YOUTH POLICY MAPPING:
The Case of National Youth Policy of Ghana

INTRODUCTION AND THE CONCEPT OF GHANA NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

VAF AND YOUTH POLICY MAPPING

A National Youth Policy (NYP) is a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that a country intends to give to the development of its young men and women. It clearly defines the place and role of youth in society and the responsibility of society to youth and should be supported by the following three universal concepts: ‘Participation’, ‘Equity’ and ‘Cohesion’. (P. Kenyon, ICNYP). The importance of policies and programmes to promote young people is being emphasized at international level.

The UN General Assembly: “Calls Upon all States, all United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned to make every possible effort aiming at cross-sectoral youth policies by integrating a youth perspective into all planning and decision-making processes relevant to youth”.

In 2010, National Youth Authority (NYA) through the Ministry of Youth and Sports achieved another milestone by launching the National Youth Policy under the theme

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“TOWARDS AN EMPOWERED YOUTH, IMPACTING POSITIVELY ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT”.

It was intended to provide guidelines for all stakeholders involved in the implementation of policies, programs and projects for the development of youth in Ghana. The launch of the policy was greeted with many excitement and hope for the future for the Ghanaian Youth was almost restored. The policy sought to address multiple issues as youth empowerment and development is a complex subject.

The 17 policy priority areas of the policy are:
- Education and skills training
- Science, Research and Technology
- Information and Communication Technology
- Youth and Employment
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Youth in Modern Agriculture
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Environment
- Health, HIV and AIDS
- Networking and Partnership
- Mentoring
- Arts and Culture
- Sports and Recreational
- Governance, Democracy and Leadership
- Youth in Conflict Prevention and Peace building
- National Youth Week

There was no doubt that a successful implementation of this policy will propel Ghanaian Youth and make them stand out among their counterparts in Africa.

Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) under the Executive Arm of Government as success stories of the policy. The major complain however of the National Youth Authority (NYA) is that these agencies are under the direct administration of the Office of the President instead of the NYA. This has resulted the NYA being starved of funds and logistics to become more efficient in the youth development agenda.

@Municipal and District Level.

In reality, the National Youth cannot boast of any success with regards to the implementation of the National Youth Policy at least at the municipal and district level. The National Youth Authority set up national implementation committee to monitor the activities of NYA at regional and district level. This committee was halted due to lack of funds. Our engagement with some district and municipal Directors revealed that for many decades now, they have never received any budgetary support from NYA at national level in respect of the policy implementation. It has failed completely said by one District Directors.

Challenges of the Policy Implementation.

Policy without Implementation Plan: The foremost setback of the policy was the absence of an implementation plan of the policy. In fact it took almost four (4) years for the National Youth Authority to develop and launch an action plan. What value is a youth policy without the necessary mechanism and blueprint to guide its implementation? Soon
after the political and colorful celebration of the policy, all its actors went into hibernation. The talk over the policy and what it sought to achieve was lost.

Lack of funding....
Another systemic challenge of the NYA and the implementation of the policy was complete unavailability of funds. Our engagement with the NYA national office revealed that they don’t receive any budgetary allocation from the Ministry of Youth and Sports in particular for the implementation of the policy. The Ministry of Youth and Sports directs its focus to sports especially football. For example, it came out clearly that a budget for one soccer event is bigger than the whole ministry’s budget. If the NYA national office complains of funds suffocation, what will make of the municipal and district offices?

“Duplicate and adhoc agencies like YES and GYEEA compete with national Youth Authority for funds hence the NYA has being sidelined by government”
Emmanuel S. Martey (Municipal Director, NYA-EFFUTU).

Inadequate staff and Skilled Personnel: One surprising issue has to do with staff and personnel throughout NYA offices. District and Municipal offices have an average of two staff (Director and Secretary). There were no personnel for programming.

The Directors were overburdened with workload. The knowledge of coordinators in the field of youth development and the trend in global youth agenda is questionable. In the Upper West Region for example, all municipal and district offices of NYA have been closed down due to non- replacements of retired coordinators. Sometimes, coordinators resign and join other organizations and they were never replaced.

Inadequate Logistic Support:
The NYA offices lack logistic and equipment support to enable them do their jobs effectively. Lack of furniture, computers and several challenges affect the work of NYA and its policy direction. Some of the NYA offices were not connected to electricity. The offices were not welcoming at least to young people. Coordinators have lost touch with the youth and have difficulty appealing and attracting youth to their offices. On average, NYA district offices receive less than 10 guests or youth visits/enquiry in a whole month.

