



Commonwealth of Dominica



NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY



**COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA
NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY TASK FORCE**

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

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		Page
Table of Contents		
	Executive Summary	(i)
Section 1:	Background and History of Youth Policy in Dominica	1
1.1	Background and History	
1.2	Youth Services	
Section 2:	Rationale and Purpose of the National Youth Policy	5
2.1.	Vision	
2.2.	Mission	
2.3.	Value Statements	
2.4.	Rights, Responsibilities and Obligations	
2.5.	Rationale and Purpose	
2.6.	Goals and Objectives	
Section 3:	The National Youth Policy Formulation Process	8
Section 4	The Dominican Youth	10
4.1	Definition	
4.2	Demographics	
4.3	Social and Economic Profile	
4.4	Special Target Group	
4.4.1	Physically/Educationally/Emotionally Challenged Youth	
4.4.2	Young people with SIDS	
4.4.3	Out of School Youth	
4.4.4	Rural Youth	
4.4.5	Unemployed Youth	
4.4.6	Young Men	
4.4.7	Carib Youth	
Section 5:	Policy Issues, Background, Policy Positions and Recommendations	15
5.1	Employment	15
5.1.1	Background	
5.1.2	Policy Position	
5.1.3	Policy Statements	
5.2	Education and Training	17
5.2.1	Background	
5.2.2	Policy Position	
5.2.3	Policy Statements	
5.3	Health	19
5.3.1	Background	
5.3.2	Policy Position	
5.3.3	Policy Statements	
5.4	Drugs, Violence and Crime	22
5.4.1	Background	
5.4.2	Policy Position	
5.4.3	Policy Statements	
5.5	Recreation, Physical Education, Sports and Culture	23
5.5.1	Background	
5.5.2	Policy Position	
5.5.3	Policy Statements	

	5.6	Community and Social Responsibility	25
	5.6.1	Background	
	5.6.2	Policy Position	
	5.6.3	Policy Statements	
Section 6.		Institutional Framework	27
	6.1	Background	
	6.2	Policy Position	
	6.3	Policy Statements	
Section 7.		Implementation	29
	7.1	Background	
	7.2	Policy Positions	
	7.3	Policy Statements	
Section 8		Monitoring and Evaluation	30
	8.1	Background	
	8.2	Policy Position	
	8.3	Policy Statements	

Section 1: Background and History of Youth Policy In Dominica

1.1. Background and History

No country's youth is free from the global problems of rising unemployment, underemployment, drugs, crime and violence. For the young men and women in Dominica, unemployment remains the biggest challenge. This is in no way isolated from the other related factors such as education, level of literacy, entrepreneurial training, opportunities for enterprise development and migratory urges and attractions. No much has been done to address directly this and other related challenges mainly because youth as a concept in Dominica is still a relatively new and emerging social construct. During slavery the concept of youth did not exist. The youth was an adult and the adult was a youth until death or incapacity due to arduous physical labour (Danns, et al. 1997:13). As a result very little youth services existed.

In the 1930s provision for compulsory education was established because illiteracy was seen as a major issue to be tackled. Church assisted groups provided other services to youth through philanthropy. Guiding and scouting developed as mediums to provide these services. Systematic initiatives to address youth problems came in 1945 with the establishment of a Social Welfare Department within the public sector. This was part of the broader response to the social situation in Caribbean Society as contained in the Moyne Commission which was set up to inquire into the social and economic conditions of the region during the latter part of the 1930s.

There were some emphases on continuing education for school leavers; these were mostly recreation programmes for youth, the traditional model of youth work. These developed alongside probationary and youth welfare services.

The pace of social development initiatives quickened during the 1970s in response to the changing social and economic tone of the region and Dominica. Black ideology and consciousness and a "new West Indian" way of thinking emerged, as the major pre-

occupation of the English-speaking island states was cessation by Britain. The independence movement took on a new dimension and Dominica attained political independence in 1978.

In the interim services to youth increased; a Youth Camp site was established at Londonderry providing young people with a facility through which skills in agriculture, auto-mechanics, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, basic electricity and metal work were acquired. Through the Dominica Cadet Corp other social development goals were established in discipline, leadership and moral development (Christian, 1988). However, there was an absence of collaboration and therefore coordination among agencies offering these services. It was this concern, among others, which led to the establishment of the National Youth Council in 1970. A national youth council alone could not and did not bring about the desired levels of coordination. In 1972, in response to these concerns and based on the recommendations of the Vin Lawrence Report, a Youth Development Division was established within the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Despite the organizational and institutional changes, by the 1980s it was clear according to the West Indian Commission that the region's youth felt powerless in a world dominated by adults (*Time for Action, 1992*). During that period, the National Youth Council had become defunct leaving the youth without an umbrella organization to assist in the coordination of youth services. Community youth groups still flourished. With the reduction in adult suffrage from 21 to 18 years, a number of political youth organizations emerged. With the right to vote came the opportunity for youth to elect those who best represented their interest and welfare. It was in the post independence period and Dominica was recovering from the ravages of Hurricane David.

