



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste

Secretary of State for Youth and Sport

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Official Translation

Preamble

Timor-Leste is seen as the poorest country in the Asian Region, due to its annual income of \$370 per capita (UNDP 2006). Our population, estimated at close to one million people, suffers from a number of inequalities that affect severely our social and economic well-being. These inequalities are a reflection of the history from which our country has emerged and our own social and cultural practices. It is now the responsibility of the Government of Timor-Leste to provide the conditions and infrastructure for the gradual development of a society in which young people are key elements in the sustainable development of the country.

The energetic and dynamic transition of young people to adult life is a valuable resource for the development and empowerment of the country. This force should be channelled properly to create new opportunities for young people and for their education and social integration, thus avoiding the global tendency for feelings of social restlessness typical of this age group.

The Timorese young people have shown an unconditional dedication to the liberation and independence of their country, extending the resistance movements of Timor-Leste to outside of their own country and alerting the world to the Timorese cause. In the most difficult times, young people had the courage to organise themselves and to devote their energies to the Timor-Leste cause. This historical fact highlights the importance and vital role of young people in all circumstances as agents in transforming society.

The National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste is the first document to define the guidelines for promoting the holistic welfare of young people. The State undertakes to support the new generation to face a better future, and to celebrate the success of the struggle for liberation and the meaning of independence for Timor-Leste. The integrated vision assumes that the 'justice between the present and future generations is recognised as a fundamental base for sustainable development' (Braga - Plan of Action for Youth, 1998). The National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste should be seen as a means to allow the growing participation of young people in the fight against poverty and to improve the socio-economic welfare of Timorese society in general.

Preamble 2

Executive summary..... 4

1. The Policy in the Context of Timor-Leste 5

2. Definition of Youth 6

3. A Profile of Young People 6

4. The Vision of the National Youth Policy 8

5. The Objectives of the Youth Policy. 8

6. Key Strategies 8

7. Target Groups 9

8. The Rights and Obligations of Young People 9

9. Responsibilities of the Actors serving Young People 10

10. Areas of Inter-sectoral Intervention 10

11. Implementation Mechanisms 13

12. Monitoring and Evaluation 14

13. Conclusion 14

Executive summary

The National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste is based essentially on a national survey of young people in Timor-Leste, on studies of social, economic and demographic issues made in the country and on wider consultations.

The policy demonstrates the will and concern of the State to develop the capacity of young people, now and in the future, to mobilise them in the support of development and to reduce poverty in the country. This document contains a definition of youth, the vision and objectives for the development of youth, the rights and duties of young people, the role of stakeholders in the affairs of youth, an outline of six key strategies and implementation mechanisms for the strategies.

By analysing the collected information, six key strategies and three priority groups were identified.

Key strategies

1. Mobilise young people to serve their communities;
2. Establish links between education and after-school reality;
3. Provide more and better job opportunities for young people;
4. Teach illiterate young people how to read and write;
5. Help the most disadvantaged youth; and
6. Promote the civic participation of young people.

The goal of these proposals is to gradually stimulate young people to provide voluntary work for the community, to form civic values based on their duties as citizens and to create more and better opportunities in the labour market. The Government encourages young people to take initiatives of support for the community, and to access the microcredit schemes to fund specific areas of work.

Young people, to be active citizens and to achieve sustainable development, need to broaden their sphere of knowledge and participation in the different aspects of the social, economic and political life of the Nation.

Priority Target Groups

The first group refers to the majority of young people who have benefited from access to education and health, but have difficulties in the practical implementation of their learning in the labour market.

The second group includes young people who have difficulties in accessing essential services such as education and health. This group is more at risk of poverty than the previous

one. An example of this group is illiterate young people.

The third group refers to young people who have experienced or experiencing serious disadvantages, for example, young people with disabilities.

The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport will promote, in cooperation with other institutions, the establishment of a National Youth Fund, which is designed to support the initiatives of the youth groups or organisations and will establish a mechanism for selecting the proposals and supervising the implementation of projects or programs.

1. The Policy in the Context of Timor-Leste

The National Youth Policy is a statement of the intent and willingness of the State to develop the capacity of Timorese youth. As such, its basic elements will be incorporated into the preparation of strategies and sustained programs, and integrated into the national development program.

Young people's psycho-social, cognitive and emotional development should be a positive power to enable them to face new challenges in the society in the future.

