



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND THE BLUE ECONOMY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AFFAIRS



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA NATIONAL

YOUTH

POLICY 2021



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FOREWORD

This National Youth Policy has been developed as Antigua and Barbuda's framework to guide the approaches which key stakeholders should adopt over the next ten (10) years to enable youth development. Further, this framework anticipates that all key stakeholders understand the value of using a collaborative and cooperative approach to engaging with and enabling those who will inherit Antigua and Barbuda's future society. The policy makes provision for youth, defined as our citizens and residents from ages 12 – 35, to be immersed in learning, to have access to meaningful opportunities and to be exposed to a variety of experiences that support the realisation of their full potential, not only as individuals, but as active, responsible, and well-adjusted change agents in society. It is anticipated that through these three vehicles, our youth will develop the knowledge, skills and competencies that will support their active and meaningful participation in the labour market, the democratic process and civil society in general.



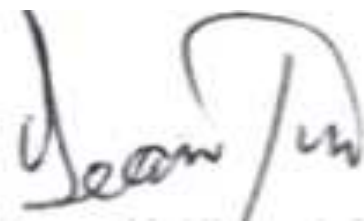
The government of Antigua and Barbuda, through the hardworking team in the Department of Youth Affairs carefully formulated this policy, following extensive consultations with our youth and other key stakeholders. It was through this pathway, that the views and opinions of youth as it relates to their vision of the future, existing concerns and their proposed solutions were canvassed and compiled. The common threads were identified and encapsulated into nine (9) thematic pillars for action. For each of these themes, the state of existing conditions is candidly expressed, overarching policies formulated and strategic goals and objectives identified.

The National Youth Policy is designed to enable youth, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender or abilities, to learn the core values of life that will enhance their spiritual and physical wellness, gain knowledge, competencies and skills through quality teaching and practical instruction. The policies provide opportunities for youth to engage in entrepreneurship and employment in diverse sectors including those which are established or emerging such as the blue economy and information technology. In this same vein, opportunities are provided for youth to express themselves creatively and share their views and opinions through available channels in a responsible way. Ultimately, the National Youth Policy is designed to enable youth to experience life in a physical environment which is safe, stable and sustainably maintained with their active input. Youth are to experience life where there is gender equity and one which is free from abuse

of a physical or emotional nature. To build our nation now and in the future, we must create an environment where our young people see themselves as being agents of change who are not entrapped by the mentality of entitlement without effort, freedoms without responsibilities, wealth acquisition without compassion, enjoyment without environmental sustainability, embracing diversity without a loss of identity.

While the National Youth Policy is designed to ensure that Government policymakers and agencies lead the charge in facilitating a fertile environment for change, there must be harmony between public and private sector stakeholders for long term success. Following the formal approval of the National Youth Policy, a comprehensive National Youth Action Plan will be deployed to articulate how the national policies, goals and objectives of our youth will be realised. We must all support our human resources, especially our youth. I encourage us all to embrace these policies. Along with our youth, we can make a positive change!

This National Youth Policy is a culmination of hard work. I thank Dr. Jrucilla Samuel, the Acting Director of the Department of Youth Affairs and her team for articulately highlighting the realities of our young people in Antigua and Barbuda, especially during one of the worst pandemics in modern history. The COVID-19 virus has claimed millions of lives worldwide, eroded dominant markets, and created new norms. It is against this backdrop of unprecedented global challenges that I commend the Department of Youth Affairs and all stakeholders.



Honourable Minister A. Dean Jonas
**Minister of Social Transformation,
Human Resource Development (incl. Youth Affairs)
& The Blue Economy**



POLICY VISION

The National Youth Policy envisions a transformed Antigua and Barbuda rich in human and social capital—where young people are represented in all spheres of decision-making and given equal opportunities to live purposeful lives. Driven by determination and ambition, this national policy sees a future where youth are unafraid and involved in forming strategic alliances that will generate further wealth and create meaningful change in cornerstone institutions. Equipped with core values, knowledge, competencies, and adequate resources, young people can self-actualize in a safe, secure, and sustainable environment.

POLICY MISSION

The mission of this National Youth Policy is to amplify the voices of young people, maximise their contributions, and position them as resilient catalysts for change. Recognising that national development hinges on youth engagement, the mission is also to promote intellectual and emotional intelligence. Fully aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and potential, youth can lead productive lives in all-inclusive settings that arouse and sustain motivation, and cultivate self-efficacy.

GOALS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

The National Youth Policy seeks to achieve the following goals:

1. An empowered youth population which is capable of fully participating at all levels of decision making
2. Patriotic youth who demonstrate love for country and a strong sense of national pride
3. Morally-centred young people who internalise core values that permeate all aspects of their lives
4. Strategic collaborations with national, regional, and international stakeholders in youth empowerment initiatives
5. Environmentally conscious young people who use and manage the natural resources of this country in a sustainable manner
6. Violence-free youth who exhibit intellectual and emotional intelligence and fight against all forms of inequalities that hinder youth development
7. A well-trained, healthy, and engaged workforce that realises organisational and national goals



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The National Youth Policy seeks to achieve eleven (11) strategic objectives:

1. To strengthen programmes that build cultural, entrepreneurial, and basic literacy
2. To promote STEAM subjects: science, technology, engineering, the arts, mathematics
3. To develop social and economic opportunities for youth employment
4. To revive the spirit of volunteerism and engage youth volunteers
5. To prioritise mental health and nutritious lifestyles among youth
6. To cultivate a love for nature and increase climate change awareness
7. To instill core values and encourage spiritual development
8. To encourage responsible use of the media among youth
9. To promote gender equity and equality
10. To strengthen youth organisations and alliances with other departments
11. To bolster meaningful political participation

YOUTH PROFILE & TARGET POPULATION

Amid the absence of a national consensus and universal definition of youth, this National Youth Policy is of the view that ages 12-35 would be the most suitable range to classify individuals as youth. The DYA arrived at this decision after multiple consultations and interviews with a broad group of internal and external stakeholders, including psychologists, educators, parents, and youth leaders and strategists. The DYA also carefully considered regionally and internationally recognised definitions of youth.

Jamaica / United Nations 15-24

Turks and Caicos Islands 10 -29

Trinidad and Tobago 12 and 29


Barbados, Belize, Commonwealth 15-29

St. Vincent and the Grenadines 15-30

St. Kitts and Nevis under 35

The United Nations, Jamaica, and Belize, described youth as a transitioning period from adolescence to adulthood or “increasing independence” and maturity. Barbados compared youth to an “age of exploration,” while the Turks and Caicos Islands considered the period “a crucial time for young people, as they experience significant challenges which make them most vulnerable.”

Stakeholders proposed various age categories for youth such as 12-29, 12-30, and 13-35. Some explained that 12 is a defining moment for many young people in Antigua and Barbuda who might be starting secondary school. They added that this important step is symbolic of moving away from a “childish mentality” which is associated with primary school students. Stakeholders described the transition to secondary school as gigantic. They pointed out that 12 is also midway through early adolescence, a period which usually occurs between ages 10 and 14. During this time, adolescents are also developing cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally. They are more conscious about their bodies and curious about sex as puberty begins. In the Middle Adolescence stage (15-17) there is a growing



desire for autonomy, while youth experience greater independence and emotional stability, and develop a strong sense of self in the late adolescence or young adulthood stage (18-24).

It was not difficult to find a consensus on the beginning of the youth age. However, stakeholders could not agree on the end of youth. Some persons noted that age 30 was ideal for the end of youth. They referenced cultural beliefs that women who are not married by 30, are in danger of remaining single for the rest of their lives. They also considered the 20s to be the time when many young people enjoy their lives to the fullest and then try to settle down by 30. Others however, contended that persons in their early 30s can also be considered youthful although they have transcended the adolescence period. They added that times have changed and expressed amazement that marriage was incorporated into the debate.

With all definitions, opinions, and theories in mind, the DYA is of the view that 12-35 is most suitable for the category for youth in Antigua and Barbuda. Recognising the pivotal stages of adolescence, coupled with puberty, this National Youth Policy believes 12 is a good beginning. The stages of identity crisis, conventional morality, and abstract reasoning also characterised the non-homogenous youth group. Projections show that young people between ages 10 and 35 comprise approximately 30% of Antigua and Barbuda's population, estimated at 99,337 (Statistics Division, 2021). The category includes youth of diverse backgrounds and needs—students, parents, employees, entrepreneurs, low-risk, vulnerable, and most-at-risk youth, as well as immigrants and persons with disabilities. Although the age range narrows down the definition of youth, the goals of this policy are far-reaching; their manifestation will also benefit individuals who fall outside the youthful bracket of 12-35.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ABEF	Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation	APUA	Antigua Public Utilities Authority
ABHTI	Antigua & Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute	ART	Aggression Replacement Training
ABIA	Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority	ASC	Antigua State College
ABICE	Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education	AT&LU	Antigua Trades & Labour Union
ABIIT	Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology	CARICOM	Caribbean Community
ABNTA	Antigua & Barbuda National Training Agency	CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
ABSB	Antigua and Barbuda Social Security Board	CFS	Child Friendly Schools
ABSIP	Antigua and Barbuda Science Innovation Park	COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
ABWU	Antigua and Barbuda's Workers Union	CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
AGHS	Antigua Girls' High School	CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	DYA	Department of Youth Affairs
AIR	American Institutes for Research	ECCU	Eastern Caribbean Currency Union

EDP	Entrepreneurial Development Programme	MBS	Medical Benefits Scheme
EQ	Emotional Intelligence	MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
ES	Effective School	NODS	National Office of Disaster Services
ESF	Effective Schools Framework	NYC	National Youth Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	NYPA	National Youth Parliament Association
GARD	Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development	OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
GBV	Gender-based violence	OSEC	One Stop Employment Centre
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	PBM	Positive Behaviour Management
GSNA	Grade Six National Assessment	PYD	Positive Youth Development
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education	RPFAB	Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ILO	International Labour Organization	SEN	Special Education Needs
IQ	Intelligence Quotient	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
IT	Information Technology	STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
JCI	Junior Chamber International	STEM	Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

JJRP	Juvenile Justice Reform Programme	TBL	Tripple Bottom Line
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN	United Nations	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNCRC	United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child	WAR	Women Against Rape
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme	WHO	World Health Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	YEEP	Youth and Education Empowerment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	YEP	Youth Empowerment Programme





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Youth Policy is a strategic framework for youth development and empowerment in Antigua and Barbuda. It captures the psychosocial, spiritual, economic, and political concerns and experiences of young people in nine (9) broad themes. The policy will guide stakeholders as they make decisions and implement meaningful programmes and services to engage youth. Youth engagement necessitates strategic alliances and synergies that foster team cohesion and sustainable development.

Thematic Focus I: Quality Education & Capacity Building examines the Child Friendly/Effective Schools Framework in primary and secondary institutions. The policy then discusses the significance of literacy and numeracy development and the provisions that are in place for special education. Realising that all students are not homogenous, the policy highlights the importance of gifted and digital education, the absence of science teachers on the sister isle, and negative implications for Barbudan youth. The next segment focuses on cultural empowerment and affirmation as it underscores the significance of history and archaeology. The policy appeals for a resurgence of national pride and preservation of the nation's tangible and intangible heritage. The theme closes with the role of Parent Teacher Associations in bridging the gap between home and school and plans of the National PTA to further the interests and welfare of parents, staff, and students in all institutions.


Thematic Focus II: Youth Unemployment & Human Capital Development details the increasing challenges young people face, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. It also captures the efforts of the government, trade unions, and civil society organisations to build human capital through various empowerment initiatives and the plight of persons with disabilities. The policy also aims to heighten awareness about the value of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification and appeals for greater efforts to modernise and destigmatise technical and vocational institutions. It then pinpoints the role of the University of the West Indies in combatting socio-economic inequalities, preserving its academic rank worldwide, and bolstering local research. The policy also underscores the need for multicultural competence and succession planning to lessen the importation of foreign workers and enable youth to manage strategically, as they coexist with regional and international counterparts in diverse industries. The theme ends with the antecedents to employee engagement and various strategies that will mitigate against unproductivity.

Thematic Focus III: Creative Industries & Entrepreneurship highlights the multimillion dollar value of the creative industries that are a rich source of fulfilling careers. It also documents the challenges the Department of Culture encounters with unregistered artists and its efforts to measure the economic contribution of the creative and cultural industries to Antigua and Barbuda's national development. The policy then transitions to resilient youth who exploited opportunities and adapted to the COVID-19 environment, as well as the challenges young entrepreneurs encountered as they set up businesses. The theme closes with the importance of sustainable entrepreneurship and strategies aimed at helping youth entrepreneurs.

Thematic Focus IV: Environmental Sustainability emphasises the role of young people in protecting the environment and using the natural resources in a sustainable manner. This theme also magnifies the diversification of the maritime sector and presents the blue economy as one way to fight youth unemployment. The focus then shifts to green economy initiatives in the Department of Environment and ministries of agriculture and tourism. The policy also outlines the efforts of the National Office of Disaster Services in climate change mitigation and adaptation, but not before Barbudans reminisced on their catastrophic experience with Hurricane Irma and another lingering trauma of migration.