The ascent of the Division was followed by a proliferation of community based youth organizations and the active involvement of youth in community development. A strong cooperative ideal was emerging at the centre of these organizations: the island craft cooperative, YARD and Cayemboc as well as other loose cooperative type organizations

that included Pichelin Youth Development Movement, Kingshill Youth Group and Campeche.

Youth unemployment and adult reproductive health were the two major concerns for youth work in the 1980s. In response, the government initiated a non-formal youth training programme to assist in job creation among the young. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, youth centres were established in two areas to attempt to address problems of sexual and reproductive health. Youth volunteerism gained greater importance and as non – government community organizations expanded, the interest in youth work grew also.

Today, unemployment and problems of sexual health still remain major issues and more so since the onset of HIV/AIDS in the latter part of the 1980s. This is compounded with problems of drug abuse and the shift in traditional values and thinking among youth brought on by the revolution in technology and the attending problems of globalisation.

The revival of the National Youth Council, the new focus on education with emphasis on universal secondary education and the development of a national youth policy are some of the initiatives that, it is hoped, will ensure that Dominican youth meet the challenges and utilize the opportunities of the 21st century.

1.2. Youth Services

According to the Vin Lawrence Report, “Youth work in Dominica should supplement the effort of schools and formal training to prepare young people for their life as adults. It should prepare them for future responsibilities of parenthood and family life, enable them to be intelligent consumers and assure their active participation in creating the culture of tomorrow.” Youth services such as sports, education, training, culture, health, employment and recreation therefore should encompass the broad areas of their development.

These services shall be incorporated into meaningful national programmes intended to quicken the pace of development through the provision of necessary training and opportunities for the total development of each youth.

The Vin Lawrence report cites special groups that this programme can target. These include the out of school, employed and unemployed, young women and girls, urban youth, disadvantaged, uneducated or undereducated.

Efforts have been made in the past to cater for the needs of young people through the establishment of a Youth Development Division in 1972, the National Youth Council, the development of youth groups, volunteer organisations, youth cooperatives, youth camps, sports clubs and community based organisations. There is however urgent need to intensify the efforts and approaches to providing youth services because of the increased pressure brought to bear on young people who are faced with many social ills.

More integrated approaches are required for the provision of these services. Such approaches will encourage the development of strong ties among education, physical education and sport, vocational training and employment, health and welfare. It will encourage greater participation in community-based NGOs, which will increase the benefits to youth in the areas of training and sports scholarships and job opportunities. Facilities that complement these youth services must be designed and must be youth friendly. Therefore the National Youth Policy (NYP) will be integrated into the general objectives of the development of youth services.

Youth services must not be designed and developed in isolation, since they are to encourage greater youth participation as well as total youth development. They must offer long-term as well as short-term opportunities for individual development.

Section 2: Rationale and purpose of the National Youth Policy

2.1. Vision

The National Youth Policy seeks to recognize the roles, rights and responsibilities and ensures the holistic development of young men, women and society through a process of involvement and empowerment by:

- a. taking into account the fact that each person is unique and should be treated equally;
- b. ensuring the involvement of government and all stakeholders responsible for creating the necessary environment for such a process, through stated strategies;
- c. serving as an advocate for Dominican young men and women on relevant issues.

2.2. Mission

The Mission of the National Youth Policy is to create a framework that will ensure that young men and women in Dominica grow up with a sense of belonging and worth and are empowered to participate fully in the social and economic development of the nation.

2.3. Value Statements

The NYP is designed with a core of principles and values. These have influenced the design and focus of the policies and will guide their implementation. These principles and values have been identified as follows:

- Sustainable development: Past development models were influenced by concerns for short-term measures and external pressures. The NYP endeavours to ensure that the needs of today's generation do not compromise the potential of future generations for full and meaningful development
- Youth participation: The NYP recognises that if our young people are to become leaders of tomorrow then they must be allowed to participate at all levels of Dominican society and at an early age.

- Youth driven: Notwithstanding the fact that problems affecting young men and women should be the concerns of the entire society, the NYP appreciates programmes directed at young people which are youth driven and centred.
- Cultural diversity: The NYP recognises that Dominican Society has a wide and diverse culture and that all programmes and policies must be designed to meet that reality.
- Gender sensitivity: The NYP promotes equal opportunities for all young people-- men and women-- and supports a gender inclusive approach in every sector of the country.
- Empowering environment: The NYP is built on the belief that sustainable development in Dominica requires an empowering environment that fosters the creativity, participation and loyalty of young men and women. Youth empowerment is essential to sustain Dominica's development.

2.4. Rights, Responsibilities and Obligations

The National Youth Policy recognizes that enshrined in the constitution, young people as well as all citizens have fundamental rights that must be respected. The National Youth Policy is committed to preserving these rights. Young people therefore have the right to:

- Participate in the formation of policy, decision-making, leadership and national development
- Freedom of lawful expression
- Protection from any kind of abuse, coercion, violence, exploitation, and degradation
- Access to all benefits and entitlements such as education, training, employment, housing, legal services, healthcare, social security and recreation
- A secure future through policies and practices that ensure sustainable development

Whilst enjoying these rights, young men and women are required to meet the following responsibilities:

- To promote peace, security and development.
- To promote and advance gender equality.
- To promote tolerance (cultural, ethnic, political, religious etc).
- Promote positive lifestyles and behaviours.
- To promote an exemplary work ethic and life long learning.
- To promote respect for law and order for the rights and responsibilities enshrined in the constitution.
- To ensure a society free of violence, coercion, tension, crime and intimidation.
- To respect private property and the property and rights of others.
- To engage themselves in productive activities.
- To become self-reliant

2.5. Rationale and purpose

The National Youth Policy (NYP) is a framework for youth development in the Commonwealth of Dominica. It seeks to ensure that all young people are given equal opportunity to reach their full potential. The NYP addresses the major concerns and issues critical to young men and women and their development. The policy provides guidelines for the development of youth programmes and initiatives by government and non-government organizations (NGOs).

