

The page features three large, overlapping orange circles of varying shades (dark orange, medium orange, and light orange) arranged in a descending diagonal line from the top right towards the bottom right. Two thin orange lines intersect at the top left, forming a wide 'V' shape that frames the circles.

Giving voice to youth

A guidance brief for UNFPA on the Youth Advisory
Group of the UNFPA SUB REGIONAL OFFICE FOR
THE CARIBBEAN





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Giving Voice to Youth

**A guidance brief for UNFPA on the
Youth Advisory Group of the
UNFPA SUB REGIONAL OFFICE
FOR THE CARIBBEAN**



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1 INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Caribbean Region is currently experiencing the largest cohort of 15-24 year olds in its history; half of the Caribbean population is under the age of 25. While this generation of young people face many challenges and risks that impact directly on their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being there are enormous opportunities and benefits that could accrue to the Region by investing in young people. This generation will enter into the working world in a context where they outnumber the dependent populations thus creating a window of opportunity for a demographic bonus.

The challenge to the Region - to Governments and the development agencies that work with them - is to ensure that policies and programmes are responsive to the needs and rights of young people. Youth participation is an effective way to ensure youth voices in policies and programmes

The establishment of the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is part of UNFPA's commitment to young people's empowerment and rights, including their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to express their views and opinions, in accordance with basic human rights principles and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This rights-based approach is the underpinning of youth participation in the context of the YAG and at the same time youth involvement should achieve improved programme results so as to justify human time and financial resources.

Established in 2006, the YAG is an offspring of the Global Youth Advisory Panel (GYAP) which was set up by the Executive Director, Ms. Thoraya Obaid. The YAG, like the GYAP, will help to guide the organization's priority-setting in the core area of youth by offering a platform through which young people, especially the most vulnerable can advise UNFPA on the design of youth-friendly and youth-relevant policies and programmes.

The Director for the Sub-Regional Office of the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean, Mr. Harold Robinson has placed the YAG as a priority for how the Sub-Regional Office intends to do business. As the "highest level of interface" it is necessary to ensure that the YAG functions effectively and that there are clear guidelines for its operation. For this reason the guidelines that follow provide a clear and easy to use reference for UNFPA Staff for the establishment and management of the YAG.

"YAG's Advisory role to the office is very important, representing the highest level of interface with young people."

Mr. Harold Robinson

Director, OEDSC

December, 2007.

2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The YAG is a broad based and expansive regional group of young people, in particular those who are vulnerable and live in extremely difficult circumstances. The group provides a youth consultative forum on UNFPA policies and programmes in the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean region. It is made up of National Youth Advisory Groups where possible and a Regional Advisory Group of selected young people from the different countries served by UNFPA.

The **purpose** of the Youth Advisory Group is:

- To facilitate open dialogue and exchange among youth and between UNFPA Management and Staff and youth where UNFPA is advised on the diverse range of youth issues and strategic opportunities and actions to address them.

Specifically, the **objectives** of the Youth Advisory Group are to:

- Bring a youth perspective on issues affecting Caribbean youth so as to ensure that their rights and needs are acknowledged and promoted within the UNFPA programme for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean (EDSC) and the overall work of the UNFPA Sub-Regional Office;
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing about best practices and lessons learned for moving the agenda of young people's rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health forward;
- Develop and promote youth-adult partnerships within UNFPA to enhance programme delivery at the national and regional levels and to empower young women and men;
- Improve young people's understanding of the principles and Plan of Action of the ICPD, UNFPA's mandate and the organisations' efforts to improve the lives of young people;
- Strengthen the skills of young people (especially vulnerable and disadvantaged young people) in areas that include leadership, decision-making, communication, problem-solving and advocacy, thereby facilitating their effective participation in National Developmental processes.

The **expected results** from the Youth Advisory Group are:

- Overall improvement in the youth-friendliness and responsiveness of the Programme of Cooperation for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean (EDSC) and the UNFPA Sub-Regional Office's policies and programmes to address young people's rights and needs; and

- Improved capacity and confidence of young people, especially the most vulnerable, to participate in National Development processes.

3 ESTABLISHING THE YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

The YAG will consist of two components:-

- (1) **National Youth Advisory Groups** which will operate at the country level and include about 10-15 young people, especially from vulnerable or specific target groups who meet the criteria for membership (below).
- (2) **Sub Regional Youth Advisory Group** comprising young people from across the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean who represent specific target groups in countries served by UNFPA in the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean.

The Director reserves the right to decide on the number and target groups of young people to be represented on the Sub Regional YAG

3.1.1 Criteria for Membership

The UNFPA Director for the Caribbean Sub Regional Office will make the final selection of members based on the following criteria:

The nominee must:-

- Be willing to share his/her experiences (including life/personal experiences) and those of other young people with whom they interact that will enhance UNFPA's understanding of youth issues and will guide the work of UNFPA in the Caribbean Region;
- Be willing to participate in youth development activities, events or programmes (individually or as part of a group) organised by UNFPA and/or related to issues addressed by UNFPA's mandate.
- Be able to commit personally to the Youth Advisory Group and to participate in pertinent meetings and other activities.
- Be between the ages of 15 and 24.

(Relatively older youth (e.g. between 25-30 years old) such as previous YAG members, may be invited to serve where they have experiences or expertise that will enhance the group).

3.1.2 Selection Process

The selection process will involve the following steps for the National YAGS:

➤ **STEP 1: Nomination**

Partners, Government entities, NGOs and CSOs will be invited to nominate candidates for each country who meet the criteria or the interest of UNFPA to comprise the National Youth Advisory Group (CV of Youth must accompany the nomination)

➤ **STEP 2: Review of Nominations and Final Selection**

UNFPA's selection committee will decide on 10 – 15 young persons from each 'country list' of nominees who will comprise the National Youth Advisory Group. This may be done in collaboration with the YAG Focal persons themselves.

➤ **STEP 3: Invitation**

UNFPA will invite selected persons to accept the nomination and confirm their participation.

➤ **STEP 4: Letter of Appointment**

When selected persons accept and confirm participation, the UNFPA SRO Director/ Representative will issue Letters of Appointment which will include the Terms of Reference

Selection for the Sub Regional YAG

The Sub Regional YAG will be established after all the National YAGs are formed, i.e. selected persons have accepted their nomination, to reflect specific issues that the Director will decide. In this sense Sub Regional YAG members may be selected from appointed National YAG members or from other groups that can bring the desired experiences and perspectives. UNFPA may invite partner organisations to nominate persons to the Sub Regional Youth Advisory Group.

In the selection of YAG members, the following elements should be considered to ensure that the mix of issues and experiences in the National and Sub Regional YAG represent the diversity of Caribbean young people.

- Diversity in terms of racial, cultural and geographic characteristics.
- Representation of indigenous, rural and urban populations.

- Gender balance.
- Youth living in extremely difficult circumstances.

3.1.3 Term of Appointment

National and Sub Regional YAG members will be invited by the UNFPA Director for the Caribbean to serve for a maximum period of two years.

After the initial two years, 50% of the group members will be replaced by new appointees.

Any Member whose term has ended will continue to be part of the YAG listserv.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

At the country level YAG members are expected to:

- Bring youth perspectives on youth issues to UNFPA policies and programmes, based on their experiences;
- Participate in once monthly (or otherwise agreed with responsible Officer) meetings of the YAG;
- Review and make recommendations for the UNFPA Branch Office Annual WorkPlan;
- Participate in UNFPA’s programme workshops and other events/activities held in the YAG member’s own country and disseminate information gathered/knowledge gained to other youth;
- Establish purposeful linkages with existing youth networks that operate nationally as well as regionally;

At the Sub Regional level YAG members will:

- When selected from a National Youth Advisory Group: coordinate country level YAG input/recommendations to the UNFPA Director for the Caribbean;
- Keep National YAG members informed of activities at the Sub-Regional level;
- Keep UNFPA informed of new and emerging issues among young people in the Region by sharing their own experiences and those of young people in their country;

To enable the Youth Advisory Groups to effectively play its role, UNFPA will:

- o Identify a youth focal point who will liaise with the YAG, facilitating and coordinating its meetings, communication and recommendations to UNFPA;
- o Facilitate access by YAG members to relevant information and documentation about UNFPA activities, events, resources and focal points;
- o Clarify issues or questions raised by members, in particular, in preparation for YAG meetings;
- o Provide briefing materials and other preparatory activities pertinent to the YAG meeting agenda, as necessary and requested;
- o Explore and provide as appropriate, opportunities for capacity building and training of YAG members that would enhance their role at the Community, National or Regional level.

3.3 Meetings and Communication

1. Branch Offices will facilitate communication among and between YAG members especially those who have little or no internet access or are otherwise inaccessible. YAG members who have regular access to the internet will be subscribed to an electronic listserv and group, .
2. At the National Level the group will meet once monthly to coincide with the monthly reporting period of the office or otherwise as guided by the Assistant Representative. Other meetings may be organised from time to time to respond to particular issues.
3. The Sub Regional group will meet once yearly, to review the year's programme and provide recommendations for the new year.

UNFPA may also organise special meetings of the YAG or invite YAG members to participate in National or Sub Regional Workshops or meetings.

¹ UNFPA Caribbean Office is exploring the development of a website that will facilitate online forums for Caribbean young people. When this has been developed the YAG e-group will be migrated to that site.

4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION.

The National and Sub Regional Youth Advisory Groups will be monitored by the Assistant Representatives or Focal Point designated to work with the YAG by the Director for the Caribbean Region.

UNFPA's VISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

“A world fit for Adolescents and youth is one in which their rights are promoted and protected. It is a world in which girls and boys have the optimal opportunities to develop their full potential, to freely express themselves and have their views respected, and to live free of poverty, discrimination and violence”





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UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA - because everyone counts



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