The society is not always fair and supportive of young people in their 'search for their first job, maintaining a healthy life, forming a new household and family, and pursuing responsible citizenship'.¹

The population of Timor-Leste is mostly composed of young people. Their numbers are increasing and, while there are many young people who have access to education, there are also many who are recorded in the country's statistics on illiteracy.

The Timorese society still faces serious weaknesses, which stem from the various forms of poverty that exist. Such weaknesses are contrary to the development that is sought, and constitute a serious obstacle to releasing the dynamism of young people themselves.

Given this situation, we emphasise that:

- Young people are an essential asset for the future development of Timor-Leste;
- Young people should be treated equally with the rest of the society;
- The State, and the society in general, play a crucial role in recognising the role of young people;
- The Government, through the inter-ministerial mechanisms, will establish targeted programs for youth;
- Young people who have benefited from their access to education and a healthy life, have, through their respective youth organisations, a duty to help those in most need.

2. Definition of Youth

The Timor-Leste National Youth Policy defines youth as those aged from 16 to 30 years. Terms 'foinsa'e', 'otas nurak' and 'klosan' are used in Tétun language to describe young people. The term 'foinsa'e' can be translated literally as 'grown recently and might, or might not, be married' or is referred to as 'still an adolescent'. 'Otas nurak' or 'young age' has a meaning similar to 'foinsa'e', referring particularly to adolescents and young people. The word 'klosan' refers to a young unmarried person.

¹ See World Bank, 2006, World Development Report 2007, October

3. A Profile of Young People

One in every three inhabitants of Timor-Leste is a young person. According to the National Census of 2004, 290,000 East Timorese are aged between 15 and 35 years. Youth aged between 15 and 25 years are approximately one in five inhabitants of the population, or 171,000. The long-term tendency is for the numbers of young people in the country to increase each year.

The National Youth Survey shows that about three in four men, aged between 30 and 33 years, are married, with this number increasing to nine in ten men who are aged from 34 years and above. One in five women are married at the age of 21 years, increasing this number to half of women between the ages of 24 and 26 years. By age 27 years, three out of four women are married.

Urbanisation

Approximately one in four young people aged between 15 and 30 years live in urban areas, many of whom are living in Dili.

Unemployment

The 2004 National Census shows that two out of five urban young people were not in paid work. In Dili, nearly one in two young people (44 per cent) did not have paid work.² And others who are educated, are busy with low-income activities, for there are no viable employment opportunities.

Education

The 15 to 19 years age group has achieved a better level of formal education than other groups in the population - three in five young people in the 15 to 19 year age group have some level of secondary education or higher.

However, that does not mean that they all are able to read and write. The National Youth Survey in Timor-Leste revealed that a third of young people aged between 15 and 35 years, who have completed the sixth year of primary school, are only able to read a sentence with difficulty and about one in ten young people in this group are unable to read.

According to the 2004 National Census, three out of ten young people aged between 15 and 29 years said they are not literate in Tétun - this applied both to men as well as to women. The National Census also shows that more than a quarter of young people aged between 15 and 35 years (27%) are not literate in any of the four major languages in Timor-Leste. For the group in the age bracket of 15 to 25 years, close to one in four (23%) are illiterate. Women are more illiterate (24%) than men (21%) in the age group of 15 to 25 years.

The proportion of young people aged between 15 and 24 years who are literate is a key indicator in the Millennium Development Goals for the reduction of poverty. Compared with other countries in the region, Timor-Leste has a much lower rate of literacy for this age group (77%).

² World Bank, 2006, Background Paper for the Development Partners Meeting, 3-4 April, p2.

Welfare

The National Youth Survey showed that the welfare of the majority of young people in rural areas depends first and foremost on how secure they feel. The more young people feel secure, the more they also believe they have an important role to play in the wider community and are more tolerant of others' views.

The survey also revealed that many young men in particular are mainly involved in activities that only benefit them. Therefore, measures to encourage more young people to have a more direct role in the development of their communities will bring more benefits to everyone involved.

Many young Timorese through the media compare their standard of living with what they see in other countries. In many cases, they are dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities they believe exists in Timor-Leste. This expectation of a higher standard of living can, on the one hand, be beneficial, since it leads to greater efforts in seeking opportunities. But, on the other hand, it can create a growing frustration in those who fail to achieve their expectations, and causes greater social instability.