Thematic Focus V: Gender, Leadership & Social Change centres on the inequalities in the family and schools that reinforce gender discrimination. The policy also focuses on fatherhood engagement and underscores the importance of male role models in the home and male role model teachers in the classroom. It then highlights the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and the need for youth to think strategically when making decisions. The policy also accentuates the vital role of political leaders and the mutualistic relationship they should have with emerging leaders to enact real change. The section ends with the churches' perspectives on young people's involvement in politics and the need for youth to be value-centred in a sophisticated arena.

Thematic Focus VI: Values & Spiritual Development underscores the fundamental principles that build character and spiritual development of young people. The policy also looks at the dimensions of workplace spirituality and its alignment to positive youth development, engagement, and corporate social responsibility. The lens then turn to the active role of a few youth organisations that continue to instill spiritual and critical values among youth.



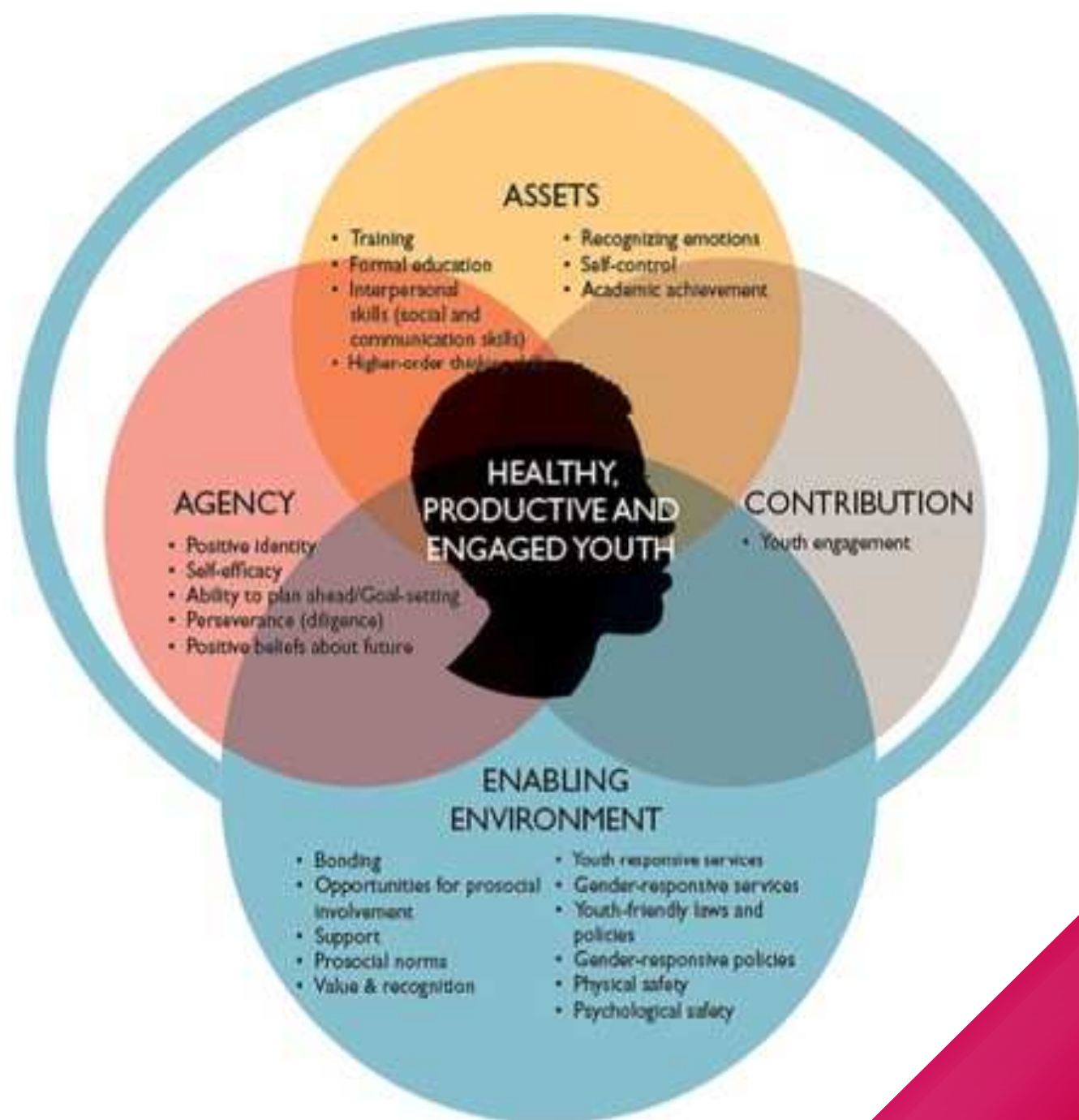
Thematic Focus VII: Protection, Safety & Security details the debate surrounding corporal punishment and also examines the issue of bullying online, in schools, and at the workplace. The policy then elaborates on the impact of gender-based violence that includes domestic violence, sexual offences, human trafficking, and statutory rape. The National Youth Policy also captures stakeholders' divided views on the decriminalisation of marijuana and efforts to help reform youth in conflict with the law.

Thematic Focus VIII: Health, Sports & Psychosocial Support accentuates the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, deep-rooted social issues, lifestyle diseases, and HIV/AIDS. The policy also examines the value of sports and the need to protect athletes who fall under the supervision of paedophiles.

Thematic Focus IX: Media & Department of Youth Affairs is the final section of the National Youth Policy. It underlines the critical role of the media in promoting socially responsible behaviour and the dark side of social media, which not only help to build businesses but also to assassinate character. The policy then takes a close look at the role Department of Youth Affairs and the challenges it encounters with limited resources. The section closes with the ardent efforts of the National Youth Council, National Youth Ambassadors, and National Youth Parliament Association.

Guided by the positive youth development (PYD) framework, the policy underscores the importance of the multi-sectoral approach. Youth are everywhere; therefore, they deserve to be represented in every domain. This policy highlights the perspectives of diverse youth and also promotes partnerships with cornerstone institutions such as the family, church, and schools. They too play a key role in setting standards, shaping minds, and enabling youth to soar to exceptional levels of influence and leadership. At these heights, youth are able to leave a positive legacy that can transcend generations. However, this National Youth Policy is ever cognisant that in areas where deficiencies and dysfunction exist, youth flame can be extinguished. Psychological resources are critical to youth engagement. Hence, the need for strategic planning and effective policies that will buttress agents of socialisation and authentic change.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



PREAMBLE

2021 has been an eventful year and one of many accomplishments, but none greater than the manifestation of this National Youth Policy. The policy was high on the ministry's agenda and the DYA team committed to collecting quantitative and qualitative data that would present an accurate picture of youth on the ground. The plan commenced with a needs analysis, weeks of genuine and unrestrained discourse with young people who were anxious to share their views on a broad range of issues such as spirituality, COVID-19, education, sports, unemployment, and entrepreneurship. The needs analysis guided the construction of the instruments and through national consultations, focus group sessions, one-on-one interviews, and questionnaires, the DYA acquired a substantial amount of data.

Despite social distance regulations and geographical barriers, young people and key stakeholders, including those in the diaspora, showed a keen interest in the consultations. They appeared on Google and Zoom platforms after working hours, to talk about matters that affected them. The plan was not just to generate statistics, but also to understand the hows and the whys—the root causes of problems and fundamental challenges that hinder youth advancement. The virtual world made the process easy. Youth displayed their maturity and engaged in constructive discussions which generated more than a snapshot of statistics, but also a wealth of information that pervades every aspect of this National Youth Policy. Stakeholders described their overall experience as enlightening and cathartic and appealed for more consultations in the future.

Realising that the policy would be deficient without Barbuda's input, the DYA team travelled to the sister isle to collect data. The experience was a fulfilling one and Barbudans were happy that they were included in the process. Barbudans shared their vision for youth development and discussed the lingering impact of Hurricane Irma. Individuals who could not participate in the consultations or face-to-face interviews, shared their perspectives over the phone and via social media. The nine themes of this National Youth Policy encapsulate the perspectives of diverse stakeholders and include a plethora of recommendations and strategies that build youth resilience and mitigate against internal and external shocks.

Thematic Focus I: Quality Education & Capacity Building



Antigua Grammar School-Class of 2021

Recognising education as a colossal source of empowerment, Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) 4—quality education. From eliminating poverty to revitalizing partnerships, Goal 4 is the bedrock on which 16 SDGs lie. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to an education,” but the calibre of education must never be forsaken. As a small island developing state, Antigua and Barbuda has made significant strides in educating the masses in enabling environments. Though challenged financially, this twin island state continues to navigate foreign fields during one of the toughest periods in modern times—the COVID-19 pandemic. With the Ministry of Education receiving the lion’s share, \$143.1 million of the \$1.4 billion budget allocation for 2021, the government understands that education is a key combatant against poverty and all forms of social inequalities, as well as a propeller for positive youth development.

1.1 Child Friendly/Effective Schools Framework

The Child Friendly Schools (CFS) framework, also referred to as the Effective Schools Framework (ESF) in secondary schools, was developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and focuses on establishing holistic, enabling environments. In 2008 Antigua and Barbuda piloted the CFS Framework.



Students and staff at Irene B. Williams Secondary School

Recognising the usefulness of the framework that bolsters early childhood and youth development, the Ministry of Education expanded the initiative into 28 of 30 government-run primary schools and introduced the Effective Schools (ES) model into 4 of 13 secondary schools. If young people are to be truly empowered, more needs to be done to ensure that the CSF/ESF principles of child-centredness, democratic participation, and inclusiveness are fully realised.

Appropriate class sizes and teaching methodology are two major requirements of the child-centredness principle that are vital to the cognitive and psychological development of young people. Although a lowered student-teacher ratio does not necessarily add value to the teaching-learning process, smaller class sizes can certainly add value when working with struggling learners. A lowered student-teacher ratio may result in less workload for educators, greater instructional scaffolding, and heightened engagement for both parties. This level of support and motivation is dependent on the teachers' skill set. The current practice of inserting untrained teachers into the system can counteract youth advancement and the overall goals of the CFS/ESF. Acknowledging the economic challenges of developing countries, the Ministry of Education must intensify its efforts to provide pre-and in-service teacher training and effective support and supervision for teachers trying to manoeuvre uncharted territory. Many teachers in the system can also be classified as youth and they too might be facing similar challenges like their youthful students. Therefore, these teachers also need to be scaffolded by competent educators so that they can better connect with students and personify proficiency.

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Educational Statistical Digest for the Academic Year 2018-2019 shows that 48% of primary and 50% of secondary school teachers were trained in Antigua and Barbuda. If scores of young people are to truly receive a quality education, officials must place greater emphasis on training teachers. Equally essential is the need for more meaningful refresher training for

educators who were trained a long time ago. New pedagogical training is necessary. Refresher training helps to augment productivity and educational excellence as it keeps educators abreast with current knowledge. The emphasis on training must not be downplayed since it builds teacher knowledge and comprehension, as well as their teaching skills and self-evaluation.

Well-trained educators have a positive impact on youth development because they:

1. establish a constructive classroom climate
2. enhance students' self-esteem
3. motivate students consistently
4. develop critical thinking skills
5. improve student learning
6. prepare students for real life



Students at Sir, Novelle Richards Academy

There were resounding calls amid consultations for the Ministry of Education to tailor the curriculum to suit the needs of both the private and public sectors. The major complaint was that the theoretically-oriented curriculum was archaic and lacked meaningful practical components. Educators called for better synergy among the Ministry of Education, examination bodies, and the wider private sector so that the educational content would be relevant to the 21st century. This democratic synergy is crucial to professional development and youth employment, especially amid a rising rate of joblessness. Globally, youth employment fell by 8.7 per cent in 2020 compared with 3.7 per cent for adults (International Labour Organization, 2021).

The earlier focus of implementation of CFS in Antigua and Barbuda was solely behaviour management but CFS is much more involved with child protection systems, skills-based Health and Family Life Education (HFLE), and inclusive, learning-ready classrooms. The principle of inclusiveness is key to youth advancement. All children have a right to an education, regardless of their circumstances, including race, ability, gender, ethnicity, economic status, and physical limitations. While the CFS is thriving in some schools, the ESF's only claims to success are the use of Positive Behaviour Management (PBM) processes and the existence of student councils at the secondary school level.

In its February 2021 draft report on the evaluation of the implementation of CFS in Antigua, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) raised doubts about the sustainability of the CFS/ESF initiative due to a shortage of additional resources and time. There were also challenges in monitoring and evaluating the initiative. Nevertheless, the AIR was optimistic that the model could be successful if implemented as part of regular classroom practice.

