

GUIDE to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for



YOUTH



UNITED NATIONS

Department
of
Economic
and
Social
Affairs

GUIDE to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for

Recommendations and ideas for concrete action for
policies and programmes that address the everyday
realities and challenges of youth.

YOUTH



UNITED NATIONS

DESA

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FOREWORD

While many comprehensive publications provide a deeper understanding of the obstacles and challenges lived by youth, this Guide offers practical ideas and recommendations for concrete action to the people who make and carry out legislation, policies and programmes that affect the everyday realities and struggles of young people. Investing in youth means a commitment not only to their improved well-being and livelihood but also to the economic, social and cultural development of future generations. Failure to make such investments can result in steep societal costs. Yet, few countries adequately recognize the needs of youth and devote to them the sustained attention required to fulfil the vision of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

The year 2005 brought both the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the WPAY by the United Nations General Assembly and the five-year review of implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The conjunction of those two milestones pointed out the special need for new impetus to be given to the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels. When appropriate policies, legislation and programmes are in place—and matched with adequate resources and investment—the economic, social and human development of a generation will more likely be realized.

Today's youth number over one billion, or 18 per cent of the people inhabiting the Earth. Even though society depends on youth for its continual renewal and prosperity in many ways, the policy-making process does not reflect this. The WPAY encourages governments to be more responsive to the aspirations and needs of youth for a better world. It also recognizes that young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. The empowerment of youth depends on and reinforces the empowerment of society at large. This Guide focuses on what governments, at every level, can do to further the vision laid out in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The recommendations and ideas contained herein are inspired by analyses, case studies, lessons learned and good practices documented by a wide range of sources. They are geared towards fostering an atmosphere where a young person may assert his or her identity and pursue new interests and acquire knowledge and skills. Readers should note that the policies detailed in the Guide are not to be interpreted as a perfect recipe for all countries, all youth or all situations. Nonetheless, even though the circumstances, difficulties and culture of youth differ across and within borders, the target audience of this Guide is united by the same ultimate goal: a peaceful and safe society of healthy individuals with productive skills who can enjoy full and effective participation in work, family and community life.

FOREWORD

The United Nations has long recognized that the imagination, ideals and energy of young men and women are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. The nature and quality of young people's lives, as well as a country's future social and economic development, depend largely on how well young people navigate the transitional period from a protected childhood to an adulthood of self-determination.

While some of the recommendations contained in this Guide may be considered “quick wins”, others can only be implemented effectively with long-term commitment and recognition by governments that improving the lives of youth is a forward-looking process that itself requires cooperation, institutional support and vital partnerships across society and across the different spheres of governance. It is my hope that the Guide to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth will help governments everywhere pave the way for youth opportunities, empowerment and inclusion.



José Antonio Ocampo
Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs

Overview & Key Messages

The General Assembly has called on governments to base initiatives regarding youth on the agreed international strategy—the **World Programme of Action for Youth** (WPAY). This Guide focuses on what governments, at every level, can do to fulfill the vision enshrined in the WPAY and acknowledges a need for new impetus to be given to the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes.

This Guide organizes the 15 priority areas of the WPAY into three clusters that reflect the challenges youth encounter across borders and cultures: Youth in the Global Economy, Youth and Their Well-Being, and Youth in Civil Society. It is important to note that the sections of the World Programme of Action for Youth are interrelated and are dependent on each other.

While there are many publications that provide a deeper understanding of the lives of youth, this Guide provides recommendations and ideas for concrete action for the people who make and carry out policies and programmes that affect the everyday realities and struggles of youth. Each section moves from briefly examining the concept of each priority area and how it is experienced by youth to mechanisms and specific policies that may enhance their political, cultural and socio-economic opportunities, enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and their overall quality of life. For each priority area of the WPAY, policies and programmes are framed as detailed responses to the most relevant “how to” questions; this format was chosen because it would have the most practical resonance with policy makers.

Readers should note that the ideas and recommendations contained in this Guide are not to be interpreted as fit for all countries, all youth, or all situations. Local circumstances should always be taken into account.

The target audience of this action Guide is: government ministries, parliamentarians, agencies that serve youth, and local and regional governments. In addressing this audience, it also refers to the role of the main stakeholders, such as civil society, the media, the private sector, parents, the international community and, of course, youth themselves, and therefore underscores the need for partnerships to carry out the projects and programmes presented herein so that the WPAY is more than a global statement of intent and a standard for action.

The following key policy messages form the foundation of the recommendations contained in this Guide:

- Recognize, address and respond to youth as a distinct but heterogeneous population group, with particular needs and capacities which stem from their formative age;
- Build the capabilities and expand the choices of young people by enhancing their access to and participation in all dimensions of society;
- Catalyze investment in youth so that they consistently have the proper resources, information and opportunities to realize their full potential;
- Change the public support available to youth from ad-hoc or last-minute to consistent and mainstreamed;
- Promote partnerships, cooperation and the strengthening of institutional capacity that contribute to more solid investments in youth;
- Support the goal of promoting youth themselves as valuable assets and effective partners;
- Include young people and their representative associations at all stages of the policy development and implementation process; and
- Transform the public perception of young people from neglect to priority, from a problem to a resource, and from suspicion to trust.

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This Guide also owes a great deal to the commitment of many organizations and individuals whose tireless advocacy, programmes and research focus on the opportunities, empowerment and inclusion of youth everywhere. This book draws from many guidelines, tools, standards and research developed by the United Nations and its agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, as well as the input of youth.

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