



Training Module on Youth Rights, Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Popularizing sustainable policies that impact
school to work transition of the youth

Foreword

UNESCAP provides technical and financial aid to facilitate the recognition and enforcement of policies that affect the student and youth population who undergo 'school to work transition'. The focal points of this can be categorized as follows,

1. Empowering the youth on policies that benefit all stakeholders
2. Empowerment of policy makers
3. Effective distribution of the positive effects of successful policies among all parties
4. Enhancing the interrelationship among different stakeholders
5. Enhancing the working capacity through training

Drawing on the advantages of information and communication technology, the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, expects to formulate innovative policies in collaboration with the national and private institutions that enforce policies that affect the population that undergo school to work transition, and other institutions which implement motivational programs for the targeted group,.

NYSC, as the leading national youth development organization in Sri Lanka, implements pragmatic approaches in enforcing the policies that affect school to work transition, utilizing the support of third parties, technical assistance and strategic methods. By effectively employing the human resources with national and international exposure, it is expected to introduce novel tools and training modules to increase working capacity.

Thus the above mentioned tools and resources will be utilized for a wider institutional intervention and better exchange of knowledge and experience between countries. The youth in the field of vocational and professional training in Sri Lanka and other regional countries can make use of the training modules produced for their personality development.

Editorial:

This training module provides technical guidance on the skills that should be achieved by students and the youth community in their transition from school to the corporate world. The training module is prepared to help youth policy makers, teachers, professional trainers, other training facilitators and the youth community to enhance service capacities through self-study.

In executing this training module, the training period shall be decided by the chief service provider. The subject area has been scheduled to enable training time periods to be either one day or two-and-a-half-day training programmes based on the needs of the target group. The subject matter should be utilized in a manner which would enable a one day refresher discussion consequent to the training.

Youth rights, Civic engagement and Political participation are few of the basic rights of the youth community. Enhancing the awareness of the youth with regard to this aspect is a responsibility of the policy makers. This endeavour would assist in the formulation of a youth centered development system. This training module expects to introduce a youth development approach where the rights of the youth are safeguarded by providing the theoretical and technical assistance required for it.

Accordingly, steps should be taken to execute a qualitative training programme making use of the well formulated session plan and supporting material. Apart from that, we recommend that you use services of an assistant trainer which would aid you direct your attention to areas that you might possibly overlook.

Youth Rights, Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Training Handbook

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PART 01

01.Introduction to the training handbook

Today’s young generation is drifting apart from civil and political activities. The main reasons for this are the lack of a youth centered decision making mechanism and youth issues going unaddressed. Before the school to work transition occurs, the young person should be equipped with prior knowledge about the civil society.

This training handbook provides the technical and theoretical knowledge needed to enhance the awareness of the youth on his duties / responsibilities and his role in the civil society and to connect him to the decision making process.

The youth participation in civic activities should be increased and the civil society should also be aware of these youth rights. Especially the policymakers should pay attention to this matter and create new policies for youth development. The enforcement of these policies and introduction of regulatory mechanisms is also a necessity.

Sri Lanka is a country which has faced two civil conflicts and a 30 year war between communities. The young community was directly involved in it. This handbook is compiled to prevent any such situations in the future by creating a new development approach which incorporates the youth and the civil society in the decision making process.

PART 02

02.Objectives of the training module

The objective of this module is to provide a theoretical and technical introduction to the basic youth rights, civil society activities and ways of political participation as well as a guidance to organize a properly structured training program.

03.Contents of the training module

SUBJECT AREA/ OBJECTIVES	METHODOLOGY
Introducing youth rights, labour rights and responsibilities	The participants are divided in to 4 groups and given the pre-prepared definitions. Prepare 4 analytic presentations based on the definitions. Next note down the points on which everyone agrees and share the recommendations of the trainer.
Awareness on the existing legal framework	Do a group discussion based on the National

	youth policy, Report of the presidential committee on youth, Children’s Charter
Awareness on Civic Engagement and participation	<p>Provide the space for a discussion based on brainstorming about the issues in youth political participation. The importance of advocacy groups and a youth ombudsman can be made known to them through drama and other such activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform 2 role plays 2. Have another group to judge 3. Based on the analysis of the two groups increase their knowledge on civic engagement 4. Write down the points learned and utilize for future use
Challenges faced in youth political participation	A discussion based on the experiences of youth parliamentarians and the issues discussed in the youth parliament is encouraged here.
Encouraging and empowerment of the youth for better political participation	Build the participants ideas based on brainstorming. The ideas presented should then be well analyzed and organized to educate the youth

Youth Rights, Civic Engagement and Political Participation

4.Youth Rights

Youth Rights refer to a “Set of doctrines aimed at enhancing the civil rights of young people”. Therefore youth rights activists/organizations generally seek, to enhance the role of young people in society through equal rights. This encompasses the assertion of participation of all communities in the country

In Sri Lanka the age group between 15-29 years can be considered as the Youth Population. According to the United Nations (UN) those within the age category of 15-24 years fall within the Youth definition. The above definition might be based on various factors. The different definitions are given based on different development indices of a country. Although there are global definitions for a 'youth', 'adolescent', 'adult' and etc. all these categories are subject to constant change. Although a youth is generally identified as the period between childhood and adulthood, the real definition of a youth should be based on their mentality and attitude.

