



The Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023

A coordinated approach to youth-centred
development in the Pacific

Secretariat of the Pacific Community





Cover photo: Students in Tailevu, Fiji, World Water Day, 2014.



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**A coordinated approach to youth-centred
development in the Pacific**

Prepared by the Social Development Division of the
Secretariat of the Pacific Community



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Acknowledgements

The Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF) 2014–2023 is a collaborative effort by youth stakeholders, consisting of regional and national development agencies, youth networks, and governments and administrations. The process of development has been guided by a steering committee with representatives from the Commonwealth Youth Programme, International Labour Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Oceania Football Confederation, Pacific Youth Council, the University of the South Pacific, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Other stakeholders with an interest in PYDF outcome areas have contributed to country consultations and the shaping of implementation strategies.

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Foreword

The Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023 represents an important milestone for the Pacific region. It responds to the calls from young people, development partners and governments for greater support for the implementation of countries' youth policies, and to address barriers to progress. In 2013 Pacific ministers for youth endorsed four outcome areas, as set out in this framework, as well as key steps for their implementation. The implementation strategies that have since been developed take into account both the capacities of governments and their existing collaborations with development partners and youth representative structures.

The framework aims to be a catalyst for investment in youth, rather than a regional youth programme. It aims to facilitate shared decision-making based on evidence and contributions from relevant communities of practice, and to support Pacific Island countries and territories in implementing their development objectives for youth. The framework must strengthen the way we collect data to understand the circumstances of youth in the Pacific, and it must position youth at the forefront of this movement to ensure that they have an opportunity to influence decisions that affect them. Furthermore, with young people at the helm of these important discussions, we can nurture partnerships between youth, governments, administrations and development partners that seek all perspectives and work to meet development challenges in the best interests of youth and Pacific communities.

The framework, and its responsibilities for regional coordination, is shared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Youth Council. While SPC has led the process of development thus far, the Pacific Youth Council is the regional body representing 10 national youth council bodies in the Pacific, which, in turn, represent provincial youth councils in member countries. So there is a unique opportunity for development agencies and governments to engage young people in development and to create space for young people to exercise leadership in contributing to the framework.

Together, we commit to embracing the framework's objectives to engage Pacific youth in leading change towards the framework's vision: **A sustainable Pacific where all young people are safe, respected, empowered and resilient.**

Dr Colin Tukuitonga

Director-General
Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Mr 'Alaipuke Esau

Chair of Executive Board
Pacific Youth Council



Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| AIDS | acquired immune deficiency syndrome |
| HIV | human immunodeficiency virus |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| LGBT | lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender |
| NCD | non-communicable disease |
| NEET | young people who are not in education, employment or training |
| PICT | Pacific Island countries and territories |
| PRYTT | Pacific Regional Youth Think Tank |
| PYC | Pacific Youth Council |
| PYDF | Pacific Youth Development Framework |
| SPC | Secretariat of the Pacific Community |

Rationale

The Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF) recognises and responds to official acknowledgements made by Pacific Island leaders and ministers¹ who have convened at several recent high-level regional forums and endorsed the position of youth and the need for a regional framework as a priority in the regional development agenda (see Annex 1 for relevant excerpts). Specifically, Pacific ministers of youth and sports have endorsed the proposed shape and process of the PYDF at the Third Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Youth and Sport, held in New Caledonia on 7 December 2013².

The proclamations are based on a recognition and understanding of the situation of youth in the Pacific and the need for a coordinated approach to promote priority youth issues with greater emphasis in regional and national development agendas. More than half of the region's population of 10 million, across 22 countries and territories, is under the age of 25. This segment of the population is growing fast, placing huge and increasing demographic pressures on basic resources and core services. Average youth unemployment rates in the Pacific are 23%³ compared with a global average of 12.6%⁴. Despite the substantial size of the youth population in the region and the significance of issues such as youth employment and young people's sexual and reproductive health, there remains a lack of targeted investment required to meet the needs of all young people in the Pacific. The resulting impact has been minimal change in the overall status of youth since 2005–2011⁵.

A concerning and significant proportion of the youth population is marginalised from mainstream development efforts, which has created development burden and hindered the region's progress. Key youth populations marginalised from mainstream development efforts include:

- young people who are not in education, employment and training;
- young women;
- rural youth;
- young people with disabilities;
- youth who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

With little systematic engagement of youth and a marginalisation of key youth populations, youth disenfranchisement can lead to many negative consequences⁶. Increased targeted

¹ *Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, 2012; Leaders' Communiqué, Cook Islands 2012; Eighth Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, 2013; Final Communiqué, Papua New Guinea, 2013.*

² *Third Meeting of the Pacific Ministers of Youth and Sport, 2013. Communiqué. New Caledonia, 2013.*

³ <http://www.spc.int/nmdi/youth>

⁴ *International Labour Organization. 2013. Global employment trends for youth 2013. A generation at risk. Geneva: International Labour Office.*

⁵ *United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles. United Nations Children's Fund – Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community*

⁶ *Noble C. and Pereira N. 2011. Urban youth in the Pacific: Increasing resilience and reducing risk for involvement in crime and violence. United Nations Development Programme – Pacific Centre. 2011. Study prepared for the Forum Regional Security Council.*



investment in these key youth populations to address priority youth development issues will benefit Pacific communities as a whole. Such investment is vital for sustainable development and is shown to have greater economic benefit⁷.

The Review of the Pacific Youth Strategy (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2010), the State of Pacific Youth Report (United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2011) and the Urban Youth Report 2011 (United Nations Development Programme 2011) are key documents that have informed the development of the PYDF. The State of Pacific Youth Report 2011, launched at the Pacific Islands Leaders' Forum in Auckland 2011, determined that very little change had occurred since 2005. It noted that while some young people had improved education and access to improved health and other services, of concern was a significantly sized population of youth who remained, due to various vulnerabilities and discriminations, lacking in access to these services. For these young people, their situation was deemed more critical than the baseline in 2005, due to the compounding pressures of the global economic crisis. The report stated rather confrontationally, 'Without major investment in young people, they may well flounder as a generation, undermining the capacity of Pacific Island countries and territories to escape aid dependence and develop economically⁸.' Youth stakeholders have recognised that a change to the way the region addresses youth is urgently required.

Improved statistical data and analysis on youth is critical to identify gaps and provide evidence to guide investments — many Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) do not measure youth unemployment with international standards, which vastly underestimates the real situation. Much census and national survey data are not analysed to determine youth profiles. Without hard evidence, 'youth' is still considered a 'soft' issue.

Youth issues are often treated as stand-alone issues, unconnected to other issues, and often without addressing root causes. As both a cross-cutting and a multi-sectoral issue, coordination is essential to ensure that all aspects of youth development are addressed and monitored across sectors and to bring a focus on youth and youth engagement to new sectors. National youth policies need to be implemented across a range of ministries and need high-level commitment from core ministries.

A key reason that has been attributed to previous lack of implementation is the lack of commitment and engagement of partners, governments and young people. Without a regular high-level forum for making decisions about youth, there is little development accountability to deliver on youth. The review of the previous strategy recommended the establishment of a strong mechanism for regional cooperation and regular cross-government progress reporting. In a resource-scarce environment, regional coordination is important to avoid duplication of efforts and to work collaboratively, sharing resources more equitably to meet resource gaps.

⁷ United Nations Population Fund. 2015. *The State of World Population 2014*. New York: United Nations Population Fund.

⁸ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*, p. 5. United Nations Children's Fund – Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



Background

The predecessor to the PYDF was the Pacific Youth Strategy 2005–2010. It featured seven components designed to produce positive outcomes for young people, including accessing integrated education, nurturing sustainable livelihoods, promoting healthy lifestyles, and researching information and data on youth. The end review of its implementation and effectiveness in 2011 highlighted significant challenges that had hindered its success.

The review of the Pacific Youth Strategy 2005–2010 revealed a low uptake from countries and territories; few youth policies had made any reference to the regional strategy. Implementation of national youth policies was generally still slow and under-resourced. National stakeholders had been challenged by needing to reflect alignment to the regional strategy in their youth policies, while also needing to represent local issues and responses. The State of Pacific Youth Report 2011, as mentioned above, revealed very little change in the situation of youth since 2005. It recommended a greater focus in three areas:

1. **improving governance for youth** — coordinating regional strategies for scaling up youth programs targeted at key populations;
2. **improving data collection and analysis of youth** — monitoring of established youth measures; and
3. **mobilising resources for youth** — making resources available to support youth programming.

These two key documents provided the basis for regional and development agencies, governments and administrations, and young people to reconsider the purpose of regional strategic frameworks, if these were to lead to change and development progress, inclusive of young people. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), responsible for developing the regional strategy, convened all stakeholders to discuss the issue of how previous strategies had not been implemented as expected, and attempted to resolve the question of how countries, development agencies and young people could create real change in the lives of young Pacific Islanders.

Eighteen months of rigorous consultation and a participatory process of strategic development ensued. Stakeholders determined that an effective regional strategic framework was indeed needed, despite the lack of success with the previous one. A regional framework needed to support countries to implement their own youth policies rather than enforce alignment with the regional framework, and needed to address the specific barriers to implementation. In doing so, it must: 1) provide guidance on how to measure and monitor the situation of youth; 2) engage and have commitment from development agencies and governments and administrations; 3) reach the right youth (i.e. youth who are missing out on mainstream development efforts); and 4) be informed by the voices of youth throughout its process.

During this time, a PYDF Steering Committee, comprising representatives from development agencies and youth networks, provided oversight and guidance to the development of the framework and other strategic initiatives aimed at nurturing an enabling environment. Youth stakeholders worked in solidarity to promote regional commitment towards youth and the need for a regional framework. Most notably, a youth-led advocacy initiative on youth employment succeeded in reaching Pacific Island Forum Leaders' recognition and



commitment to youth initiatives in 2011⁹. Forum Leaders welcomed the PYDF development in 2012, indicating a high level of expectation and regional significance to youth¹⁰.