The NYP reflects government's intention to solicit active youth participation in national development. It underscores the distinctive and complementary roles of government offices, NGOs and youth groups in youth development. The NYP is a framework with common goals for youth development and promotes a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. The policy seeks to place youth at the centre of national development and highlights their participation in the process of development and the construction of an equitable and productive society.

The NYP sets out the direction of a national action plan and provides the monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of all aspects of the plans. A plan will complement the policies and highlight the role of all agencies engaged in youth development as well as the programmes, services, activities and facilities employed to achieve the goals and objectives of the policy.

The National Youth Policy is the standard for the assessment and evaluation of initiatives and strategies designed to satisfy the policies laid out in the policy document.

2. 6. Goals and Objectives

The National Youth Policy strives to achieve and reflect the following goals and objectives.

- a. To develop a holistic response to the challenges that young men and women face in endeavouring to develop their potentials.
- b. To sensitise and instil in young people an awareness of and commitment to the values enshrined in the constitution and to provide the environment, which allows them to honour and uphold the principles of the constitution and to develop national pride.
- c. To develop methods that encourage and recognize the participation and contributions of young men and women in the development of Dominica.
- d. To facilitate the establishment of good role models, strong family and community support and positive value systems for young men and women.
- e. To provide a framework for achieving, within a global context, a youth population that is equipped to meet the scientific and technological challenges facing Dominica.

Section 3: The National Youth Policy Formulation Process

A series of meetings and training sessions were held with the Youth Division, youth workers, young people and the Commonwealth Youth Consultant and a tentative programme was designed to begin the policy formulation process. A task force of

representatives from the National Youth Council, youth student bodies, the media, churches, NGOs, the private (business) sector, Youth Division, Sports Division was installed on December 9, 1998. The Task force held a series of meetings and produced a strategy and process document.

The process included consultations with stakeholders: youth leaders, young people, public and private sector employees and members of parliament. There were meetings with the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Youth, the Chamber of Commerce and international agencies. A Carnival T-shirt gang, billboards, banners as well as radio and television interviews were used to promote the activities of the Youth Policy Task Force.

The Policy Task Force used the participatory approach through a number of consultations and youth community meetings aimed at reaching principal stakeholders. Six district consultations with youth and other stakeholders were held to discuss six strategic areas:

1. Youth, drugs and violence
2. Youth, recreation, physical education, sports and culture
3. Youth and Education
4. Youth, employment and the economy
5. Youth, community and social responsibility
6. Youth and health

Six hundred (600) young people were targeted. These included employed and unemployed youth, students, and rural and urban youth.

Each consultation allowed for the presentation of a paper on the specific area followed by a workshop that enabled the youth to discuss issues, recommend policies and identify strategies to address the concerns identified.

The process of documentation brought the task force to the critical stage of research and data collection. Additional data and information were obtained from published sources.

Section 4: The Dominican Youth

4.1. Definition

The policy recognizes that the period between childhood and adulthood varies from individual to individual and is affected by the norms of a particular society or community and the period during which the policies are formulated. It recognizes that not all young people are the same -- some are at school, others are at work and still others may be unemployed while some may be parents. It appreciates the fact that some young people are challenged with a variety of disabilities. It recognizes too that age limits will not incorporate all the characteristics that define a young person. The National Youth Policy is directed at young people 15 to 30 years old but recognizing the various definitions of young people that have already been legislated.

The policy is conscious of the cultural and value system that governs the outlook of young Caribs and that these are different from those of non-Carib people. The policy subscribes to the gender difference that exists among young people. It is also aware that the challenges, which confront urban and rural youth, may be similar but the resources available to both groups are not. This policy seeks, therefore, to provide a means by which the development of a large number of young men and women can be promoted in accordance with their physical, social and economic circumstances and settings.

Government is conscious that young people with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, those that are unemployed and in particular young women are to be treated as special target groups under the policy. However, extra special attention will be given to the Carib youth.

In an environment that recognizes youth as a negative force, the NYP accepts the challenge to provide the environment and the means to fashion appropriate and positive responses to the term, "Youth." This policy is determined to support an enabling

environment where young people can develop fully as worthwhile participants in the development of their communities and Dominica.

4.2. Demographics

According to the 1991 Population census, the youth population, that is, those under 30 years make up 61.6% of the Dominican populace. Thirty percent (one third) of the population falls within the category defined by the policy as youth. Fifty-one percent of these are males and roughly 20% are school age but only about 50 – 60 % of these may be at school. The others have not been able to access secondary education because of the limited spaces available at this level.

Young people headed over three thousand households (3103) according to the 1991 population and housing census. Nearly ten thousand (9693) were employed which means that roughly 51% were either at school or unemployed. With 16% of these at schools of some sort, it can be safely said that at that time about 35% of the youth population were unemployed.

Dominica recorded a population decline in 1991. The results of the population and housing census conducted that year indicated that 74% of the population resides outside of Roseau. It also showed that Dominica's population is relatively young with the highest number of males and females being in the 15-19 year age group.

4.3. Social and economic profile

The Dominican economy, like most Caribbean countries is developing. It is still unable to provide satisfactory levels of income, employment and other necessary prerequisites for desirable standards of living for the population. Its one crop economy and dependence is characterized by reliance on external sources of capital flows (direct foreign investment and aid), consumer and capital goods. Initiatives are being implemented towards a diversified economy with reduced dependence on bananas.

The earnings from bananas and other agricultural crops have declined from 42% in 1990 to 19% in 1997. During the same period manufacturing exports grew from 26% to 30% while tourism moved from 28% to 44% (Strategic Outlook, 1999/2000). Shifts in economic activities may have some implications for employment and migration, that is, rural to urban as mostly rural residents have cultivated bananas. Migration out of these rural communities necessitates adjustments to family and community relations as well as in the life of the young people involved since they have the greatest propensity to migrate. Some effort to include these considerations in development planning should be undertaken.

The distribution of unemployed labour force indicates that a substantial number of persons (50%) have no occupational training. Since 50% of young people make up the labour force it means a large number of young people particularly those in the rural areas are unemployed. In addition, about 13% of the young people are illiterate. This seems to indicate further that a fairly large number of youth are either unemployed or not in any specific employment. The duration of employment for young people is a source of concern. Sixty one percent of the unemployed have been without work for at least twelve months. Seventy-three percent of the women and about 51% of the men have not worked for over one year. This means that the Dominican youth may be among the poorest in the nation. The situation appears to be worse for young women and may be worst for young mothers. Very often this malaise of unemployment may be accompanied by drug use and violence, inadequate access to education, the absence of social and economic safety nets and health problems.

The youth falls within the most productive age group and many are at risk for early teen pregnancy as well as exposure to health risks such as sexually transmitted diseases, which include HIV/AIDS. While the national policy on health is based on the principle that each person has the right and access to the highest possible level of health care and health care services, the state of health of the Dominican youth population needs specific attention in areas such as adolescent health, drug, alcohol and tobacco use, nutrition and

physical and sexual activity. About 23% of teens in Dominica have had at least one abortion.

4.4. Special Target Group

While the major objective of the NYP is to provide opportunities for all young men and women in Dominica, there are special circumstances, which make it essential to provide special consideration for those who have these circumstances in order to benefit from the general provisions of the policies. These include the following:

4.4.1. Physically/Educationally/Emotionally Challenged Youth

The NYP recognises that while some provisions are made for young people who are physically challenged to access public buildings, public transportation and work places, enough is not done. The policy acknowledges the need to give due consideration to the needs of that group and to make adequate provisions in all development plans and policies.

4.4.2. Young people with SIDS

The incidence of sexually transmitted illnesses has been most prevalent among the young and threatens their welfare. The prolonged and repeated illness, the physical and psychological pain and suffering coupled with discrimination place the youth under severe stress. The NYP recognises that these young people require special health care, support services, counselling, financial and other assistance.

4.4.3. Out of school youth

The NYP recognises the need for the education system to respond to the needs of those 16-18 years old who are out of school. It recognises that many of these students are out of school because of circumstances beyond their control—loss of parents, illnesses, lack of financial and other support as well as teen pregnancy, inadequate school places and poor academic performance.

4.4.4. Rural Youth

The decline in the contribution of agriculture to the economy has rendered several rural young men and women economically vulnerable. Rural young people migrate to Roseau in response to the displacement. It is important for development initiatives to give special consideration to the needs of these rural youth.

4.4.5. Unemployed Youth

Very often young men and women are unemployed because they lack the skills, qualification and experience. This often leads to anti-social behaviour. As a matter of priority special programme must be directed at young people to incorporate them into the productive sectors. These programmes must not be welfare oriented but should focus on areas of personal, community and national development.

4.4.6. Young Men

Our current education system discriminates against men. A minority enter high school, performs creditably at external examinations and gain entry in tertiary level institutions in Dominica. Young men have the highest repetition and dropout rates at all levels of the school system. It seems that this and other factors have led many to the state prison since almost 99% of the inmates at the prison are male. The NYP recognises the need to treat young men as a special group requiring protection, specialised instruction and nurturing in our school system and otherwise.

4.4.7. Carib Youth

Carib youth constitute a special group under this National Youth Policy. They constitute one of the most disadvantaged groups in Dominica. Their long struggle as the indigenous people of the region has left them out of the mainstream development of Dominica and access to social services. The demise of the Banana Industry, the mainstay of their family economy, and the struggles with the craft industry has produced excessive hardships for the Carib people. Carib children have the lowest school attendance rates. A recently commissioned study by UNICEF to assess student (5-16 year olds) access to school in

the Carib Territory indicates that the distance from the school; and access to meals were the determinants of school attendance for these children (Jones and Serrant, 2001). In addition, the 1997 Poverty Survey in Dominica identified the Carib Territory as a pocket of extreme poverty on the island. "...In the Territory there was another kind of poverty. This was partly economic, the Carib Territory being one of the poorest in Dominica, but partly a different form of deprivation, stemming from being a low status minority with a long history of neglect, loss of culture and struggling to keep identity" (GOCD, 1996, p. ii). This policy recognises that Carib youth would require additional resources and focus to bring them to par with the rest of Dominica.

Section 5: Policy Issues, background, Policy Positions and Recommendations

5.1. Employment

5.1.1. Background

Unemployment is probably the most or one of the most serious problems affecting the lives of our young people in Dominica. Employment is central to personal development, economic independence and participation in the national economy. It serves as a safety valve against such ills as illegal drug use and trafficking and promiscuity. Youth participation in Dominica's economy remains a major concern for planners and administrators since young people are moving away from employment in the agricultural sector. The need to broaden the economy to facilitate that change and harness the abilities of these young people remains a challenge.

The continuous development of a tourism sector and some indication of buoyancy in the industrial sector provide some hope and will provide much needed employment for young people. However, recent development in the global climate, in particular the new arrangements within the World Trade Organization (WTO), which threaten to dismantle the preferential treatment that Dominican and Windward Islands bananas enjoy on the European market may threaten that possibility and make attention to employment the most crucial issue in Dominica. According to the National Labour Force survey (November 1999), 34.2% of Dominicans ages 15 to 24 were unemployed, 33.9% males and 34.8% females.

5.1.2 Policy Position

The Task Force believes that a wider participation of young people in the economy of Dominica is critical to community and national development.

It is of the notion that many young people cannot participate because they do not have the prerequisite or required skills and experience to access available employment opportunities. The youth recognizes that young men and women, with little or no experience can fall prey to unreasonable employers.

The Force believes that several young people and in particular women are paid wages that are below the level of income required to support themselves and their families. And that employment disparity exists between the rural and urban areas as well as between the youth in these areas.

The Task Force asserts that unemployment and underemployment rob a society of resources and that young people are at the commencement of their careers and in the face of low productivity society breeds low achievers and non- producers and that young people must be encouraged to participate actively, think creatively, and develop entrepreneurship.

5.1.3 Policy Statements

1. Initiatives shall be pursued that increase the participation of young people in the economy and other aspects of life in the country: culture, sports and so on.
2. Opportunities shall be made to exist for young people to acquire the skills and experience required to access existing and future employment opportunities.
3. Wages shall be made commensurate with employment type and level and gender equity in wages will exist for all young people.
4. Safety nets for young employees and in particular those who are teen parents shall be established or facilitated.

5. The gaps in employment opportunities between rural and urban areas in Dominica shall be narrowed and so increase the life chances of rural youth.
6. Disabled young people will be given every opportunity consistent with their abilities to participate in the economy.

5.2 Education and Training

5.2.1 Background

Education and training are critical to youth development and participation in the socio-economic mainstream of Dominican Society. Providing youth with life skills is also critical to addressing the main problems and concerns currently facing youth today.

The current education and training level among youth is one for concern. The National Literacy Survey (1993) revealed a relatively high rate of illiteracy among primary school leavers with higher levels in the rural districts where as many as one third of the youth are illiterate. Some 15% of those aged 15–29 are illiterate. The highest levels of illiteracy are being recorded among persons employed in agriculture and forestry (31%) and casual employment (25%). This data is especially daunting in light of the fact that Dominica has attained universal primary education. The poor quality of primary education is of concern and has been the focus of current reform initiatives. While recent reforms in education have increased student access to secondary education, some 30% of youth of secondary school age do not have access to secondary education. This seriously compromises the right of a child to an education commensurate with his/her needs and ambition.

Government expenditure on education compares favourably with that of other developing countries (18% in 1998/99 financial year). This sector receives approximately 4.2% of the Gross Domestic Product. This represents a decline from 5.8% in 1985. However, it is felt that the country does not adequately prepare youth for participation in the economy despite the nations move to universal secondary education. Government schools particularly rural schools are under-utilized, under-financed with a high proportion of untrained teachers particularly within secondary education. The result has been poor quality education and disparities in the educational experience of students.

Analysis of enrolment figures and the curriculum show that there is greater emphasis being placed on what is often referred to as academic as opposed to technical subject areas.

5.2.2. Policy Position

The Task Force recognizes that education is valuable to the development of the individual and the nation. It treats education as one of the major developmental tools of any society and that education and training systems impact most directly on the lives of young men and women and on the future prospects of the nation.

The Task Force places education at the forefront of people oriented development that empowers young people to participate in their own development as well as that of the nation.

The Task Force recognizes that the key to youth development in education is the principle that achievement is possible. It also believes that self-worth, respect, equality, responsibility and character building are essential ingredients in the formulation of education strategies.

The focus in education should be, though not restricted to, quality teacher training, relevant and adequate student support services, strong student involvement in school governance, adequate provision of relevant employable skills and the expansion of opportunities for youth.

5.2.3 Policy Statements

1. Access to education at secondary and tertiary levels including access to out of school youth, those who are employed and those with special needs shall be increased.

2. The quality of education at all levels will be improved and provisions will be made for equity among schools as well as between government and government assisted schools, urban and rural schools. Such quality areas shall include but not limited to school finance, teacher development, learning support, instruction and supervision and relevant curriculum among others.
3. Training and education that prepare prospective graduates for self-employment, job creation and lifelong learning will be promoted.
4. Facilities shall be established to increase opportunities for promising youth and students to access educational and training institutions.
5. Educational opportunities shall be provided for teen parents with specific considerations to mothers.
6. Facilities will be established that will mitigate the cost of education to the most vulnerable groups in Dominica.
7. Opportunities to foster greater public-private collaboration and initiatives on education shall be created.
8. Initiatives that increase student and youth involvement in school governance shall be pursued.
9. Adequate opportunities shall be given for young people to prepare for the world of work. Adequate training using tools that are relevant to the workplace including appropriate training in and with information and communications technology (ICT) shall be provided.
10. Adequate facilities shall be developed to monitor and evaluate education and training in Dominica.
11. Special focus will be placed on the male child to increase his performance and status within the education sector and other areas of the state.
12. Career guidance and counselling programmes will be pursued.

5.3 Health

5.3.1 Background

Outlined in the Action Plan For Health Care in Dominica For Year 2002—2006 are some policies regarding adolescents and youth health. As is generally stated, good health is not

merely the absence of disease or infirmity in the population, but rather constitutes a satisfactory/fit state of physical, mental and social well being in the individual. The Action Plan recognises that the health and well being of adolescents and youth has emerged as an area of concern especially their sexual and reproductive health. The Adolescent Health Survey revealed that the spread of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is cause for concern. Further indications are that in the Caribbean and Latin America, more deaths among adolescents result from external causes including accidents, homicides and suicides. The increasing cost of health care has resulted in the inability of many youth to access health services since many are in school and unemployed and no provisions exist to accommodate this fact.

Associated with many of the health risks and problems youth face are those stemming from drug, alcohol and tobacco use, poor nutrition and lack of recreational activities. When the economic and social effects associated with the AIDS/HIV infection and the loss of school hours are factored, this creates yet another social dilemma. Young people afflicted with HIV/AIDS virus or the disease suffer discrimination and are unable to benefit from health services. They also find difficulty in obtaining and maintaining jobs.

A little less than 25% adolescents have sex before the age of 16 and about 23% have had an abortion (Adolescent Health Survey, 1996). Although the rate of teenage pregnancy is on the decline and at a low (14.5% in 2001), but with its concomitant health, social and economic problems, it remains an issue of concern. The attending loss of schooling and the impact on future reproduction is worrisome. Teen mothers find it difficult to provide adequate and balanced meals for themselves and their children with the result that they are both mal or undernourished.

5.3.2. Policy Position

The Task Force believes that quality health care is a fundamental right and the delivery is a matter of priority. It also believes that when addressing the health of youth, particular attention must be given to the feasibility of curbing major attitudes and behavioural

patterns of these young people. The Task Force maintains that education is the key to better healthy reproductive relations and practices.

The Task force recognizes that several young men and women are engaging in sexual intercourse and the intercourse is unprotected and sometimes results in pregnancy and STIs.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of a reproductive health plan, which must address many critical issues such as parental education, education of teen mothers and the attitudes of the young towards sex.

The Task Force believes that an unhealthy nation produces an economic burden that lowers both production and the standard of living. It also believes that the attention a young person devotes to the maintenance of health depends on the place of health in his or her value system.

5.3.3. Policy Statements

1. Adequate quality health care services shall be provided for all young people including those with special needs as well.
2. Emphasis shall be placed on preventative and community based health care services to ensure that all young people have access to quality health care facilities and services.
3. Access to specialized health services shall be facilitated where they may be required by young people
4. Programmes that provide quality health information and education at the level of the school and other community based institutions will be implemented.
5. Opportunities shall be provided where young people can become involved in community health management and decision-making.
6. Young people shall be given greater opportunities to make decisions regarding their own health care and to practise healthy lifestyles.

5.4. Drugs, Violence and Crime

5.4.1. Background

Drugs, violence and crime are related issues, which threaten the development of young people in Dominica. It is of concern that drugs, violence and crime are on the increase in Dominica and involve a variety of young people--the employed, unemployed and students.

There are many complex reasons for drug use and its attending violence and crime. These include the urges of youth to experiment with drugs, parental neglect and absenteeism, low self-esteem, materialism, economic pressures and unemployment, attempts to satisfy emotional needs and peer pressure.

Crime manifests itself in violent acts against persons and property--wounding, battery, burglary, theft as well as the destruction of property. It affects the relationship between families- -incest, sexual abuse domestic violence and truancy among the young.

The frequent incidence of violence against women and children and suicide among men is alarming. There is an urgent need to reverse these dangerous trends so as to preserve the true nature and character of the Dominican Society.

5.4.2. Policy Position

The Task Force believes that one of the major challenges facing Dominica today is the reduction of crime and violence committed by and towards young people.

It believes that structural weaknesses in the social and economic systems have failed to respond positively to the dangers of crime and violence among the young.

The Task Force believes that the dual problem of drug use and trafficking among young men and women should be tackled, as they may become menaces to society.

It believes that violence has the potential to disrupt school, church and communities. It results in increase levels of truancy, declining church attendance and disruption of competitive sports and recreation activities, loss of respect for relationships and rules, bad driving and riding habits and aggression. The Task Force believes that swift corrective and preventative actions are necessary.

5.4.3. Policy Statements

1. Programmes in conflict management and resolution shall be developed and implemented to assist the young at school and other community based institutions.
2. Drug prevention initiatives and programmes will be developed and implemented to reduce the malaise of drug trafficking and use.
3. Effort will be made to establish rehabilitation facilities and to consider alternative sentences for young offenders, drug users, traffickers and the like.
4. Appropriate response mechanisms shall be developed and adopted to deal with crime and violence at schools and other institutions serving young people.
5. Successful youth initiatives and achievements will be recognised and rewarded
6. The state will collaborate with regional governments in the fight against drugs.

5.5. Recreation, Physical Education, Sports and Culture

5.5.1 Background

Young people continue to dominate areas of sports and recreation in Dominica. They have continued to pursue the sports and recreational options available to them. However the enthusiasm shown by young men and women in these areas has not been supported by the necessary resources required to transform these activities from past times to careers and vocations.

Physical Education, Sports and Culture have proven to be very effective in moulding the character of young men and women as well as providing an effective alternative to drug use, violence and other manifestations of deviant behaviour. Development of these areas

must be seen as critical to the process of building self-esteem and positive attitudes among the young.

Physical Education, Sports and Culture continue to suffer from the limitation of facilities and trained personnel, the absence of sports and culture curriculum in schools and explicit policies governing these and their organisation in Dominica.

5.5.2. Policy Position

The Task Force recognises that to broaden the participation of young men and women in recreation, physical education, sports and culture, there is the need to develop a culture that touches on all aspects of national life.

It recognises further that there is the need to increase facilities, broaden options and provide modern equipment. In addition there is a need to improve the status of sports men and women and increase the value of recreation, physical education, sports and culture in national development.

The Task Force believes that wide participation and the pursuit of excellence in recreation, physical education, sports and culture will build the individual and strengthen the nation.

It also recognises that these remain corner stones to the development of national pride and patriotism.

5.5.3. Policy Statements

1. Opportunities shall be developed to educate young men and women in the areas of national culture and to develop and preserve the said culture.
2. Mechanisms to foster greater cooperation and collaboration among groups, organizations and individuals involved in the field of recreation, physical

- education, sports and culture and related areas both nationally and regionally will be established.
3. Community-based groups and clubs will be promoted as the basic structure for increased participation and involvement in recreation, physical education, sports and culture.
 4. Facilities and training at the level of the community in areas relevant to the development and preservation of recreation, physical education, sports and culture in Dominica shall be established.
 5. Initiatives to encourage young men and women to adopt sporting disciplines as a means of personal fulfilment and as a career goal shall be pursued.
 6. The contribution that young people make to recreation, physical education, sports and cultural preservation shall be recognised and rewarded.
 7. Inter-community competitions in culture and sporting activities will be supported and promulgated.
 8. A Centre for Excellence in Sports and Culture will be developed and maintained.

5.6. Community and Social Responsibility

5.6.1. Background

Dominican life is largely organized around families and communities. Many of these are rural based but are heavily affected by migration as well and rapid social and cultural changes. These effects are brought on by the adverse economic situation and the expectations that develop as a result of migrant contact and interaction with international communities. Many of these local communities are agricultural-based and the decline of the banana industry on which many have been dependent for so long has stressed community economics.

The dismantling of traditional social structures such as the family as well as traditional support systems has placed communities under enormous strain and has sent the young in search of employment and other opportunities elsewhere and at the same time severing their community connections. Many communities are left without young potential

leaders and mentors as many abdicate their responsibility to their communities and members within their household. What has emerged are a number of family structures and arrangements typical of other Caribbean countries. Many of these have been created by divorce and separation and have brought added burdens to young men and women.

Of added significance and a manifestation of the community alienation, is the increasing absence of national pride and patriotism and a seeming disconnection from what many be constituted as truly Dominican.

5.6.2 Policy Position

The Task Force recognizes the importance of the family and sees the importance of good family life in transmitting positive social values and attitudes and the socialization of children into responsible and disciplined citizens.

The Task Force also recognises the critical role that communities and community groups play in transmitting national values, pride and patriotism to the young.

It also recognizes the need to strengthen community organizations that serve the young and give them a voice in community and national affairs.

5.6.3 Policy Statements

1. Initiatives and programmes that strengthen community organizations and groups that provide services to young people shall be promoted.
2. Initiatives that facilitate the involvement and participation of young people in community based governance, management and development will be promoted.
3. Facilities to support families in crisis and respond to the needs of the young who have been affected as a result shall be established.
4. Measures to safeguard young people; their families and communities from adverse economic and social conditions shall be adopted.

5. Organisations and activities that foster national pride and patriotism in the service of young people shall be established and/or improved.

Section 6: Institutional Framework

6.1. Background

At present two key institutions exist to manage the affairs of youth in Dominica. The Youth Development Division (YDD), which is an organ of the public sector and the National Youth Council, which is a representative body of young people.

The YDD organizes a variety of programmes designed to encourage the social development of young people through the provision of a range of programmes and services designed to respond to their psycho-social need. These include social, educational, employment and other community service activities. Among its most noted programmes are the Youth Skills Training programme, the 4H programme as well as Youth Community Development Work.

The National Youth Council (NYC) on the other hand is made up of officers elected by representatives of various youth societies and groups on the island. Its primary function has been to coordinate the plans and programmes of affiliated group within eight designated youth districts.

A large portion of the nation's population is made up of young people and given the complexity of the issues that confront them; institutions, which are relevant to addressing these issues adequately, are required. Proper management of the affairs of young people is essential to ensure adequate coverage in the gamut of needs and to ensure that no individual or groups of individuals are left behind.

6.2 Policy Position

The Task Force recognizes the serious limitations of the current institutional arrangements and the financial and personnel constraints under which they carry out their functions.

The Task Force recognizes the need to have institutions that are relevant and that are staffed sufficiently to manage the affairs of young people. Further it is of the opinion that these institutions must be able to adopt systematic approaches to the analysis, development, selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth services and programmes.

The Task Force recognizes the critical role that youth organizations play in the successful execution of youth services and the need for young people to be involved in the implementation of activities designed to promote their welfare and development.

The Task Force also recognizes the constraints associated with large organizations and the limited financial and material resources and therefore the challenge that exist for any attempt to expand current institutions.

6.3 Policy Statements

1. Functions and responsibilities of all existing institutions responsible for youth programmes will be reviewed.
2. Responsibilities and functions of existing officers within these institutions will be reviewed in response to the policy issues.
3. Research and planning will be made an integral part of the Youth Development Division. The appropriate mechanisms will be put in place to facilitate these functions.
4. An **Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth** will be established to integrate aspects of youth development across ministries and NGOs and to monitor such integration.

5. A **National Youth Parliament** will be established under the auspices of the NYC to debate and discuss youth policy issues
6. The Task Force will be transformed into a **Youth Commission** to evaluate the implementation of the youth policy and will become a Standing Committee of the NYC.
7. Initiatives will be developed and implemented to enhance and strength the organization, development and sustainability of the NYC.
8. Appropriate **Terms of Reference** will be adopted for the various institutions and organizations proposed.

Section 7: Implementation

7.1. Background

These National Youth Polices are new to the youth work and service in Dominica and so careful preparation is necessary to ensure that they are implemented on a timely and in an effective manner. Given the large number of young people and the wide variety of services captured in this policy, every effort is necessary to ensure that the mandate is honoured to improve the quality of life of the nation's young people.

In order to reach the large number of young people with the initiatives developed as a result of these policies, careful implementation is essential and critical. In addition, whatever methods are used to implement these initiatives will also be a useful foundation on which to monitor and evaluate the success of these programmes.

7.2. Policy Positions

The Task Force recognises the important role that implementation plans and strategies play in the operation of the policies outlined.

The Task Force also recognizes the institutions and organizations involved in working for young people and the need to coordinate their activities.

It further notes that in the absence of implementation structures and procedures, large sections of the young population including groups with special needs may be left out of youth development process.

7.3 Policy Statements

1. A research and planning Unit with appropriately trained personnel will be established within the Youth Division to implement plans, programmes and initiatives for the development of young people in Dominica.
2. An implementation, monitoring and evaluation plan will be put in place so as to ensure that the policy goes beyond rhetoric.
3. Strategic plans, corporate and work plans will be developed in order to satisfy the demands of the policies outlined in this document or those developed subsequently.
4. The National Youth Council will be an equal partner and participant in the development of the various plans and strategies for the implementation of these policies and others relating to youth in Dominica.

Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1. Background

Monitoring and Evaluation remains the single most difficult challenge for the public sector. The absence of the appropriate frameworks and mechanisms for carrying out timely and systematic monitoring and evaluation has meant that learning from previous initiatives has not occurred.

Programme success criteria are not well established and programmes have not been measured to determine the extent to which they have met desired outcomes or the processes by which the outcomes have been attained.

8.2. Policy Position

The Task Force recognizes that the critical nature of monitoring and evaluation in determining the extent to which programme outcomes have been established and met. It further recognises the need to provide useful feedback to the implementation process both for current and future programme initiatives.

Given the limited resources available the margin of error for programme success is small. It is necessary to increase the success of youth programmes and to establish objective measures to evaluate these programmes.

The Task Force also notes the constraints imposed by the inadequate personnel and expertise in the monitoring and evaluation of youth plans, projects and programmes.

8.3 Policy Statements

1. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be established and maintained so as to increase feedback on programme performance.
2. Evaluations will be conducted annually, and quarterly written monitoring reports on projects and programmes will be submitted.
3. The monitoring and evaluation capacity of the Youth Division will be strengthened and upgraded to facilitate organizational learning and feedback.
4. A state of the youth report will be presented to parliament every three years as part of a policy performance review (PPR).