1.2 Literacy Development

Twenty-first-century education necessitates an outright fight against illiteracy and other poverty-plagued, anti-progressive issues that stunt the development of self-actualisation. Illiteracy should no longer pervade the landscape of Antigua and Barbuda. During focus group sessions educators pointed out that despite an average of 75% passes overall in CSEC English A and English B from 2014 to 2019, many students in tertiary institutions continue to exhibit literacy deficiencies. Youth need to master literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, and decoding to capitalise on the wealth of information in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Whether it is the bottom-up, top-down, or interactive approach, systems must be in place to scaffold and catapult young people from the stage of emergent literacy where phonological awareness abounds to the ideal stage of abstract reading where an appreciation of multiple viewpoints exists. The journey to the much talked about Zone of Proximal Development centres on teacher support and fosters a level of self-efficacy and autonomy that breeds critical-thinking and proactive citizens.



Youth development hinges on literacy development. Since reading, writing, and communication are complex cognitive processes, there must be an unwavering commitment by the government to indulge in authentic research and develop effective literacy programmes. Educators insisted that these programmes require teachers of fortitude and multicultural competence who possess the experience and expertise to plan, screen, refer, and activate youngsters' schemata. While universal access to primary and secondary schools is evident in Antigua and Barbuda, there must be a valiant effort to position the education system to meet the needs of underprivileged youth and propel a rebirth of confidence. The Ministry of Education

must equip itself with reliable, valid, and dynamic assessments that are essential to making accurate diagnoses of literacy aptitude and learners' needs at an early stage. Failure to pay genuine attention to this embryonic and foundational stage will grossly impede youth development and societal advancement. Based on stakeholders' input and multiple literature, the following strategies should foster literacy development in Antigua and Barbuda.

Strategies for Promoting Literacy Development

1. Encourage parents to read to their children and model the behaviour they want to see.
2. Train all teachers to habitually incorporate the six language arts skills (listen, speak, read, write, view, and visually represent) into their lessons.
3. Create literacy-rich environments in classrooms with pictures and books of various genres that stimulate and enhance reading, writing and speaking.
4. Build libraries in educational institutions.
5. Set a purpose for reading and writing to activate students' existing schemata (background knowledge) and build motivation, direction and comprehension.
6. Integrate technology like text-to-speech apps, blogs. and online games to buttress literacy skills in all subjects.
7. Introduce graphic organizers like KWL charts and Venn diagrams to help students organize, visualise, simplify, and remember information.
8. Use debate to foster student engagement and critical literacy.
9. Offer intensive and individualised interventions by trained specialists to assist struggling readers.
10. Incorporate music, art, role-playing, and field trips into lessons to bolster literacy among kinaesthetic learners.
11. Teach students language techniques, text structure, summary writing, and other reading and writing strategies to make them independent learners.
12. Provide financial support for research on literacy.

1.3 Numeracy Development

Like literacy, numeracy development is essential to the holistic growth of young people. Described as the mirror image or dual of literacy, numeracy is not simply an individual's ability to count. It entails the use of higher-order cognition like problem-solving, idea generation, and creative thinking that enables youth to excel in all spheres of society. For years, mathematics has caused many to sweat profusely, experience anxiety attacks or frown when the subject is mentioned. A collective and strategic effort would be required to alter that mindset. Mathematics should not be feared, but fear of this mandatory subject abounds in a growing number of young people.



The average overall passes for CSEC Mathematics from 2014 to 2019 was 44%. Students complained during focus group sessions that the reasons why they failed mathematics were largely attributed to three factors: difficult examinations, poor math teachers, and insufficient time to complete the syllabus. Students recommended that there should be another mathematics exam tailored for those who are, for example, in the business or humanities stream, rather than a standard exam for all. The students added that alternative math exams would generate a greater appreciation for the subject, make learning mathematics more meaningful, and improve the pass rates and self-esteem of thousands of students across the region.

Although all youth will not learn at the same rate, each learner must be afforded the opportunity for success at his or her level. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that all learners have equitable access to basic numeracy skills. A moderate percentage will have a desire to use the numeracy skills and knowledge gained to pursue further interests in fields that require the use of mathematics. However, all youth should be exposed to the opportunity to build capacity in numeracy so that they can successfully branch out into their preferred paths. Investment in developing numeracy skills can positively influence the social and economic development of the nation. Trained math educators also made several recommendations for education officials and teachers during interviews on numeracy development.

Recruit teachers wisely
Teachers must have a strong working knowledge of the concepts to be taught. Misconceptions often occur when knowledge of content areas is limited and when such misconceptions are engrained in the child's mind, it is extremely difficult to

erase or replace. One will encounter that exceptional child who will challenge the teacher's presentation, even beyond the scope of what one may deem to be the child's level. The teacher needs to be prepared for such occurrences; embrace these situations, and be in a position to respond appropriately.

Position trained teachers at primary levels

Ensure all trained or qualified math teachers are positioned at all levels of primary schools. This is necessary to establish a solid foundation and appreciation for mathematics.

Develop an explorative mind

To create learning conditions that will effect critical thinking and reasoning skills, math teachers must have an explorative mind. While rote has its place to cement basic concepts and to assist with the student's ability to recognise patterns, young people must be brought into that place where they see math as a functional tool with many benefits. The teacher must appreciate that in addition to the learning of content areas in mathematics, students can also gain skills such as problem-solving, organizing, and time management that can extend to one's daily operations during and beyond elementary and secondary years of schooling.

Know that Math methodology is dynamic

Passivity has no place in the math learning space. Mathematics is life and as such the imparters of numeracy skills need to adopt a lifelong learning approach with regards to the strategies employed. Youth are not waiting on information. They are living in an age where the acquisition of knowledge is instant. The math teacher's job as a facilitator in the learning process is to guide and ensure that the process is authentic and reliable.

Implement peer teaching

Children communicate with each other in different ways which oftentimes vary from the way we communicate as adults. Peer teaching is a suitable strategy to employ as well as affording many opportunities for 'teacher with student' and 'student with student' communication so that each person will have a better understanding of what is being transferred.

Understand that mathematics is a language

Each language has its terms, expressions, and rules that must be followed to preserve the integrity of its rudiments. Mathematics too has its terms, expressions, and rules that young people need to be exposed to from a very early age if they are to properly appreciate and develop their numeracy skills. Many opportunities have to be provided for children to develop that appreciation for the fundamentals of numeracy.

Strategies for Numeracy Development

- Develop a heightened interest and positive attitude toward mathematics.
- Teach mathematics creatively via songs, stories, dance, poetry, and games like warri and dominoes.
- Integrate advance organisers into lessons to summarise difficult concepts and formula.
- Introduce mnemonic strategies to help students retain information.
- Use cooperative learning groups to foster interdependence.
- Integrate technology to bolster student engagement.
- Use authentic assessments to test knowledge and skills.
- Use humour to keep students interested.



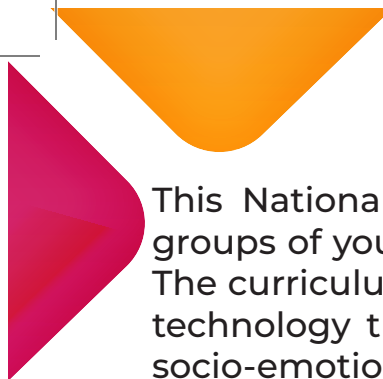
*Education Officials and top candidates
for 35th Annual CSEC Awards*

1.4 Special Education

In March 2021, the database of the Ministry of Education showed that there were approximately 17,384 students registered in schools nationwide. It also highlighted that the Special Education Needs Unit had assessed approximately 550 of these students who had been identified with some form of challenge in negotiating the school plant and the national curriculum. The most common disabilities were the blind and visually impaired, deaf and hearing-impaired, and emotional disabilities, while Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was next in line, along with autism. Youth with special education needs comprise individuals with disabilities and learning difficulties which are described as mild, moderate, and severe. In sync with the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Antigua and Barbuda acknowledges that students with special educational needs should be afforded privileges similar to pupils in the conventional classroom setting or placed “in the least restrictive and most enabling environment to the extent that resources permit,”(Education Act, 2008).

In the draft Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy, that is guided by the SEN Code of Practise, the Ministry of Education vows to do its best to facilitate inclusive learning. However, lack of a permanent space to function, inadequate human and operational resources, poor parental support, as well as resistance by teachers to provide accommodation, modifications and alternatives for special needs students remain core challenges facing special education. The Adele School for Special Children also highlighted their challenges; among them, a lack of physical space. The compound is quite small and there is no room for much needed expansions. There is also a lack of related services which students need. These services include physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, early intervention services, assistive technology training, transitioning and career planning, as well as vocational skills acquisition. The government must address these issues that are vital to youth development.

While there is educational provision for some special needs youth, financial restrictions, inappropriate accommodations, and geography hinder others on the moderate or severe end of the spectrum from accessing free public education. For those who choose the private route, special education can be costly. The government must intensify its efforts to assist families burdened with the requirements of special education and reduce disparity among all classes, including Barbudan youth who do not have full-time access to special education programmes on the sister isle.



This National Youth Policy aims to fight discrimination and empower diverse groups of young people with exceptional needs, including those with disabilities. The curriculum should also be enabling and incorporate a wide range of assistive technology that bolsters meaningful participation in educational activities. The socio-emotional atmosphere of educational institutions must also be engaging for the persons with disabilities to perform at optimal levels. Despite limited resources, the Ministry of Education has made progress in developing special education programmes. More than 50 teachers have received their first degrees in special education and others received special education certificates from the University of the Southern Caribbean. Progress is also evident in:

- | |
|--|
| • weekly assessments of students who encounter challenges. |
| • termly training of teachers in special education. |
| • parent workshops each year to guide and support parents. |
| • detailed SEN Assessment Report along with Teacher's Card, for parents, schools, and counsellors following student assessments. |
| • support for teachers in teaching special needs students. |
| • assistive devices and manipulatives for SEN students in schools. |
| • negotiating the national curriculum and the school plant. |

The special education unit also conducted online Zoom workshop training for parents with special needs students during the COVID pandemic. Their focus for 2021 entailed guiding parents to use the Seesaw platform to support their children with online learning.

1.5 Gifted Education



Talented students must not be relegated to traditional classrooms where boredom and resistance may set in among some of the most analytically, synthetically, and practically gifted minds. Like the differently-abled, precocious youth have special needs and require special attention. This is because, unlike their peers, gifted students are faster learners and abstract thinkers who are highly motivated and exhibit a high level of metacognitive knowledge and awareness. Teachers must not fall into stereotypical traps that confine gifted students to merely certain socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers must be cognisant that gifted students can be found in diverse places, among every race, nationality, and gender or may be sitting quietly at the back of the class.

Additionally, educators must realise that the characteristics of gifted students have increased. No longer are gifted youth identified solely by their high IQ. Teachers must familiarise themselves with Robert Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence that highlights three dimensions: analytical (academic problem-solving and computation), creative (imaginative and innovative problem-solving) and practical (street smarts and common sense). Educators should also be knowledgeable about



Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences which include linguistic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Youth may display extraordinary talent, but if left unnurtured, they may be left behind and unfulfilled. Educators must redesign the curricula to cater for young people who do not fall within the category of traditional intelligence. The education system must be grounded in solid strategic programmes that identify, accelerate and enrich exceptional students to attain higher levels of achievement in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This is necessary to combat increased isolation, depression and dropout rates among youth.

1.6 Digital Education

The role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in youth empowerment must be emphasised. ICTs are the vehicle to SDG progress. The integration of ICTs in every domain helps to reduce inequalities, foster innovation, and promote decent work and quality education. The face-to-face mode of instructional delivery pervaded all educational organisations in Antigua and Barbuda in the pre-COVID period, but the pandemic revolutionised the teaching-learning process. Caribbean youth were among the 1.2 billion-plus students thrust into the world of remote learning. The government was forced to invest heavily in online platforms and pedagogy as it provided crash courses for educators, parents, and students alike. Youth in this twin-island state should never revert to a stage where they are so comfortable with in-person instruction that online education seems alien. The integration of technology in all subject areas, appreciation of blended learning, and a narrowing of the digital divide must precede a changed mindset among the masses. The Ministry of Education must also elevate its level of persuasion and support to teachers who continue to resist digital literacy as a core literacy. The incorporation of technology into 21st-century classrooms should no longer be optional.



This National Youth Policy promotes all efforts by the public and private sectors to bridge the digital divide. In this digital age, there is a need for universal access to Information Technology (IT) at all spheres of the education system. This would reduce computer illiteracy and the stress associated with technology. Social media mastery is not enough. IT knowledge, particularly at an early age, would enable students to build their digital skills, appreciate digital education, and align themselves for digital

jobs. They would also become the producers and not mere consumers of technology. Recognising the financial challenges of many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), especially amid COVID, the government must develop more partnerships with the private sector to build Antigua and Barbuda's ICT infrastructure. It must not only furnish students with laptops but also make a conscious effort to ensure that youth in poverty-stricken communities have good internet connectivity. ICT deficiencies reduce economic growth and productivity and breed educational inequalities among youth.

As everyone attempted to cope with the new normal, there was a glaring socio-economic disparity between the haves and have nots. Students who lived in vulnerable situations could not afford basic technological luxuries like computers

and the internet, which are essential to digital education. In 2021 there were approximately 8000 secondary school students in Antigua and Barbuda. The DYA distributed 1000 questionnaires to students in secondary institutions across the island in April. 38% indicated that they do not have a computer. The majority of the students identified financial difficulties as the main reason why they were without computers. During consultations and focus group discussions, educators highlighted that student online class attendance plunged by at least 60% during COVID-19. Lack of access was a key factor for lack of attendance, however, teachers also complained about some students who had computers and internet access, but were either a no-show in the classroom or failed to attend classes regularly. Other variables were at play, including a general lack of motivation.

COVID did not alleviate the socio-economic circumstances of all youth; in many cases, it exacerbated the situation. The COVID-19 disruption coincided with various challenges that affected students' academic performance. 24% of the students who participated in the questionnaire indicated that their grades improved, while 23% noted little or no change; but 47% pointed out that their grades dropped. Young people complained about being bombarded with assignments and receiving little or no feedback, while teachers said that they were burdened with online preparations, as well as higher electricity and data costs. 54% of the questionnaire participants admitted that they did not study often while they were home. Among the reasons were:

demotivation	mental breakdown
household chores	depression
procrastination	stress
distractions	work



The government must not only enhance the technological infrastructure and resources to adequately improve pedagogy and student success rates but psychosocial support for students, parents, and teachers is also necessary. 27% of the students indicated that they needed help for mental health issues, while 42% indicated educational assistance. If youth are to embrace digital education, the psychosocial support must be strong enough to cater to their emotional, mental and social needs, whether it be in the form of mental health counselling or spiritual encouragement. The ICT diversification of education is necessary since it will ultimately precede the diversification of Antigua and Barbuda's economy. However, it requires strong support systems for stakeholders. Youth expressed fear that once the pandemic is under control, educators will revert to their pre-COVID ways of teaching, which involved little or no integration of technology.

1.7 Barbuda & Science



Biology students at Sir McChesney George Secondary School

The absence of science teachers for core subjects like Biology, Physics, and Chemistry at Sir McChesney George Secondary School raised serious concerns among Barbudans. Parents explained that while Agricultural Science was critical, the school also needs full-time teachers for other science subjects. Parents lauded the efforts of the headmaster who was playing the dual role of principal-teacher since 1997. Had it not been for the principal's sacrifice, parents stated, there would have probably been no hope of producing future generations of doctors from the sister isle. Parents urged the Ministry of Education to install at least one teacher for Biology, Physics, and Chemistry so that Barbudan youth can have similar opportunities as their Antiguan counterparts. The government must ensure that youth, including female students on the sister isle, are equipped to pursue careers in nursing, medicine, and science-related fields. In the 2019 Women in Business and Management survey report for Antigua and Barbuda, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reiterated that "Although women make up more than 50 per cent of higher-education graduates, they remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines." Regardless of the school's population size, augmenting the science programme at Sir McChesney George Secondary School can also help in empowering and propelling females into male-dominated fields.

While all subjects are not negotiable, this National Youth Policy views all subjects as equals and believes that all students should be allowed to choose subjects that they deem fulfilling and would qualify them for the National CSEC Awards. There is no doubt that the STEM disciplines are vital, but this National Youth Policy prefers the STEAM model (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) which does not exclude the Arts. Like science, an arts-rich education develops critical thinking skills and "is driven by discovery, curiosity, and a profound longing to know oneself and the surrounding world" (Arts Academy, 2021).

1.8 Significance of Culture, History & Archaeology

Culture



Cultural enthusiasts and educators expressed the need for youth, particularly nationals, to want to learn more about their culture, and not merely for academic purposes. Acknowledging the multicultural element of this society, the culture of Antigua and Barbuda must remain visible in the melting pot. Culture plays a key role in shaping one's identity, but as the government promotes tolerance and multicultural competence, youth must internalise the uniqueness of being Antiguan and Barbudan. The government and wider community must work collaboratively and unceasingly to develop a culture of social cohesion where young

people neither feel ostracised or alienated in the land of their birth nor see their regional counterparts as threats. The question “Who am I?” must be answered with a resounding sense of national pride ingrained in social identity and devoid of all forms of prejudice. One educator emphasised that being Antiguan and Barbudan must not be determined only by birth or naturalization, but also by an unbreakable spiritual connection. It is that desire to fight for the betterment of land that we call our own. It also entails the nationalistic acts of its people and the undying will to always come back home even when one is in the farthest point in the world. Being Antiguan and Barbudan is to defend our way of life or culture without apology.



Youth Cooking Fungee

Educators and cultural enthusiasts noted that greater efforts are needed to inculcate the importance of this island's cultural heritage into youth who quickly absorb other cultures and show little or no appreciation for their own. The family, school and church are pivotal institutions that foster a love culture. While we understand the importance of variety, the cooking of local dishes like fungee and saltfish, ducana and pepperpot in the homes and schools, as well as the preservation of the mother tongue or native dialect, must be elevated to levels of national significance and prestige. In an age of cultural imperialism, young people must realise that

there is nothing wrong with showing local preference. Educators also called on the church to regain its prominent position in promoting and preserving the culture of Antigua and Barbuda. Referencing the role of the church in reviving steelpan and maintaining traditional courtesy and values that are quickly disappearing, educators insisted that the church must once again become an integrated and proactive institution within this dynamic society.

Youth should learn about Antigua and Barbuda's culture because it helps them to forge a common identity that is specific only to this twin-island state. Education officials should intensify efforts to write cultural practices into the school curriculum. Understandably, it is cultural for culture to change, but this country's culture is changing too fast. It is being overtaken by a global culture. Drastic measures need to be taken to stem the loss of all local practices, perspectives, beliefs and preferences. We must find a means of ensuring that our culture does not become a replica of someone else's but more of an amalgamation and celebration of all the people past and present who have made and continue to make Antigua and Barbuda home.

Antigua and Barbuda must also intensify efforts to tap into grants and other sources of funding to preserve this nation's cultural heritage. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported the Department of Culture in a project entitled "Strengthening capacities for the implementation of the 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in Antigua and Barbuda." The Warri Revival Programme will train 550 students and 50 members of the business community, churches, community and sports groups how to play Warri. Six young people—those currently in vocational programmes as well as prison inmates—and at least one member of staff from the Department of Culture, will also receive training to create warri boards for local purchase. This will allow for the transmission of the knowledge and continuity of the skills associated with making warri boards and allow greater public access to them. Students and conservatists will work closely together in tree-planting exercises to combat the decline of the *Caesalpinia Crista*, the tree that bears the warri "seeds". Its revival will instruct the populace how the protection of living heritage elements goes hand in hand with the protection of related spaces and their constituents.



The Antigua and Barbuda Warri Academy welcomed the UNESCO project and reiterated calls for the introduction of warri in the schools. Founder of the academy Trevor Simon contended that the multifaceted game would help the Ministry of Education, Sports and the Creative Industries achieve its objectives since learning warri can help enhance students' problem solving, confidence, and ability to plan and execute. This National Youth Policy joins the Antigua and Barbuda Warri Academy and urges the ministry to introduce this mind-game that can also improve discipline. Once the coronavirus is no longer a threat, young people should be able to benefit tremendously from the game that continues to teach vital life skills.

History



Monument of Sir Vere Cornwall Bird Sr.

If young people are going to appreciate the culture of Antigua and Barbuda, they must also appreciate the rich history of the twin-island state. Quality education is holistic and includes not merely our present way of life, but is also inextricably linked to past occurrences. Youth said that they want to know more about the history of Antigua and Barbuda and they want that history to be told by Antiguan and Barbudans. They felt as if Antigua and Barbuda were underrepresented in textbooks

and hoped that more young people would find history appealing. The study of giant figures and unsung heroes must not fall into oblivion but must remain imprinted in our minds to guide future decisions. The names and meaningful contributions of fallen and standing giants like Prince Klaas, Dame Georgiana Ellen Nellie Robinson, Sir Vere Cornwall Bird Sr., Sir George Herbert Walter, Sir Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards, and Sir Lester Bryant Bird must reverberate in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Antigua and Barbuda. With Dame Georgiana as the lone female in the hall of stalwarts, young girls must understand that their unwavering contributions can propel them to the status of national heroines and create more gender balance in the recount. Young people must recognise that the freedoms they take for granted resulted because of the hard work of national heroes and countless ordinary men and women. History must also serve as a reminder to all youth that they have the power to prevent a recurrence of atrocities and all forms of exploitation that restrict the development of self and nation.

Despite the wealth of knowledge associated with history, many students do not want to study the subject. The most recited reasons, according to teachers, are that history is boring, has too many dates to remember, and has lost its relevance in modern-day society. Although a few institutions have sought to revive interest by making history mandatory, many students still regard the subject as a burden. Educators need to show the relevance of studying history and make it less a matter of learning dates and names but focus on why students should know those dates and names. The focus on “self” in time and space—the question “Who am I?” is an excellent entry point to teaching history—from a starting place of the individual. Other recommendations to popularise the subject include launching an intense history campaign throughout Antigua and Barbuda, subsidising payment for CSEC History, and teaching history to create more knowledgeable rounded youth who know how to forge a stable future because they know their past.

Archaeology

Like history, archaeology is another important field, which some young people said is yet to captivate the interest of their peers. Youth added that not only were they able to pursue a fulfilling career in archaeology, but they were also able to develop a deeper understanding of the specific heritage needs of Antigua and Barbuda with regards to representation and preservation. After an archaeology investigation is conducted, there is a need for interpreting artefacts and managing the tangible and intangible heritage—all of which aid in informing the cultural heritage of Antigua and Barbuda. Youth asserted that archaeology is only a start, but a necessary one nonetheless. Young people must understand the significance of heritage sites, which are undoubtedly tied to tourism. Thousands of tourists reach this nation's shores each year because of the rich historical and heritage sites. In 2016, Antigua and Barbuda successfully attained its first ever UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Antigua Naval Dockyard and its Related Archaeological Sites, a notorious historical landscape on the south of the island. As the only working Georgian-era dockyard, youth must appreciate the value of the Antigua Naval Dockyard as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. So too must they understand the need to display their national pride by protecting and preserving other sites of historical and cultural value across the island. Betty's Hope Plantation and Fort James, for example, must become household names and regarded with utmost reverence like the Antigua Naval Dockyard and its Related Archaeological Sites.



World Heritage Site Antigua Naval Dockyard

Youth pointed out that the government can assist in building interest in culture, history, and archaeology in several ways. The most effective would be an investment in the education sector. Young people are the nation's most promising resources. Collaborations with archaeologists, heritage managers, archivists, researchers, and teachers are crucial. Students should be exposed to newfound research as well as unusual, but attainable career options that will keep them engaged and help build the professional capacity of Antigua and Barbuda.



The Digital Age has also infiltrated the field of archaeology and the study of history.

There is a need for technical staff that specialise in areas such as sonar mapping, geographic information systems, virtual reality, and heritage management that balances conservation and development. By embracing modern advances, this country will be able to reveal historical treasures in innovative ways that can contribute to the development of unique tourism products, which are also beneficial to Antiguan and Barbudans and the diaspora. The government can also aid in prioritising the preservation of these elements that comprise national culture.

Strategies to Promote Historical/Cultural Heritage

- Educate the public about the country's rich culture through properly prearranged heritage festivals that have the potential to fascinate, exhibit cultural traditions, and raise the economic impact on the community (Crompton & McKay, 1997).
- Celebrate the important national events such as Independence Day and birthdays of national heroes via freedom walks where people pay respect and homage to important heritage (Srivastava, 2015).
- Organise heritage walks that are usually held during conference meetings where participants are guided to historic core areas (Shankar & Swamy, 2013).
- Capitalise on the mass media (radio, newspapers, social networks etc.) to promote cultural heritage.
- Use heritage trails to highlight cultural heritage in a customer - friendly and interactive way. In heritage trails different routes are linked with significant items of a particular heritage area.
- Recognise individuals nationally for their contribution to culture, history, and archaeology.
- The government and private sector must also grant more scholarships and loans to young people desirous of studying theatre, archaeology, history, music, and other culturally related fields that can boost cultural tourism and ultimately lead to a more diversified economy.

1.9 Role of Parent Teacher Associations



Cobbs Cross Primary School PTA fundraising campaign walk for a girl in need of heart surgery

The role of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) must not be downplayed. The PTA is an essential support unit for schools across the island. It helps to bridge the gap between these institutions and the home, and augment parental engagement in educational matters. The association fosters teacher sensitisation to real-life issues plaguing youth and their families. It also harnesses that level of understanding and emotional intelligence which are crucial to students' academic performance and psychological well-being. The PTA should be recognised nationally and consistently. Its social and economic contributions should not be taken lightly. The PTA's role transcends volunteerism

and involvement in scholastic events. Its efforts are evidently and undoubtedly entrenched in nation-building, unifying critical cornerstone institutions in Antigua and Barbuda.

The National Parent Teachers Association (NPTA) sees youth development as a critical part of its mandate since young people are present and future leaders. The NPTA aims to represent the views of parents on matters of national educational significance. It also aims to promote holistic education and further the interests and welfare of parents, staff, and students in all institutions of learning. The NPTA believes that teacher training is a legitimate medium that is crucial to youth development. Educators and youth workers can conduct case studies and other types of research as they learn firsthand about the skills and strategies to augment positive child and youth development. The NPTA plans to establish programmes that tangibly reward and recognise exceptional youth in areas not only confined to academics and sports, but also for being good role models to their peers. These programmes would ultimately acknowledge the role parents and students played in the lives of youth. For all the aims and plans of the NPTA to materialise, the association indicated that parents and the government must acknowledge that the NPTA has an important role to play in the development of the education system and make a conscious effort to include the association on different boards and councils.

Thematic Focus II: Youth Unemployment & Human Capital Development



Numerous individuals who participated in consultations, interviews, and questionnaires identified youth unemployment as a major problem in Antigua and Barbuda. It is also a universal issue. The ILO indicated in 2021 that the global figure for youth unemployment exceeded 64 million. Young people are finding it more difficult to be gainfully employed as the labour market prospects remain dim amid exogenous shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the tourism industry. As highlighted in the 2021 National Budget Statement, total visitor arrivals over the period January to September 2020, contracted by 52.5 per cent compared with the same period in 2019. The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) was forced to revise its growth projection for the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) to a decline of 16.2 percent in 2020. Like many SIDS, Antigua and Barbuda found itself in a peculiar, but globally familiar situation that exacerbated existing social and economic issues such as poverty and youth unemployment.

2.1 Youth Unemployment

According to the 2018 Labour Force Survey, the youth unemployment rate was 25.7%, which was more than triple the overall unemployment rate. Although the Statistics Division did not capture youth employment data in 2020, young people were among the hundred of labourers in the hotel industry and tourism-related fields who were plunged into a state of joblessness. Compared to 2019, the number of tourists fell by more than 60% in 2020. The direness of the situation was further highlighted in June 2020 when the management of Antigua and Barbuda Social Security Board (ABSB) announced that there was a 40% decline in contribution income, which translated to 11,000 fewer employed persons than the beginning of 2020. More than 70 per cent of the 11,000 were employed in the hotel accommodation and hospitality sectors.

Young people insisted that all lenses must be focused on youth unemployment because the issue has rippling effects. In 2020, the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda (RPFAB) announced that there was an overall decrease in crime. However, by July 2021 the Commissioner of Police reported an alarming trend of youth offenders. Youth reiterated that in times of depression or desperation, unemployed young people sometimes commit deviant and criminal acts to survive. Stakeholders postulated that though there has been a decrease in crime, there may be an increase in 'victimless' crimes. Some crimes go unreported including those that are controversially dubbed victimless crimes, such as prostitution and illicit drug use, which may lead to increased social health issues. Youth also asserted that with scores of young people on the breadline, a state of learned helplessness may likely set in.

Unemployed Males

Youth associated unemployment with stress, depression, and other forms of mental health challenges. Unemployed young males indicated that they felt emasculated especially since they were unable to contribute financially to their households or maintain the traditional role of breadwinner since the COVID-19 pandemic. The young men emphasised that it is difficult to eliminate the jobless status in a labour market crowded with employees of similar talents. Other unemployed males added that there is no doubt the spread of coronavirus had a negative impact on the economy, but they continue to be employed irregularly because too much emphasis is being placed on academic qualifications rather than on employee performance.

COVID-19 Opportunities

While some youth bemoaned the COVID-19 pandemic, others described it as “a blessing in disguise” since they were able to capitalise on the crisis, start their own businesses, and make an unprecedented amount of money. They argued that because young Antiguan and Barbudans have been socialised to become subordinates, it is difficult for them to perceive themselves in dominant roles outside of their homes. Youth added that the adage, “Government job might pay liddle but it’s sure”—an ideology of past and current generations—is a strong motivator for many young people to become part of the bulging public sector. This National Youth Policy encourages youth to not only focus on working an 8-4 job, but also to start their own small business and learn a trade or craft even as a second option. Small beginnings can lead to big things. Start small and expand.

Multiple Jobholders

Youth also complained about the same individuals being employed within several areas of the government sector. They recommended that the government alleviate the problem of youth unemployment and unemployment generally by tapping into the talents of other human resources. Young people noted that an employee who has multiple jobs is likely to burnout or become unproductive. They pointed out that while the government cannot police what workers do after-hours, it can put mechanisms in place to enhance job performance.

Jobseekers’ Plight

The development of this National Youth Policy involved multiple discussions with young people across the island. Youth were among droves of jobseekers who argued that employers rejected them due to either one or a combination of the following factors:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• stereotyping of secondary schools• criminal history• time extension for retirees• poor work ethics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gender• inexperienced/underqualified• overqualified• skill deficiency |
|---|--|

'Top School' Mentality



Youth are of the view that the stereotyping of a few secondary public institutions as “top schools” is detrimental to students outside of those establishments. They were adamant that the achievement of high CXC pass rates in the top schools are indicative of educational inequality which hinders employment opportunities. Youth argued that the Ministry of Education continues to secure placements for top performing students of the Grade Six National Assessments (GSNA) in the Antigua Girls' High School or the Antigua Grammar School. They pleaded for the elimination of the national grade six exams and suggested

a random placement of students in schools nationwide to reduce discrimination. That discrimination, they claimed, is implanted in the minds of some employers who believe that top schools produce the best workers.


Youth & Rehabilitation

Youth who were involved in criminal activities also said that they too faced discrimination because of their past troubles with the law. They urged employers to be more empathetic to their plight and allow them to be truly rehabilitated. Youth said that their recidivism rate will continue to be high if employers from both the public and private sectors continue to view them as “undesirables”. They called on the government not only to create meaningful jobs that would enable them to return to some state of normalcy after their prison experience, but also to invest in educational programmes in the prison to equip them academically. The young men pointed out that it is difficult to get a second chance without papers. They also lauded the efforts of the prison ministries and other social groups that continue to provide spiritual support, which aided in the rehabilitation process. This National Youth Policy believes that rehabilitation is possible and can be successful if young people are truly given second chance opportunities behind bars and outside of prison.



Retirees & Professionalisation

Young people also attributed the high youth unemployment rate to the extension of time granted to retirees. They believed that it created a bottleneck in the public sector by preventing upward social mobility and new employees from penetrating various organisations. Youth argued that it is important the government ensures that extensions for retirees are properly justified, especially if the skills of the retirees cannot easily be accessed in existent employees. They acknowledged that many of their peers lack the skills and knowledge needed in the job market, but they recommended that they work towards achieving professionalisation status by taking advantage of scholarships and training opportunities. However, this means that there must be an education drive to alert students and the wider public to the different scholarships that are available. One complaint was that young people could not capitalise on scholarships that they knew nothing about.



Stakeholders suggested that employers hire young, motivated professionals who can add value to their organisation and counteract employee disengagement. The Antigua and Barbuda 2018 Labour Force Survey Report highlighted that unemployment was less prevalent among those with higher educational attainment. The unemployment rate for persons 25 years or older with a university education, which largely comprised female university graduates, was 3.3% unlike those with primary education or less and with a lower/junior secondary education which were 10.4% and 7.4% respectively. However, the ILO (2020) posited that “Encouraging young women and men to go to university will not solve alone the problem of youth unemployment. It is important to ensure that university curricula are of high quality and also that there is sufficient demand for graduates’ skills.”

Despite the significance of higher-level education, many young people lamented that some employers do not want to provide on-the-job training. They preferred to employ individuals with both experience and education. Young people also complained that their undergraduate or graduate degree did not give them a competitive advantage since some employers refused to pay for their level of qualification, especially during this COVID pandemic. Many young people also noted that employers were implementing more cost-cutting initiatives during the COVID-19 than pre-pandemic period.

Work Ethics & Gender

Youth also bemoaned that lots of employers assumed that they do not have good work ethics. While young people acknowledged that some of their counterparts may have issues with punctuality, productivity, initiative, and attitude, they believed that all young people must not be placed into this stereotypical category. Although Antigua and Barbuda’s Constitution guarantees protection from gender-based discrimination, youth pointed out that there seems to be a rising preference for employing males. They argued that this discrimination resulted because some employers believed that the employment of females coincided with loss of capital and labour unlike males who do not have to grapple largely with feminine issues like menstruation and pregnancy. In the 2019 Women in business and management report: survey report for Antigua and Barbuda, the ILO noted that the development of policies and programmes to promote gender equality is guided by Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the SDGs and Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) Strategic Action Plan. In an effort to ensure gender equality, the ILO recommended that gender equality policies are communicated to employees and managers “with responsibility for recruitment, performance reviews, training and development, and remuneration decisions.

Strategies for Tackling Youth Unemployment

1. Invest in the online entertainment industry which is a great source of job creation for youth.
2. Train at least 2000 youth annually through comprehensive entrepreneurship development programmes. Merge the Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP) and Antigua and Barbuda Science Innovation Park (ABSIP) so that they can be more impactful. Some of the activities within both divisions overlap. If they unify they can have a more strategic approach to sustainable / development rather than operating independently.
3. Position qualified people to manage business incubators strategically. These individuals should be well-experienced visionaries. They must also possess the intellectual and emotional aptitude to deal with sophisticated matters related to foreign investment, which can open many doors for jobless youth.
4. Offer more incentives to youth to foster creativity and innovation. Host national competitions and reward youth as well.
5. Reform school curriculum and integrate entrepreneurial principles into all disciplines. Rather than merely concentrating on passing CXC subjects, youth can align their subjects with an entrepreneurial career.
6. Create a social partnership and establish a 5-10-year-plan to tackle youth unemployment.
7. Strengthen employment service centres like One Stop Employment Center and New Work Experience Programme to make youth more marketable.
8. Adopt the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) at the Youth and Education Empowerment Programme (YEEP) and other second-chance institutions. Focus on building skills and competencies rather than merely taking CXC subjects. Building competencies aligns with increased marketability for youth.
9. Offer more professional development and educational programmes in prison and designate a percentage of jobs to rehabilitated youth.
10. Provide more opportunities for on-the-job training.

2.2 Human Capital Development

Building knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes among young people is a critical catalyst for youth empowerment. A government's investment in human capital development has positive implications for national advancement because it is inextricably linked to employee engagement and economic growth. In this dynamic competitive environment, human capital development is key to tackling the scourge of youth unemployment.

2.21 Empowerment Initiatives

Literacy, Leadership, Second Chance Education



The DYA continues to play a key role in developing the human resources through various social programmes such as Literacy and Leadership. While the focus has largely been on reading and writing, the department is now focusing on the other types of literacy including financial, digital, critical, and multicultural. Rather than teaching these types of literacy in isolation, they will be integrated into another youth

affairs' programme aimed at increasing entrepreneurship. Greater emphasis must also be placed on reaching the target population.

The Youth and Education Empowerment Programme (YEPP), another youth affairs' initiative, enabled hundreds of vulnerable young people to get a second-chance-education and sit a wide range of CXC subjects free of cost. Youth of various backgrounds and nationalities testified that the programme enabled them to secure permanent employment and upward social mobility in various organisations and called on their peers to take advantage of the programme. However, more young people need to access the pro-youth programme. While the DYA recognises that there is a hunger for knowledge, it must remain ever cognisant of its overarching mandate to serve young people. Hence, the manifestation and significance of this National Youth Policy, which should serve as a guideline to drive organisational objectives and goals.

New Work Experience Programme

The Ministry of Labour also continues its fight against youth unemployment through its New Work Experience Programme. With approximately 800 people, including scores of youth training on the job and receiving a weekly stipend, the New Work Experience Programme has been a rewarding avenue that combats

poverty and secures permanent employment. However, some youth complained that some employers are using this labour programme as an employment agency. The Ministry of Labour must ensure that employers do not abuse the programme and overwork the multitude of young people in different organisations.

One Stop Employment Centre

The public and private sectors must continue to invest in training and development programmes which help to increase employee confidence, productivity, and well-being. Like the New Work Experience Programme, the One Stop Employment Centre (OSEC) builds skillset via training workshops that expose youth to critical business issues such as work ethics, budgeting, and financing. Youth also learn about the importance of the labour code, soft skills, job search techniques, and interview tips, but more emphasis needs to be placed on educating young people about their rights. Youth admitted that they were ignorant to the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Code and learnt what little they could from other people's experience. Their interest in the Labour Code peaked only when they believed that their rights were denied. Youth should be exposed to the Labour Code in educational institutions before they transition to the status of employees or employers.

In addition to permanent job placements in the private sector, OSEC offers youth assistance with creating a resumé and internship/trainee placement assistance. The internship/trainee programmes enable youth to gain experience and knowledge, which also allow them to have some form of work experience on their resúms. Companies in general are reluctant to hire jobseekers who have no work experience, even for an entry level position. Therefore, OSEC tries to encourage youth to invest in their future and do an internship, even if the trainee programme is unpaid. OSEC also offers other workshops such as customer service and interpersonal skills, entrepreneurship, and also placements in external courses that it negotiates with institutions for free. These courses include sewing, agriculture, and computer classes that concentrate on Microsoft Word, Excel, and QuickBooks. It is important that the government strengthen employment service centres to build human capital.



Trade Unions

The Antigua Trades & Labour Union (AT&LU) and the Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union (ABWU) have an awesome responsibility not only to defend the rights of workers and promote unionism, but also to educate young employees about their rights, roles, and responsibilities. For more than eight decades, the AT&LU hosted countless workshops and seminars to enhance the knowledge and skills of workers, including youthful employees. This forms part of ongoing efforts to improve the conditions of work and wages. Unions maintained that education and re-education remain a principal means of fostering adaptability and combatting challenges in the COVID-19 period.

In light of COVID-19, the ABWU recommended the establishment of a social partnership among the government, private sector, and trade unions to plan the way forward during the COVID pandemic. The ABWU suggested that the tripartite approach is necessary for sustained employment and national development. “Tripartite consultation remains the basis of sustainable progress and social justice. It is essential that young people are included and represented in tripartite dialogue on the future of work, ideally as members of decision-making bodies. Young people must have a voice in current policy decisions that are shaping their future” (ILO, 2020). The union insisted that inclusiveness, which is the mantra of the ILO, is paramount to decision-making. According to the ABWU, social dialogue helps to avoid industrial action and national impasse in a transparent, cohesive, and collective way. The social partnership is also an opportunity for all stakeholders to develop a roadmap for economic activity and national survival. They can examine investment opportunities and human resources that are needed to propel current and future national development.

In an interview with the Antigua and Barbuda Employers’ Federation (ABEF), the trade union reiterated the need not only for job-specific skills, but also loyalty, discretionary effort, and soft skills among youth in the workplace. Describing the education system as outdated, the union called for more teamwork, communication, and critical thinking that are vital to attaining organisational objectives and goals. As consultations continue with CXC, the ABEF is hoping to create a greater alignment between the educational curriculum and contemporary job requirements. This includes meeting the needs of millennials. Members of the ABEF also continue to participate in the ILO-hosted gender diversity workshops. The workshops are designed to improve how women address power dynamics and gender disparities in workplaces, as well as to strengthen their advocacy efforts on women empowerment. The training was also designed to consider and address setbacks caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

Unions must continue to collaborate with local, regional and international stakeholders like the ILO and UN to make SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 10 (reduced inequalities) a reality. This National Youth Policy aims to bridge the gap between employers and employees. Employers must understand that today’s millennials are not motivated by a mere mere; by a pay cheque. Their physiological, psychological, and social needs will also have to be considered. Thus, decent working conditions, self-esteem enhancement, and a sense of connection are no longer optional requirements in the 21st century workplace.

2.22 Persons with Disabilities



Youth on the job

Youth also voiced concern over the treatment of persons with disabilities in Antigua and Barbuda. Recognising that this twin island state is a developing country, young people were adamant that the government could do more to empower this group. With limited resources, the National Vocational and Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities has advocated for the integration of its members in various spheres, including the job training and placement programme. They have been helping vulnerable members of society as they feed the homeless from a soup kitchen in the capital. Both the Center for Persons with Disabilities and Antigua and Barbuda Association of Persons with Disabilities (ABAPD) stated that COVID-19 led to withdrawn or retroactive behaviour. Due to limited socialisation, their members have been struggling to cope. They experienced mental challenges, mainly anxiety, due to decreased social activity and unemployment. With the

cost of living increasing, the centre also assisted them with stipends and food vouchers, as well as psychosocial support. The teaching of life skills was also high on the centre's agenda.

Youth recommended that employers in Antigua and Barbuda hire more people with disabilities. This inclusion, they asserted, can add value to organisations. Young people must also advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and realise that diversity helps to grow businesses. It also enhances the self-esteem of marginalised groups. Youth's attitude towards persons with disabilities can make or break this unique faction of the population. Young people must not view them as helpless; rather they should respect and include them in decision making.

The government must also take charge and prioritise the needs of persons with disabilities. The perception that they are vulnerable and insignificant has held back the development of Antigua and Barbuda. Youth must always apply the golden rule and treat others how they would want to be treated. The 'normal life' that youth take for granted can change instantly—whether it be through an accident or the birth of a child—young people must not believe that their way of life is superior to others. It would also be helpful if the government continues to allocate funding for data collection. The government and the NGO ABAPD have already been collecting data and building their database on persons with disabilities. The ABAPD noted that many people with disabilities live way below the poverty line with poor housing structures and no running water. The database helps present a clear picture of the group's plight and enable the government to plan strategically so that it can reach the marginalised section of the population.

2.23 Caribbean Vocational Qualification

There is a common belief that technical and vocational education is reserved for underachievers. Over the years this negative stigma has led to the underdevelopment of vocational programmes in Antigua and Barbuda. However, there is significant value in vocational education for young people. Schools that promote Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should not be deemed inferior. This level of education can give youth a competitive advantage since they already have skills that enable them to adapt quickly to the work environment. This edge may also save organisations a lot of money who will spend less on training employees. UNICEF (2017) pointed out that “No nation has achieved sustained economic development without considerable investment in human capital, including education at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and TVET.” If the public is going to take technical and vocational education seriously, the government must lead the charge in rebranding, modernizing, and destigmatizing technical and vocational institutions. The government must also erode the elitist mentality that some subjects are superior to others.



*Chair of Barbuda Sports and Youth Affairs
Nadia George*

As Antigua and Barbuda works towards achieving SDG Goal 4, “to provide equal access to affordable vocational training,” the government must also try to rebuild technical vocational programmes in the sister isle. Barbudan youth pointed out that they do not want to be left behind. They said that they are willing to learn but do not have any access on the sister isle to youth skills programmes. The development of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) will have positive implications for young people, preparing them for the real world of work and enabling skilled individuals to move freely in the OECS Economic Union. However, youth were unaware of the importance of the competency-based CVQ.

The CVQ is awarded to persons who demonstrated competence in reaching approved occupational standards in a particular industry. These standards are approved by CARICOM. The Level of the CVQ is guided by the Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF), which has a five-tiered system of qualifications: semi-skilled worker, independent worker, supervisor, manager/technician, and executive/professional. Many CARICOM member states have already embraced the CVQ, but further investment in the Antigua & Barbuda National Training Agency (ABNTA) is needed so that it can monitor, coordinate and promote TVET in this twin island state. The ABNTA needs capacity strengthening to provide accredited status to training providers via quality enhancement and quality assurance processes. With help from the Commonwealth of Learning, the ABNTA is training lecturers at the Engineering Department of the Antigua State College to assess the CVQ. Besides the Engineering Department and Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE), youth in establishments like the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development (GARD), Antigua & Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI), and YEEP can take advantage of the CVQ initiative. There is a plethora of benefits for the youth who acquire

the competency-based qualification since the CVQ:

- provides relevant, globally recognised qualifications
- Can be used to procure a Caricom Skilled National Certificate
- Enable them to get authentic work experience
- Caters for the diverse learners with different learning styles
- Can be used as credential towards entrepreneurship

There are also CVQ benefits for employers who will:

- Get the opportunity to employ skilled and qualified individuals suited to their exact needs
- Can choose from a wider pool of skilled, adaptable and creative employees
- Can sustain a competitive advantage via competent human resources

The CVQ can ensure that numerous artisans such as welders and plumbers are certified. The CVQ can also help combat youth unemployment and position scores of young people as specialists in the labour market due to their training and certification. Stakeholders recommended that the focus must not only be on job-specific skills, but also on literacy and soft skills. The aim should be to develop the whole self so that CVQ students are equipped to function effectively in professional environments.



*Students of the Industrial Technology Department
building benches at Antigua State College*

2.24 Role of the University of the West Indies

Mixed feelings emerged during interviews and consultations about Antigua and Barbuda's readiness for the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus. Many young people said it was a blessing that can help more individuals in the OECS attain higher education and reduce socio-economic inequalities. Others raised doubts about the country's ability to afford the university, including its salary structure. They described it as an inefficient institution that largely brings its inefficiencies to bear on any country that decides to take on the campus. Nevertheless, optimism abounds that the institution can make a tremendous contribution to the development of Antigua and Barbuda particularly in the enhancement of human capital. However, analysts suggested that the campus must develop a niche and offer unique programmes to attract students.



First graduating class at the UWI Five Islands Campus

The university is anticipating thousands of regional applicants as it prepares to launch its School of Science, Artificial Intelligence and Computing—a first in the Caribbean. The university is hoping that the focus on data science will position OECS youth strategically in the global labour market where more than 6 million jobs will require IT specializations by 2022. Young people are also looking forward to UWI's review of the degree programmes and the 2+2 arrangement for the Antigua State College (ASC) and the Antigua Barbuda International Institute of Technology (ABIIT), which will reduce the number of years students acquire their degrees. Youth are eager

that the UWI will add more areas to the curricula to attract more millennials and address the challenge of low male matriculation in higher education. The Antigua and Barbuda 2018 Labour Force Survey Report pointed out that female university degree holders in the labour force outnumbered their male counterparts four to one.

Concerns also arose that this twin-island state may not have the numbers and range of people with terminal degrees to feed the demand of UWI for such competencies. While some analysts agreed that there is a substantial body of qualified people on island, others believe that the Five Islands Campus will have to tap into the virtual learning space to draw on its professorial and doctoral faculties until it becomes self-sufficient. They also claimed that this is necessary for the UWI to preserve its academic rank in the top 5% of universities around the world. Analysts recommended that the government and private organisations provide more doctoral scholarships to competent youth and help produce the first generation of UWI department heads of Antigua and Barbudan heritage. Once the UWI has a strong cadre of indigenous academics, analysts believe it will advance a wide-ranging research agenda, which will drive advancement in an increasingly wide area of development.

Young people highlighted that Antigua and Barbuda should pay more attention to research so that leaders, including educators and other professionals, can make informed decisions. They anticipated that the university's presence will coincide with greater research on the Antigua and Barbudan experience. Youth added that for too many years the literature has been dominated by the experiences of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados. While they had no issue with other countries documenting their stories, young people insisted that Antigua and Barbuda needs to follow suit and make it normal for natives to read about their situation, backed by authentic research. Rather than making general assumptions that what works for other nations will automatically transplant effectively to this twin island state, youth asserted that solid research helps to raise the level of discourse, empowers current and future generations, and creates meaningful change.



AGHS students inquiring about the UWI

2.25 Succession Planning

Youth also appealed for more succession planning programmes. They were adamant that inadequate shadowing takes place when selfish managers refuse to share their knowledge and take advantage of multiple training opportunities that could have benefitted young employees. Youth called on the government in particular to ensure that all willing employees get the chance to participate in training and development programmes that will position them for managerial roles. They argued that while per diems are a motivator for many, the common good should trump egocentric motives.

Despite their experience and expertise, youth believed that some managers discriminated against them because of their age and nationality. They asserted that the discrimination retards the development of employees and undervalues local talent. Succession planning is necessary to bolster optimism and engagement among youthful employees. It also enables them to thrive optimally and counteract shocks associated with the sudden departure of leaders. Youth indicated that managers and leaders must create an atmosphere receptive to change and view succession planning as a forward-thinking initiative rather than a threatening process.

2.26 Multicultural Competence

Youth development should also be synonymous with multicultural competence and emotional intelligence. While kinaesthetic skills are crucial, greater emphasis needs to be placed on training the youth in Antigua and Barbuda to function optimally in a diverse workplace. Now, more than ever, workplaces include employees of different nationalities, race and gender. Training programmes in multicultural competence are necessary for managers and employees, as well as principals, teachers and students in educational institutions, to combat xenophobia, ethnocentrism, gender inequality, and discrimination against non-binary individuals. Entrenched in popular concepts like diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice, multicultural competence embodies the knowledge, skills and capabilities, as well as culturally appropriate behaviours that are needed to achieve effective communication, better interaction, greater productivity, and organisational success.

Failure to pay keen attention to multicultural programmes will have serious repercussions on cornerstoned domains like health and educational sectors where there is an abundance of diverse individuals. Culturally competent leaders are likely to shatter glass ceilings and enable youthful minorities to ascend the corporate ladder, while leaders devoid of multicultural competence may be more resistant to change. This opposition to positive change may create or intensify conflict with workers, culminate in employee disengagement, and stifle national development.



2.3 Employee Engagement

One of the major SDGs is to promote greater levels of productivity and decent work for all men and women by 2030. Despite its significance to national development, employee engagement remains a major challenge in Antigua and Barbuda. Youth explained that while training may be a superb human resource strategy to build employee efficiency, low salaries, coupled with absent fringe benefits, continue to fuel disengagement in the workplace. These discouraging factors, which can result in the loss of valuable time and labour, forced many young people to seek additional employment to improve their standard of living.



Youth also pointed out that many buildings where civil servants work are not conducive to employees' health. Young people said the health of employees must remain high on the government's agenda because poor working conditions can also lead to a decrease in labour and capital, as well as low employee morale. Stakeholders recommended efficient and regular maintenance of workplaces, which help mitigate against sickness and unproductivity.

Employee engagement and sustainable development can also be bolstered via ICT. Youth identified the lack of internet and high-speed internet as the gravest challenges they experience in the workplace. ICT are critical to any country's social, economic and environmental development. If young people are to be truly empowered, the government must prioritise the development of the ICT infrastructure in the workplace. Failure to do so would hinder productivity and contribute to employee disengagement.

Inet, a branch of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) has since launched its fibre optic broadband internet service. This means that the capacity is now between 20 and 200 times greater. Increased download and upload speed will improve access to streaming content and remote learning and working. Employees, students, and other residents in Antigua should have a more reliable and enjoyable experience. A tower was being built in New Winthorpes to accommodate Barbuda. By 2022 the entire island should benefit from the fibre optic broadband internet initiative, according to A.P.U.A.



Youth asserted that the government and private sector can also improve productivity by:



Thematic Focus III: Creative Industries & Entrepreneurship



Antigua and Barbuda is among the one hundred plus signatories to the UNESCO 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The 2005 Convention highlights the significance of the creative economy and cements Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “We all have the right to get involved in our community’s arts, music, literature and sciences, and the benefits they bring.” UNESCO described the creative industries as “goods and services produced by the cultural industries and those

that depend on innovation, including many types of research and software development.” The creative industries incorporate copyright fields such as culture, music, art, craft, and theatre, as well as broadcasting and multimedia. More young people are generating capital from the creative industries, which positively propel economic diversification, counteract prolonged youth unemployment, and align positively with the GDP growth.

3.1 Value of the Creative Industries

UNESCO emphasised the immense value of the cultural sector estimating that the cultural and creative industries generate near 30 million jobs worldwide, “employing more people aged 15 to 29 than any other sector.” Labelling the sector as the fastest growing in the world, UNESCO noted that it has “become essential for inclusive economic growth, reducing inequalities and achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.” Developing countries have begun exploiting this industry, however, Antigua and Barbuda is lagging behind and is yet to see the real economic benefits of the creative industries.



The Department of Culture identified the high number of unregistered artists as one of the main challenges facing the creative industries. The lack of documentation makes it difficult to capture the majority of individuals in the creative industries. Many youthful musicians and entertainers disclosed that the fear of paying taxes prevents them from registering. There is a dire need for the Ministry of Education, Sports and the Creative Industries, along with the Inland Revenue Department and all relevant stakeholders, to educate the members in the creative industries about the advantages of being registered, especially in times of chronic unemployment. It is equally important to enlighten the public about the value of the arts and the



plethora of benefits associated with the creative industries. This enlightenment and exposure must begin at the early stages of the education system to develop an appreciation among youth.

Young students must realise that the creative industries are not only fun but also a rich source of fulfilling careers. Paying more attention to the creative component of the curriculum will therefore require holistic pedagogy. For youth to appreciate, transfer, and apply what they learnt in earnest, educators must not teach in isolation. Quality teachers add value to the creative industries when they help students realise the importance of certification and differentiation. They encourage them to become more marketable in a highly competitive world.

The government must focus on establishing areas that promote the creative industries and provide youth with physical spaces where they can share ideas and information. The government must also remain committed to UNESCO's 2005 Convention that recognises the right of State parties to frame cultural policies to protect and promote diversity of cultural expressions and develop measures that will provide public financial assistance. It should also establish and support public institutions, as well as nurture and support artists involved in the creation of cultural expressions. The UNESCO-funded mapping project, which commenced in February 2020, will measure the economic contribution of the creative and cultural industries to Antigua and Barbuda's national development. Mapping is an important method of measuring and investigating the value of cultural industries. It assists policymakers with creating evidence-based policies that will allow for the sustainable development of such industries which will benefit young artists. The cultural information portal is expected to improve public information sharing and exchange. The objectives included identifying and recommending ways of addressing the principal needs of key cultural industry sectors and hindrances to greater participation by vulnerable and marginalised groups, particularly youth, the persons with disabilities, women, and reformed offenders aged 16-45.



Strategies for Developing the Creative Industries

- Develop infrastructure in schools and other venues to facilitate effective and safe training.
- Grant more full scholarships for training teachers desirous of studying the Arts.
- Reform the curriculum; include the arts and interdisciplinary learning across all subject areas.
- Introduce and implement policies that protect the rights of performers.
- Hire professional and efficient advisors in the field of Arts and take advice given.
- Increase community awareness about the benefits of the Arts.
- Implement standards within the hotels and other industries that promote a professional and safe work environment for entertaining as well as remuneration.



3.2 Entrepreneurship Drive & Hurdles



The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the global economy, but for many youth in Antigua and Barbuda, it fueled two types of entrepreneurship—opportunity and necessity. Understanding the value of entrepreneurship and obvious benefits like economic independence and job creation, youth joined the list of individuals who were able to identify and exploit opportunities, and adapt to the changing environment. As many were laid off, made redundant and fired, scores of young people set up shop in their homes, on the streetside, and online. Amid the depression and enthusiasm, youth said their drive to entrepreneurial freedom was plagued with challenges rooted in psychological, educational, and cultural factors. They complained that the climate of this twin island state does not foster innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset. Youth made reference to the education system, which they

claimed does not encourage creativity, but confines students to the traditional realm of standard jobs and shoots down dreams of deviating from the norm. Young people also identified access to finance as the greatest challenge they face and appealed to the government to assist aspiring and struggling entrepreneurs. As a principal factor in the establishment of any enterprise, youth pointed out that lack of access to startup capital will ensure that their businesses remain in the embryonic stage.

Entrepreneurial Development Programme

Recognising that entrepreneurship is an antidote for youth unemployment and a source of wealth generation, the government established the Prime Minister’s Entrepreneurial



*Co-founder of Packed Grocery Delivery,
Chaneil Imhoff*

Development Programme (EDP) in 2019 to provide support for existing micro and small business entities. Funded by the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority (ABIA) and the Ministry of Finance, the EDP provides low-cost financing to new and existing businesses. The EDP also provides training to managers and team members. Training areas included financial planning, basic record keeping, business plan, restoration of credit, and entrepreneurship. The interest rate on the loans is 2% to 3% with the exception of loans for agriculture-based businesses which is 1%. Priority areas included manufacturing, information technology and innovative internet-based businesses, tourism, and related services. However, the approval of loans is dependent not only on applicants’ citizenship and business ideas, but also on the 5Cs:



Although the EDP granted in excess of \$3 million in loans up to May 2021, youth contended that the criteria may be ideal for individuals with assets, but difficult for young people with little or no collateral to cover risks and qualify for loans.

Female Entrepreneurs

The government and civil society organisations must also support female entrepreneurs. According to the ILO’s 2019 Women in business and management survey report for Antigua and Barbuda, “Women have less access to financial resources and information than men when they are establishing businesses.” The ILO added that “access to information, business incubator schemes for women, training and business counselling during the business lifecycle while the entrepreneur is establishing the product or the brand” should be incorporated into a policy to support women’s entrepreneurship.

The Ease of Doing Business

The ease of doing business was another contentious issue that emerged during discussions. Youth noted that bureaucratic procedures and taxes were chief impediments to entrepreneurial growth and pointed to the World Bank’s *Ease of Doing Business 2020* report. The report covered areas of business regulation like starting a business, getting credit, and paying taxes. Of the 190 economies, Antigua and Barbuda was ranked 113. Young people urged the government to offer more concessions or incentives to youth trying to get their businesses off the ground. In an economy where the market is oversaturated and competition from online stores in a globalised world is real, youth want the government to be more understanding to the needs of young entrepreneurs.

Youth also suggested that a centralised place is needed to do business and called for the merger or synergy between units like the EDP and the Antigua and Barbuda Science Innovation Park (ABSIP) whose objectives and functions are similar. Young people said it was a waste of resources for these entities to be operating separately when they would be more effective pooling their resources. However, they welcomed initiatives by ABSIP and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). As a business incubator, ABSIP aims to improve the survival and growth prospects of new start-ups in Antigua and Barbuda that lack resources, experience and networks. ABSIP assists them over the hurdles to successful entrepreneurship—Education, Incubation, Investment and Policy.

ABSIP's collaboration with UNOPS resulted in the continuous promotion of entrepreneurs and capacity building via hackathons that involved local, regional and international participants, as well as seminars and workshops that focus on topics like female entrepreneurship and design thinking. UNOPS Creative Computing Camp for secondary students in Antigua and Barbuda was also empowering to youth who received training in physical computing focusing on robotics and app-development using the Appshed platform. More than 50 students and 15 teachers had already benefited from the annual camp.



Students receiving training in physical computing

Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Sustainable entrepreneurship is ingrained in the triple bottom line (TBL) that involves managing the three Ps: people, profits and planet. Youth of Antigua and Barbuda need to understand that while the profit-making motive is critical to business success, sustainable entrepreneurship is inseparable from sustainable development. Young entrepreneurs must see the necessity of incorporating sustainable strategies into their business plans to secure a competitive advantage and ensure that the needs of the present and future generations are fulfilled.

It is important that young entrepreneurs recognise that sustainable entrepreneurship transcends economics and involves a strategic fight against environmental degradation and anti-social progress. While there may be challenges, particularly for developing countries like Antigua and Barbuda, to create that triple balance, young entrepreneurs must realise the merit of the TBL theory. Many times, managers and leaders are so busy focusing on the economic bottom line that they fail to protect the environment and address the needs of the people who help generate wealth—their employees. From an early age, youngsters must be exposed to best business practices that could morph into major economic advantages. However, the government must first solidify a strategic plan to cultivate and maintain an entrepreneurial culture in Antigua and Barbuda. Youth identified the following barriers to entrepreneurship development in Antigua and Barbuda.

Barriers to Entrepreneurship

• Cultural mindset	• Little/no management experience
• Lack of start-up capital	• Lack of technical and customer support
• Get rich quick mentality	• Lack of technology
• Age	• Excessive competition
• High employee costs	• Lack of skills/qualifications
• Unproductive employees	• Lack of education
• Finding a place to conduct business	• Poor marketing/difficulty advertising

Youth also suggested various ways the government and civil society organisations can foster entrepreneurship.

Strategies to Help Youth Entrepreneurs

Provide more grants/low interest loans	Provide training and development programmes	Reduce taxes for youth start-ups
Establish a Youth Fund	Promote buying local goods/services	Provide land for youth businesses
Develop mentorship programmes for youth start-ups	Host youth exhibitions	Develop job creation strategies for youth with disabilities
Strengthen incubation centres	Make entrepreneurship classes mandatory in secondary schools	Provide more concessions for youth start-ups
Conduct research on youth entrepreneurship	Prioritise STEAM subjects	Recognise youth entrepreneurs nationally

Thematic Focus IV: Environmental Sustainability



It has been more than three decades since the meeting of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations, which highlighted a critical nexus between the environment and development. The commission described sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It would be a massive blunder to formulate or update a National Youth Policy devoid of environmental sustainability. Based on the questionnaires that were distributed to

1000 students, 91% indicated that they believe they should protect the environment and did so by not littering, using biodegradable items, conserving water, recycling, as well as cleaning the beaches and communities. During consultations, young people underscored the importance of environmental concepts such as the green economy, conservation, preservation, and sustainability. They recognised that sustainability is not merely a buzz word, but a supreme emblem of development that warrants the keen attention of every citizen. Youth argued that the government needs to foster socio-economic and political strategies to augment environmental sustainability, which should be enshrined in every aspect of national life. However, they insisted that mass education, persuasion, and outreach are necessary to catalyse behaviour change.

4.1 Diversification & the Blue Economy

In 2020 Antigua and Barbuda took a bold step and joined forces with Kenya to co-champion the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group on the sustainable blue economy, which was endorsed in 2018 at a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London. With a land to seaspace ratio of about 1:80, the OECS is yet to unlock the potential of the blue economy. The blue economy, which is valued globally at US\$2.5 trillion, is not merely confined to fishing but includes other treasured fields like the yachting and boat repairing industries where thousands of young people can find engaging work.



The government remains committed to diversifying the maritime sector amid rising levels of youth unemployment in the global community. Several emerging or underdeveloped industries can lead to meaningful economic diversification for young people. These industries include marine

biotechnology, seabed mining, renewable energy, and aquaculture. Antigua and Barbuda's heavy dependence on tourism, coupled with natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other external shocks, magnified the risks associated with this bread-and-butter industry. On the face of it, it may be much easier to advance the blue economy in the tropics so Antigua-Barbuda may have momentary advantages. With the island's main engine of economic growth under threat, the coronavirus pandemic has propelled the blue economy under laser lens focus, which resulted in the establishment of a few firsts—a Blue Economy Department and Maritime Blue Economy Plan.