Common youth policy components from PICTs were compiled before young people determined the four top priorities that now feature in the PYDF. A policy paper outlining the four priority areas and the intentions of the framework was presented to Pacific ministers for youth in December 2013. Ministers endorsed the framework and acknowledged the key role of SPC in coordinating the delivery of technical assistance within the scope of the framework.

Barriers to implementation were discussed in depth in 2014 as youth stakeholders strategised on how to make the framework work, without the availability of sufficient and specific funds for youth, and with the issue of youth often being sidelined in favour of better resourced development issues, and issues with clearer evidence bases. Youth stakeholders recognised the absence of critical drivers for investment, including development accountability, engagement of beneficiaries and stakeholders, statistical and analytical evidence, and strategic information to inform decision-making for policy and programming. The strategic approaches have been designed to address these.

⁹ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2011. *Leaders' Communiqué, Auckland, New Zealand 2011*.

¹⁰ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2011. *Leaders' Communiqué, Cook Islands 2012*.



Strategic approaches

The PYDF's strategic approaches mark a significant change to the way youth issues have previously been addressed in the region. Learning from the reviews of the last two regional youth strategies has led to a clearer articulation of where challenges and opportunities lie. Youth stakeholders have agreed on a set of principles that have shaped the development of a pragmatic and strategic approach to address barriers to implementation, maximise available resources for youth, mobilise new resources for youth and achieve clear and lasting improvements in development outcomes for young Pacific Islanders.

The strategic approaches aim to:

- Strengthen development accountability by:
 - engaging beneficiaries (i.e. young people) to increase duty-bearer responsiveness, and
 - facilitating dialogue in high-level forums to discuss youth issues and increase commitment to youth-focused policies and programmes across development sectors;
- Strengthen the evidence base by:
 - establishing a regional set of youth indicators and supporting countries to incorporate into national surveillance tools, and
 - mapping programmes to identify reach (of marginalised populations) and gaps;
- Improving development effectiveness by:
 - engaging development partners and youth stakeholders to improve coordination of technical and development assistance to address gaps, and
 - targeting investment towards key populations of more marginalised youth from mainstream development efforts;
- Utilise strategic communication as a cross-cutting function to:
 - apply evidence to formulate clearly articulated messages for high-level audiences,
 - keep all stakeholders informed and engaged in dialogue for decision-making, and
 - strengthen networks of youth and stakeholders across the region.

Key features of the strategic approaches are elaborated on below.

An inclusive rights-based approach to position youth as equal partners

Effective participation is integral to a rights-based framework and to positive youth development¹¹. Effective youth participation involves young people in governance,

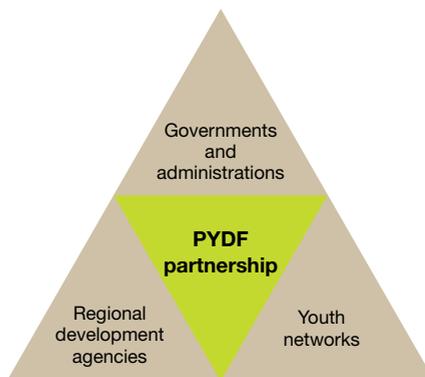
¹¹ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children's Fund – Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



management, design and delivery of initiatives in a way that genuinely gives young people decision-making power. It is based on an agenda that is jointly set between young people and adults, and avoids tokenism. Effective youth participation is about a partnership where all parties have the mandate to express their views and make decisions. The quality and effectiveness of participation activities are at least as important as the amount of activity. Effective youth participation takes time, resources and skill.

This regional youth framework features a shared management of the regional coordination role with young people. This is realised through the partnership between SPC and the Pacific Youth Council (PYC). Through the PYC, national youth councils will work with development agencies to provide capacity building at the national and provincial level to enhance the influence of young people.

In a resource-scarce environment, youth stakeholders need to rely on advocacy efforts to call for increased resources. Development accountability can be strengthened when direct beneficiaries are involved in a central role, as development participants. The PYDF partnership exercises a participatory decision-making model, moving away from the ministerial meeting model, which focuses primarily on governments, with development partners in advocacy roles, and young people delegated to subordinate positions. Rather, it apportions equal voice to the three stakeholders, recognising the valued roles and responsibilities of each, and is focused on dialogue, sharing information and understanding all positions as ‘communities of practice’. All three stakeholders contribute information and receive information as well as a consolidated analysis of data and analysis for their own country and the region. PYDF partnership dialogues can be brought to various forums, both online and physically in the spaces of other youth-relevant agendas.



A targeted approach to complement and enhance mainstream efforts

Not all young people within any one country are the same in terms of their potential to make a successful youth transition. Their opportunities differ according to their household assets, the type and quality of services they have and have had access to, whether they are male or female, where they live, what education level they have, what ethnic or religious group they belong to, and how healthy they are.

A concerning and significant proportion of the Pacific youth population is marginalised from mainstream and national development efforts, creating development burden, and hindering the region’s progress. For example, in Kiribati 58% of young men aged 20–24 years are not engaged in productive activities, 44% in Marshall Islands and 46% in Samoa. These young people have often been defined as ‘NEET’ youth – young people who are not in



education, employment or training¹². Other key populations include young people who are not in education, employment and training; young women and young people discriminated against because of their sexuality; rural youth; and young people living with disabilities. Annex 2 provides more detail on key populations of youth that the PYDF is inclusive of. While there have been some successful targeted youth initiatives, few have been taken to scale to address the demand that exists. Greater impact will take place with sharper targeting and inclusion of key populations of young people.

A targeted approach will include a focus on networking – linking groups of young people representing key populations to national youth structures and to development opportunities, development partners and governments and/or administrations. Such an approach will also provide an opportunity for young people from key youth populations to lead their own development initiatives.

An evidence-based approach to provide incentives to increase and focus investments in youth development

There are major gaps in the available data on young people in the Pacific, posing one of the biggest challenges to promoting their rights. Several priority youth issues (e.g. youth employment) are not measured to international standards. Census and national survey data are conducted over long cycles, and data is often not analysed to determine youth profiles. The lack of data equates to a lack of evidence that would provide the incentive to invest. As a result, important youth issues can sometimes be sidelined in favour of issues with clearer evidence bases. Evidence of the youth situation is essential for future programming and strategic development. Government and development partner stakeholders have identified the need for and requested guidance on how to measure and monitor the situation of youth.

Youth indicators are needed to identify gaps and track progress in services for young people. Information needs to be available by sex, five-year age groups, geographic location and household asset base. In addition, information is needed on the nature and level of young people's participation in community activities and the political process. Until the situation can be accurately presented with statistical or other evidence, it will remain difficult to attract resources to these important areas that need investment.

In addition, periodic mapping of programme coverage to assess reach (to key populations) and identify gaps will provide key information to improve delivery and coordination of technical assistance and will support countries in their bilateral and multilateral relationships.

An integrated approach to introduce youth objectives across sectors

Youth issues are often treated as stand-alone issues, unconnected to other issues, and often without addressing root causes. Youth issues are rarely single-sector issues; rather, they are most often about jobs and industries, social and natural environments, health systems, education systems, and national security. It is more cost-effective to bring a youth focus to sectors where there are already resources, expertise and programming traction, rather than setting up stand-alone programmes outside of these sectors. In addition, the sheer scale

¹² See 'Note' in Annex 2 referring to the intention to develop a new term to use instead of NEET. This term should reflect youth capacities and potential in alignment with a positive youth development approach.



of need demands increased integration across development agendas. A youth-integrated approach enhances results in various sectors by ensuring that programme outcomes have both economic and social outcomes that benefit young people and communities as a whole.

The PYDF 2014–2023 comprises four priorities for development outcomes for youth across development sectors. These are common to national youth policies across the region and have been developed and prioritised by young people. These work towards a common vision, which is ‘a sustainable Pacific where all young people are safe, respected, empowered and resilient’. These outcomes are relevant to education sectors, the private sector, industry sectors, health sectors, and other sectors related to natural resource management, climate change and the environment. The PYDF contributing outcomes in each of these priority areas provide a strategic direction to guide where and how youth investment across several sectors can be made for the best impact.

As both a cross-cutting and a multi-sectoral issue, the coordination of youth issues is essential to ensure that all aspects of youth development are addressed and monitored across sectors, and to bring youth focus and engagement to new sectors. High-level commitment is required to authorise a holistic approach across a range of sectors. National youth policies require this commitment from core ministries to support implementation across a range of ministries. As such, integration – or mainstreaming – is an approach that needs to be supported at both the regional and national level. Improved coordination, mapping and tracking development support to youth issues across sectors supports and improves development effectiveness.



Vision



Young people have defined this statement that describes the Pacific they would like for young people as:

A sustainable Pacific where all young people are safe, respected, empowered and resilient



Mission



The mission of the PYDF is to increase investments in youth across development sectors by strengthening development accountability, the evidence base and improving development effectiveness through engagement, coordination and strategic communication between all youth stakeholders, including key populations of young people.



Principles



In developing relevant initiatives in countries, the following eight principles, defined by young people, will be applied to guide how to work towards positive youth development in the Pacific.

1. Strength-based

All initiatives should shift the mind-set away from problem or deficit-focused approaches towards a strength-based approach that enhances Pacific identity (language, culture, religion, arts, traditional practices).

2. Evidence-based

All initiatives should be informed by evidence to ensure that interventions are of the scale required, and that implementation is monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and impact. Young people should be provided with information to equip them to make decisions.



3. Ownership and active participation

Participation of young people, especially target groups of youth, is key to ensuring that development initiatives respond to their specific needs, and that they own and are positively engaged in the activities that affect them in their key social environments (family, friends and peers, school and work, community) leading to positive connections and quality relationships.

4. Partnering and cooperation

All initiatives should adopt effective and trusting partnerships between young people and their communities, institutions, agencies and governments to facilitate integrated multisectoral and multilevel commitment and effort towards common goals.

5. Sustainability

All initiatives should integrate environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions towards responsible management of marine and land resources, and enhanced resilience of present and future generations of Pacific Islanders.

6. Diversity and inclusiveness

Acknowledge and respect the diverse needs and circumstances of young people by facilitating inclusive mechanisms and providing targeted responses for their specific challenges.

7. Rights-based approach

The principles of human rights provide the overall framework that includes a universal approach to support governments to deliver effective services for all young people and provide space for them to claim their rights to equitable development.

8. Innovation

Initiatives require the exploration of creative and independent paths of thinking, planning, communicating and implementing in order to change the way we do business with and for young people, to improve outcomes for youth in the Pacific.



Development outcomes for youth



The PYDF 2014–2023 comprises four priority outcome areas that have been determined by young people.

1. More young people secure decent employment

- a. Young people have increased access to relevant education and training in formal and vocational sectors.
- b. More young people are involved in entrepreneurship.
- c. Youth-friendly employment services are established to connect young people to employment opportunities.

2. Young people's health status is improved

- a. Young people's mental health and wellbeing is improved.
- b. Young people's sexual and reproductive health is improved.
- c. Young people's nutrition and physical activity is improved.

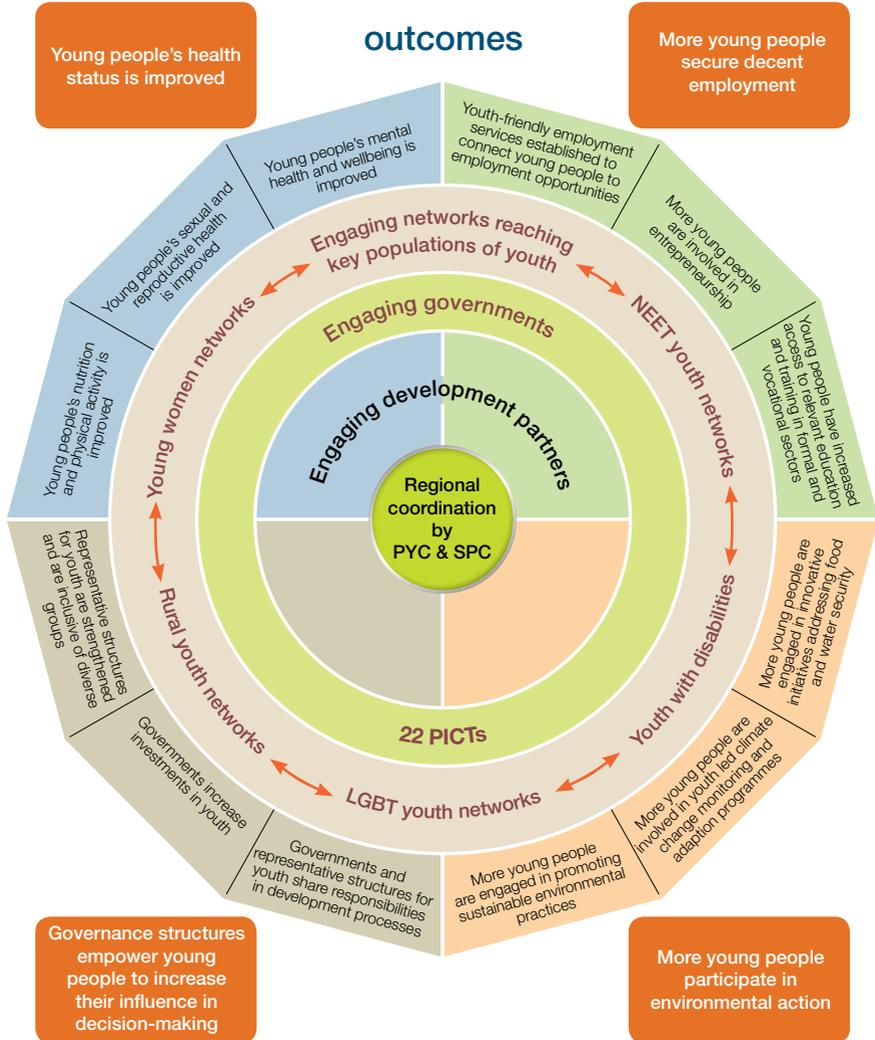


3. Governance structures empower young people to increase their influence in decision-making processes

- a. Representative structures for youth are strengthened and are inclusive of diverse groups.
- b. Governments increase their investments in youth.
- c. Governments and representative structures for youth share responsibilities in development processes.

4. More young people participate in environmental action

- a. More young people are engaged in innovative initiatives that address food and water security.
- b. More young people are involved in youth-led climate change monitoring and adaptation programmes.
- c. More young people are engaged in promoting sustainable environmental practices.



- LGBT lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
- NEET young people who are not in education, employment or training
- PICT Pacific Island countries and territories
- PYC Pacific Youth Council
- SPC Secretariat of the Pacific Community



Strategic approaches



1. An inclusive rights-based approach to position youth as equal partners

- o Position youth as drivers of the PYDF, working in partnership with SPC to fulfill the regional coordination role.
- o Support national youth councils or other representative youth structure to facilitate networking and inclusion of key populations of youth in development processes.
- o Support young people to lead their own initiatives at the national and local level.
- o Include youth as equal stakeholders in development dialogues and decision-making forums.



2. A targeted approach to complement and enhance mainstream efforts

- o Support and facilitate networking to connect key populations of youth to relevant forums, to youth stakeholders, and to relevant information to support youth investment.
- o Assess implementation reach of development assistance to determine which populations of youth are benefiting and which are marginalised from development efforts.

3. An evidence-based approach to provide incentives to increase and focus investments in youth development

- o Determine a standard set of youth indicators to analyse the situation of youth through routine surveillance.
- o Populate indicator framework to establish baseline of regional youth data and conduct mid-term and end-term evaluations.
- o Track progress of development assistance at regular intervals.

4. An integrated approach to introduce youth objectives across sectors

- o Support integrated implementation in priority areas that have already been developed strategically (e.g. youth employment, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing, youth and agriculture, youth participation, youth and climate change).
- o Develop strategic guidance across PYDF priority areas, particularly for mental health, youth and non-communicable diseases, and youth engagement in the environment.
- o Map and track development assistance and resource needs to improve distribution of technical assistance across sectors and PYDF priority areas.



PYDF priority outcome areas



Four core outcomes have been determined by young people as being the highest priority with the largest potential for positive impact. These describe the overarching directions for positive Pacific Island youth development. Three contributing outcomes feed into each of the four core outcomes. The logic is that the combined effect of achieving the contributing outcomes will lead to the overall outcome being achieved.



Outcome 1: More young people have secured decent employment

More young people have secured decent employment

Young people have increased access to relevant education and training in formal and vocational sectors

More young people are involved in entrepreneurship

Youth -friendly employment services are established to connect young people to employment opportunities

Meaningful education and employment are significant for young people because they increase the life chances of youth, and enable them to contribute to their families and communities and address intergenerational disadvantages. It is known that employed and productive young people show a gradual willingness to contribute to civic and social cohesion.

The situation

The global youth unemployment rate, estimated at 12.7%¹³ in 2015, has increased to a level that is difficult for governments to adequately respond to, creating serious disadvantages for young people and resulting in long-term structural problems for societies. Some 73 million young people worldwide are estimated to be unemployed in 2013. In the Pacific, the youth unemployment rate stands at an alarming 23%¹⁴ and young people are over five times less likely to secure jobs than older workers¹⁵. National youth unemployment rates range from 63.7% in Tuvalu, 58.5% in the Marshall Islands and 8.9% in Vanuatu¹⁶. While some of the high rates reflect employment on the ground, care is advised in interpreting subregional differences because some intercountry and regional differences are also due to the use of different measures of employment and unemployment¹⁷. Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and Federated States of Micronesia all applied the same employment measure that was proposed by SPC, which is based on 2012 International Labour Organization 2012 standards. Applying this definition in other Pacific Island countries would give higher total unemployment rates.

¹³ http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/WCMS_212431/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁴ <http://www.spc.int/nmdi/youth>

¹⁵ International Labour Organization. 2013. *Global employment trends for youth 2013*. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_212423.pdf

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ Haberkorn G. 2013. *Disentangling Pacific Island employment myths*. 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. 2-11 October, Geneva.



The situation is compounded by a significant ‘youth bulge’, which cannot be absorbed by existing labour markets and job creation strategies. The 15–24 age category makes up half of the unemployed population in the region¹⁸. In Fiji alone, 25,529 young people registered with the National Employment Centre in 2012 in the hope of securing some form of employment¹⁹.

Many unemployed young people are also unproductive, meaning that they are not engaged in a paid or unpaid activity that contributes to their personal livelihood, or that of their family and community as a whole. The United Nations Children’s Fund and SPC State of Pacific Youth Report 2011 highlighted that the percentages of young men aged 20–24 who are not engaged in productive activities is quite alarming in Kiribati (58%), Marshall Islands (44%) and Samoa (46%). In addition, the State of Pacific Youth Report goes on to state that between a quarter and more than half the men in the 25–29 age group in Kiribati (57%), Samoa (44%), Marshall Islands (35%) and Solomon Islands (26%) are not employed²⁰.

The unemployment rate for young women in every Pacific Island country and territory is higher than that of young men. They are often engaged, however, in child care, assisting with parenting and in domestic work. This contribution needs to be acknowledged. Overall, current statistics do not offer a realistic representation of the unemployment situation because they only count young people who are ‘looking for work’ in the formal sector.

The state of youth education in the Pacific varies according to factors such as location, gender and the quality of education delivery and infrastructure. Not all young people between the ages of 15 and 19 are in school. However, more young people, especially young women, are remaining in school longer, meaning that they are attaining more formal education than their older peers. Figures from 2009 show that in Samoa, 61% of women aged 20–24 have completed secondary education or higher compared with 47% of women aged 25–29²¹. A similar trend is observed in Kiribati, perhaps the result of subsidised educational costs and changing perceptions towards the education of female children and young women.

Few young people access tertiary education because of the low rates of post-high school completions. More young men compared than young women access tertiary education in the Pacific. Palau recorded the highest tertiary participation rate (40%) in 2000, with Fiji and the Marshall Islands experiencing significantly lower rates at 15% and 17% percent, respectively. Tonga and Vanuatu experience even lower tertiary participation rates of 6% and 5% percent, respectively.

The education sector is academically inclined, driven by personal and formal sector demands. Consequently, there is less emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Part of this is related to the perception of TVET as an option for those that have discontinued school.

Given the generally poor performance of economic development in the Pacific and the lack of employment creation, recent initiatives exploring self-employment and entrepreneurship strategies are providing options for more young people. For example, the Kiribati Institute of Technology is currently working in partnership with the International Labour Organization

¹⁸ International Labour Organization, n.d. *Draft Pacific youth employment strategy (Pacific YES)*. Suva, Fiji: International Labour Organisation.

¹⁹ Swami N. 2012. *Centre registers 25,529 youths*. Accessed 7 November 2012 at: www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=211965

²⁰ United Nations Children’s Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The State of Pacific Youth Report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children’s Fund – Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community

²¹ Ibid



(ILO) and the Australian Agency for International Development-funded TVET Sector Strengthening Project to introduce the Know About Business (KAB) programme and establish a business incubator. In addition, the Community Continuing Education Centre of the University of the South Pacific (USP) is in discussion with ILO to identify opportunities to deliver entrepreneurship education at USP and in informal communities in the Pacific.

There has also been some progress in the secondary schools. Since 2008, ILO's KAB Programme has reached approximately 29,000 students in secondary and vocational schools in Papua New Guinea. In Fiji, KAB is expected to reach 2,000 young people in 20 schools in Fiji in the first phase (2013–2014). In addition, since 2008, the Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) has implemented the business training programme in 15 secondary schools in the capital, accounting for approximately 1,200 students and has assisted about 80–100 students with start-up capital.

Challenges to current employment and education policies and programmes exist, and some of these include the following:

- poor emphasis placed on school-to-work and home-to-work transitions;
- lack of educational and training opportunities necessary for the workplace;
- lack of employment creation, which results in limited employment opportunities, particularly in the formal sector, and competition for the limited places available;
- obstacles associated with the promotion of small enterprise development as a solution to unemployment (i.e. personal attributes necessary for small business success do not usually align with young people's priorities and their developmental and contextual experiences);
- lack of data on youth labour market participation, including populations of youth who are neither in the labour force nor in education or training;
- little effort to showcase successful models of youth entrepreneurship and development;
- lack of investment focus in the formal sector and too much focus on jobs for young people without tertiary qualifications;
- young women continue to be under represented in post high school education in some countries;
- inadequate educational facilities — access to quality education and teaching standards is weakest in rural areas and outer islands of Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Vanuatu²²;
- education curriculum is often not geared for the realities of rural life;
- poor basic literacy and numeracy skills among those who discontinue school;
- school leavers are not prepared for the realities of a limited job market;
- societal expectations that young people should be educated in schools;
- very few second-chance training opportunities exist for those who discontinue school; and
- emphasis on the management and governance systems of the education sector rather than on student retention or teacher education.

²² Donnelly J. and Jiwonji A. 2010. *Urbanization and children in the Pacific*. Suva, Fiji: United Nations Children's Fund – Pacific, Policy, Advocacy, Planning and Evaluation Programme.



The policy framework

Youth unemployment is an enduring challenge for Pacific Island countries. The commitment to employment, which directly or indirectly implicates young people, is covered by international mandates such as the 1964 Employment Policy Convention (No. 122), which stipulates that 'each Member shall declare and pursue, as a major goal, an active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment'²³. This is further supported by resolutions concerning youth employment made at the 2005 and 2012 International Labour Conference (ILO 93rd and 101st sessions). The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women offers the framework for instituting women's equal opportunity in the workplace, and mandates legislative reforms that will accord women full dignity and worth. At the regional level, the urgency to promote youth employment is articulated in the Pacific Declaration on Investing in Youth Employment²⁴ (2011) and the forthcoming Pacific Youth Employment Strategy.

Promoting access and opportunities for education is a priority for Pacific Island countries and many national budgets recognise this concern. The Pacific Education Development Framework 2009–2015²⁵, aims to better provide Pacific peoples' access to economic opportunities through skills and prospects for mobility. The Pacific Education Development Framework makes special mention of the need to develop a holistic approach to young people's education.

²³ International Labour Organization. 2005. *Resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 93rd Session*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

²⁴ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/71076964/The-Pacific-Declaration-on-Investing-in-Youth-Employment>

²⁵ <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific%20Education%20Development%20Framework%202009-2015.pdf>



Outcome 2: Young people's health and wellbeing status is improved

Young people's health and wellbeing status is improved

Young people's
mental health and
wellbeing is
improved

Young people's
sexual and
reproductive health
is improved

Young people's
nutrition and physical
activity is improved

Youth health is significant because the region has a very young population. Healthy young people will contribute to healthy communities, productive nations and the region as a whole. The health of young people impacts on their participation in other sectors such as education, employment, agriculture and sports.

The situation

Many major health issues are experienced by young people in the Pacific. These include poor mental, sexual, reproductive health and issues affecting young mothers. Lifestyle diseases such as obesity and diabetes appear to be increasing among young people in urban areas as a result of changing dietary patterns and low levels of physical activity. Of the population of young people, marginalized young people are most likely to engage in risky behaviour such as drug and alcohol misuse and sex work. Many Pacific Island young people report having poor access to appropriate health services.

The State of Pacific Youth report²⁶ highlighted four health issues shared by many young people in the region.

1. Suicide and attempted suicide. In the Cook Islands, Samoa and Fiji, suicide and attempted suicide are linked to young people having difficulty managing their emotions related to experiences of loss in personal relationships, shame as a result of failure, and anger that results from adult and youth misunderstandings. Despite the difficulty in attaining reliable data, research with students in the North Pacific in 2009 revealed that 'over one in four respondents in the four countries said they had attempted suicide in the past 12 months'. On a global basis, suicides are assumed to be 22% under-reported and this is undoubtedly the case for PICT²⁷. In Fiji, suicide

²⁶ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children's Fund –Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

²⁷ World Health Organization. 2012. *Seoul forum on suicide prevention in the western Pacific region: Meeting report*. World Health Organization, 13-14 September 2012.



outnumbers deaths by drowning and other injury-related accidents²⁸. Depression-related suicide is noted as the main cause of death among young people. In the first six months of 2010, there were 15 suicides and 44 attempted suicides by young people below the age of 25²⁹.

2. Alcohol and drug misuse. Alcohol consumption by Pacific Island young people, particularly those below the legal drinking age is alarming. Some reasons for this include the easy availability of alcohol, unregulated alcohol laws and peer pressure. About 25% of high school students involved in a survey in American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Marshall Islands and Palau revealed having had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row over 30 days. A study in Fiji also revealed the seriousness of binge drinking, 'about three in five young people reported having had five or more alcoholic drinks in one session'³⁰. Fewer young people use and abuse drugs than they do alcohol. Anecdotal evidence shows that drug use, particularly cannabis, is prevalent with young people in gangs and those that live in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. Excessive alcohol consumption and, to a lesser extent, drug use are known to be causes of motorcycle accidents in the Cook Islands and street fights and domestic violence in New Caledonia's capital. On occasions, it leads to risky and unsafe sexual behaviour increasing the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections.
3. Teenage pregnancy raises many health concerns. Teenage mothers have a greater risk of dying from complications and are less equipped to support the child. Babies are often likely to experience low birth weight and malnutrition, and have a lower chance of survival. The adolescent birth rate is highest in the Marshall Islands (85 per 1,000), followed by Nauru (81 per 1,000) and the Solomon Islands (70 per 1,000). It is the lowest in Niue and Tonga (both at just under 20 per 1,000).
4. HIV and AIDS is a reality for young people in the Pacific. Papua New Guinea records the highest number of HIV cases, accounting for 98% of the 5,169 new HIV diagnoses reported in PICTs in 2008³¹. The prevalence rate for those in the 15–24 age group was about one in a hundred in 2007 although this fell to 0.8 in a hundred in 2010³². The rate of HIV infection in Papua New Guinea is highest among females, which adds to their vulnerability and marginalisation. The rest of the Pacific has an extremely low HIV prevalence. It is estimated that there are about 230 people living with HIV in Fiji at the end of December 2012. The Fiji situation is concerning because 77% of all reported infections have been made by those between the ages of 20 and 29 years and 30 and 39³³. HIV may be slightly under-reported in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ Baoa R. 2010. *Suicide top teen death list*. Fiji Times Online. Accessed 20 October 2012 at: <http://www.fjittimes.com/story.aspx?id=155434>

³⁰ Puamau E.S. 2011. *Drug and alcohol use in Fiji: A review*. *Pacific Health Dialogue* 17(1):165–171.

³¹ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children's Fund –Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

³² Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *National Millennium Development Indicators*: <http://www.spc.int/nmdi/MdiSummary2.aspx?minorGroup=23>

³³ Fiji Islands. 2012. *Global AIDS progress report 2012*. United Nations AIDS Secretariat. Accessed 20 October 2012 at: http://www.unaids.org/en/dataanalysis/knowyourresponse/countryprogressreports/2012countries/#a_52702



Young people also identify non-communicable diseases (NCD) as significantly affecting their health and wellbeing and their futures. In the Pacific, 75% of all deaths in the Pacific are due to NCDs. Overweight and obese children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and more likely to develop NCDs such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age. Obesity and diabetes appear to be increasing among young people in urban areas as a result of changing dietary patterns and low levels of physical activity³⁴. Common risk factors underlie NCDs. Globalisation and urbanisation bring with it unhealthy lifestyles and environmental changes that make communities susceptible to tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity³⁵. Young people in particular are susceptible to tobacco and alcohol use. These underlying risk factors give rise to intermediate risk factors such as high blood pressure, elevated blood glucose, abnormal lipid profiles and obesity. In turn, the intermediate risk factors predispose individuals to the 'fatal four': cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. Altogether, these chronic diseases account for the majority of deaths in the region³⁶.

Some challenges to addressing youth health concerns include:

- the slow response to address identified health issues, such as NCDs, by country;
- health and wellbeing of rural young people (e.g. in the Marshall Islands the rate of teenage pregnancy in rural areas is double that of urban young people³⁷);
- lack of priority given to youth concerns such as suicide and mental illness;
- cultural barriers to programmes relating to sexual and reproductive health;
- lack of data on issues such as suicide and attempted suicide, alcohol and substance abuse and HIV;
- lack of evaluation of the impact of health promotion programmes (many health promotion programmes exist in the Pacific but with very little understanding of their impact).

The policy framework

The Pacific Shared Agenda for Sexual Health and Wellbeing (2014–2018), developed by countries and regional and civil society partners, is the regional response to improve sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing of Pacific people. It includes a set of overarching regional targets focusing on an intersectional approach to the provision of sexual health services, programmes and policies, with targeted interventions for key populations and vulnerable populations, including youth populations, as well as addressing social determinants that impact on sexual and reproductive wellbeing.

The Pacific Framework for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (2007–2016) aims to help Pacific Island countries reduce death rates from chronic diseases by 2%

³⁴ Oceania Football Confederation. 2013. *Pacific Youth and Sports Conference 2013*. <http://pyasc.org/Social/Health>

³⁵ World Health Organization and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2007. *The Pacific framework for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases*.

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children's Fund – Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



per year by assisting them in determining the size of the NCD burden, developing national plans of action, and selecting, implementing and evaluating appropriate interventions.

The World Health Organization supports a Pacific Islands Mental Health Network that works within a framework that facilitates and supports cooperative and coordinated activities within and among PICTs that contribute to sustainable national and subregional capacity in relation to mental health.



Outcome 3: Governance structures empower young people to increase their influence in decision-making processes

Governance structures empower young people to increase their influence in decision-making processes

Representative structures for youth are strengthened and are inclusive of diverse groups

Governments increase investments in youth development across sectors

Governments and representative structures for youth share responsibilities in development processes

It is becoming increasingly evident that policies and programmes for young people increase their effectiveness and impact when young people are actively involved; when they can influence the shape and nature of initiatives; and when they learn and develop important skills through the process of engagement. The 2006 Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting reported:

*'...the capacity of a society or community to maximise young people's participation as citizens in the social, political and economic life indicates the extent to which that society can flourish. Young people are a barometer through which we can measure the level of social cohesion and democracy – or the lack of it.'*³⁸

There is a follow-on effect of this to other sectors, such as employment. Contributing to the economy is a citizenship role, in as much as contributing to a country's decision-making processes. Strengthening representative structures and development processes within governments and regional organisations in the Pacific in ways that lead to more young people becoming engaged, more effectively, will have significant positive impacts on accountability, governance and organisational effectiveness across the Pacific. Maximising on the role of young people can advance and accelerate a country's growth and development.

The situation

Measuring the extent of young people's participation in the Pacific is difficult because of the absence of indicators. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Youth Development Index uses governance as a contributing indicator based on the strong link between government type and youth development³⁹. It also uses a cluster of indicators in one of its five domains – civic participation. Noting the notorious difficulty of attaining relevant data, the report

³⁸ As quoted in: Commonwealth Secretariat. 2013. Youth development index: Results report, p. 60. The Commonwealth Secretariat.

³⁹ Commonwealth Secretariat. 2013. Youth development index: Results report. The Commonwealth Secretariat.



emphasises the importance of this domain to youth development, and to the future growth and sustainability of their communities as a whole. Nine Commonwealth Pacific countries⁴⁰ were scored in this domain and all scored the same, 0.332, figuring around the mid-point of the highest scoring country, Sierra Leone at 0.690, and the lowest scoring country, Tanzania at 0.069. The domain is likely to be strengthened with the addition of new data indices.

Qualitative analysis is limited, however, a regional study conducted by UNICEF Pacific⁴¹, revealed that very few young people currently participate in decision-making, but more than 10 times the number of young people believed that kind of participation was important. Young people clearly want greater opportunities to influence national decision-making in both consultative and more practical methods such as programme activities. The voice of young people in decision-making at traditional and community levels is apparently extremely limited. Young people encountered rigorous opposition from adults to the type of participation that involved discussion about sensitive issues or actions that pushed the rules and boundaries of social order. They also felt resistance to their participation in 'cultural or serious issues'.

A key factor contributing to the lack of young people's participation is institutional lack of information and understanding of youth issues. The study also highlighted representation as a problematic issue, where much participation only included the 'elite' young people and often was more tokenistic in nature. In addition, youth delegates at the 2009 Pacific Youth Festival raised concerns over the denial of their rights to be active citizens, stating reasons such as⁴²:

- cultural traditions that may limit youth involvement;
- absence of structures, policies and resources to encourage and facilitate youth involvement; and
- a lack of awareness about civic participation, both on the part of young people and decision-makers.

Many youth platforms do not always represent the diversity of young people and, as a result, their impact does not always respond to issues of the most marginalised young people. Important aspects to consider are:

- how to measure the effectiveness of their involvement;
- documenting the criteria of involvement, such as how they represent youth groups;
- avoiding tokenism and ensuring that the involvement of youth is meaningful to their own development, and provides opportunity to effect or influence change; and
- long-term support to sustain youth participation more systematically at national levels.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Countries were Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

⁴¹ As quoted in Carling M. 2009. *Maximising potential: The citizenship role of young people in Fiji*. Masters thesis, School of Government, Development and International Affairs, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

⁴² Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2009. *Pacific Youth Festival Suva Declaration 2009*. Accessed 19 October 2012 at: <https://sites.google.com/site/unfocccyoung/youth-declarations/suva-declaration>



Challenges to effective youth participation in the Pacific include:

- an absence of indicators to measure youth civic participation;
- restrictive family, community and traditional structures and attitudes that diminish the value of the youth voice (It is difficult to assert one's independence when elders perceive young people as dependent);
- a lack of recognition of the value of the youth voice in non-youth-related sectors;
- bureaucratic structures that do not facilitate youth engagement. The lack of processes and practices that engage the unemployed and less educated young people in youth citizenship;
- low levels of awareness and knowledge of human rights, good governance and citizenship;
- tokenistic participation by and representation for young people;
- lack of available funds to develop capacity and support sustained participation initiatives; and
- politically imposed limitations on citizen freedoms and democratic voice in some countries.

The policy framework

Several official acknowledgements have highlighted the importance of strengthening youth participation in the Pacific, including the Koror Statement on Youth Empowerment for a Secure, Prosperous and Sustainable Future; the Pacific Youth Charter; the Pacific Youth Festival Suva Declaration; and the Forum Leaders' Auckland Declaration in 2004⁴³. The Leaders' Communiqué, 2011, also highlighted the need to urgently address youth unemployment, and to include the voice of youth in decision-making⁴⁴. Participation is a human right — there is no ambiguity within the human rights framework that all citizens of all ages have the right to participate in all matters concerning their welfare⁴⁵. Attaining this ideal for Pacific young people is a challenge and this leads to initiatives to encourage the active participation of young people being a priority for the PYDF.

⁴³ '...listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognise the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, health care, and job opportunities.' *Pacific Forum Leaders' Auckland Declaration, 2004.*

⁴⁴ 'Acknowledged the need for increasing employment and other meaningful opportunities for youth, including the voice of youth in decision-making'. *Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2011. Leaders' Communiqué, Auckland, New Zealand.*

⁴⁵ For example: Article 1, *United Nations Right to Development 1986*; Article 21, *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; Article 25, *the Millennium Declaration.*



Outcome 4: Environmental action is increasingly led and influenced by young people



The Pacific region is on the front line of climate change; its effects on the immediate environment are highly visible with impacts affecting the everyday lives of Pacific people. Throughout the region, climate change is heightening the intensity of extreme weather events, driving sea levels up, acidifying the oceans, and exacerbating droughts, yet this is only deemed to be the beginning of impacts⁴⁶. As the largest population group that will be affected by the impacts of climate change, young people are very aware that they will live with the decisions that leaders make today.

Young people have an important role to play in mitigating the effects of climate change and have articulated this through forums such as the Pacific Youth Festival 2009⁴⁷, the State of Pacific Youth Report 2011, and the 2012 PowerShift event, and demonstrating an active role at the community level through initiatives led by 350.org and the establishment of its Pacific chapter. Educating young people and creating an awareness of this reality will assist them to be more involved in decision-making processes. Young people need to be at the forefront of stakeholder partnerships and developing locally inspired adaptation strategies in their communities.

The situation

Young people have been involved in both climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives in the Pacific Islands region. There are also well-established youth networks in environmental conservation, youth and agriculture, and climate change. For young people who need to have futures to aspire to, the process of potential re-location and adaptation needs to be done with hope and empowerment to prevent discontent and negative outcomes. A joint programme implemented in Choiseul Province in the Solomon Islands has included out-of-work youth to work on the province's adaptation programme. Youth there have not only learned the skills needed for community-based adaptation but can now support their families

⁴⁶ 350 Pacific. 2013. August 2013–July 2016 Strategic Plan. 350 Pacific.

⁴⁷ Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2009. Pacific Youth Festival Suva Declaration 2009. Accessed 19 October 2012 at: <https://sites.google.com/site/unfccyouno/youth-declarations/suva-declaration>



and communities⁴⁸. The youth-led solidarity movement, 350 Pacific, has also trained young people in communities throughout the Pacific in climate change mapping and implementing adaptation initiatives. There is a clear need for much more climate change education and youth involvement.

Young climate change advocates have positioned themselves more radically — more positively and actively — than Pacific government negotiators whom they have seen fail year after year to make effective advances on pushing for global agreements to reduce emissions. A young organiser from the Solomon Islands, Christina Ora, says, ‘You have been talking all my life, do not tell me you need more time⁴⁹.’ While on one level, young people recognise that Pacific Islanders are victims of and face great loss from climate change, they also believe that climate change offers an exciting opportunity to bring Pacific Islanders together to create stronger and healthier villages, cities and communities, while pushing global polluters to ‘clean up their act’⁵⁰.

350 Pacific says it is time for young people to join in the fight and has committed to taking on the fossil fuel industry. This they have embarked on with a successful campaign, Pacific Climate Warriors. In October 2014, 30 young climate warriors from 12 different nations travelled to Australia to challenge their fossil fuel industry. Making international headlines, they succeeded in blockading Newcastle port, the world’s largest coal port, for a day with traditional outrigger canoes and massive support from local Australian activists. This occurred on the same day that hundreds of young Australians closed their bank accounts with Australia’s big four banks to make a statement against their financing of fossil fuel expansion projects⁵¹.

Yet despite this obvious capacity for advocacy and practical action, several challenges exist to involving young people in climate action and including youth-focused solutions in country-specific plans and programmes. Young people are more often included as mere beneficiaries in strategic frameworks, and not as partners in the development and governance of strategic frameworks. Reasons for this include:

- lack of dedicated funding for youth environmental initiatives or on addressing social impacts of society in general;
- poor understanding of climate change issues with most young people;
- limited access to ICT and thus, limited ability to participate in online climate change initiatives and networking;
- absence of data to track the effectiveness of policy implementation and effectiveness;
- youth position on global climate change is more radical than countries’ political positions leading to scepticism by technical and political representatives;
- absence of institutionalised climate change adaptation policies and practices in many Pacific Island countries.

⁴⁸ *The Choiseul Integrated Climate Change Adaptation Programme is jointly supported by the United States Agency for International Development, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme.*

⁴⁹ 350 Pacific. 2013. *August 2013–July 2016 Strategic Plan*, p. 5. 350 Pacific.

⁵⁰ 350 Pacific. 2013. *August 2013–July 2016 Strategic Plan*. 350 Pacific.

⁵¹ <http://350.org/press-release/pacific-climate-warriors-from-12-countries-blockade-worlds-largest-coal-port/>



The policy framework

The platform for policy and programmatic consideration of climate change awareness and adaptation strategies is reflected in international and regional mandates. Young people were supported to work with Pacific leaders to agree on the regional input towards the Small Islands Developing States process, and played a significant role in shaping the resulting youth statement from the Major Group on Children and Youth. There is a clear commitment to include young people in the work around sustainable development in the region.

Leaders from low-lying atoll countries such as Kiribati and Tuvalu have been active in highlighting their concern about the environment and young people's futures. In Kiribati, President Anote Tong echoes that 'global warming will change the lives of our young people in more ways than we can imagine. In 30–40 years, the nation, their home may no longer be habitable — it may not even exist'⁵². This has implications on the sociocultural identity of Kiribati's young people and the future of I-Kiribati as a people⁵³.

The forthcoming strategy climate and disaster resilient development in the Pacific is a new regional strategy for PICTs, providing an integrated approach to address climate and disaster risks. This integrated approach has been adopted due to the recognition of clear overlaps between climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, and the similar tools and resources required to address these risks at both the policy and programmatic level⁵⁴. The strategy will succeed the existing separate regional frameworks on disasters and climate change (respectively, the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action and the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change), which both end in 2015. The strategy states that all community members, including youth, are acknowledged as powerful agents of change, and that young people should be involved in both decision-making and implementation.

⁵² Tong A. 2011. *The effects of climate change in Kiribati: A tangible threat to adolescents*. In: *The state of the world's children 2011 — Adolescence: An age of opportunity*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

⁵³ A more specific discussion on the impact of climate change on children in Vanuatu and Kiribati can be accessed at http://www.unicef.org/eapro/pacific_climate_change_report.pdf

⁵⁴ <http://gsd.spc.int/srdp/>



Implementation mechanisms



The PYDF provides broad strategic guidance for PICTs that are planning to invest in areas such as those that are prioritised in the framework. Given the difficulties in securing regional funds for youth programmes in the current aid climate, this framework works to steer investment towards PYDF priority areas, supporting, in turn, the resourcing of national youth policies.

With this as the primary focus, the PYDF does not prescribe conditional establishment of formal mechanisms and procedures to coordinate implementation at the national level. Therefore, the emphasis of the implementation mechanism is at the regional level where there are committed resources to advance the PYDF, although this will be kept lightweight and nimble to avoid cumbersome bureaucracy.

Countries and territories can benefit from their participation in ways that will ultimately support implementation of national youth policies through: 1) improved evidence and understanding of the youth situation, 2) more favourable environments for securing financial and technical resources, 3) positive engagement of youth citizens, and 4) greater inclusion of key populations of youth. Participation will require the collection of key information on an annual basis. Minimal reporting burden will be ensured.



To balance the focus at the regional level, and to ensure that there is a direct impact on the lives of young people, the PYDF features a small grant scheme to support youth-led activity at country level. This will require the support of partners, national youth councils and national ministries and departments to facilitate distribution of grants.

The key features of the implementation mechanisms and their roles and responsibilities are detailed below.

The Regional Coordination Mechanism

SPC will work in partnership with the Pacific Youth Council (PYC) to undertake the responsibilities of regional coordination. A work plan of tasks will be developed each year under the guidance of a PYDF Steering Committee, and in collaboration with PYDF partners, including governments and administrations of SPC's membership, regional development partners, national youth council members of the PYC, and other youth networks.

SPC and PYC work in partnership to do the following:

| Task | Why? |
|---|---|
| 1. Support Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to institutionalise youth indicators into national surveillance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So that relevant data on youth can be collected and analysed to better understand the status of youth. |
| 2. Map distribution of service delivery and development assistance (government, non-governmental organisations, and others) to PYDF outcome areas in participating PICTs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consolidate information to determine which populations of youth are benefiting and where there are gaps. This provides governments and administrations with a tool to support bilateral and multilateral negotiations. • To identify best practices in the region to support South–South cooperation and exchanges. |
| 3. Compile regional mapping of service delivery and development assistance (government, non-governmental organisations, and others). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify common gaps that require regional attention for greater investment. |
| 4. Use regional forums to highlight gaps and advocate for greater regional investment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve delivery and effectiveness of technical and development assistance. |
| 5. Strengthen networks and facilitate linkages between key populations of youth, youth stakeholders, governments and administrations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase participatory decision-making to embed youth objectives across development sectors, donor strategies and other key regional development agendas. |
| 6. Support youth-led initiatives in PICTs through a small grants scheme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide young people, particularly those from key populations, with the opportunity to build capacity for active citizenship and lead change in their communities. |
| 7. Develop strategic guidance for investment in PYDF priority areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To guide investment and effective development programming. |

The scale of this work will depend on the capacity (human and financial resources) of the Regional Coordination Mechanism. SPC and PYC will work to increase this capacity to increase, in turn, the scale of support outlined above.



The Pacific Regional Youth Think Tank

The Pacific Regional Youth Think Tank (PRYTT) is part of the Regional Coordination Mechanism. It is an advisory body that brings expertise together to support informed decision-making relating to regional coordination. It is not a governance body.

To guide the Regional Coordination Mechanism and enhance the strategic approaches, the PRYTT has been established to:

- provide a pool of technical expertise on Pacific youth development to ensure activities related to PYDF regional coordination are well planned and conducted in the most strategic, effective and efficient way;
- use opportunities for engagement, networking and partnership to strengthen coordination of technical assistance to enhance the success of PYDF implementation;
- strengthen the movement towards increased investment in youth development in the region by supporting PYDF advocacy efforts and other relevant development processes;
- provide advice on overcoming obstacles impeding progress or negatively affecting the quality of PYDF regional coordination and implementation towards its planned outcomes, as well as other relevant situations faced by Think Tank members; and
- ensure that youth fulfil a central and pivotal role in all aspects of implementation and regional coordination.

The PRYTT will capitalise on the pool of technical experts to foster regional solidarity among youth stakeholders, through information sharing, and will support improved coordination and greater collaboration and partnership to increase investments in youth development.

Governments and administrations

All of SPC's member countries and territories are encouraged to participate in the regional framework. Governments and administrations can benefit through their participation in several ways listed below. By contributing information to regional analyses and national mapping, engaging in strategic dialogues, and sharing best practice, governments and administrations can anticipate the following returns over the time-frame of the framework:

- Youth-inclusive national surveillance;
- Consolidated information on the distribution of service delivery and development assistance, and increased effectiveness in delivery of targeted technical and development assistance;
- Regional advocacy efforts that focus greater investment in national priorities;
- Strengthened networks and linkages to support youth-inclusive development sectors, strategies and development agendas;
- Opportunities for active young citizens to lead change at the community level;
- Access to strategic guidance to guide government investment and programming;
- Access to strategic information and regional best practices;
- Participation in regional dialogues and decision-making processes relating to youth across development sectors;



- Facilitated access to development partners and South–South exchanges to support national youth policy implementation.

Focal points in ministries and departments of youth of participating PICTs will be provided with user-friendly tools to collect information on an annual basis.

As part of the youth small grants scheme, governments and administrations may be requested to receive and administer grants to recipient youth organisations undertaking a youth-led initiative. These will be coordinated where there are existing agreements in place with grant donors.

Youth

All youth organisations are invited to participate in the regional framework. These include networks representing key populations of youth, associations, alliances and other community groups that are operated by youth or for youth. The PYC and its associate members of national youth councils will have a central role in connecting youth organisations — particularly the key populations — to the framework, and also have a shared management role at the regional level. For countries that do not have national youth councils, other existing youth structures can represent them. These will also contribute to information collection through annual mapping and reporting. Youth reported mapping will provide additional information that may not be captured in reports from youth ministries or departments.

Networking and communication are key strategies to support the participation and engagement of youth. Young people are invited to contribute to facilitated discussions as part of communities of practice involving governments, development partners and youth. These may be online communities of practice, or physical meetings conducted in various regional forums.

Regional representatives of networks representing key populations of youth and thematic areas of the PYDF are invited to participate on the PYDF Steering Committee, which also serves to connect networks to the PYDF. As key participants to the PYDF, youth organisations will have increased access to development assistance to support capacity building and strengthening of the youth voice in PICTs.

All networks and information distribution channels will be used to invite young people to apply for youth small grants to support youth-led initiatives. As part of the youth small grants scheme, national youth councils or other youth organisations may be requested to receive and administer grants to recipient youth organisations undertaking youth-led initiatives. These will be coordinated where there are existing agreements in place with grant donors.

Youth stakeholders

All development agencies that work in the area of youth, youth engagement, or in one or more of the thematic areas of the PYDF are considered as ‘youth stakeholders’. These may have a regional or multi-country focus or interest, or may have a country-specific focus (national youth stakeholder). Donor agencies with an interest in PYDF-related activities are also included as youth stakeholders. Participating youth stakeholders will have an opportunity to work collaboratively, share expertise and resources, and have access to strategic information and youth networks to inform programme development and delivery.



Youth stakeholders will be connected to PYDF networks for communication and will be invited to participate in PYDF activities, including regional dialogues and advocacy initiatives. Youth stakeholders will be requested to contribute to information collection through annual mapping and reporting. These will provide additional information that may not be captured in reports from youth ministries or departments, or from youth organisations. The work and investments made by youth stakeholders will be recognised in this process. Consolidation of all reports will be distributed throughout the PYDF networks to support programme development.

Youth stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the PRYTT or one or more of its thematic subcommittees to provide advice to the Regional Coordination Mechanism. Membership is open to those who have an interest in and commitment to shaping and contributing to the work of the PYDF.



Monitoring and evaluation



Periodic measurement of the PYDF needs to be done at different levels and in the following way:

1. Overall progress towards PYDF outcomes:

- a. Determine youth indicators, in alignment with international standards of measurement and with global Youth Development Indicators;
- b. Annual monitoring for lower-level indicators;
- c. Periodic situational analysis in 2016 (five years after the 2011 State of Pacific Youth Report), including populating youth indicator framework;
- d. Second situational analysis in 2021.



2. Annual monitoring of strategic implementation by the Regional Coordination Mechanism:

- a. Annual mapping and gap analysis of service delivery and development assistance;
- b. Quarterly progress reports against annual work plan (Regional Coordination Mechanism work plan).

The Regional Coordination Mechanism will seek partnership with agencies with expertise in youth indicators to fine-tune the regional indicators, their disaggregation, data sources, and opportunities for integration into national surveillance tools such as census and demographic health surveys. The 2016 and 2021 situational analyses will be designed using the same analytical framework to rigorously assess change over the time frame. The Regional Coordination Mechanism will seek partnership to undertake these.

The Regional Coordination Mechanism will work with governments and administrations and their ministries and departments for youth, youth stakeholders, youth networks and structures to implement regular monitoring and collection of data using simple tools — ones that are designed to relieve the reporting burden. The primary tool for country mapping and gap analysis of service delivery and development assistance is shown below.

Monitoring and evaluation will support a practice of learning and evidence-based communication and decision-making.

Country mapping and gap analysis of service delivery and development assistance

Participating governments and administrations, youth stakeholders and national youth councils will be asked to use simple reporting tools on an annual basis to map all initiatives that relate to the scope of PYDF priority areas. These include governments programmes, projects implemented by non-governmental organisations, national youth councils and other community-level initiatives. The Regional Coordination Mechanism will compile reports from all agencies in each country to prepare a consolidated report for each country and for the region as a whole.

Each reporting agency rates each PYDF 'issue' by level of unmet need or whether the issue is a priority at all for the country. Additionally, reporting agencies are asked to determine which key populations of youth that require assistance are not being reached. Follow-up information may be requested to get further detail or to document best practice.





Sample mapping tool

| MAPPING: Existing programmes and donor/development support | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| What are the existing programmes (government and non-governmental, and other donor support initiatives) | | | | |
| | Employment and training | | | |
| | Access to relevant education and training | Entrepreneurship | Youth employment services | Improved mental health and wellbeing |
| List who is doing what. Which youth are targeted? (Provide more detail on additional pages if needed) | | | | |
| GAP ANALYSIS: Level of need and reach | | | | |
| Need; Are they (combined) meeting the need sufficiently? Is there still a gap? (use colour code) | | | | |
| | Country priority: Gap in service provision combined with need for donor/development assistance | | | |
| | Country priority: Partial provision of service (current) combined with further need for donor/development assistance | | | |
| | Service provision within means of national capacity and budget or not a priority for the country or territory | | | |
| Key populations: Which key populations of youth are <u>not</u> being reached completely, and is determined a need? (tick) | | | | |
| Young women | | | | |
| Rural youth | | | | |
| Youth out of education, employment or training | | | | |
| Youth with disabilities | | | | |
| Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender youth | | | | |
| Other groups of youth (define) | | | | |



| Health | | Governance and participation | | | Environment | | |
|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Sexual and reproductive health improved | Nutrition and physical activity improved | Youth networks/ structures strengthened | Governments increase investment in youth | Youth engagement in development | Youth-led initiatives in food and water security | Youth-led climate change adaptation and monitoring | Youth-led sustainable environment |
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Annex 1: Excerpts from regional declarations

Third Meeting of the Pacific Ministers of Youth and Sport

New Caledonia, 7 December 2013

Communiqué

1. The Meeting endorsed the Pacific Youth Development Framework, noting its key features which are to improve regional coordination and resourcing of youth development initiatives, strengthen engagement of youth, and to strengthen cross-sectoral integration of outcomes for youth, particularly at country level. In this regard, Ministers recognised the key role of SPC in coordinating the delivery of technical assistance within the scope of the Framework.
2. Ministers and delegates endorsed the vision and the four key priority areas of the Framework as being relevant across the Pacific, noting that these do not replace – rather they enhance – national youth policies, and provide opportunities for countries to access support in a more coordinated way. These areas are:
 - a. Education and Employment;
 - b. Health;
 - c. Governance and Participation;
 - d. Youth engagement in environmental action
3. The Meeting recognised and called for action on the development significance of youth employment and considered the strategies as recommended by the International Labour Organisation to improve opportunities for decent employment for youth in the Pacific. These included increasing the provision of education and training for more young people, providing entrepreneurship opportunities as well as youth employment services to increase the number of young people securing decent employment.
4. Ministers acknowledged the diversity of the Framework and highlighted the importance of securing sustained funding to support coordination at the national and regional levels. They also highlighted the importance of statistics information to support decision-making and of incorporating gender-based violence into planned interventions where appropriate. They also called on Governments and Administrations to provide space for young people to participate in decision-making.
5. Ministers and delegates further endorsed the key steps for governments to take in implementing the Pacific Youth Development Framework in country including efforts to:
 - i. facilitate shared partnerships between representative structure for youth and government authority.
 - ii. assess technical and resource needs within the scope of the Framework.
 - iii. coordinate development and implementation of initiatives which include capacity building.
 - iv. monitor and report on results.



6. The Meeting welcomed commitments by Ministers and partners to assist coordination of the Framework and to help provide resources for implementation.

The Meeting commended SPC and development partners for spearheading the development of the Framework.

Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, Auckland 2011

Leaders' Communiqué

24. In welcoming the 2011 Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence report prepared by the Forum Secretariat and UNDP, Leaders acknowledged the need for greater action in mainstreaming youth issues nationally and regionally, increasing employment and other meaningful opportunities for youth, and including the voice of youth in decision making. Leaders endorsed the Key Guiding Principles contained in the report. They also commended ongoing and complementary work in the region on youth and conflict issues, including the recent Wansolwara Youth Peace-building Conference and the important matters highlighted in their Statement.
25. Leaders underlined the important role of government, the private sector and technical and vocational training institutions in urgently addressing youth unemployment. Leaders also recognised the need for the development of a regional framework for youth employment, the contribution that labour mobility offers, and emphasised the importance of having annual labour and employment statistics that are disaggregated by gender and age. Leaders also highlighted the vital importance of sport in assisting young people to stay healthy, contribute to society and develop into leaders of their communities. In this regard, Leaders welcomed Australia's Sports Outreach Programme.

Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, Cook Islands 2012

Leaders' Communiqué

48. Leaders welcomed efforts by CROP agencies, UN agencies, and other partners to develop a Framework for Youth Development in the Pacific. Leaders also noted progress made on the implementation of their decisions regarding the PIFS-UNDP Youth Initiative.
49. Leaders noted work being done on youth employment and its importance to preventing social discord.

8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (8CYMM)

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, April 16–19, 2013

Final Communiqué: Young People at the Centre of Sustainable Development

26. Ministers noted the development of the Pacific Youth Development Framework (PDF) as an example where collaboration amongst agencies has resulted in a more effective structure for coordinating youth development assistance across the region.



27. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of mainstreaming youth development not only in the Commonwealth Secretariat and in Governments, but in an attempt to optimize the use of resources, the designing and implementation of coordinated programmes and the linking of young people to development sources and resources.

Statement from the Stakeholders Forum for the 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting – Youth: Our Common Wealth

12. Stakeholders noted the importance of effective collaboration and partnership, with young people at the heart of it, for collective impact. We noted the development of the Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF) as an example where collaboration amongst development agencies has resulted in a comprehensive structure that aims to coordinate development assistance across the region, in the area of youth development. Scarcity of resources means that collaboration is essential to achieve impact. Partnerships need to be built at both national and regional levels and with all stakeholders including youth networks (particularly those that represent marginalised groups) and across the public and private sectors.
13. Recommendation: Stakeholders therefore call for targeted resourcing of efforts that enable collaboration and focuses support at the country level to impact on critical youth issues. This includes an intellectual focus that improves the understanding and effectiveness of collaborative approaches to enhance outcomes.
14. We also noted the need for improved accountability for the resources for youth empowerment programmes. Furthermore, accountability mechanisms need to be participatory and inclusive, providing opportunities for youth input.



Annex 2: Target key populations of youth

Given the evidence that highlights increasing marginalisation of specific groups of youth, the Pacific Youth Development Framework aims to enhance efforts of governments and administrations to reach groups of young people who currently face challenges in benefitting from mainstream development efforts. These may vary from country to country and some countries may have additional groups of marginalised young people. However, in general, these groups are as follows.

Young women

Many Pacific Island societies are patriarchal in nature. This results in the inferior status experienced by women, specifically young women. Young women continue to be under-represented in post-high school education and employment. The State of Pacific Youth Report 2011 (SOPY 2011) revealed that for every age category (15–19, 20–24 and 25–29 years), young women were less likely to be employed than young men. In the Solomon Islands, the percentage of young men in employment was 42% in the 15–19 age category, 64% in the 20–24 age category, and 74% in the 25–29 age category. The percentage of young women in employment in the same age categories was 30%, 34% and 34%, respectively. Only in Kiribati was the percentage of young women in employment (38%) higher than young men (33%) in the 20–24 age category.

Discriminatory behaviour and practices against women are still widespread in the Pacific. For example, many young women experience violence in their families and communities. High rates of intimate partner violence against women have been recorded in Kiribati (68%), the Solomon Islands (63%) and Samoa (46%)⁵⁵. Young women with disabilities are often more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. The seriousness of the issue has led to calls, for example in the case of Fiji, that ‘the vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities [be] addressed in the new constitution’⁵⁶.

Young people in rural areas and outer islands

The Pacific, particularly Melanesia, is primarily rural. The 1999 census results from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu recorded the rural population as being 86% percent and 79%, respectively⁵⁷. The rural area is, therefore, home to the majority of young people. Current discourse prioritises the rural area as the panacea for many challenges faced by young people. Such claims are supported by recommendations made in the 2011 Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy. At the local level, some governments, non-governmental organisations and churches offer programmes and activities for rural young people. In reality, the urban area will continue to be attractive for rural young people who will leave for the opportunities and attractions of the urban area.

⁵⁵ Young Women’s Christian Association. n.d. *Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled. A Pacific Young Women’s Leadership Strategy 2011–2014*. Geneva: Young Women’s Christian Association.

⁵⁶ Vuibau T. 2012. *Treat all equal*. Fiji Times Online. Accessed 21 October 2012 at: <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=209540>

⁵⁷ Donnelly J. and Jiwajji A. 2010. *Urbanization and children in the Pacific*. Suva, Fiji: United Nations Children’s Fund – Pacific. Policy, Advocacy, Planning and Evaluation Programme.

Addressing the issues faced by rural young people is significant because it may impact the growing number of rural to urban migrations and attend to the needs of young people who choose to remain in rural areas. Engaging young people in rural areas is linked to establishing stronger communities, and greater participation in agriculture and sustainable livelihoods.

Young people seeking economic independence

In the Pacific, urban areas are attractive places for young people, and their population in these areas continues to grow due to natural increase and from rural to urban migration. A recent World Bank report revealed that more young women than young men are moving to urban areas, often to squatter or informal peri-urban settlements⁵⁸. This is of concern given the low level of employment opportunities in urban areas and the general vulnerability of young women in the Pacific.

Young men and women without work in both urban and rural areas often struggle to participate in commercial opportunities. Unemployed urban young people who have migrated from rural areas are particularly vulnerable because they often do not have access to the family and community support that is more prevalent in rural communities, and do not have access to land for livelihood purposes. These young people are sometimes referred to as the NEET population — young people who are not in employment, education or training. A feature of urban spaces is that are more complex in terms of structures, and are not as formally organised as a rural communities, so it is often harder to reach young NEET people who do not fall into commercial groups.

As noted above, many unemployed young people are also unproductive, meaning that they are not engaged in paid or unpaid activity that contributes to their personal livelihood, or that of their family and community as a whole. The SOPY 2011 report highlighted that the percentage of young men aged 20–24 years not engaged in productive activities is quite alarming in Kiribati (58%), Marshall Islands (44%) and Samoa (46%). In addition, the SOPY report states that between a quarter and more than half of all the men in the 25–29 age group in Kiribati (57%), Samoa (44%), Marshall Islands (35%) and Solomon Islands (26%) are not employed⁵⁹.

It is important that vulnerable young NEET people are targeted by youth development policies and programmes because they are most affected by the lack of employment opportunities available to them. Assisting them will strengthen income sustainability and livelihood options.

***Note by the author:** At the time of publication, there is recognition that the NEET term does not align with a positive youth development approach⁶⁰. Rather, it focuses on the negative aspects to characterise this key population. The Regional Coordination Mechanism will seek to engage youth networks — in particular young people who may be out of education, employment or training, but whose potential should be recognised — to determine a positive Pacific term that recognises young people's journey to economic independence.*

⁵⁸ Asian Development Bank. 2012. *The state of Pacific towns and cities: Urbanization in ADB's Pacific developing member countries*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

⁵⁹ United Nations Children's Fund and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2011. *The state of Pacific youth report 2011: Opportunities and obstacles*. United Nations Children's Fund –Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community

⁶⁰ See <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/mar/23/neet-words-public-services-commissioning-jargon> and <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13676260600805671#.VaRwsPmqpBc>



Young people with disabilities

The incidence of young people with disabilities in the Pacific is difficult to ascertain because of the lack of disability-specific data. The World Health Organization estimates on proportions of populations that live with disabilities, suggesting that 'some 193,000 young people aged 15–24 years in the Pacific region are disabled and about 58,000 young people are severely disabled. Melanesia accounts for most of these disabled young people'⁶¹. In the Pacific Islands region, considerable increases in disability are occurring due to high levels of non-communicable diseases that result in new non-communicable disease-related disabilities.

As elsewhere, people with disabilities in Pacific Island countries face multiple disadvantages, particularly so for children and young people. Children with disabilities in the Pacific are much less likely to enrol in schools (by a factor of up to 10) and most face an inevitable future of a life of dependence⁶². Many who do enrol with minor hearing and vision impairments fail to succeed or complete education because of a lack of detection systems, and subsequently, a failure to receive proper treatment. Early detection, identification and rehabilitation are weak in the region and there is little coordination between the services that exist⁶³. Mainstreamed or targeted programmes that support people with disabilities to attain a livelihood have been identified as a particular need⁶⁴. For people with both minor and severe disabilities, employment opportunities are very limited, resulting in high levels of poverty among people with disabilities and their families.

Negative perceptions of disability often discourage employers from recruiting people with a disability. Similarly, at the community level, particularly in rural areas, people with disabilities are not included in income-generating activities and related projects. They are also excluded from decision-making processes at all levels of the community. This leads to people with disabilities, especially disabled women, being the poorest and most marginalised members of communities⁶⁵.

Young people are covered under international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention stipulates that people with disabilities have inalienable rights to health, education, employment and freedom. They should under no circumstance be violated or discriminated against. Attaining this ideal is a challenge in the Pacific, and many Pacific Island governments have not ratified the convention. Pacific Island governments, administrations and regional organisations are progressive in relation to the development of disability-friendly policies⁶⁶. At the regional level, the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2003 and the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability was endorsed

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² *United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Pacific Proposal, 2012.*

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ *Survey of disability services and related human resources in the Pacific. Australian Agency for International Development.*

⁶⁵ *United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Pacific Proposal, 2012.*

⁶⁶ *Fiji, for example, has a definition that accounts for both the medical and social models of disability.*

by Forum Leaders in 2010. Consequently, seven Pacific Island countries⁶⁷ have developed national disability policy statements with the policy being formally endorsed in four countries since 2009.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender young people

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, mahu, vakasalewalewa, palopa, pina, fa'afafine, akavahine, faka'ifine, faka'leiti young people exist as sexual and gender minorities. In some Polynesian cultures, fa'afafine are socially sanctioned although in most cases, sexual minorities are discriminated against in families and communities. This attitude stems from embedded cultural and religious beliefs. As a result, many become socially isolated, affecting access to basic services and decent employment opportunities, and may experience emotional and psychological issues.

Social and legal discrimination often forces young people with diverse sexual and gender identities to conceal their identity. This means that identifying them using language such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, fa'afafine, faka'leiti and rae rae should be done with caution, and it is likely there are young people with diverse sexual or gender identities that are 'not out' or publicly identified. As a result, little is known about their sexual behaviour and practices. This is a particularly concerning issue for young men who have sex with other men and transgender young people, some of the most vulnerable populations for HIV transmission.

⁶⁷ Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu and Kiribati.



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