Youth Development in the Public Service

The 2011 Survey Report
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Foreword by the Director General

A nation that does not take care of its youth has no future and does not deserve one. South Africa is a youthful country with over 41% of the country’s population constituting those classified as youth. Research shows us that this group faces numerous challenges, the most serious being health, education and employment related. This has resulted in a call for attention to be given to the development and advancement of young people by the President and government.

To this end, the National Youth Policy (2009 – 2014), was developed to provide a framework for all sectors to put in place programmes and interventions that will contribute to youth development for active participation in the economy of the country. Although government departments have to date put in place various programmes and policies to guide the course of youth development in the country, the magnitude of the challenge shows that these mitigation strategies are not yielding the desired results at the desired pace.

In 2011, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) conducted a survey to gather baseline information on the status of youth development, with special focus on youth outside the Public Service. The purpose of the survey was to establish the level of this group’s knowledge and awareness of the many government programmes, projects and policies that are supposed to assist them with employment in the public service or to create employment for themselves. The survey was also intended to assist identifying communication blockages between government and youth in society so that these blockages could be addressed.

The methodology used in this survey consisted of questionnaires that were handed out to young people attending various meetings and Youth Day events throughout the country during the youth month.
This report contains the findings which I want to share with you in order to improve government’s outreach to youth outside the public service. The findings are indeed very useful and interesting. For example, most of the young people observed had difficulties completing the questionnaire which was in English, even-though care was taken to use very simple language and handwriting of most responses was immature. This is very important to know as it could mean most of our documents are often not understood by youth. Recommendations were also very interesting and amongst these, was one that spoke to the use of social media. Many suggested that government should keep up with how youth communicate by using face book.

I hope that you find this survey report interesting and useful in your departmental programming for youth development. Just as we advocate for mainstreaming the needs of people with disabilities in our communication and all activities to achieve inclusivity, this report reminds us of the need to mainstream youth issues too.

Mashwahle Diphofa
DIRECTOR GENERAL
DATE: 10 March 2013
1. Introduction

As we know, June is youth month in commemoration of the positive role young people of 1976 played in the creation of democracy in South Africa. During this month, all sectors in the country, Public, Private and Civil Society are encouraged to focus on how to improve the lives of young people. It was in this context that the DPSA conceptualised this survey that would provide baseline information to inform how the department could also programmatically contribute to youth development. This activity was also in line with the National Youth Policy (2009 – 2014) that requires all sectors to put in place programmes and interventions for youth development.

According to various reports, young people are in the majority and at the same time, they are disproportionately affected by problems of underdevelopment and unemployment. To respond to these challenges, government has developed programmes to assist youth in gaining work experience in the public service through internships and learnership among others, but these have not been very successful.

Government has also introduced financial support programmes to encourage more young people to start their own businesses and not only be gainfully employed but to also employ others. The magnitude of the problem is however so great that there are still many young people who are feeling dejected and without hope for a better life. This study was to contribute to the body of knowledge that would assist government in understanding why the varied existing mitigation strategies are not yielding the desired results? Why are so many young people not accessing support programmes to assist them establish own businesses? In other words, what should be done differently?

Because 2011 marked an important milestone of commemorating 35 years since June 1976, the DPSA conducted this study to mark this important day. Data collection was to be informal and the sample had
to be representative of youth in their diversity including young women and youth with disabilities. It was also important to include rural and urban youth. A questionnaire targeting 2,000 youths was administered to youth in the public service, out of school, school going and youth in correctional facilities.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the study was to:

- Assess the level of awareness by youth of development policies being implemented by the government.
- Establish if the policies are accessible to these youth to enable them to be active participants in the implementation process.
3. Scope

The scope was national and was targeted at 2000 respondents. The Methodology was the questionnaire, 2000 questionnaires were circulated. To ensure inclusion and equal representation for the survey, all provinces were reached and responses varied from province to province and nationally. The Western Cape Province had the highest response rate with 493 (31%) responses, followed by National Departments with 230 responses and Gauteng Province was third with 170 responses (10.7%). The Department of Health in the Western Cape played a pivotal role in facilitating the administration of the questionnaire to ensure inclusion and optimum representation.

The Department of Correctional Services also assisted with the administration of the questionnaire, with the Northern Cape Province also participating fully to ensure inclusion and representation, the Northern Cape was fourth with 267 (16.9%). The lowest response rate was from Free State Province as the least with 11 (0.7%), followed by the Eastern Cape with 29 (1.84%) responses and Limpopo with 80 (5%) responses. Table 2 below is a picture of the geographical spread of responses:
Table 1
Provincial Spread

The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

- Are you aware of policies and programmes that seek to address the need for youth development in the country, if yes which?
- How do these policies and programmes benefit the youth?
- Do you think the policies are accessible to youth?
- How would you advise government to improve on the factors above?
4. Analysis

From a total of 2000 questionnaires issued, 1 575 responses were received from youth across the country giving a very good response rate of 78.75%. Of this number, 963 (61.1%) were females and 610 (39.9%) were males. 74 (4.7%) respondents were young people with disabilities, 37 (50%) women and 37 (50%) men. Critical to mention is that, though the response rate was numerically positive, it was not as positive substantially, several responses were vague and irrelevant indicating a lower standard of operation among youth in the country. This analysis aims to highlight this trend.

Responses varied in line with the level of knowledge and awareness of young people.

4.1 Respondents who were aware of policies and provided motivation

The questionnaire sought to assess whether youth were aware of policies that seek to address their development needs. Respondents were asked to name the policy, framework or programme; and the department offering these policies.

Respondents who were aware and provided substantial input were 122 (7.75%) in total. Males had a higher level of awareness at 90 (73.7%) than females who were at 32 (26%). Youth with disabilities generally had a lower awareness level of policies and programmes intended to support youth. This outcome is very important as it illustrates some of the impacts of gender discrimination which manifest in how boys and girls are socialised. Presently, society treats boys and girls differently with women and girls having less exposure and information than their male counterparts because besides school or work, they are socialised to accept added
domestic roles and responsibilities whilst men and boys are left free to explore and engage in social activities which then make them more outgoing and more informed.

Some respondents in this category were more aware of programmes than policies and in some instances, some respondents seemed unable to differentiate between a policy and a programme as they would write the name of a programme in a place of a policy. In other instances, respondents wrote a department or organisation instead of the programme such as the NYDA which was stated as a programme for youth development. In some instances, programmes such as loveLife were given as government programmes indicating that the respondents could not differentiate between government programmes and civil society programmes. Clearly, there is a low level of awareness of government programmes among the youth. In some instances, knowledge and information provided by youth was superficial, vague and incorrect. This may account for the frustration that youth often express as they may be going to wrong departments for help for example.

There were programmes that were more consistently popular among the respondents such as the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) programme by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Masupatsela by Department of Social Development, Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) by the Department of Public Works, the National Youth Service (NYS), learnership and internships. The most popular policy known by youth was the National Youth Development Policy.

4.2 Respondents who were aware of policies but provided no motivation

There were 228 out of 1575 (14%) in this category and responses
were equally divided between men and women. These respondents named some programmes that they were aware of, but did not know which government department offered these programmes. In most instances, they would mention a wrong department for a given programme, for example, stating that the ANC Youth League or SASCO are government programmes. Programmes that were highlighted included; War against Poverty, Safety volunteer, ICT Cooperatives. The responses by this category again reflect a limited awareness of government work on youth development and as with the previous group, ignorance. The latter is of concern as at one level one could say government needs to improve the way it communicates with youth but on the other hand; one would have to ask this question:

- Is it not the duty of these young people to take the trouble to engage on issues that concern their development?
- Should every young person, regardless of political affiliation, not know the difference between ANCYL, SASCO and government?

The questionnaire also sought to establish youth’s understanding of how these policies and programmes benefitted them. Two categories are identified for this response, those who said they know about the programmes and policies but never indicated how they benefit youth and those who substantiated how the programmes and policies benefitted youth.

4.3 Responses from youth who were not aware of how government policies and programmes benefitted them but still provided inputs:

There were 131(8%) respondents who indicated that they were not aware of policies but provided inputs on why these policies existed.
This group consisted of 40% women and 60% men. Furthermore, youth with disabilities (though small in number with respect to the population) formed a bigger part in this group. Of this group, 42 (0.13%) of them (both male and female) indicated a lack of awareness of policies and programmes targeting them. Despite their lack of knowledge of existing policies, they contributed towards the following inputs on why and how these policies could assist.

- They guide people with disabilities to find jobs
- They open opportunities for people with disabilities
- They provide access for people with disabilities
- They guide young women on teenage pregnancy
- They provide information on skills development and jobs
- They guide on poverty alleviation
- They guide on crime prevention
- They provide career guidance

As was previously reported, women were less informed about policies and programmes than men in this group. But, although women were less aware, they generally knew how policies and programmes could benefit them. This is a very important finding as it tells us that youth with disabilities are more aware of the need and right to be consulted when developing programmes for them. If government was to do this, most programmes would respond to their specific needs as guidance on how to make programmes more disability friendly and inclusive would be provided.
4.4 Responses from youth who were not aware of how government policies and programmes benefited them and did not provide inputs:

There were 969 (61.5%) out of 1575 in this category. Of this number 727 (75%) were women and 240 (25%) were men. While a majority (about 60%) of these respondents stated that they knew nothing about policies and programmes by government departments, some simply did not respond to this question at all (about 40%). This is the largest group of respondents, and is disconcerting as it tells us that most young people do not know about government programmes intended to support them. The trend continues to reflect that within this group, more women (75%) than men (25%) are less informed with women with disabilities being the least aware of all. In this instance, young people show a high level of ignorance on development related issues.

4.5 Logically inconsistent or irrelevant responses:

This group consisted of responses that were completely irrelevant. There were 125 (8%) out of 1575 responses in this group, 30% females and 70% males. These responses had to be treated as spoiled papers as they were not at all valid for the purpose of the study with respondents being either above the age of 35 and looking for job prospects or just completely irrelevant.

Respondents were also asked if the policies intended for youth development were accessible to young people giving reasons; and giving recommendations for improvement; while some respondents put the blame on government’s inability to reach out to young people, several respondents admitted that young people are themselves ignorant of calls made by government on development issues. Table 2 provides a picture of the above analysis.
Table 2 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware with motivation</th>
<th>Aware without motivation</th>
<th>Not aware with motivation</th>
<th>Not aware without motivation</th>
<th>Logically inconsistent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male PWDs</td>
<td>Female PWDs</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 728</td>
<td>Total 928</td>
<td>Total 37</td>
<td>Total 37</td>
<td>Total 37</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>113</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grand total 1,575

A difference in responses of youth based on the geographic spread was also noted and, this raised the issue of how important it is for government to always factor in the rural urban divide in its planning and programming. The needs articulated by rural youth were for basic things such as work and government sponsored projects and, most respondents though not all resorted to responding in vernacular despite the questionnaire being in simple English.

Urban youth on the other hand, responded to questions in English only and their needs included both the need for employment and, the provision and use of free relevant technological platform that government could provide and use to reach them. For example, use of social media platforms like facebook, youtube or twitter.
5. Findings

- Out of 1 575 questionnaires received, only 253 (16%) responses provided relevant and substantial information reflecting the level of awareness of policies and programmes.

- Young people are very keen to find work and to undergo skills development. Almost all responses carried an element of job creation as a recommendation for government to improve on youth development.

- Young men seemed more informed on policies and programmes than women and youth with disabilities thus placing them at a more advantaged position than young women and young people with disabilities.

- Responses indicated that most young people did not understand the role that these programmes and policies could play in their lives.

- For the few young people who showed a high level of understanding of the role of policies, their main concern was with accessibility of these policies to the targeted groups. These young people emphasised that the programmes are by en large concentrated in the big cities and less so in townships and rural areas.

- Despite the simplicity of the questionnaire structure and language, some young people who were from rural areas found it hard to respond to the questions in English; these young people resorted to answering the questionnaire in vernacular.

- There were responses with irrelevant comments; these largely came from unemployed people above youth age. The assumption is that they participated out of a desperate need and hope of getting jobs.
• Young people are unable to differentiate between programmes/policies and government departments offering them. Government departments need to intensify their marketing strategies for youth development programmes to ensure that this segment is fully aware of their work.

• Programmes such as the National Youth Service Corps by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Expanded Public Works by the Department of Public Works were known by youth. This indicates that government has the capacity to reach youth and other departments should use these as good practises to learn from. In this way, youth across the country will access government programmes intended to empower them.

• Many young people are still uninformed about programmes and policies intended for their advancement. Out of 1575 responses received, only 253 were relevant and substantial, and 969 (61%) respondents showed a high level of ignorance. This means government needs to double its efforts to ensure that all the safety nets that have been developed for youth should be written and distributed in a manner that can be accessed and understood easily by youth.
6. Recommendations by young people to government

This was a section that received prominent attention from all respondents:

- Government should intensify the outreach campaigns to reach out to young people particularly in rural areas and townships. This was profoundly expressed in phrases such as, more publicity, more awareness raising, more involvement, etc; about 80% of responses reflected this.

- Free Internet facilities should be made available for youth. Young people believe they would benefit more through the availability of internet. This recommendation (30%) was from young people in the urban and semi urban areas which also show that youth in rural areas are still less exposed to the benefits of modern technology.

- Government should use social media as a tool to interact with youth as they felt social media was the most relevant media for young people; 35% were of this opinion. Both youth in rural and urban were of this opinion with youth in rural areas stressing the use of cell phones by government to interact with young people and the urban youth also highlighting tools like face book.

- Government should employ competent people to run youth development. Comments such as “government employees are lazy” were prominent on this item; 35% of responses raised this concern.

- Politics should not interfere with government work; 35% expressed this opinion.

- More job creation should be done by government departments; this point was raised by 99% of the respondents.
• Government should ensure that all policies and programmes are accessible to young people especially in rural areas. This was expressed in words like; make information more available in rural areas; 70% of responses highlighted this.

• Government should work together with youth organisations to harness working relationships for youth development; only 5% expressed this opinion.

• Specific recommendation at 20% suggested that more centres should be established in rural areas and townships for youth.

• Poor communication between government and citizens: 90% of the respondents felt that communication with communities should be improved.
7. Recommendations by DPSA

From the findings above, the following recommendations are critical for the enhancement of youth development mainstreaming in the Public Service.

- **The issue of language:** Proficiency in English was clearly poor amongst rural respondents and needs to be addressed in the short-term and medium term. In the short-term, government policies and programmes must be produced in popular version and in vernacular too.

  In the long-term, language policies must be implemented and schools must ensure that young people are proficient in English and able to present themselves in the market place.

- **Government departments have a lot of programmes and policies that are meant to benefit young people, however the study reveals that young people are not aware of most of these programmes and policies.**

- **There were programmes that proved to be fairly popular among young people such as NARYSEC of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and EPW of the Department of Public Works, but several youth programmes by departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Public Enterprises were not mentioned even once in the study. These departments need to formulate effective marketing strategies to ensure that the youth as the target segment is aware of such programmes aimed at their advancement. The departments could also forge partnerships with those better known to achieve this purpose and others.**

- **Front office service:** The issue of access to departments was
singled out as very problematic among all respondents. Most young people reported that they found it very difficult or impossible to reach government programmes. They are often sent from pillar to post and do not have money for long calls while officials try to find the right person etc. (incompetent officials they said).

- Thusong centres as the “one-stop-shop” service delivery points in communities must be well-staffed by well-informed officials. The spread of Thusong centres should be in a way that it is within walking distance’s reach for young people and each centre should incorporate a unit dealing with youth development.

- Government departments should have systems in place to inform young people about their programmes. For example, young people both rural and urban possess cell phones and departments should use modern applications to reach them. Example of the Department of Home Affairs was given.

- Urban youth felt that in this age of technology, young people are predominantly the core users of social media and government departments should make use of social media platforms as facebook, and twitter to access young people.

- Government departments have a lot of programmes and policies that are meant to benefit young people and from this survey, it seems not all youth are aware of these. It is important that departments address this challenge with a special attention to aspects of material used, language and access point to illustrate. Efforts should be made to ensure that objectives are met.

- It would seem that programmes by government departments are not properly publicised for young people to know about them and therefore engage.
A concerted effort to reach and include more young women and young women with disabilities is required by government departments in their programmes.

The results of the study provide a clear indication that youth development as envisaged by government is not yielding the desired results. On the other hand, while the greatest need is there for young people to be aware and access policies and programmes by government, job creation and skills development for the youth remains critical. There is a need therefore, for intensifying the job creation programmes and also to consider adopting best practices from other countries.

Departments such as the Departments of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training, for the improvement of the communication skills at school level need to intensify programmes.

For such departments as the Department of Public Works, the Department of Human Settlement, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform among others, it is important to continue the trend to popularise their programmes while seeking more effective methods to ensure that all youth is covered.

Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Public Enterprises with such a wealth of youth development programmes that are fairly unknown to the youth, concerted efforts are imperative to ensure that young people get the benefit of these.
8. Conclusion

Taking into consideration that youth constitute the larger part of the population in the country, the outlook of the study and its finding leaves a disconcerting state if youth is indeed to advance. While the challenges highlighted by this study would require efforts of all sectors, the Public Service remains with a call to facilitate for more programmes that will generate sustainable job creation, and also facilitate for the awareness raising of those programmes in place for youth to benefit from them.