Therefore it is expected to employ youth centered mechanisms which protect youth rights and ensure inclusiveness, widen the capacity to make democratic decisions and to empower them culturally, economically, politically and socially and to create a living environment which safeguards youth rights.

5.Labour Rights

According to Sri Lankan Labour Law, minimum age for employment is 18 years.(However those between the ages 14 to 18 could engage in certain work subject to exceptions) If a youth engages in employment it is recommended that he earns a salary equivalent to an adult in that respective field. When youth engage in hazardous work, they should receive all the proper material to protect them from any danger or sickness that may befall them.

The following rights are recommended for the youth:

- Voting right
- Education
- Employment
- Right to enter into government jobs
- Right to carry out peaceful protests
- Right to free health care
- Right to have the basic necessities such as food and shelter

Furthermore, The United Nations Childrens Charter has identified the rights of a child as universally applicable. It is the responsibility of every state and adult to ensure these rights.Sri Lanka ratified the Childrens Charter in 1991. The articles which apply to the child over the age of 15 years is applicable to the youth as well.

6.Responsibilities of the Youth

As a society , we could expect many responsibilities from the young community.

- Voting in elections – Despite having the right to vote, many do not actively participate or vote at elections. Due to this reason our young Generation has forgone their opportunity to voice their opinion.
- As young people they should respect their parents and elderly citizens and refrain from engaging in destructive activities, which will bring harm to public and private property.
- They also need to utilize the government provided benefits such as free education, free vocational training and take it upon themselves to become qualified employees for their workplaces.
- Awareness of the existing legal framework

At present many young people are ignorant about the country’s legal framework .It is the responsibility of the lawmakers to ensure that the youth is aware about the legal framework. Following are some of the recommended publications that ought to be read, in order to understand the legal framework better

- 2014 Youth policy and its recommendations
- 1988 Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth
- United Nations Convention on Childs Rights

7.Civic engagement

Civic engagement can be defined as “individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern” or “citizens working together to make change or difference in the community”. Civic engagement includes communities working together towards either a political or non-political motive. Due to the subject being a broad area of study, we will only concentrate on the youth civic engagement.

There are many such ways in which this participation can take place:

- Casting their vote on political figures/political parties who advocate for youth rights
- Creating advocacy groups or a post of Ombudsmen to discuss youth issues in different sectors or areas. For example it is recommended to nominate a separate Ombudsmen each to discuss the educational issues and unemployment issues of our youth. (Refer Sri Lanka National Policy Page 21, Policy Intervention i-vii)

8.Challenges for Youth political participation

One main issue is that, our younger generation does not actively participate in the political framework. Simultaneously they do not have a proper understanding of how our political system works. Citizens below 35 years rarely hold solid positions in the political arena or government/state level jobs. In order to remove this inequality one suggestion would be to allocate for the youth a considerable number of seats in Municipal Council Elections.

Obtaining misleading information through Facebook and other social media platforms is another challenge that our youth community face. In order to eradicate this issue, a platform needs to be built on Facebook, where we can continuously update and provide accurate factual news.

Another challenge that can be identified is the lack of political knowledge and expertise among our youth. In order to broaden their understanding, participation in the “Youth Parliament “can be recommended. This activity will enable our youth to get an understanding about our political system. Simultaneously our Youth Parliamentarians can educate other young people regarding the political and legal system.

Encouraging and empowering a young person towards better civic and political participation

Influence the policy makers and politicians to remove the barriers that the younger generations face when participating in decision making.

Develop a handout constituting valuable political information and have it distributed among the youth.

Encourage school teachers and students to debate and discuss current political and social events, while giving students an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Let students do political role plays and dramas to hear their political voice.

9.Session Plan

Subject Area	Youth Rights, Civic Engagement and Political Participation	Venue	
Duration		Target Group and number	

	Duration	Subcategory	Method	Aid Material
01.	1 ½ hours	1.Youth Rights 2.Labour Rights	PowerPoint Presentations Workshops Reference – Labour Law, etc.	Laptop, Multimedia Projector, hall facilities, training material, facilitators
02.	1 hour	Youth responsibility	PowerPoint Presentations Workshops (Brainstorming/ Group Discussions)	Laptop, Multimedia Projector, Hall Facilities, Training Material, Facilitators
03.	1 ½ hours	Awareness of the Existing Legal Framework	Group Discussions PowerPoint Presentation Reference - Youth Rights, UNICEF/ UNO publications, etc.	Laptop, Multimedia Projector, Hall Facilities, Training Material, Facilitators
04.	3 hours	Civic Engagement	Role Play Group Discussions Case Studies Videos	Laptop, Multimedia Projector, Hall Facilities, Training Material, Facilitators
05.	1Day	Challenges for Youth in Political Participation and Engagement	Observation and Review of the Youth Parliament Videos Facebook as a communication platform	Laptop, Multimedia Projector, Training Material, Internet Facilities, Transport Facilities
06.	6 Hours	Empowerment of youth to encourage active civic engagement	Handouts/ brochures Debates Role Play Short plays	Handouts Mediators Training Material

Facilitator:Asst. Facilitator:

