Virgin Islands
NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2014 2019
VISION

Virgin Islands youth attain their full potential and freely and actively participate in the political, social, economic and religious processes of the Territory.
Virgin Islands National Youth Policy and Strategic Framework
The development and sustainability of any economy is hinged on our commitment to our youth. I am indeed pleased that we have a new beginning for them as they prepare to lead all sectors of this economy tomorrow, whether in the private or public sector, or faith-based organisations.

Our youth hold the keys to the prosperity of this Territory and we must continue to ensure that they are equipped for this task. Through the Virgin Islands National Youth Policy, my Government has pledged to ensure that our young people have access to appropriate programmes, recreational activities, quality education and training, as well as opportunities to contribute as meaningful, productive members of this society.

Through this policy, we have cemented our commitment to instil in them a strong sense of national pride. We have created an avenue for them to build and give back to their communities. We have reinforced the importance of taking responsibility for their personal development, and we have challenged them to become well-rounded members of our society and the world.

I am pleased that in giving our youth a voice, this policy has included the creation of the Virgin Islands Youth Commission, the National Youth Council and the National Youth Parliament. In these three bodies is a vision for the future of the next generation of leaders of this Territory, who will be trained on the guiding principles of democracy, good governance, advocacy, human rights and the law.

I congratulate and thank the Minister for Education and Culture, Honourable Myron V. Walwyn and his team at the Ministry and members of the National Youth Committee for their dedicated efforts in bringing this longstanding project to completion. Through sustained youth development programmes, we will continue to pave the road towards a better, more prosperous Virgin Islands.

Hon Dr D. Orlando Smith, OBE
Premier and Minister for Finance
Almost two years ago with the launching of a national committee to develop a youth policy for the territory, I recall advising the Committee that their task would not be easy. That the process has taken some time is testimony to the fact that this is highly recursive work and we wanted to be sure it was done to the best quality and standard. For me as Minister, this meant a few important things: (1) that the Policy should be a user friendly practical declaration of the priority and directions that the territory intends giving to the development of our young women and men; (2) that it is fundamentally grounded within the overall vision that has been articulated for our country as “a prosperous Virgin Islands, that is ideal to live, work, visit, and do business”, and (3) that it provides the means for young people to have their say, to participate more strategically in the decisions that affect their lives, and to embrace the essence of being a proud citizen of the territory with a vested stake in its sustainable development.

This policy is intended to guide programmes and plans across a range of sectors to foster youth development, participation, education, wellbeing, employment and protection. Because all sectors have their policy and because young people transcend all sectors, we thought it necessary to set out the fundamental strategies and actions that should be taken into consideration across the board so all the quality services, supports and opportunities are available to the young women and men in our Territory so they can bloom and grow into the kind of citizens we all want.

The plan is for our young people to be ready to assume their responsibilities as the heirs to the great territory that is our Virgin Islands.

The policy is being developed at a time when the focus on youth development globally is very high. The UN Secretary General in 2013 declared “working with young people” as one of his five top priorities in the international development arena. The post 2015 development agenda is providing unprecedented opportunity for youth views and a possible separate youth goal. The Commonwealth Youth Development Index launched late last year under five indicator headings of health, education, employment, civic participation and political participation is being promoted to Governments as a means of measuring progress of national strategies targeting youth. The CARICOM Secretariat has completed a CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan and is accelerating support to implement this agenda for the region’s youth.

The Territory’s Youth Policy has been shaped by looking at our existing laws and frameworks that cater to young people. The working group spearheaded by young people, Ministry officials and other critical stakeholders that managed the policy process also looked at the regional and international good practices in youth development.

Consultations were also held with young people to find out their aspirations and recommendations for a brighter future for youth, and with all the key stakeholders, at all levels, who can support and inform youth development. What emerged was a success model for our youth and a vision of “Virgin Islands youth able to attain their full potential and freely and actively participate in the political, social, economic and religious processes of the Territory”.

I am very pleased that the Policy provides for the establishment of specific youth-led and youth-managed governance structures including a National Youth Council, which will enhance young people’s participation in the affairs of the Territory. This means that our young people will have a more recognised and valued role through consultation, decision-making, and representation.

Throughout the Territory and starting with my Ministry, we have a more fundamental role to play as advocates and enablers of genuine youth development. This is the legacy I am hoping to carve as Minister, and what I would like to see continued for generations to come. The development of this Policy was achieved working inclusively with a myriad of stakeholders. It will also require a national effort and the buy-in of all stakeholders and partners across all sectors of society working collaboratively for it to succeed.

Honourable Myron V. Walwyn
Minister for Education and Culture
The Virgin Islands National Youth Policy has come to fruition through the support and assistance of Ministry of Education and Culture under the direction and leadership of Hon. Myron V. Walwyn along with the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports and the National Youth Policy Committee, tasked with researching and drafting of this Policy. The National Youth Policy Committee wishes to acknowledge and express its sincere gratitude to the youth, religious organisations, non-profit organisations, government agencies, the private sector and persons throughout the Virgin Islands for their invaluable contributions. The contributions of these persons and organisations have been instrumental in the completion of the policy.

Members of the National Youth Policy Committee tasked with drafting this policy were:

- Ms Drusilla F. Fahie - Chairperson
- Ms Xavynna Samuels - Member
- Mr Theodore James - Member
- Ms Lauren Welch - Virgin Gorda Representative
- Mr Coy Levons - Anegada Representative
- Mr Melvin Turnbull, Jr. - Member
- Ms Sabrina Matthew - Member
- Ms Sharie deCastro - Member
- Mrs Deserie Harrigan - Member
- Mr Bevin George - Member
- Ms Jessica Callwood - Jost Van Dyke Representative
- Ms Avelinda Freeman - Assistant Director of Youth Affairs, Department of Youth Affairs

**ACRONYMS**

**DYAS**
Department of Youth Affairs and Sports

**ME&C**
Ministry of Education and Culture

**NYCOM**
National Youth Commission

**NYC**
National Youth Council

**NYP**
National Youth Parliament

**NGO**
Non-Governmental Organisation
A written National Youth Policy is a publicly approved framework for action on youth development, which is endorsed by the Territory’s lawmakers and developed with the fullest engagement and participation of young people. It is the greatest gift that the Territory can bequeath to its youth.

The Virgin Islands, today, faces numerous challenges that seek to frustrate the Territory’s aims of producing a crop of future leaders that will successfully carry on the Virgin Island’s legacy. It will have to successfully overcome significant hurdles if its aspirations of a youth development programme that rivals that of first world countries is to come to fruition. Key among these issues is the lack of a mechanism by which the opinions of Virgin Islands youth on issues that affect their lives and ultimately their futures are taken into consideration in the Territory’s decision-making processes. This National Youth Policy has been adopted after much consultation with all relevant stakeholders to create the necessary framework by which the Territory’s decision makers can strategically engage young people and incorporate the Territory’s youth as key contributors and beneficiaries in development and decision-making processes.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports has produced this policy in collaboration with a range of critical youth and adult stakeholders. It will guide and strengthen the development of responses to ensure that the youth of the territory have the range of supports, opportunities and quality services that are required in a progressive society that is committed to positive youth development.

The National Youth Policy of the Virgin Islands provides guidance for the development of the Territory’s Youth to enable the entire youth population of the Territory to inherit the leadership of the Virgin Islands. This policy sets standards to which the Government and all youth development stakeholders must adhere in order for the requisite measures to be implemented so that young people can develop the range of competencies to become more resilient, less likely to engage in risky behaviours and thereby enjoy a better life and a better future. This means they will also be able to contribute positively to the growth and development of the Territory.

In accordance with the age range for youth suggested by the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the Virgin Islands National Youth Policy specifically targets young persons between the ages of 15-29 who make up a significant portion of the Virgin Islands population. This policy signals the Government’s commitment to ensuring that investments are made to secure the future of all youth and that they are included and empowered to make decisions to improve their own lives, to become good providers and careers for families if and when they chose to have them, and to be happy, successful and engaged members of the population.

The overriding concern is to ensure that development supports are available and accessible to our youth through all life-cycle stages and that the diverse needs of a non-homogenous youth population are well catered for thereby, ensuring a seamless transition from youth to adulthood.

The National Youth Policy was developed within the framework of all requisite national laws, regional and international agreements which provide an enabling framework for young people and their development, and at the same time, creates opportunity and access for young people to be firmly engaged and entrenched into national decision-making and development.

The Policy also integrates the concept of youth as agents and enablers of development and the importance of factoring in their ideas, opinions and concerns in the decision making process, especially when such decisions could impact their lives.
Any long term national youth policy for the Virgin Islands should have a clear, consensus-based, vision of the kind of men and women we need for a safe, sound and prosperous future. We are a diverse and evolving society, but we hold firmly to core values and principles of democracy, development and the rule of law. All citizens of the Territory place premium value on the quality of the society we wish to build. As such, we should all agree on the qualities of the individuals that will constitute our ideal society and how we will work inclusively and supportively, harnessing our strengths and networks to achieve this collective goal.

The road to the realization of this goal for and with young people is paved with risks and opportunities. It is important to emphasize that these risks and challenges impact youth; their families, their communities and their country’s economies and well-being, for example:

- The rising rate of crime and violence presents a significant challenge to development and has a negative effect on human welfare-youth health, wellbeing and life expectancy in the short-term, and on economic growth and social development in the long run.
- Globalisation and dynamic social and economic change has contributed to increased poverty and unemployment, and will have repercussions for decades on the structure of education, employability, jobs, and the equitable participation of youth in the economy.
- New technologies have changed the way that young people live, learn, participate in society and interact with each other, impacted their values and beliefs, contributed to crises of access and identity, the anti-culture of instant gratification and other inconsistencies with traditional values and heritage that increase their risk and vulnerability.
- Schools, clubs, churches and other community structures are no longer as strong and supportive as in the past and more vulnerable youth remain unprotected and unsupported.
- The school environment is not conducive to learning and curricula are not responsive to the life-long learning interests and needs of youth so that a number of youth lack the knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes and values to be relevant and competitive in order to take care of themselves and contribute to their country.

2.2 Strategic Framework

The Virgin Island’s National Youth Policy is a road map for the next five years that provides:

- A practical demonstration and declaration of the priority and directions that the country intends giving to the development of our young women and men between the ages of 15 to 29.
- A rights-based strategy that provides the vision, framework and realistic guidelines from which opportunities and initiatives will be implemented to facilitate the meaningful participation and development of all young women in the Territory, irrespective of class, gender, orientation, and extant life circumstances.

The National Youth Policy will focus on six goal areas in order to:

- Ensure that youth have access to quality education and training.
- Ensure youth access decent work and livelihood opportunities.
- Ensure youth are equipped and engaged to contribute to and live in a
2.3 The success model

These six (6) policy goals are high on the national agenda in terms of their importance to young people. By paying attention to the specific strategies in each goal area, the Government expects that young women and men can enjoy the quality services, supports and opportunities that allow them to successfully navigate the risks and challenges of the youth, and develop into healthy and well-adjusted adults. Healthy and well-adjusted adults are the ones who will lead happy and productive lives, and contribute positively to the development of the Territory.

In interrogating risks and challenges facing youth in each area, the Policy development process has been careful to have young people articulate the desired state of development and wellbeing they wish to achieve, and the roles they wish to play as enablers of their own development and as contributors to national agenda.

This is in pursuit of optimum development in preparation for fulfilment of their role and function in the development of the Territory: young people who are healthy, vibrant and engaged.

- Ensure that youth have access to quality sports and recreational activities as an integral part of their development and wellbeing.
- Ensure the availability of quality programmes and services that cater to young people’s physical, mental, and emotional wellness.
- Put measures in place to give youth a strong sense of national pride and belonging and for them to volunteer their talents and skills to enhance their own wellbeing, the community and national development.

safe and secure society.
MISSION
Empowering Virgin Islands youth aged 15 to 29 to ensure participation in the Territory’s social, political, religious and economic development.

GOAL 1
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
All youth have adequate access to quality education and training that develop their competencies and skills.

GOAL 2
EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Youth access decent work and livelihood opportunities that provide them with long-term economic security and meaningful lives.

GOAL 3
CARE, SAFETY AND PROTECTION
Youth are equipped and engaged to contribute to and live in a safe and secure society.

GOAL 4
SPORTS AND RECREATION
Youth access quality sports and recreational activities as an integral part of their development and wellbeing.

GOAL 5
HEALTH & WELLNESS
Youth access youth-friendly programmes and services that allow them to adopt healthy behaviours and lifestyles.

GOAL 6
IDENTITY, CULTURE AND SOCIAL COHESION
Youth have a strong sense of national pride and belonging and volunteer their talents, competencies, and skills.

VALUES
Integrity, gender equity and equality, patriotism, good governance, equal opportunity and impartiality, and ethical and values-based leadership.

PRINCIPLES
Human rights, Youth mainstreaming, Asset-based development, genuine participation.

VISION
VIRGIN ISLANDS YOUTH ABLE TO ATTAIN THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND FREELY AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS PROCESSES OF THE TERRITORY
2.4 The Implementation Strategy

An overarching principle for the formulation and successful implementation of Territory’s youth policy is that youth are fundamental assets to the Territory’s development. They should be afforded access and opportunities to provide their opinions and their experiences to shape decision-making and development that has the potential to affect their lives.

At the same time, the Policy recognises and promotes the approach and rationale that youth development must be mainstreamed across all sectors and actively engage and receive the resources, supports, commitments and leveraging potential of public sector organisations, the private sector, faith-based organisations and civil society, parents and other community leaders, all working together on youth development in conformity with the overall vision of success for the Territory’s socio-economic development.

Attention will be paid to the national laws and regulations that enhance the enabling climate for youth development in line with the policy, as well as to the applicable international conventions and obligations. At the same time, opportunities locally, regionally and internationally that position the Territory’s young people to enhance their leadership acumen and capacity for empowered social, economic and political participation to support the Territory’s development agenda, will also be pursued.

The Ministry of Education and Culture through the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports shall spearhead the overall policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review, in addition to mobilising resources necessary for the policy implementation. In addition the following bodies will be established:

• National Youth Commission

The National Youth Commission will be a multi-sectoral body that ensures the effective implementation and execution of the framework set out in the National Youth Policy. The Commission will execute the role of an advisory body on all affairs concerning the youth of the Virgin Islands.

• National Youth Council

The National Youth Council will serve as the umbrella body that represents youth organisations in the Virgin Islands and employ its mandate to act on issues that impact Virgin Islands youth. It will serve as the ideal medium for empowering young people to develop the skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society. The National Youth Council will provide programme support in a number of areas for the successful implementation of the policy.

• National Youth Parliament

The Youth Parliament will provide participants between the ages of 18-29 with an opportunity to understand in theory and practice the important principles of governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. It will provide a basis for the development of skills to advocate meaningfully on different platforms and themes that impact young people. This will be one of the programmes led by the NYC.
2.6 Action Plan

This Policy establishes the framework for the integration of youth development work in the Territory with a focus on young people and emphasis on the ideal environments and combination of supports and services that can benefit young people today and in the future.

The Policy will rely on the development of a discrete Action Plan that will specify the quality and arrangement of specific programmes, projects, initiatives and schemes on short, medium and long-term bases that will be introduced, strengthened, integrated or otherwise made available to give effect to success outcomes for young people in each goal area.

Young people will be the main beneficiaries of the policy. But they must also have a bigger role in designing policies that affect them. For this to happen, youth issues must be mainstreamed across all areas of development. The reason for this is simple. Youth issues by nature cut across sectors, while policies are set within sectors. So this challenge of coordination can best be managed by drawing up a coherent national framework that manages the implementation of investments and resources in all sectors that impact youth.

All stakeholders with a vested interest in realising the overall vision for the Territory must also have a vested commitment for youth development. This will be the legacy for a strong Territory where our people create and manage our own destiny.
A national youth policy is government’s commitment and practice towards ensuring quality living conditions and opportunities for the youth of the Virgin Islands.

In 1996, a Draft National Youth Policy for the Virgin Islands was prepared but never finalized despite several initiatives. In 2005, under the direction of the then Minister, a committee was formed to review the draft document. In 2007, the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, gathered information from key stakeholders such as Youth Organizations, high school students and incarcerated youth in an effort to obtain an informed analysis of the issues facing youth at that time. In 2008, the review process was still taking place. However, to date, the document has not been finalized, and consequently the Virgin Islands is without a Youth Policy.

The Government of the Virgin Islands, being cognizant of the importance of having an approved youth policy, established a committee in late October 2012 to finalize the policy. A National Youth Policy Committee was formed with the mandate of drafting a National Youth Policy for the Virgin Islands to be approved by the House of Assembly. The Committee’s mandate included holding public consultations throughout the Virgin Islands, meeting with various youth organizations and reviewing laws applicable to the youth.

The Committee overseeing the process included a wide cross section of the public sector, the private sector, parents, churches and other contributors. More importantly young people themselves, who are viewed as the foundation of the Territory’s development, were fully integrated at all stages of the process. A participatory methodology and the use of primary and secondary research were all combined to inform the content of the National Youth Policy.

3.1 Definition of Youth

In the Territory, a youth is a person who has attained the age of 16 years and is under the age of 18 years. The UN General Assembly defines ‘youth’ as persons between 15 and 24 years, and young people between 10 and 24 years (UN General Assembly, 1995). CARICOM in its 2010 Eye on the Future Report reports that there is no standard definition for youth in the Community, and the definition of youth in member states can range from 0 to 35. Bearing in mind the special concerns of equity, rights and access in developing countries, Commonwealth Governments agreed that in normal circumstances, a young person should successfully make the transition from child to adult before the age of 30. The Commonwealth Plan of Action and Commonwealth policies and programming situate youth as persons from 15 to 29 years. However it is important to remember that every generation of young people has to negotiate its entry into adult society. Social, political, economic, psychological and other issues facing young people weigh heavily sometimes on this factor. Because human development is not a uniform process, negotiating the critical stage when young people are confronted by biological and social changes can be complex and varied, and affect some more than others. This is why it is important to remember that youth is not a homogeneous state.
3.2 Policy Purpose

The purpose of the National Youth Policy is to guide the empowerment of the territory’s youth, aged 15 to 29, to ensure their participation in the Territory’s social, political, religious and economic development. This empowerment will be achieved through a range of quality services, support and opportunities that are made available to ensure their genuine participation, engagement and connectedness to the society, culture and values of the territory.

3.3 Policy Context

The context and rationale for the policy are informed by the fact that, like in many Caribbean countries and territories, a significant component of the citizens of the territory are under the age of 35. This presents ample opportunity for our young men and women to contribute towards the growth and development of the territory. This goal has been publicly espoused repeatedly. The 2014 Budget refers to creating a “community where every young person has the opportunity to realize their full potential.” Overall across varying sectors, there is shared sentiment and urgency relating to the role of young women and men “as productive and contributing members of the society.”

The Virgin Islands, today, faces numerous challenges that seek to frustrate the Territory’s aims of producing future leaders who will successfully carry on the Virgin Island’s legacy. There are concerns that we have lost sight of what it publicly to be a citizen. Identity crises, lack of firm rooting in our culture, growing criminal activity, the global economic crises and contractions in jobs; the shifting values system and deteriorating family structures, violence in schools, substance abuse, alarming media images, high incidence of lifestyle diseases, the prominence of social media, the pressures of modern living and the appeal of instant gratification all place more children and youth at-risk.

Violence and abuse against girls and boys is reported to be widespread. This pattern has gradually increased with the prevalence of gangs, drug and alcohol use, risky sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancy, corporal punishment, bullying, poor educational attainment and youth unemployment. A recent Child Sexual Abuse study estimated a child sexual abuse prevalence rate of between 20-45 per cent for the Eastern Caribbean Area. Adolescents, especially boys and those out of school, face many challenges growing up in the sub-region, including early initiation of sexual activity and its consequences, male marginalization, mental health issues, obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, migration of parents and disability. Migration within the sub-region remains one of the highest in the world, with the Eastern Caribbean exporting the largest proportion of its constituent population in percentage terms globally. For example, the British Virgin Islands has an immigrant population of 38.3 per cent.

We do know that many of our young people successfully navigate the road to adulthood and are sterling examples that we can proudly hold up anywhere in the world. But youth is a heterogeneous construct, and there are new and complex challenges putting youth at risk in varying degrees of intensity and impact. As such, the policy highlights priority target groups that include young women, young men out of school and unemployed, youth with disabilities, and special needs, unemployed youth, and youth engaged in risky behaviour, or in conflict with the law.

During the policy process it was discovered that it is difficult to gain access to the opinion of Virgin Islands youth on issues that affect them. A proactive policy and proactive territory must find a meaningful way for young people to contribute to their own development and that of their peers as an integral part of building a strong territory. Young people’s lived experiences, learning and opinions are valuable assets. The Policy recognizes the rights to and access of young people to accountability in development and decision-making. But the Policy also assumes that young people will take full advantage of access and opportunities that will be created to influence the development agenda, and they will be accountable to their peers and to the wider citizenry for advocating and pursuing an agenda of wholesome and positive development.

The Virgin Islands National Youth Policy takes into consideration what could be the optimum social, economic and political participation of young people in the Territory, the competencies and skills they would need to be resilient, to avoid risky behaviour and what supports should be put in place that can lead to measurable long-term benefits that will
not only redound to young people, but also provide returns in investments as productive citizens and a strong society. The six pillars upon which the policy proposes specific interventions are education, health and wellness, economic participation, youth identity and social cohesion, sports and recreation and safety and protection. The recommendations that have resulted from each of these themes are expected to be mainstreamed into and inform programme and project design in the relevant sectors of government where strategies already exist or are being contemplated to improve the welfare and quality of life of all people in the territory.

This Policy recognises the strategic role of a range of stakeholders in government, churches and faith-based organisations, the private sector, the development sector, parents, and NGOs in policy implementation. All these partners are expected to work inclusively, leveraging their networks, asset base, resources and sectoral and comparative advantage to manage discrete programmes and investments that can help youth in line with the main policy goals. This gives rise in particular for the development of a National Commission on Youth that will monitor and measure progress in the mainstreaming of youth development, which strategy is to be designed and rolled out by the Ministry.

The Ministry will be the main coordinating body for the National Youth Policy and work closely to ensure all the bodies and arms that are established under the Policy can function effectively. One such body will be the National Youth Council. The Policy seeks to support and encourage youth in development and decision-making through the formation of a National Youth Council. There are guidelines on how the Council should be established. The National Youth Council will complement the management and delivery of services and supports for young people under the Policy by creating a unique governance and advocacy network of youth agencies, clubs and organisations who are a ready source for Government’s programming, a combined source for research and fact finding on youth development and a prime source for leading community and project development to benefit their peers.

Through the principle of an articulated and structured National Youth Policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Government of the Virgin Islands re-affirms the importance of the active and total involvement of the Territory’s youth in the advancement of the Virgin Islands. The policy recognizes that the youth must be at the core of national development if they are to effectively inherit leadership of the country and highlights their participation in the process of sustaining a society that boasts productivity, equity and democracy, and one in which all people feel safe and valued and a true sense of belonging.
3.5 Policy Aims and Objectives

The Virgin Islands National Youth Policy is the guiding framework to govern all youth development. It will do so by clearly indicating a role for young people in development in all policy areas, the main requisites for enhancing for general youth development, and what key strategies can be integrated, expanded or innovated to promote greater participation by more and diverse youth cohorts in the social, political and economic processes of the Territory.

To this end the **six (6) objectives** of the youth policy are to:

1. Ensure that youth have access to quality education and training.
2. Ensure youth access decent work and livelihood opportunities.
3. Ensure youth are equipped and engaged to contribute to and live in a safe and secure society.
4. Ensure that youth have access to quality sports and recreational activities as an integral part of their development and wellbeing.
5. Ensure the availability of quality programmes and services that cater to young people’s physical, mental, and emotional wellness.
6. Put measures in place to give youth a strong sense of national pride and belonging and for them to volunteer their talents and skills to enhance their own wellbeing, and community and national development.
The principles and values on which the Youth Policy has been developed are first of all derived from the Constitution of the Virgin Islands. In addition, key principles and values considered critical to youth policy and programming have been included.

### 4.1 Principles

#### 4.1.1 Human Rights

This places young people at the centre of development, recognises their right to participate in decision-making in all matters which affect their lives and their communities in partnership with adults; and ensures adequate focus on youth who are most vulnerable, excluded or discriminated against on the basis of ethnic background, political affiliation, origin, social status, gender, culture and religious belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, criminal conviction or recovering addiction.

#### 4.1.2 Youth Mainstreaming

Youth issues by nature cut across sectors, while policies are set within sectors. Youth mainstreaming means that youth affairs and youth concerns will be systematically integrated across all sectors. For the Government this means setting up appropriate mechanisms for youth participation in policy-making, ensuring direct sector investments actually target youth development, and monitoring what progress is being made in the circumstances of youth, and making necessary adjustments for true development.

#### 4.1.3 Asset Based Development

The Asset Based Approach recognises young people as enablers, major players, models and integrators; and a vital source for peer-to-peer development, attitudes and positive reinforcement. This Policy uses an asset-based approach to the participation of the youth in their own development, and the advancement of the Territory.

#### 4.1.4 Genuine Participation

The Policy adopts a participatory and inclusive approach to youth development guided by the ‘three lens approach’ to youth participation so that development interventions in the Policy will work for the benefit of youth (as target beneficiaries), with youth as partners, and shaped by youth as leaders. Youth leading initiatives for themselves and their communities, youth shaping change to make the Territory a better place are all important elements of the genuine participation of the Territory’s youth embraced in this Policy.

### 4.2 Values

Values encompass the principles, traits, standards and qualities that are considered desirable or worthwhile in youth development. This relates to personal traits of the youth and adult stakeholders, as well as those traits that guide the operations of the institutions that support and serve young people and their development.

Our values are:

Integrity, gender equity and equality, patriotism, good governance, equal opportunity and impartiality, and ethical and values –based leadership.
Policy will serve to ensure better accountability to all stakeholders, to strengthen the capacities of duty bearers identified in the Policy to meet their obligations, and to respect, protect and guarantee these rights. Under the Policy, right holders at all levels will also be more aware of and encouraged to claim their rights so that entitlements are attained and safeguarded.

5.1 Rights of Youth

The fundamental rights of all citizens and residents are enshrined in the Constitution. However, for reasons of culture, access, status and other factors, often the rights of young people are overlooked and overshadowed. The fact that many young people in and out of school do not know their rights is a compounding factor. Understanding their rights enforces young people’s ability to engage in good governance, to respect all human rights and to champion democracy and patriotism.

As such, this National Youth Policy recognizes the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Constitution to all young women and men in the Territory. The simplified version of the Declaration is attached as Annex 1 to the Policy.

5.2 Responsibilities of Youth

The enjoyment of rights as a citizen also carry with it inherent responsibilities. As agents and enablers of development, young women and men of the Territory are expected to:

- Be law abiding Citizens.
- Be patriotic and loyal to the Virgin Islands and take actions that will bring about benefits to the Territory and its entire people.
- Respect and value the culture and heritage of the territory, including people, the environment, values, beliefs, labour and contributions of everyone.
- Take full advantage of education, training, employment, recreational and other opportunities that are available to be confident, well-adjusted, healthy and happy leaders and team-players.
- Refrain from all acts that are harmful to society.
- Avoid acts that are personally harmful to physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing.
- Take full responsibility for the direction of their lives.
- Connect with other youth in positive acts and initiatives that help other members of the community and which promote youth rights, well-being and development.
- Connect with adults and establish mutually beneficial relationships that share learning, promote understanding and foster a better society.
- Advocate for other youth, especially those who are at risk or marginalized, and ensure all young people can be happy and enjoy a meaningful life.
5.3 Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

The family has the major role in the development of well-rounded and adjusted individuals who are happy and secure. Today, however, traditional family structures have weakened for many reasons. More youth are unsupervised at earlier ages, more are apathetic, and more are at the risk of making decisions that can jeopardize their lives in the short and long-term.

Parents are also younger than ever, some are alone, and some are without the supports they need to protect and nurture young people. But parents and guardians have the responsibility to be our youth’s first teachers, and a source of advice, discipline and protection.

The Policy encourages parents and guardians to take responsibility for actions of youth under adult age and for children and young children. Positive inputs at every stage of a child’s life will foster bright, well-adjusted, healthy, creative, balanced and confident adults. Lack of positive inputs, on the other hand, will cause youth and mature adults to fall short of their potential and be possible burdens on society. Parents and Guardians shall:

- Provide a safe and secure home environment for their children.
- Ensure that their children complete primary and secondary school education as required under domestic law.
- Provide access to recreation and leisure activities according to their means.
- Undertake proper and responsible parenting and be the first teachers of their children.
- Be positive role models for the their children and the youth of the Territory.
- Ensure the basic needs of their child/children are met.
- Provide effective guidance and counselling.
- Adopt a personal culture of continuous learning and encourage their children to do the same and pursue life-long self-advancement.
- Give youth opportunities to achieve their full potential and their goals including through life skills and skills development according to their God-given talents.
- Ensure that adequate financial support according to one’s means while showing youth the importance of living within one’s means.
- Adopt fair measures to sanction the actions of youth so they are made aware on a sustained basis of different consequences, good and bad, of their actions.

5.4 Responsibilities of the Government

This Policy is to be utilized as a mechanism to enable sound decision making in the creation of a stable economy and environment by engaging and including young people. While young people must take sound decisions for their development, they must be furnished with information and opportunities to aid in forming values, skills and competencies for good decision-making. The Government of the Virgin Islands has a collective responsibility to ensure that all its arms and agents are actively working together to achieve these aims. The enabling environment for such youth development falls into four broad categories:

- an economic and social base.
- political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks.
- a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy.
- access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system.
The Government of the Virgin Islands shall:

- Ensure the rights of young people are upheld and protected in accordance with all national laws and international laws and treaties to which the Territory is party, and establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress.

- Create the enabling environment for youth development and make necessary investment in resources, infrastructure and systems to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy.

- Establish a high-level National Commission to mainstream and monitor youth development in the Territory.

- Establish a National Code of Conduct to guide the actions of all youth work, including the conduct of individuals and youth-serving agencies and institutions, so that the rights of youth are always protected and youth development is managed in accordance with the principles and values of professional youth work practice.

- Provide support for the professionalization of youth and a structure institutional foundation for positive youth development.

- Provide incentives to the private sector to encourage their investments in youth.

5.5 Responsibilities of the Private Sector

The Private Sector is a key player in the economy and sustainability of the Territory. A country with a happy, competent and well-adjusted youth population is one that can enjoy stable economic growth, retain confidence for overseas investments and be self-reliant. Supporting youth development is therefore a good investment for the private sector, and for young people, who seek the opportunity for exposure, to use their creativity, and to be given chances to excel.

The Virgin Islands private sector has a responsibility to support the Government by leveraging their networks and comparative advantage in discrete programmes and investments that can help youth in line with the main policy goals. The Private Sector shall:

- Take part in the overall creation of employment and employment of the Territory’s youth.

- Establish special employment quotas for skilled/qualified youth.

- Establish internship/professional attachment programmes and other mechanisms to give young people opportunities to advance personally and professionally.

- Review/update their merit/employment criteria, such as modifying the bring/learn ratio for youth, to make the process more equitable for them.

- Encourage and assist with the development of entrepreneurs and a mentorship scheme for young entrepreneurs within the Virgin Islands.

- Provide access to information that is paramount to the development of the Territory’s youth.

- Provide opportunities for the acquisition of skills by the Territory’s youth.

- Take measures to ensure the workplace does not exploit young people.

- Avoid partiality and discrimination against any young woman or man.
5.6 Responsibilities of Churches and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs)

The Virgin Islands is viewed as a God-fearing society and its core beliefs and values are derived from this faith. Churches and FBOs play a major role in youth development and are a vital source for non-formal education in the skills, attitudes and values young people need to successfully negotiate social ills and challenges, a source of belonging and connectedness.

Churches and FBOs also have their responsibility to support national youth development that is in line with the tenets of positive youth development, asset-based development and genuine participation. This will mean integrating young people more strategically in the structures of planning and decision-making in the church, which traditionally have been reserved for elders. Churches and FBOs shall:

- Develop and implement programmes for young people in line with the main policy goals and actions.
- Create youth-friendly spaces where members can meet and assemble for recreation and learning.
- Ensure all young people are protected from sexual abuse and/or any form of exploitation.
- Provide a place for effective guidance and counselling for the Territory’s youth.
- Leverage their local and international networks to support local and international youth exchanges and events for young people to come together to foster tolerance, understanding, cooperation, respect for diversity and build social capital.
- Be positive role models and a strong moral fibre for young people.
- Support national volunteerism opportunities for young people.
- Find ways to remain relevant and sensitive to the needs of young people.
- Find creative ways for young people to take up leadership roles in the church and its organisations.

5.7 Responsibilities of other youth serving organisations / civil society

In addition to churches and FBOs, a number of organisations make a significant and sustained contribution to development of youth in the territory. They provide opportunities for sports, social activities, sailing and marine traditions, understanding and protecting the environment, artistic and cultural expression and various types of training and skills building. Their responsibilities shall be the same as for churches and FBOs.
While the Virgin Islands National Youth Policy ensures inclusion and empowerment of all youth when providing opportunities, this section focuses primarily on certain groups as a result of their specific needs and life circumstances. These groups are defined as:

### 6.1 High risk group
- Youth neglected by their parents/relatives/homeless
- Substance abusers
- Youth in gangs
- Teen mothers
- Teen fathers
- Out of school youth
- Unemployed youth

### 6.2 Special needs, traumatized and marginalized
- Young people with various disabilities, mental conditions, and special learning and development needs
- Youth who have been abandoned, lost parents or are orphans
- Physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually abused youth
- Youth in state care/institutions
- Victims of circumstances
- Youth from poorer households/backgrounds
- Youth who are children of migrants or who are non-belongers

### 6.3 Youth exposed to criminal environments and socially stigmatized
- Youth offenders including prisoners and ex-convicts
- Young illegal migrants
- Youth in sex trade
7.1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

GOAL 1: ALL YOUTH HAVE ADEQUATE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION AND SKILLS THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AS HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS.

• 7.1.1 Background

Over the years, the Ministry of Education and Culture has taken several steps to realize the Department’s education objective that is to “equip learners of all ages with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to become productive citizens in a rapidly changing society”. The British Virgin Islands enjoys a high literacy rate of 97.8% and universal access to primary and secondary education. Reforms in the Education Act and reviews of curricula have been undertaken, as well as some proactive attempts made for more inclusive education to achieve equity in meeting the needs of all citizens irrespective of circumstance.

However, there remain critical issues to be addressed relating to the education and continuous learning opportunities and access of young people. Despite universal access to primary and secondary education, dropout rates at secondary level are high. While the average net enrolment in primary education in 2007 was 90% in the Eastern Caribbean, the Territory showed an actual decline from previous years1. At the pre-primary level, enrolment is estimated at only 60%.

Major concerns include the quality and relevance of the education system to the modern job market and employment climate, the inflexibility of education assessments and systems, the quality of teaching and ratio of teachers to students; and learning environments that are inconsistent with achieving education for all students1. School dropout rates are particularly high, especially among males, even though the Education Act makes it compulsory to be in school from age five through sixteen. Young people in the Territory need a wide range of skills that should be geared to main sectors of probable labour demand. However, the education system is failing in this area, resulting in increases in numbers of unemployed youth and a reliance on external labour. Moreover, some young people are more at risk to be excluded from the active education systems in and out of school. These may include youth in the care and justice systems, pregnant teens, youth from lower income households, children of migrants, youth with disabilities and special needs, and youth living with HIV. Special steps should be taken to assess the adequacy and impact of educational services and support to these categories of youth to ensure they are able to equip them to transition successfully.

While this Policy acknowledges that all youth have the right to an appropriate, inclusive and quality education, it also places the onus of responsibility and involvement on parents and community support systems for a values-based education that is consistent with the territory’s vision and principles.

• 7.1.2 Education and Training Objectives

Recognising the prominent role of the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in contributing to the provision of quality education and skills that will enable young people to achieve their full potential as happy and productive citizens, this policy goal is therefore concerned with:

• Ensuring collaboration and coherence of efforts in the education sector so that young people in and out of the school system receive the ideal mix of education and training, according to their needs to realize their full talent and potential.

• Integrating the varying educational
agents in the territory and the processes of formal, informal and non-formal education to achieve the national vision of culture of excellence in education.

- Directing systemic attention to mapping and addressing the provision across the Territory of the personal and social development training competencies that youth must acquire according to youth life-cycle needs.

- Expanding the network of quality vocational and targeted learning outside of the classroom using practical applications, modern technology and methodologies.

- Meeting the needs of young women and men who are not suited to an academic education adequately.

**7.1.3 Policy Actions**

1. Ensure the provisions of the Education Act and other relevant legislation and agreements relating to education in the territory are fully implemented to ensure equitable access to all young people, to track progress and to monitor performance.

2. Introduce a system of incentives, after school programmes, mentorship, and other support services for young people in order to minimize the dropout rate, and to encourage young people to access post-secondary, technical/vocational and tertiary education in line with their passion and interests.

3. Ensure that educators are highly trained and qualified and remain up to date in their relevant field of education.

4. Equip institutions with the necessary resources, media and technologies to foster learning environments that champion innovation and excellence.

5. Increase range of vocational education at secondary and tertiary levels to ensure adequacy for the demands of the labour market in the Territory, including increased access to entrepreneurship and financial literacy.

6. Ensure cohesion and quality control in non-formal education initiatives (human rights, violence reduction, life skills, communication and interpersonal relations, HIV prevention, Health and Family Life Education (HFLE), drug education, learning programmes, training supports and services available to all categories of youth, including youth in special circumstances and with special needs, that is suitable for dissemination by relevant media to varying publics.

7. Introduce quality control and monitoring of school curricula so they remain current and applicable to the needs of diverse student and youth populations in the territory.

8. Maintain a database on the range of education, continuous...
7.2 EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

GOAL 2: YOUTH CAN ACCESS DECENT WORK AND LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES SO THEY CAN HAVE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC SECURITY AND MEANINGFUL LIVES.

7.2.1 Background

The BVI enjoys a healthy economy and economic performance. The world-class financial services sector accounts for almost 50% of the country’s revenue. Tourism also plays an important role. Employment stands at approximately 95% with the government employing some 30% of the labour force. Immigrants from the other Caribbean countries make up almost 43% of the country’s labour force.

A major goal in the Territory has been for all citizens to benefit from opportunities to use their talents in gainful employment and entrepreneurship. The Government has committed itself to expand the local economy and provide job opportunities for citizens and residents and further accelerate the development of its human resources into a knowledge-based economy.

The BVI is also known for its strong entrepreneurial culture and spirit and there are role models and mentors in the community in the area of business growth, diversification and sustainability. Indeed, one of the goals of the Virgin Islands Medium Term Development Strategy is a “thriving and buoyant economy fostering balanced growth through entrepreneurship and trade”. This also streamlines with a world economy perspective where there is increasing growth of micro and small business that provide services in the real world and virtually to meet myriad needs.

While unemployment and under employment are low relative to other Caribbean neighbours, young people want to be well positioned to take advantage of changes in the job market, have the skills base and job experience to increase their ability to take up jobs in the private sector, and leverage the comparative edge of the Territory in creating successful home-based businesses and entrepreneurial ventures.

7.2.2 Employment and Entrepreneurship Objectives

Recognising that the Ministry of Labour and the provisions of the Labour Code are key to the success of strategies for youth in this policy area, the Policy calls for urgent and sustained action in planning for and integrating a strategic role for young people in the sustainable future of the Territory, mindful of the economic and other development priorities, and its rich culture and heritage. This involves:

- Providing young people with targeted and specific opportunities through higher education.
- Establishing more effective on the job training initiatives to prepare job-seekers to capitalize on available and potential prospects in line with their personal and professional aspirations.
- Preparing VI youth to capitalize on labour demand in the Territory’s priority and emerging sectors.
- Facilitating comprehensive supports for youth entrepreneurship and business development.
- Working in tandem with other relevant partners to create a strong, professional work ethic among youth of the Territory and a greater dependence on BVI labour to fuel the economy.

7.2.3 Policy Actions

1. Enforce the provisions of the Labour Code (Advisory Committees) to enquire into and make recommendations on condition of employment and access for young people with attention to:
• Equitable access for marginalized young people and for young women.
• Removing barriers to entry of young people into productive employment in the private sector and public service (e.g. age/experience criteria, sexual intimidation and abuse etc.).
• Decent work and compensation for employment.
• Continuous learning and development opportunities supported by employers for youth employed in the public and private sectors.
• Ensuring youth mobility for all productive sectors of the economy.
• An effective job placement scheme.

2. Implement periodic labour*market surveys that provide critical information to enable VI youth to satisfy the demands of a dynamic labour market, including for decision-making on youth entrepreneurship, education sector planning and youth career choices.

3. Promote and support an integrated approach to youth self-employment, SMEs and to credit financing, with attention to:
• Introducing policies and incentives to agencies and private sector partners engaging in youth enterprise development, and credit and financing for youth.
• Supporting the establishment of a VI Youth Business Initiative to enable young women and men to own, operate or expand their businesses buttressed by a supportive partnership network.
• Promoting partnerships to mentor and provide support to sustain youth-led businesses.
• Making entrepreneurial education and training programmes accessible to youth in and out of school settings.
• Supporting the establishment of alliances of youth entrepreneurs.

4. Subsidize/incentivize traineeships and the employment of youth as priority groups.

5. Create a knowledge portal on education and career demand in the Territory, that is readily accessible to young people.

6. Develop a National Apprenticeship and Internship Programme with internal and global stakeholders and partners as appropriate to provide “world of work” development opportunities to young people.

7. Equip VI youth to understand and participate in the financial services sector including through programmes on financial literacy and financial inclusion, and awareness of the role of international financial institutions and other multilateral agencies in national economic development.

8. Support enhanced work competencies and opportunities in environmental management and preservation.

7.3 Care, Safety and Protection

Goal 3: Youth are equipped and engaged to contribute to and live in a safe and secure society.

7.3.1 Background

When speaking about the Youth of the Territory and proposing a development framework with regard to care, safety and protection from the impacts of crime, violence and drugs, several key stake holding interests come to mind: the parents/family circle, religious community, civil society and educators, the justice system, other government arms and agents; the business sector, youth themselves and the media. This concept has shaped a vision for the BVI as a place where business leaders, religious leaders, neighbourhood activists and other prominent members in the community commit to doing their part to help combat crime, and where regardless of our diversity people come together as one community to fight crime.

Crime, violence, drugs and gang membership are a scourge on all Caribbean societies directly impacting more and varied groups of young people as participants and victims. Pre-teens, teenagers and older youth cohorts are currently committing crimes and violent acts in the Territory. Schools and homes are places marked by growing prevalence of violent and risky behaviours. More youth are now coming before the courts and being placed in the justice system. Into this ecology, we can add people’s perceptions of youth as deviants and de-stabilisers of society, a perception that is fuelled by the media and an increasingly intolerant and unsympathetic society.

However, there are growing numbers of youth and children who are victims of criminal acts and acts of violence and abuse perpetrated by adults. The Social Development De...
The Department of Youth and Sport indicates that child sexual abuse has become the leading type of abuse inflicted on children in the territory. Youth are also victims of physical abuse, verbal abuse and gross neglect.

The Territory has a good legislative framework of special protection of children and young persons. The National Security Council has been made accountable for the effective implementation of a national strategy and action plan to maintain law and order.

### 7.3.2 Care, safety and protection objectives

Given strong framework of policies and initiatives in this domain, this policy goal is concerned with:

- Coordinating more effectively the range of supports and services that will give young people adequate access and opportunities to make more informed decisions about their life choices and refrain from risky and criminal behaviour.
- Enhancing the ability of at-risk youth, youth who have been abused and youth in conflict with the law to feel valued and able to contribute positively to society.
- Creating strong youth advocacy and actions for a safe and crime-free VI targeting schools, entertainment arenas, churches, and other places where youth freely assemble.
- Promoting national acceptance and support for the effective rehabilitation of reintegration of the young offender into society, and the enhanced participation of at-risk youth into society in development and decision-making in the Territory.
- Advocating for agents of the law, the judiciary and other persons charged with the protection of the society to adopt a more youth-friendly and inclusive approach with and for participation in crime and violence.

#### 7.3.3 Policy Actions

1. Establish a national youth safety and security programme that includes but is not limited to: making available a range of age-appropriate information, education and skills training to children and youth in and out of schools on personal safety skills, to take personal responsibility to reduce youth violence. and to lead peer-education and advocacy campaigns to reduce youth participation in crime and violence.

2. Support the establishment of a coordinated network of second chance programmes (holistic rehabilitative support services) to ensure that all categories of youth who are affected by bad choices can bounce back.

3. Work with the justice system to ensure the rights of youth in the justice system are upheld. to ensure that they have appropriate legal advice and services, and to explore alternative sentencing options consistent with international good practice.

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1 The British Virgin Islands has revised some legislations and implemented a range of new legislation specific to children, including:
   - The Children and Young Persons Act, 2005
   - The Youth Courts Act, 2005
   - The Criminal Justice (Alternative Sentencing) Act, 2005
   - The Probation of Offenders (Amendment) Act, 2005
   - The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 2007
   - The Education Act, 2005

2 Under domestic laws, a child is a person under the age of 16 and a young person is a person who has attained the age of 16 years and is under the age of 18 years.
4. Work with the justice system to ensure the adequacy of standards to protect and safeguard youth/adolescents from sexual and domestic violence, neglect, and other exploitation and other abuse; to protect youth confidentiality and juvenile records; and to punish offenders.

5. Collaborate with the justice system to provide protective supports and empowerment of young people (witnesses) who have to interact with the justice system ensuring trained professionals and resources to service needs across the territory.

6. Work with the relevant authorities (National Security Council, Police, etc.) to ensure legislative and administrative provisions are in place to protect youth from access and opportunities for criminal or deviant behaviour. 

7. Develop, and promote in collaboration with NGOS, churches and the donor community youth-centred and community-based models in protection and crime prevention.

8. Establish or strengthen programmes that nurture strong and values-based relationships between the police, the judiciary and other arms and agents of law enforcement and order with young people.

9. Establish a peer-education programme that engages youth leaders, young professionals and reformed offenders to mentor and engage and empower youth at risk, offenders and juveniles and steer them into positive behaviours and outcomes.

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**7.4 SPORTS AND RECREATION**

**GOAL 4: YOUTH ACCESS TO QUALITY SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AS INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING**

**7.4.1 Background**

The importance of sports and recreational activities in the psychological, cognitive and physical development of young people is recognized in all societies. In addition to known construction of sports and games, recreation activities for youth appeal include music and cultural events, gaming, entertainment and community service. Appropriate recreational opportunities and access for youth are elements of planned development aimed at fighting social ills such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and other deviant behaviour. In addition to health and personal development benefits there is compelling evidence that sport can be an effective vehicle for advancing sustainable human, social and economic development.

The Government’s Medium Term Development Strategy includes the goal for “a healthy, vibrant and engaged populace well-prepared to fully participate in the development of the Territory”. The importance of leisure and recreation to the wellbeing of the population has also been represented in the desirability of providing a “green space”; a location where citizens can relax with their friends and family, have social activities and generally take a break from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives in a natural environment.

The National Sports Policy (NSP) already provides the Territory with a holistic framework aimed at improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels, through casual or organized participation in sports and games. The NSP also recognizes sport as a tool for youth development, leadership and well-being. Along with DYAS, there are a number of clubs and organisations providing sporting and recreational activities for the youth of the Territory.

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**7.4.2 Sports and Recreation Objectives**

There is a strong policy framework and opportunities in the Territory in relation to sports and recreational needs of all citizens, including young people. As such this goal is concerned with:

- Integrating sports more effectively in youth development programming.
- Designing sports and leisure programmes so that they are holistically developmental in concept and execution, and not used as a means for excluding youth from participating in other aspects of social life.
- Establishing safety and protection protocols for young people and their participation in sports and recreational activities to keep them safe.
free from exploitation and abuse of any kind.

• Establishing a mechanism of measurable targets for enhancing the wellbeing of youth through sports and recreational activities, especially those who might be otherwise marginalized by social, cultural or other circumstances.

7.4.3 Policy Actions

1. Design and implement a sustainable, quality sport for development programme (SDP) intentionally targeting specific developmental goals (health, leadership, self-esteem, conflict management, peace building, human rights, respect for diversity,).

2. Implement a mechanism to coordinate programmes, structures and strategies on youth development through sport with relevant social sector agencies and institutions, the private sector and civil society.

3. Support and strengthen the role of youth in sports and recreational programmes as planners, administrators, and managers, etc.

4. Ensure youth participation in the development and monitoring of safety and protection protocols and code of ethics for all agencies and individuals providing sports and recreation services for children and youth.

5. Provide youth-friendly spaces and safe environments for young people to meet and socialize.

6. Ensure that all sport and recreational planning and programmes are gender-aware and diversity sensitive and seek to increase the participation of young women, marginalized youth and other special youth cohorts and priority groups identified in the NYP.

7. Enhance youth participation in sports and recreation through-out the Territory by promoting inter-island competitions, and by introducing more attractive options and events.

8. Ensure the recognition of youth excellence of achievement in all forms of sports, games and other recreational pursuits that require physical, cognitive / strategy skills.

• Ensuring a role for young people at all levels in planning and implementing sports and leisure programmes.
7.5 Health & Wellness

GOAL 5: Provide youth access to programmes, support and services that allow them to adopt healthy behaviours and lifestyles and enjoy a good quality of life.

7.5.1 Background

Improving overall social services programmes and healthcare to benefit all citizens and residents is a main thrust of the VI’s development strategy. Main actions relate to raising standards of health and quality of life, providing modern and coordinated health facilities and services, enhancing arrangements for mental health treatment and care, and ensuring safety and checks for quality health service delivery.

The Ministry of Health and Social development is responsible for the social welfare of all citizens including youth. It already has in place several programmes that specifically target youth sexual and reproductive health, and offers preventative and educational programmes for healthy lifestyles and behaviour. All school age children receive free medical care at various public health facilities. In collaboration with the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Ministry of Education and Culture, an Annual Youth Summit on HIV/AIDS is also staged. More focus is also being placed on supporting children and youth up to eighteen who have mental and physical disabilities and thus a varied a number of special needs.

Notwithstanding these support systems, there are several health risk factors impacting youth more than ever. The Virgin Islands are experiencing increasing risk factors for non-communicable diseases among its population. There are rising rates of preventative health issues associated with lack of physical activity, poor eating habits, accidents and tobacco, alcohol and substance use. Youth who are victims of different forms of gang and other violence may require a variety of health interventions. Cases of sexual and violent abuse may require health interventions of a highly confidential and sensitive nature. Mental-health conditions are also increasingly prevalent among young people. On a global level, it is estimated that approximately 20 per cent of youth experience a mental-health condition each year. Young people are at greater risk of a range of mental-health conditions as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

7.5.2 Health and Wellness Objectives

This policy area will focus on:

1. Strengthening the social safety net for youth to ensure no young person is left without recourses.
2. Widening and strengthening the collaboration of key stakeholders to ensure that youth health, wellbeing, and quality of life targets are achieved through systematic coordination and among key social sector interests with parents, NGOs and other community-based organisations, private sector and the media.
3. Encouraging the development of innovative partnerships that integrate sports, the arts and entertainments, culture, and other action and participatory approaches into the education and training of young people on preventative health, sexual and reproductive health and other programmes targeting young women and men.

7.5.3 Policy Actions

1. Develop a knowledge base on the services and supports available to youth across the territory relating to substance and drug abuse, HIV and AIDS, STIs, sexual abuse, pregnancy, domestic violence, diet and nutrition, non-communicable chronic diseases, counselling, etc.; and make it widely available for youth audiences.
2. Establish or expand youth friendly spaces and community resource hubs across the Territory where young people can access information, skills, supports and services to engage in healthy lifestyles.
3. Engage with relevant partners, including youth, to design youth-specific quality of life indicators and targets for BVI youth that will guide behaviour change, and the adoption of healthy lifestyles among young people.
4. Develop awareness and programmes to address specific preventative health needs of young people – like obesity, tobacco and alcohol use, mental health, and accidents.
5. Equip health centres with youth friendly learning spaces and knowledge spaces for peer-education and participatory learning on youth-health issues.
6. Find creative means to integrate physical education, sports, culture, the arts, and other avenues that allow for action and participatory learning into health services education for youth.

9. Improve national capacity for counselling and provide spaces in schools and community settings where young people can readily access psycho-social support.

11. Enhance access to health and nutrition classes where young people can learn to plan and prepare healthy meals.

12. Support a range of non-formal training and preparation for youth-serving organisations to help youth to reduce risk and vulnerability to disease, crime, violence etc.

7. Establish prevention, management and rehabilitation services for youth who are addicted to controlled substances.

8. Implement Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) informal and non-formal settings with attention to peer education programmes that can reach diverse youth audiences.

10. Utilise mass media and technology to promote healthy lifestyles among young people and support the development of targeted programmes that inform and reward healthy lifestyles among young people.

7.6 Identity, Culture and Social Cohesion

GOAL 6: Youth have a strong sense of national pride and belonging and volunteer their talents and skills to enhance community and national development.

7.6.1 Background

The government acknowledges that culture is vital to the individual, social, and economic well being of the people of the Territory and is committed for the long-term to supporting and promoting culture. The Culture Policy of the Territory defines culture as “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations”. The achievement of the overall vision for the territory as “a prosperous Virgin Islands, that is ideal to live, work, visit, and do business” relies on young people embracing and protecting its cultural heritage.

The language and literary arts, performing arts, visual arts and handicrafts, indigenous knowledge, cultural beliefs, traditions and values, historical sites and buildings, monuments and antiquities form the cultural heritage of the Virgin Islands. Being rooted to this heritage brings a strong sense of national pride. National pride means being proud of and respecting the Virgin Islands. It means understanding where we have come from, how much we have achieved, and what we have that is intrinsically unique to the Virgin Islands.

Through the integration of other cultures, the way of life of the people of the Virgin Islands has
evolved and in some aspects our indigenous culture has been diluted. Many young people are unable to identify with what it means to be a Virgin Islander in the way previous generations could. Young people more readily identify and are rooted in dominant North American and other Caribbean cultures. Issues of identity may become confused in a Territory where the immigrant population is almost 40%. In order for our young citizens and residents to make sense of their identity and develop a firm sense of belonging and roots, establishing the relationship between global processes and local experiences is critical.

7.6.2 Social cohesion through volunteerism

A national volunteerism scheme will be an integral component of this goal area. Volunteerism is a source of strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion, which can instil positive values in our youth by fostering respect for equality and diversity, by encouraging inter-generational learning; mentoring and the discrete participation of all stakeholders in mutually supportive roles. It can impact a sense of belonging and root young people within their community as valued members and assets. Volunteerism is a vital dimension of democratic and social life, not merely to be valued for its resource input in limited service fields. In particular, it is viewed as essential to the development of civic participation, and individual development and a key source of social capital.

Fundamental to this policy area is the need to give young people a role and place as agents and advocates for social cohesion and nation building. This will entail the creation of opportunities for young people to understand and embrace personal and civic responsibility as tools for social cohesion; keeping our unique culture relevant and salient to young people, while educating them about what is available in the rest of the world; providing greater scope for intergenerational collaboration on culture, values and lifestyles that are inherent to the identifiable culture of the territory; harnessing youth creativity and innovation in expressing, growing and marketing the culture and sharing it with the rest of the world; and having all citizens live and embrace the culture proudly.

7.6.3. Identity, Culture and Social Cohesion Objectives

The Culture Policy is clear and includes strategies to enhance the integration of culture into the development of the people of the Territory, and to create a better quality of life through increased cultural involvement. The Culture Department, the Tourism Department, other governments, civil partners and young people are all key stakeholders in achieving this goal. This policy area therefore is geared towards:

- Grounding our young people in their rich heritage as a way of creating a
• Tapping into the Territory’s rich value system and value chain to achieve strong identity and social cohesion outcomes through volunteerism.

• Enabling young people to shape and innovate culture in ways that resonate with them, and in ways they can readily own using song, dress, trades and traditions, music and dance, literature and folklore, values and life styles, business and social media.

• Ensuring culture like sports and other potent media is effectively integrated as an effective tool for positive youth development.

7.6.4 Policy Actions

1. Work with the Ministry of Culture to ensure the integration of programming strategies, targets and indicators between the NYP and the Culture Policy for optimum participation and benefit of young people.

2. Develop with the Ministry of Culture a youth-friendly guide to cultural heritage and to opportunities/strategies available for youth to participate in, learn about and otherwise support their cultural heritage.

3. Develop with the Ministry of Culture and young people a major event or annual targets that promote youth ownership and leadership in integrating of culture for the development of the people of the Territory.

4. Establish a National Volunteerism Programme where students and youth are supported to innovate and manage opportunities that promote civic responsibility, social cohesion, intergenerational harmony, cultural expression and inclusiveness, and to participate in key sectors such as tourism, marine industry, etc.

5. Develop and integrate into formal and non-formal education sectors youth-friendly material and media that educate young people in their BVI cultural heritage, and which educate them on Caribbean cultures and the world.

6. Support/incentivize youth business opportunities and projects that promote heritage industries and cultural innovations.

7. Promote youth management of national and community media programmes that showcase cultural identity and expressions.

8. Create opportunities for young people to participate in the National Festival of Arts, CARIFESTA and other such opportunities both as managers and cultural contributors.

9. Support intra-and extra territorial youth exchanges to enhance diversity understanding, youth leadership and social capital.

10. Establish a system to recognize and validate young people’s areas of competence through volunteer activities and to recognize the importance and relevance of voluntary activities to the economic and social development of the Territory.

11. Engage young people to protect the environment as a means of preserving the rich cultural and environmental heritage of the Territory.
The Ministry of Education and Culture shall spearhead the overall policy implementation. It shall be the direct functional link between the Territory’s youth and the Government of the Virgin Islands. In exercise of this mandate, the Ministry shall:

- Develop a Plan of Action for the implementation of the NYP.
- Ensure the direct engagement of young people in the Policy implementation.
- Coordinate the provision of all supports and services for the empowerment of young people as outlined in the policy and for the work of bodies created under this policy.
- Develop and manage the Territory’s national youth mainstreaming guide
- Establish systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the Policy.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Ministry and other youth serving partners for the conduct of quality youth work and the delivery of professional youth services and supports to young people.
- Support the training of youth workers and other critical human resources for the policy implementation.
- Work with all duty bearers to create an accountability mechanism for the Policy and to ensure better coordination of programming and supports.
- Promote awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives among duty bearers in government, NGOs and the private sector at all levels, including in academia and the media. Such efforts should focus on the benefits of engaging youth in issues that affect them, and on how these groups can jointly engage young people in youth development issues and in the implementation of relevant policies and programmes.
- Establish a mechanism (communications interface platform) to keep young people informed in creative ways about the products and services available for their development in the Territory; and to receive feedback and opinions from young people on issues affecting them.
- Support the work of the NYC and other bodies established under the policy and serve as the nodal link among all bodies and agencies working with and for youth.
- Develop a knowledge base on youth in the Territory, encourage research and data collection on youth matters and benchmark good practices in youth development.

8.2 Establishment of a National Commission on Youth

The Policy calls for the establishment of a National Commission on Youth in the Virgin Islands in an effort to ensure the effective implementation and execution of the framework set out in the National Youth Policy and the enforcement of all laws and provisions for the benefit of young people. The Virgin Islands Youth Commission will exercise oversight responsibility for the National Youth Policy and be the advisory body on all affairs concerning the youth of the Virgin Islands. The Commission will be made up of high-level representative stakeholder bodies with responsibility for thematic issues in the Policy (education, health, sports, safety and security, culture, youth, planning and development, employment), members of the judiciary, academia, the private sector, the church, and development and other community and interest groups.

The Commission will constitute a professional and technical body whose members are appointed in accordance with full principles of national transparency, equity and
accountability. The Commission will execute a mandate inclusive of but not limited to:

- Ensuring the provisions of all national laws, regulations and treaties to which the Government is party are enforced in so far as they pertain to young people and their wellbeing and reporting on progress in this area.
- Assessing the sufficiency and appropriateness of the supports and services for the empowerment of youth of the Territory in relation to the main policy areas.
- Enhancing the status of youth work and working to promote the professionalization of youth work and the recognition of youth workers.
- Reporting annually to Government on the status of Youth of the Territory in relation to the progress of the youth policy.

In creating the Commission it is also recommended that:

- A member should be selected from each sister island to represent the respective island.
- There shall be a representative who is competent to represent policy and legal issues attending persons with special needs.
- Members shall be appointed by Cabinet for a period of two (2) years, which appointments may be extended or terminated at the discretion of the Cabinet.
- There shall be at least one (1) Legal Counsel appointed who will serve as Secretary to the Commission.
- The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture shall be the ex-officio chair of the Commission.

8.3 Establishment of a National Youth Council

The National Youth Council establishes the mandate for the creation of a National Youth Council (NYC) that will serve as a focal point of central representation for individuals and youth groups. This will provide greater participation in decision-making and national politics. The NYC will be an autonomous, non-partisan youth umbrella body that represents, promotes and advocates the collective interests of all registered youth clubs, organisations and other youth in the Virgin Islands. It will employ its mandate to act on issues

- The execution, monitoring and evaluation and revision of the National Youth Policy.
- Promoting the Territory’s youth mainstreaming agenda and ensure all agencies represented on the Commission adopt an internal youth mainstreaming and youth engagement protocol.
- Developing policies for approval by Cabinet that would ensure the youth are afforded opportunities for development across all sectors and interests in the Territory.
- Establishing conditions for the ethical conduct of youth work in the Territory.
- Supporting the implementation of a national accountability mechanism to ensure optimum coordination of resources and products for the Territory’s youth in line with the Policy.
- Advising on the mobilization of resources and inputs for the implementation of the policy, based on areas of competitive advantage and interest of the Territory’s stakeholders.
that impact Virgin Islands youth, and serve as the ideal medium for empowering young people to develop the skills and confidence to participate fully as active citizens and agents of positive development in an inclusive society. The NYC will be recognised by Government as the official lobby group and representative of the territory’s youth.

The proposed strategic foundation and scope for the establishment of the NYC is at Appendix 2.

8.4 Other youth structures

The National Youth Policy recognizes the NYC as an important implementing partner and as a source for mobilizing young people throughout the Territory. It is expected that specific youth programmes can be led or co-managed with the in partnership with other agencies. The programmes will include but will not be limited to:

• The National Youth Parliament (NYP)
• The National Student Council (NSC)
• Child Protection Programme
• Youth Arts Programme
• Development Education Programme
• Youth Health Programme
• Intercultural Programme
• International Programme

8.5 National Youth Parliament

8.5.1 Rationale

The Virgin Islands National Youth Policy establishes the mandate for the creation of a National Youth Parliament. The aims of the Virgin Islands Youth Parliament are to give young people, between the ages of 18 and 29 a voice to bring about changes they want to see in their communities on the key issues in which they have an interest, and to create the leadership skills and competencies in young people that will benefit them and their communities.

Citizenship, national awareness and pride, and engendering genuine interest in the affairs of the Territory are high on the agenda of the policy. Some practice on the benches of a mock Parliament can be useful to young people in deciding how to become a more active citizen, either inside or outside formal politics. In so doing they can also acquire or improve upon a range of skills associated with advocacy and the practice of democracy and good citizenship.

The NYP will be a dedicated project managed on an annual basis by the NYC. It will provide a specific avenue for a younger cohort of the Territory’s youth to access more structured and formative development opportunities. The NYP will especially target school children from Form 3 upwards and provide an opportunity for genuine peer-based preparation, mentoring and development.

The National Youth Parliament will:

• Give school children and youth an understanding and appreciation of parliamentary practice and procedures and a range of complementary leadership skills and competencies.
• Provide school children and youth of the Virgin Islands with an innovative and enjoyable forum to lead and participate in a range of parliamentary processes including debates on issues with regard to the governing of the Territory.
• Provide the Territory’s Government with documented youth-led research and perspectives for input into policy and decision-making.
• Enhance national awareness and appreciation of the role young people can play as agents and advocates of democracy and development.
• Promote broader awareness amongst young people about achieving consensus building and shaping of policy and laws without recourse to civil disorder.

8.5.2 Structure and work

Guided by Commonwealth and other existing practice on the organisation of youth parliaments, the NYC will work with the Ministry to establish guidelines for the Territory relating to the selection, recruitment, training and deployment of youth participants for the annual Youth Parliament and also establish guidelines to report on progress of the NYP and its benefits to participants. Members elected annually will comprise at least one male and one female representative for each constituency of the Territory, with at least two alternates appointed per constituency or district.
Young people are dynamic, resourceful and innovative. They need access and opportunities in the national landscape to share their views, prove themselves and make contributions according to their means to benefit their families, peers and community. Youth are today’s leaders and have proven to be reliable change agents for national transformation and the foundation of the Territory’s development. Logically, more young people must be prepared from an early stage and vested opportunities to participate meaningfully in the Territory’s leadership and development. Decisions can no longer be made without consultation with and an input from the youth, if we want to ensure that they are properly positioned to inherit and preserve the leadership and legacy of the Territory.

The National Youth Policy is a vital tool, which provides clear guidelines to all stakeholders, inclusive of the Government on the provision of opportunities for the youth to foster their positive development and empowerment at social, economic and political levels. The policy operates on a three-tiered principle: (I) youth are genuinely engaged; (II) youth are empowered; and (III) youth take action to impact programmes and policies for their personal growth and for national development. The youth therefore have the right to exploit all opportunities to achieve their full potential within the rights-based framework of this policy, and in so doing, have a reciprocal duty to be good citizens and contributing members of social change and development.

The Policy encourages the development of a stronger enabling environment for youth development and for the delivery of quality youth work, supports and services according to the diverse needs of youth. At the same time, it creates a bigger role for young people and for their active participation in activities and processes geared toward their own development and the development of a stable and strong Territory. Programmes and services are intended to empower them to be leaders, positive role models, contributors to the economy, and strong advocates of patriotism and national pride.

9.2 Action Plan and Implementation Pathways

A critical first step will be to develop an Action Plan to the Youth Policy. The Action Plan and Implementation Strategy will be the key document that breaks down the range of activities necessary to translate the National Youth Policy into feasible programmes and projects for the overall achievement of the policy’s goals. Specifically, it is intended to set measureable targets for the six strategy goals, objectives, activities and verifiable outcomes. Secondly, it will provide a clear-cut guide to how resources can be mobilised and optimised, show the critical inputs of the implementing partners, and as well as establish a time bound implementation strategy that strategically links youth development milestones to other global and national milestones.

In essence, the Action Plan is so that everyone will be accountable in a specific, measurable way for the actions and activities for policy implementation. Admittedly, a policy document can be daunting and there may be anxiety about where to start first to make a difference. The Action Plan removes the guesswork. It will allow the DYAS to prioritize strategic and operational actions given resource opportunities (partnerships, funding from other bodies, private sector support, national buzz-projects) and resource constraints (time, money, human capacity). It will establish what systems or services must be introduced or strengthened, the mechanisms by which Government departments and other service providers must coordinate their programmes, and allow partners to leverage their strengths and integrate resources to ensure there are real wins for young people over time.
As part of the Action Plan, a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be developed to:

- Provide a framework to assess the progress made towards achieving the goals identified.
- Assess the impact of programmes and supports on youth.
- Assess the role of youth in policy implementation.
- Create a youth-friendly short form Policy Document and other strategies to get young people aware and on board. Youth also need this information to be able to hold duty bearers accountable if progress is not taking place.
- Educate Members of Governments providing them with tailored inputs as to how they factor into its successful implementation and youth mainstreaming.

Report on overall progress.

Develop benchmarks for good practice in the different policy areas.

Having a NYP that no one knows about and cannot support is a waste of effort. There is an onus on the Ministry to ensure the document is highly published and popularised to enable all stakeholders to own it. Young people at all levels, in all circumstances must be able to understand what the Policy means to them and how they can be a part of the process. In particular, there should be an effort to:

- Create a youth-friendly short form Policy Document and other strategies to get young people aware and on board. Youth also need this information to be able to hold duty bearers accountable if progress is not taking place.
- Educate Members of Governments providing them with tailored inputs as to how they factor into its successful implementation and youth mainstreaming.

Finally, all parties must make the necessary commitments of people and resources to ensure that the Policy can be implemented in a real and tangible ways.

Young people at the centre of development

Youth Participation will remain critical so that young people take ownership of the policy implementation and monitoring processes. The establishment of the National Youth Council, Student Councils and other such structure will be expedited as support initiatives for this Policy.

This Policy makes the commitment of the Government to young people very clear. The vision is one that everyone should share: our young women and men at the centre of the Territory’s development; our youth with the competencies, and strengths and creativity that allow us to grow, improve and be more tolerant and inclusive as a society; our young people as the leaders and innovators who advance us to a level of development where all residents will be able to enjoy a good life and be fulfilled.
**Adult**
A person who has attained the age of 18 years.

**Asset-based development**
A principle and methodology that harnesses and uses the strengths and talents of young people as a means for social and national development. It considers that youth assets are the primary building blocks for genuine youth development.

**Authority**
Parents, Legal Guardians, Government/Political Leaders, Law Enforcement Officers, Religious Leaders, Educators, and Employers.

**Child Labour**
The employment of youth under legal employment age, where their employment interferes with school attendance (International Labour Organization)

**Competencies (youth)**
Youth possessing the following competencies are more resilient and less likely to engage in risky behaviours:
- Physical competence: Attitudes, behaviours and knowledge that will assure future health and well-being.
- Social competence: Responsiveness, empathy and caring; communication skills, a sense of humour, self-discipline, assertiveness and the ability to ask for support.
- Cognitive competence: Good reasoning, problem-solving and planning skills; the ability to think abstractly, reflectively and flexibly.
- Vocational competence: A sense of purpose and belief in the future; educational aspirations; adequate preparation for work and family life.
- Moral competence: The development of character, values, and personal responsibility; a desire to be ethical and to be involved in efforts that contribute to the common good.

**Cooperation**
The act of working together to achieve a common goal.

**Controlled Substance**
Is generally considered a drug or chemical whose manufacture, possession, or use is regulated by a government. Controlled substances are substances that are the subject of legislative control.

**Conventional Job**
Jobs that follow the accepted customs, properties and traditions, and also those that are readily classified or which are methodical, and carry a structured orderly approach to numbers and records.

**Crime**
An action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted and is punishable by law.

**Educator**
Anyone who has the responsibility of teaching and nurturing the Territory’s youth.

**Education**
The three generally accepted distinct types of education are:
- **Formal education** is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, educational system running from primary through to tertiary institutions.
- **Informal education** is the process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience, such as from family, friends, peer groups, the church, the media and other influences and factors in the person’s environment.
- **Non-formal education** is organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning group or audience with identifiable learning objectives.

**Empowerment**
A process of change by which individuals with little power gain the power and capacity to create choices in life, making informed decisions, take action and accept responsibility for their actions.

**Youth Empowerment: Definition and Context**
Commonwealth Youth Ministers and Heads of Government have endorsed the view that:
- Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions.
- Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions fall into four broad categories:
  1) an economic and social base.
  2) political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks.
  3) a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy.
  4) access to knowledge, information...
and skills, and a positive value system.

Equality
The notion of respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings. This includes non-discrimination on grounds of sex, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, origin, caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health or disability. Equality includes equal rights under the law, such as security, voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, property rights, and equal access to social goods and services. It includes concepts of health equity and economic equity and other social securities as well as equal opportunities and obligations, and so involves the whole of society.

Full Potential
One's ability to achieve the most that they are capable of.

Illegal Establishment
Any place, according to law, where undertakings that are prohibited are executed. (i.e., brothels, strip clubs etc.)

Inclusion
The act or practice of including all persons in a society's processes and practices. Giving members of society who may have been excluded or marginalized the opportunity to participate fully in decisions that affect them.

Mentally Disabled
A mental or physical disability, such as cerebral palsy or mental retardation, that is present during childhood, interferes with normal physical, intellectual, or emotional development, and usually lasts throughout life.

National Identity
A person's identity and sense of belonging to one state or to one nation, a feeling one shares with a group of people, regardless of one's citizenship status. National identity results directly from the presence of common elements and traditions in people's daily lives: national symbols, language, national colours, the nation's history, national consciousness, blood ties, culture, music, cuisine, dance, accents. The devoted love, support, and pride of belonging to one's country and the willingness to defend it, is national pride. The expression of one's national identity seen in a positive light is patriotism.

Opportunities
Chances for young people to learn how to act in the world around them, to explore, express, earn, belong, and influence. Opportunities give young people the chance to test ideas and behaviours, and to experiment with different roles. It is important to stress that young people, just like adults, learn best through active participation and that learning occurs in all types of settings and situations.

Paedophile
An adult or older adolescent experiencing a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to prepubescent children and may include persons convicted for such sexual abuse.

Quality services
Services in such areas as education, health, employment, and juvenile justice which exhibit:
1) relevant instruction and information. 2) challenging opportunities to express oneself, to contribute, to take on new roles, and be a part of the group. and 3) supportive adults and peers who provide respect, high standards and expectations, guidance and affirmation to young people.

Respect
A positive feeling of esteem, high regard, deference or understanding for a person or other entity accompanied by specific actions and conduct representative of that esteem, regard or mutual understanding. It is a manifestation of one's good conduct to every person.

Responsibility
The state or fact of being responsible, answerable, or accountable for something within one's power, control, or management.

Rights-based development
There are two stakeholder groups in rights-based development—the rights holders (who do not experience full rights) (young people of the Territory) and the duty bearers (the institutions obligated to fulfil the holders' rights). Rights-based approaches aim at strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and empower the rights holders. A rights-based approach to youth development involves the following elements:
• Express linkage to rights
• Accountability to all stakeholders
• Empowerment
• Participation and
• Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups.

School Aged
The Education Act defines a child of school age as one from age five years to sixteen years of age.

School Drop Out
Young person of school age who has ceased school attendance and has not graduated or acquired an educational certificate, under legal age. This may also refer to a NEET who is a young person who is “Not in Education, Employment, or Training”.

Sister Islands
By sister islands this Policy refers to the other inhabited Islands of the Virgin Islands. (i.e. Virgin Gorda, Anegada, Jost Van Dyke).

Social Ills
Any factor that depletes the social, political and economic wellbeing of the Territory and its citizens' enjoyment of peaceful and secure lives and livelihoods. Any factor identified by the Territory that affects
its social fabric and places an overall burden on the Territory’s resources.

**Supports**
Motivational, emotional and strategic supports to succeed in life. The supports can take many different forms, but they must be affirming, respectful, and continuous. Supports are powerful when offered by a variety of people, such as parents and close relatives, community social networks, teachers, youth workers, employers, health providers, and peers who are involved in the lives of young people.

**Stakeholder**
A stakeholder is an individual or entity that is involved directly or indirectly in the Territory Youth Policy. There are three types of stakeholders. **Primary** stakeholders are the people directly affected by the Policy, and its youth services, programmes, youth development or contributing to programmes, services and policies to influence youth development. **Secondary** stakeholders are people who support youth development but may not directly benefit from youth development services. **Tertiary** stakeholders are people who are removed from the day to day youth development field but can have a big impact on it, like the media, churches, banks, private sector sponsors and so on.

**Teenaged Parents**
Male and Female who became parents between the ages of 15 – 17 and attending school. N.B. Teen parents may or may not be attending school.

**Territory**
The islands of the Virgin Islands.

**The Community**
The area and/or surrounding where the youth of the Territory share and enjoy a common locale and activities.

**The Environment**
Everything around us in the community in which we live.

**Unemployment**
This term refers to the period in which a youth is not currently engaged in gainful employment but is actively seeking employment.

**Youth**
A youth is defined as any person resident in the Virgin Islands between the ages of 15 and 29 years. (Commonwealth Youth Programme, 1973). Youth’ is best understood as a transitional phase when a person moves from a time of dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood) (UN, 2005, p.23). Richard Curtain e.g. identifies four distinct aspects of this move (UN World Youth Report 2003).

**Youth Participation**
Youth participation is the process whereby young people influence, and share control and responsibility over decisions, plans and resources, which affect them. There is a distinction between three types of participation: **Social participation** relates to influencing societal organisations and their activities. **Political participation** relates to influencing local, regional, national and international policies and programmes. **Economic participation** relates to the extent to which young people participate in the economy and is linked to their quality of life and wellbeing.

**Youth Mainstreaming**
Youth mainstreaming is defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as the process of assessing the implications for young persons, of any planned action, including legislation, policies, programmes and projects, in all areas and at all levels. It means that there must be resources and supports committed across sectors to ensure youth are integrated fully in development. Youth mainstreaming is a strategy to make the concerns and experiences of young persons’ an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, in all political, economic and social spheres, so that they benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

Mainstreaming youth in society is about ensuring their full citizenship and enabling them to become integral in shaping the nature of the society through its different social formations, organisations and institutions. It includes a process to ensure that young people fulfil roles and responsibilities in the society and implies that resources must be identified across sectors.

**Youth Work**
Youth development work is a multi-disciplinary profession that engages young people and a range of other stakeholders to facilitate participation of youth in their personal, social and educational development and to empower them to play an assertive and constructive role in national development. (Commonwealth Youth Programme).
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APPENDIX 1

Simplified Version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Summary of Preamble

The General Assembly recognizes that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, human rights should be protected by the rule of law, friendly relations between nations must be fostered, the peoples of the UN have affirmed their faith in human rights, the dignity and the worth of the human person, the equal rights of men and women and are determined to promote social progress, better standards of life and larger freedom and have promised to promote human rights and a common understanding of these rights.

A summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. Everyone is free and we should all be treated in the same way.
2. Everyone is equal despite differences in skin colour, sex, religion, language for example.
3. Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.
4. No one has the right to treat you as a slave nor should you make anyone your slave.
5. No one has the right to hurt you or to torture you.
6. Everyone has the right to be treated equally by the law.
7. The law is the same for everyone, it should be applied in the same way to all.
8. Everyone has the right to ask for legal help when their rights are not respected.
9. No one has the right to imprison you unjustly or expel you from your own country.
10. Everyone has the right to a fair and public trial.
11. Everyone should be considered innocent until guilt is proved.
12. Everyone has the right to take for help if someone tries to harm you, but no one can enter your home, open your letters or bother you or your family without a good reason.
13. Everyone has the right to travel as they wish.
14. Everyone has the right to go to another country and ask for protection if they are being persecuted or are in danger of being persecuted.
15. Everyone has the right to belong to a country. No one has the right to prevent you from belonging to another country if you wish to.
16. Everyone has the right to marry and have a family.
17. Everyone has the right to own property and possessions.
18. Everyone has the right to practise and observe all aspects of their own religion and change their religion if they want to.
19. Everyone has the right to say what they think and to give and receive information.
20. Everyone has the right to take part in meetings and to join associations in a peaceful way.
21. Everyone has the right to help choose and take part in the government of their country.
22. Everyone has the right to social security and to opportunities to develop their skills.
23. Everyone has the right to work for a fair wage in a safe environment and to join a trade union.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.
25. Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living and medical help if they are ill.
26. Everyone has the right to go to school.
27. Everyone has the right to share in their community's cultural life.
28. Everyone must respect the 'social order' that is necessary for all these rights to be available.
29. Everyone must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.
30. No one has the right to take away any of the rights in this declaration.
APPENDIX 2

FRAMEWORK FOR ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL IN THE TERRITORY UNDER THE NATIONAL POLICY OF THE VI

What is a NYC?

Article 12 of the UN Human Rights Convention states that young people, under the age of 18, have the legal right to formally express their opinions and for those opinions to be taken seriously. The Territory is party to this Convention. Our Constitution also gives this right of expression to all young people in the Territory. There is a legal responsibility on the decision-makers to consult young people about the things that will affect them. Several development agencies and indeed the Human Rights Convention recommend that this be done through establishing youth based groups such as youth councils. For more information, please visit www.article12.com

Beneficiaries

Youth Councils enable Young People to:

• Voice their concerns
• Participate in local government
• Be empowered to take decisions and action to improve their local community.

Youth Councils enable districts/islands/groupings to:

• Truly represent the whole of the community they live in
• Become more vibrant, modern and dynamic
• Encourage young people to vote and take up political/ representational roles when they are old enough
• Improve services to young people

Youth Councils enables the Local Community to:

• Become safer and more sustainable
• More vibrant and progressive
• Improve services and be more representative

Constitution

The NYC shall establish its Constitution in order to enable it to work strategically for and with young people on a dedicated programme, and while engaging core partners and stakeholders that will support its work. The Constitution also importantly establishes a real set of structures that would enable the members to act as a properly functioning organisation with real power and responsibility over its own affairs.

The NYC Constitution should include:

• A mission statement and set of aims
• The youth council structure

• Members of the council (including the executive committee or any other committees and their roles)

• How the youth council will operate (including how often it will meet, etc.)

**Structures**

The NYC’s Annual Assembly will be its highest decision-making body and will take place once a year. As well as addressing financial, organisational and constitutional matters, the NYC will be the main body presiding over elections. The Executive of NYC will be the governing body of the Youth Council. It will be elected at the Annual Assembly. The Executive will ensure that the strategic plan and policies of the Council are implemented.

The Executive of NYC will be the governing body of the Youth Council. It will be elected at the Annual Assembly. The Executive will consist of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and the Chairpersons of the two Standing Conferences as well as ordinary members. Ordinary members will be elected through two separate Electoral systems reflecting the different backgrounds and objectives of individual member organisations.

A system of gender balancing will operate in Board elections. The Executive will be the decision-making body between assemblies. The Executive will meet at least six times a year. The NYC will establish a Secretariat and will retain the services of one permanent non-elected member to support the Executive in its functions throughout the year.

The NYC will establish guidelines to determine membership criteria, levels and entitlements of such membership, and any other issues necessary for its effective representation of the interests of the Territory’s youth. The NYC will receive an annual subvention from the government of the Territory to support the conduct of its approved programmes and will also mobilize separate resources to meet its needs.

**Strategic Foundation**

The relationship between the NYC and its member organisations will be central to its role in developing a strong youth-governance structure in the Territory. The NYC will be responsive to the needs of its members and work in partnership with them to ensure that requisite knowledge, expertise and experience of the collective is brought to the development of a strategic youth agenda for the Territory.

The NYC will embrace the genuine challenge of being the representative agent of voluntary youth-led organisations, and establish its Constitution to reflect this commitment and the principles of democratic leadership and governance.

• In advocating for the sector, NYC will play a leadership role in actively raising the profile and contribution of young people in the Territory and advocate for and create opportunities to enhance their social, economic and political participation.

• The NYC will ensure that all its members have the opportunity to participate fully in the organisation, to acquire skills and competencies that will benefit their respective organisations.

• The NYC will promote and encourage interdependent relationships and effective networking among its member organisations, and will establish relationships and networks with youth organisations in the Caribbean and globally in order to enhance its work and support for the Territory’s youth.
Values

• The National Youth Council endorses all the values and principles enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, the principles enshrined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the principles underpinning the Children and Young Persons Act 2005.

• The National Youth Council’s work is based on the core values of equity volunteerism, pro-activity, interdependence, quality and representation. Its work is fully youth-centered and rights-based, whereby the NYC believes that all young people have equal rights and responsibilities as valued citizens.

• Youth-Centered: The NYC believes that all youth are citizens in their own right. They are of equal value, regardless of race, ethnic background, political affiliation, origin, social status, gender, culture and religious belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, criminal conviction, recovering addiction or otherwise. Through the National Youth Policy, the NYC is charged with a duty to promote the best interests, well-being, democratic rights, active involvement and need for equal outcomes for the Territory’s youth to enable them to develop as individuals and as active citizens. The NYC is charged with the duties to:
  • Ensure that the best interests of young people are of paramount importance
  • Ensure that young people are aware of their human rights and their duties as responsible citizens
  • Challenge policies and practices, which infringe upon young people’s rights
  • Challenge and inform how young people are portrayed
  • Actively promote the participation of young people in decision-making

• Equity: is committed to the value of equity, both in terms of promoting the need for fairness of outcomes for young people, and ensuring that the Council’s own policies, procedures and practices are demonstrably equitable. To achieve this, the NYC will:
  • Seek to challenge all forms of discrimination against young people in shaping public policy
  • Seek to ensure that all its policies, procedures and practices are equitable in its own actions
  • Seek to ensure all future policies are based on full principles of equity and equality to ensure that no group has been unjustifiably discriminated against or marginalized.
  • Promote basic standards and guidelines for its memberships to ensure the actions of all youth-led organisations are governed by equity, inclusiveness and genuine participatory principles.

• Volunteerism: Volunteering and service are viewed as a vital dimension of democratic and social life, not merely to be valued for its resource input in limited service fields. Volunteerism benefits all parties and has been cited as good practice in developing social skills, teamwork and leadership in young people. Thus the NYC:
  • Believes that human solidarity and concern for the common good are created, articulated and sustained by volunteering
  • Is committed to promoting, sustaining and developing volunteering opportunities that resonate with young people, and which they can lead and own
  • Will ensure that quality standards exist to govern the ethical treatment of volunteers and other relevant stakeholders who are part of the volunteering system

• Pro-activity: The NYC aims to encourage coherent and innovative strategies that will enhance the quality of services to Virgin Islands youth. The NYC will do this by adopting a partnership approach to ensure that issues are addressed in a holistic manner and resources are used effectively and efficiently. The NYC thereby has the mandate to:
  • Promote innovation
  • Facilitate the development of partnerships, ensuring common ownership and problem-solving in all areas of work
  • Establish effective channels of communication with key partners
• **Interdependence:** The NYC will promote the interdependency of relationships and activity between and across the member organisations. Member organisations will be committed to acting in the collective good of young people and the youth sector. The NYC will:

  • Encourage the building of trust and mutually beneficial relationships with and between member organisations and between the youth work sector, the media, the private sector, and other sectors
  • Broker and promote collaboration
  • Ensure the promotion of a democratic culture in its internal and external operations
  • Facilitate the development of partnerships at a policy and strategy level, ensuring common ownership and problem-solving in all areas of its work
  • Establish regular channels of communication with key partners and identified stakeholders.

• **Quality and accountability:** The NYC will strive for quality in all its activities, demonstrating transparency in decision-making, responsiveness to emerging needs, openness to challenge and to ensuring that all resources are used effectively and efficiently. NYC will be at the forefront of developing new ‘measurements’ in youth work, which are in keeping with values-based leadership, integrity and professionalism in all its interactions with its internal and external stakeholders.

• **Representation:** In fulfilling its functions as a membership-led democratically-elected and governed youth organisation, supremacy will be given to representing interests as determined and defined by the voluntary youth-led organisations in membership of NYC. As such, the NYC will:

  • Be the recognized and approved youth body to represent the Territory’s youth and engage with the government, the private sector, diverse stakeholders in the Territory, regional and global youth networks, and the international community on the issues that impact young people
  • Be the basis for deciding the priority interests and platforms of youth of the Territory, and the manner in which such interests are best progressed and
  • Exercise its mandate to advocate for speak and act inclusively in the interests of its member organisations.