Limitations of the youth organisations

The National Youth Survey revealed that young people have a broad range of organisations dedicated to sports and social activities and those that support the wider community. However, an assessment commissioned by the World Bank on the capacity of a number of youth organisations, showed a series of deficiencies in relation to their governance structures, their capacities and management practices, program implementation and their relationship with other organisations.³ The conclusion is, therefore, that youth organisations must increase their skills, if they are to have a role in the economy and society of Timor-Leste.

Limitations of existing programs

Several international and Timorese NGOs operate programs for youth, focusing on education and vocational training, cultural activities and business management. These programs are, however, small in scale, when compared with the needs, and often are not connected to other initiatives. It is necessary to integrate these initiatives with the development strategy of the Government and in particular to the sector investment programs.

4. The Vision of the National Youth Policy

To live in a society where young men and women have access to education, health, vocational courses, and are endowed with the moral values of citizenship for a responsible and healthy life.

³ Ostergaard, with the contributions of Domingos Savio and António Conceição, 2005, "Timor Leste Youth Social Analysis Mapping and Youth Institutional Assessment": Final report, June, World Bank, Timor Leste Office pags. 35-48.

5. The Objectives of the Youth Policy

To achieve the vision stated above, the following objectives have been set:

- 5.1. Encourage young people, men and women, to exercise their rights and duties as responsible citizens;
- 5.2. Discover and promote the potential of young people through education and vocational training;
- 5.3. Promote national unity through community service, socio-cultural activities and youth exchange; and
- 5.4. Train young people, men and women, to be healthy now and in the future.

6. Key Strategies

- 6.1. Mobilise and encourage youth associations, including those involved in sports, to participate in a collective manner in programs for poverty reduction and community development.
- 6.2. Establish a link between formal education and after-school reality by introducing practical learning for secondary and tertiary students in their last semesters. For this purpose, students could be placed in community service in the public or private sector.
- 6.3. Establish more vocational training opportunities for young people to obtain employment, with particular relevance to self-employment and temporary work abroad.
- 6.4. Provide literacy training to young people who cannot read and write.
- 6.5. Help the most disadvantaged young people through the establishment of self-help groups to develop the means of achieving a sustainable life.
- 6.6. Provide training for young people to become responsible citizens.

Each of these key strategies will be worked out in more detail in a strategic plan and in the sector investment program of the relevant ministries and the secretariat of state.

7. Target Groups

The National Youth Policy aims to meet the needs of three target groups:

The first group refers to the majority of young people who have benefited from access to education and health services, but have difficulties in the practical implementation of their learning in the labour market.

The second group includes young people who have difficulties in accessing essential services such as education and health. This group, such as illiterate young people, is more at risk of poverty than the first one.

The third group refers to young people who have experienced or experiencing serious disadvantages - young people with disabilities are a prime example of this group. This group is more prone to the risk of poverty during their lives than the other groups because they face serious problems of survival. This may be related to the lack of shelter or access to various forms of existing support in the country or they still have problems related to their physical or psychological situation due to their disabilities.

8. The Rights and Obligations of Young People

The rights of young people are the same for all citizens, as defined in the Constitution of RDTL: the right to equal treatment without discrimination of any form (Art. 16, 2); the right to freedom, security and personal integrity (Art.30, 1); the right to honour and privacy (Article 36); the right to political participation (Art.46, 1 and 2); the right to work (Art.50); the right to private property (Art.54); the right to security and social assistance (Art. 56); the right to health and medical care (Art.57); the right to housing (Art.58); the right to education and culture (Art.59); and the right to a healthy environment (Art.61 , 1).

Young people with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens unless the disability prevents the exercise of that right (Art. 21, 1). In particular, under Art 19 paragraph 2, young people have the right to education, healthy living and vocational training.

Inherent in the exercise of these rights is a series of obligations. The number 1 of the Art 19 of the Constitution of RDTL, refers to young people's citizenship duties, and their obligations to consolidate national unity, participate in the reconstruction, defence and development of the country.

Gender Balance

This policy pays particular attention to gender balance. Woman and man have the same rights and obligations in all areas of family, political, economic, social and cultural life (Art. 17 of the Constitution of RDTL). Women have economic, political, social and cultural rights (CEDAW) based on the principle of gender equality and social justice and the total elimination of domestic violence in the Timor-Leste society (Law on Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste).

The policy encourages and supports young women to become more active in social, political, economic and cultural occupations. Programs for young people should also be based on gender balance.

9. Responsibilities of the Agencies serving Young People

The term ‘actors’ refers in this policy to the agencies and organisations that are directly or indirectly exercising functions which have an impact on young people. They may take the form of Government, national and international non-Governmental, multi-national agencies, religious institutions, sporting federations, local associations and youth organisations.

The full exercise of the rights of young people depends on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the actors in the service of young people.

All actors are obliged to use the resources they provide for the welfare of young people and to develop their sense of responsibility and talents, so that they can achieve the defined objectives. While it is up to the institutions of Government to allocate funds to set up programs for young people, religious institutions have responsibility for young people’s moral education and promoting the need to work for the benefit of the community. Youth organisations have a responsibility to help more needy young people through rewarded volunteer work. The Sporting Federations have an important responsibility for conducting sport activities.

The national NGOs and youth organisations have a relevant role in service provision for young people, or in developing young Timorese to exercise fully their social, political, economic and cultural rights. They have, also, a duty to promote the protection of young people against all kinds of discrimination and to provide support to create employment opportunities and to be responsible citizens.

The institutions or international agencies, which directly or indirectly involve young people or have programs related to young people within their respective strategies and programs, have important roles to play in supporting the young people, by corroborating with the program of the Government of Timor-Leste.

10. Areas of inter-sectoral intervention

Education and institutional development

The education of young people rests on the responsibility of the parents/guardians, community, educational and religious institutions, state institutions and government and other competent agencies. The limited capacity of parents/guardians, and the limited access of young people to formal education requires an expansion of non-formal education, particularly to improve access to employment or self-employment.

Parents/guardians have a primordial duty to ensure that their children receive a basic education. The religious institutions play a crucial role in the moral and religious education of young people. The Government through its organs should ensure the smooth running of education services in general, without ignoring the importance of the transmission of values and civic education of young people.

The Timorese youth organisations are necessary vehicles for promoting development. They encourage the young people, through NGOs and youth associations, to play a more active

role in implementing a poverty reduction strategy and rural development. Their aim is to equip the young people with the means to engage in productive employment and to perform their social responsibilities.

Employment

The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, in cooperation with the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment, will establish a youth employment strategy, without ignoring the vital role that the Ministry of Education and Culture holds in this project.

The training and employment centres have provided significant help to young people. Given the continuing demand for employment among the young people and their lack of prerequisites demanded by employers, it is necessary to develop a quality standard for vocational training and to encourage the growth of employment opportunities in the various economic sectors. The relevant ministries and agencies should cooperate to provide job creation programs.

Literacy training

The Government aims to provide basic education to all children between 6 and 14 years by 2015.⁴ The Government is also developing secondary schools, technical/vocational and higher education and training for young people in their productive ages.

The education policy of the Government intends, also, to promote adult literacy by providing better access to education for those who missed this opportunity. The Adult Education Program will target specifically the needs of the rural population and other disadvantaged groups.

Health

The aim of the Ministry of Health is to achieve a healthier Timor-Leste through an inter-departmental approach to public health. The Framework for Inter-departmental Action seeks an integrated approach from all parts of the Government, involving local communities in identification of the health problems and actions.

Young people should be informed on how to live a healthy life and then given the opportunity to participate in the promotion of public health. They, with the support of the health centres, can work to prevent and reduce the contamination of diseases, improve the basic conditions of health and cooperate in the implementation of the health promotion strategy of the Government.

Food Security

The Sector Investment Program for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has highlighted as a maximum priority the improvement of food Security in the communities reliant on subsistence agriculture. It is necessary to motivate the young people to be involved in these programs for improving cultivation methods, agricultural extension services, forest

⁴ Government of Timor-Leste, 2006, Fighting Poverty as a National Cause, 17th March, pp8-9.

rehabilitation, protection of the water areas and conservation of biodiversity.

One of the reforms to be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture is to extend the Food Security Programs, through providing funding to young people and farmers to set up demonstration plots for cultivating high-yielding rice and maize to increase productivity. In order to reduce the losses after the harvests of rice and maize, young people should promote the widespread use of simple silos for household food storage.

Environment

The young people represent a driving force for the protection and promotion of the environment, in raising awareness of the society and instilling respect for nature and environmental protection, starting with their own example.

Arts, culture and recreation

The promotion of the arts and culture among young people has educational, recreational and economic benefits. The Government should create conditions to engage the young people in these activities. It is also proposed that programs related to Timorese cultural values also be set up, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture and other agencies involved in this area.

Sport and recreation

Sport is necessary for the physical and psychological development of the young people. Sporting activities are a means for promoting health, self-discipline, team work and the development of social responsibility. Sporting activities can still be a means of fun, a productive use of leisure time and a source of economic income.

Information Technology

The young people should receive training in information technology, thus promoting a better understanding of today's world, accessing to media to obtain economic benefits.

Young people requiring special attention

In society there are disadvantaged young people due to physical or mental disabilities, family abandonment, delinquency, involvement in crime etc. These young people who are at risk of being excluded by the society, live in poverty conditions, and are denied their rights as citizens. They need personal and psychological support to enable them to be reintegrated into the society.

Poverty reduction

The communities in rural areas often do not have access to quality basic services such as education, health, adequate water and sanitation systems; as well as lacking job opportunities. The young people should be encouraged to participate actively in poverty reduction efforts in the country. These efforts should focus on giving rural youth better access to education, engaging in health promotion activities and helping to improve food

security.

11. Implementation mechanisms

Duties of the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport

The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport is responsible for the design, implementation, coordination and evaluation of the policy defined and approved by the Council of Ministers in the areas of the welfare promotion and the development of young people, physical education and sport.

It is up to the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport to ensure that all resources are mobilised to implement the National Youth Policy, and to highlight the importance and the active participation of young people in the development of the nation, through the coordination structures of the Government.

Timor-Leste National Youth Council (CNJTL) and other youth organisations

The Timor-Leste National Youth Council and other Timorese youth organisations are potential support bodies for government programs for the development of young people. The Council with its district and sub-districts coordinators and other youth organisations can play an important role in helping the implementation of the national youth policy strategies. They deserve training and financial assistance support to carry out a partnership role in implementing inter-sectoral Government programs and in the use of the National Youth Fund to finance young people's initiatives.

Institutional cooperation and coordination

The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport is responsible for establishing partnerships and institutional cooperation to ensure the better implementation of the strategies of the National Youth Policy. The institutional cooperation enables synergies of resources to be utilised effectively, avoiding duplication of services and directs aid to the more needy.

Sector Investment Program establishes principles, articulates policies, lists programs and costs, and guides the prioritization of expenses at the inter-sectoral level. The Sector Investment Programs related to education, health, agriculture, employment, economic development and training for civic citizenship are highly relevant to young people. The objective of the Sector Working Group (GTS), is to help prioritise and implement the Sector Investment Programs and to allow better inter-sectoral coordination.

The inter-sectoral cooperation through Ministries or of relevant Secretariats of State allows greater involvement of the young people in various programs in order for them to benefit from programs operating in different sectors.

National Youth Fund

The Government will establish a fund for young people, as a special resource to finance initiatives of youth groups and associations to undertake activities geared to achieve a range of objectives. Criteria will be established to evaluate proposals for initiatives and to allocate

monies from the fund. The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, through the establishment of a proper mechanism, will administer and monitor the correct use of funds for youth initiatives. The Ministries and Secretariats of State with responsibility in this area should also provide support in the form of funds, materials or equipment necessary to implement the initiatives. The National Youth Council of Timor-Leste can assist in the monitoring and implementation of the initiatives proposed by young people.

12. Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of strategies and programs of the National Youth Policy will require monitoring and evaluation to identify the results achieved. An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies and inter-sectoral programs should be carried out every two years. The evaluation should be assessed in terms of the involvement of young people, the benefits achieved, type of interventions and types of agencies providing interventions. Progress can be measured by results that are relevant to the indicators of Millennium Development Goals.

13. Conclusion

The major purpose of the National Youth Policy is to improve the skills and knowledge of young people to enable them to play an active role in implementing the strategies of social and economic development of the country. Four of the proposed strategies are based fundamentally on the aim of encouraging young people to provide voluntary services to the community to make them optimistic in order to face the future. The agencies providing youth programs must coordinate and cooperate to ensure that the best assistance is given to the needs of young people to improve their overall welfare.