, more progressive approach, to youth policy – one which respects the right of young people to “being young” for as long as they need to be and in the safest possible manner.

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