NYA lacks PoliticalWill.
Government has a weak commitment to the NYA and lacks political will to see the NYA succeed. NYA always fail to make it into National Budgetary Allocation. Successive governments have challenged youth interventions and programming through politically established agencies which sideline
the NYA. For example, the National Youth Employment programme the ex-president Kuffour’s regime and the YES Fund of Ex-president Mahama were all politically motivated and NYA never actively involved. Some coordinators were emphatic that if current and future governments do not pay attention to the NYA, in the next 5 to 10 years, it will fade out.

**Age Factor of NYA Personnel**
Per the NYA’s own definition, youth is someone between the ages of 15-35 years. It is shocking to note that the average age of NYA coordinators is more than 45 years. Where as one will argue that this age will come along with experience and knowledge of youth issues, the opposite is the case. Coordinators are disconnected with current trend of youth development and global discourses, lack simple technological skills and can never in anyway attract young people. They have just outlived their usefulness at the offices.

**Recommendations**

- **Youth Desks at Ministries/Departments:**
  NYA should collaborate with ministries and department and create a youth desk to liaise between NYA and those ministries. Government must give equal respects to all structures and institutions. This will ensure youth issues are mainstreamed into departmental and ministerial policy planning and decision making processes.

- **MMDAs budgetary allocation to NYA:**
  There is the need for policy direction towards Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to make proper budgetary allocation and commitment to NYA. Internally Generated Fund (IGF) could be alternative source to fund NYA. On the other hand, NYA should make their work meaningful and relevant in the context of national development.

- **Decoupling the Ministry of Youth and Sports.**
  The current experience with Ministry of Youth and Sports is never in favor of youth development to say the least. We cannot substitute sports and for that matter football to youth development. No doubt our national soccer team; the Black Star is the pride of the nation but how does that translate into job opportunities and skills development for the greater youth. There is the need to separate Youth and Sports and create an independent Ministry of Youth. This will increase funding allocation to youth issues and employment and other challenges can be properly addressed. Effective supervision and monitoring of the work of NYA can be assured.

- **NYA must build network and partnership with NGOs:**
  The NYA must consistently collaborate with youth-led groups and NGOs because most of the issues captured in National Youth Policy are being worked on by these groups. Partnership with NGOs will ensure efforts are not duplicated.

- **New recruitment and training at the NYA:**
  There is an urgent need to recruit new personnel to man the work at NYA at national, regional and district level. Capacity building of NYA staff should be conducted regularly to meet the increasing trend of youth development.

  · YES and GYEEEDA should have their secretariat at NYA. Government should put all
youth-led related agencies under the NYA. Agencies such as YES Fund, GYEEAD should be under one umbrella body (NYA). This will increase harmonization of programmes and equity in budgetary disbursement.

CONCLUSION:

With a mirage of challenges facing the Ghanaian Youth, effective implementation of the National Youth Policy and the overhauling of the National Youth Authority will go a long way to prepare and empower the youth to find their place in society. There is no doubt NYA has an important role in the national debate of youth development in Ghana. The Government of Ghana cannot continue to fail the youth by reneging on their mandate to resource and empower the NYA to deliver. Strong leadership devoid of partisanship is needed to head the NYA and should be skillful to attract partners and bring new vision to the National Youth Authority and its mandate.

Long Live Ghana. Long Live NYA.

About The Policy Brief

This Youth Policy Mapping (Policy Brief) was researched and revealed by Emmanuel C. Gyetuah and John K. Amuzu. Youth Champions of Voice Africa’s Future (VAF) initiative with supervision from Emmanuel Ametepey, the Country Coordinator of VAF in GHANA and Executive Director of Youth Advocates Ghana.

About Youth Advocates Ghana and VAF Initiative

Youth Advocates Ghana (YAG) is a youth development organization based in Nsawam in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Ghana. The organization was established in 2011. The mission of YAG is to increase access to sexual reproductive health information and services for young people, support the educational needs of vulnerable children and to equip young people with knowledge and skills for job creation.

YAG has been involved with the Post 2015 framework in 2013 through the Voice
Africa’s Future (VAF)
Campaign in Ghana. Launched in 2012 by African Monitor (South Africa) and 10 other African countries including Ghana, the programme was designed to evolve through three phases.

In Phase 1 perspectives from young people were collected and a set of recommendations developed to inform and influence the African position on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Phase 2 (2014, 2015) spanned across a 2-year period of advocacy and influencing key African decision makers at the national, regional and global level to prioritise Key Asks from African youth.

Phase 3, which started in July 2016, ensures that African youth and civil society are active drivers of the implementation of the SDGs.

The third phase of VAF will focus on “Accelerating delivery of a people-centred action-focused sustainable development agenda in Africa”. It aims to accelerate the domestication and implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 as instruments for effective development delivery in Africa.

This exercise of Youth Policy Mapping formed part of the project to monitor government commitment to deliver on youth promises.
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