Minister of the Blue Economy A. Dean Jonas receiving UK-funded Maritime Economy Plan

Current affairs analysts are confident that Antigua and Barbuda can diversify successfully into the blue economy but needs to move very quickly. This twin-island state needs to acquire the expertise to research and design prospectus and other instruments defining the range of blue-economy opportunities that are available in its territorial waters. It also needs to design test and publish prospectus widely to gain the attention of a global audience. Additionally, Antigua and Barbuda should develop and promulgate instruments for the competitive granting of mining and other licenses to potential investors and avoid being exploited by investors.

The nation's youth should benefit significantly from all investment initiatives. The ocean-based economy provides multiple opportunities to enhance livelihoods and existing maritime sectors. Marine resources contribute to food security, sustainable livelihoods, and social well-being, which includes recreation. As the demand for fish and its by-products is expected to skyrocket internationally, young people must understand the significance of zoning plans and regulations for the management of fisheries. The implementation of the Barbuda Blue Halo initiative promotes the sustainable use of ocean resources. The partnership between the US-based Waitt Institute and the Barbuda Council entails a marine spatial plan that protects more than 30% of its waters. The blue economy alleviates the crisis of exploitation of ocean resources and joblessness among youth.

As the government pedestialises this emerging economy, equal attention should be given to the development of the human resources and education system. Young people must be exposed to emerging industries and recognise that significant, unconventional opportunities abound. 89% of youth who participated in a questionnaire indicated that they do not know what the blue economy means. A few associated the blue economy with sustainable livelihood, tourist attraction, as well as protection and development of more intangible resources. The blue economy must be embedded into the curricula of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Young people cannot exploit these ocean-based fields if they lack the knowledge and skills that are needed to position them in potentially lucrative industries. Governmental support for a Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy at the UWI Five Islands Campus is critical. The UWI has a lead role in driving transition to the blue economy especially since it has an advanced studies programme in marine sciences, which should be able to pivot to a blue economy stream, with some effort.



The university plans to “advance intellectual progress and strengthen institutional capacity in the areas of marine science and the blue economy while benefitting from the societal, economic and environmental opportunities for the Caribbean within this emerging sector.” The success of the blue economy hinges heavily not only on the development of the knowledge base but also on the synergy among the private sector and government. The ministries of social transformation, education, foreign affairs, finance, and environment, for example, must pool their resources, collaborate with the private sector, and create effective long-term strategies that will align with youth development and socio-economic advancement.

4.2 Green Economy Initiatives

The concept ‘green economy’ does not only embody eco-friendly investments, but is also implanted in five essential principles that can improve the quality of life for the current and future generations of youth: wellbeing, justice, planetary boundaries, efficiency and sufficiency, and good governance principles. Young people in Antigua and Barbuda must be taught from an early age to respect the environment and use its resources in a sustainable manner. They must recognise that not only is there an issue with overexploitation, but also underutilisation of various resources—a potential source of new industries. Underutilisation may result in biodiversity loss since persons who do not see the value would not appreciate the need to preserve or conserve resources. The significance of biodiversity, environmental and ecosystem protection, are some of the concepts that should form part of schools’ curricula from an early to an advanced stage. The onus is primarily on the family and school, major agents of socialization, to cultivate an enduring love of nature and aversion for wasting resources among youth. Like the blue economy, there are multiple opportunities for youth in the green economy. Contrary to popular belief that the green economy impedes development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) macroeconomic model projects that this sustainable economy is a source of employment generation and a combative force against poverty. The success of the green economy and realisation of SDGs necessitate a 360-degree shift from the grassroots to the upper echelon of society.

4.21 Department of Environment

Understanding the vital role of youth input, the Department of Environment (DoE) continues to incorporate young minds into their projects and programmes. From plant fairs to school agro-science workshops and art competitions, the department works actively throughout the year and partners with other agencies to keep young people focused on environmental issues. High on its agenda are the installations of a youth engagement strategist and climate change ambassadors. During consultations, young people expressed little or no excitement about environmental matters. Recognising the power of peer-to-peer engagement, the department plans to strategically engage and recruit more youth via their counterparts.

Discussions surrounding the protection and appreciation of ecosystems should be enjoyable, but that's not always the case. To make learning fun, the department created Teachers' Resource Guides to integrate environmental topics creatively into their curriculum. The focus areas include mangroves, climate change and biodiversity. However, young people pointed out that for these resources to be effective, they require passionate educators who can stimulate and sustain student motivation, which will eventually translate into eco-conscious youth. The integration of technology into the classroom would also engage students as it improves knowledge retention and make learning more fun.



It is of utmost importance that the government, OECS, CARICOM, and international organisations continue to offer green economy scholarships and other incentives to youth in Antigua and Barbuda. Through student exchange scholarships, young people enhance knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and other green skills that foster sustainable development. Youth are also exposed to sophisticated technology, job opportunities and entrepreneurial ventures related to the blue and green economies.

4.22 Agricultural Sustainability

While green economy education is essential, equally crucial is funding to build capacity. A three-year United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security Agriculture Project was officially launched in 2020. This project was funded by Global Affairs Canada, the Department for International Development, the Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union. Young people, including many female entrepreneurs in the small agro and fisheries enterprises, will benefit from this initiative that aims to contribute to human security for farmers. The green economy also focuses on reducing social and economic inequalities and empowering women. Females comprise a substantial number of consumers and producers who continue to champion the cause and necessity for sustainable progress.

Despite the significance of the green economy, many young people find agriculture unattractive. During focus group sessions, youth pointed out that a negative perception of agricultural work persists and this is attributed largely to the low status of field slaves and the backbreaking tasks associated with the capitalist industry of slavery. Youth were adamant that agriculture will only rise to prominence if educational institutions, the government, and wider society place more emphasis on this sector and put in place support services that will keep young people engaged and encourage them to diversify.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for greater investment in agriculture. In a 2020 online survey of COVID-19 impacts on food security by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and CARICOM, 61% of respondents in Antigua and Barbuda complained that food prices were rising. You may ask, “Why should young people be concerned about food security?” Developing countries are hotspots for major population increase. The UN projected that by 2050 global populations will rise by around 2.5 billion people; most of that rise will occur in developing countries. It is predicted that youth will comprise half of the 2050 population and food insecurity will soar. Between June 2020 and February 2021, the number of individuals estimated to be severely food insecure rose from 407,000 to 482,000 in the Caribbean. Vulnerable societies that are burdened with poverty and psychological deficiencies prevent young people from reaching their full potential.

Cades Bay Pineapple, Christian Valley, Greencastle, Central Cotton, and Dunbars are five major government agricultural stations in various agroecological zones in Antigua and Barbuda that contribute to food security and national food production. They also generate revenue, support the School Meals Programme and other social programmes, as well as provide employment and export to generate foreign exchange earnings. The green economy mindset requires policy reforms, good governance, private and public partnerships, and a well-informed society that recognises the current and future importance of agriculture. Whether from subsistence or commercial level, youth should express a willingness to promote or participate in agriculture. Food security is not only quantity but is also inextricably tied to nutrition that enables nations to mitigate against pandemics/epidemics, as well as noncommunicable diseases. Like the slogan, “Tourism is everybody’s business,” youth need to understand that agriculture too is everybody’s business. It is not the business for the uneducated or old folks.

4.23 Tourism & the Green Corridor

Youth should also realise that green initiatives must not be confined to the agricultural sector but is a national effort of all ministries to create a better Antigua and Barbuda. Sustainable initiatives exist in all ministries. Few examples include the increasing use of solar energy at the airport, in schools and other government institutions, as well as the Ministry of Tourism’s voluntary programme, ‘Green Tourism Initiative’ also known as the “Green Corridor”. This is a cost-cutting and national certification programme that is aligned with the Global Sustainable Tourism criteria. The Green Tourism Initiative helps tourism businesses to reduce negative impacts on the environment while improving the efficiency of their operations.

The environmental protection efforts of this island have not gone unnoticed in the international sphere. Antigua and Barbuda was named 2021’s Emerging Sustainable Destination of the Year by travel guidebook *Lonely Planet*. The recognition was for the Green Tourism Initiative. Under the initiative, Antigua has introduced the “Green Fins Programme”. This



UNEP certification programme provides support and guidance to snorkelers and divers. Antigua and Barbuda is the only country in the Western hemisphere to have achieved this feat. The Ministry of Tourism also runs a youth awareness and education programme that focuses on sustainability. The National Youth Policy promotes all aspects of the green economy because it ensures a better future for youth in every aspect of development, including climate change.

4.3 Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

The issue of climate change is nothing new; young and old have fought the good fight. The average weather conditions have been changing for quite some time, but the onslaught of Category 5 hurricanes, reef deterioration, infrastructural damage, and worsening projections have brought climate change to the forefront. Like other Caribbean countries, Antigua and Barbuda is not a major contributor to climate change, but this twin-island state remains extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts.



Barbuda after Hurricane Irma struck in September 2017

4.31 Barbuda & Trauma

Climate change hazards are intensifying. As evidenced in Barbuda, Hurricane Irma devastated 95% of the buildings and forced the evacuation of 1500 residents in 2017. The estimated cost by Hurricane Irma was about \$250-\$300 million. Prime Minister Gaston Browne told TIME Magazine that “The extent of the damage is beyond the means of these islands...Global human cooperation is an absolute necessity.” Young Barbudans remain traumatised by the unprecedented natural occurrence. In interviews with the Department of Youth Affairs, they spoke of the horror that claimed one innocent life, removed the roofs of houses with ease, bent vehicles like toys, and maintained a psychological fear every hurricane season. Some Barbudans associated the trauma they experienced with a sense of hopelessness. Other youth however expressed optimism about the rebuilding efforts on the sister isle. With stronger homes, they are hoping they will never have to migrate again.

Barbudans also spoke of another trauma, which some claimed might have been worse than the disastrous trauma they experienced on the sister isle—the trauma of migration and feeling like the “Other”. While they expressed appreciation for the generosity of Antiguans, Barbudan youth lamented on the bullying they encountered at schools in Antigua. Already displaced, Barbudan youth used words such as “outcasts”, “aliens”, and “foreigners” to describe the way they were treated in schools. One Barbudan resident

described the experience as “trauma upon trauma.” The trauma of the natural disaster and migration may have also been responsible for the poor performance of Barbudan students at the 2018 CSEC examinations where the pass rate plunged by half (31%) several months after Hurricane Irma hit Barbuda in September 2017.

Sir McChesney George Secondary School CSEC Pass Rates						
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
49%	69%	66%	62%	31%	42.5%	70.7% (preliminary)

Stakeholders called for more psychosocial support in schools to help victims of natural disasters cope with traumatic experiences. They also appealed for greater public education on the psychological effects of natural disasters and appropriate responses to victims, including youth in schools.

The National Office of Disaster Services (NODS) leads the way in educating the nation about natural disasters such as droughts, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, and hurricanes. NODS also focuses on pre-disaster risk reduction aspects, which are critical elements of any sustainable emergency/disaster management process. The Office continues to incorporate youth into their agenda to create early sensitisation about climate change and its effects.

The Hazard Arts Competition for secondary students held in June 2021 formed part of efforts to enhance disaster risk management knowledge among youth. The project was funded through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) country directed funds in partnership with the European Union. Under the theme “Disaster Awareness and Preparedness, (#DAP),” youth were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the hazard, as well as preparedness through any medium. The top prize was EC\$1500.00. It is important that youth are not only intrinsically motivated to learn more about climate change, but they should also be rewarded tangibly for their dedication to the cause. Art is an effective medium to express themselves and combat trauma.



Winning piece by Najua George of Christ the King High School



Winners of the Hazard Arts Competition

4.32 Climate Change Advocates

This National Youth Policy embraces all blue and green climate-friendly initiatives and calls for greater youth involvement and discretionary effort to catapult the climate change agenda. Young people involved in formal and non-networked youth groups must be considered key stakeholders. Their presence must be visible and voices pellucidly audible on matters of national significance, including those aimed at reducing the carbon footprint. The government must continue working towards a healthier and cleaner environment and act as a role model in the fight against climate change so that young people would find it natural to emulate eco-friendly behaviour. Utilising climate friendly equipment in all ministries, establishing laws for the prohibition of plastic shopping bags, litter control, and litter prevention, increasing litter wardens, and implementing a cash for plastic bottles initiative are all laudable efforts. Laws deter polluters and force many, including youth, to comply with environmental rules and regulations aimed at and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Cognisant that climate change is a global challenge that requires urgent action, the UWI remains committed to building capacity through teaching, specialist training, and developing partnerships with purpose. In its Leading Climate Action report, fostering climate literacy among youth is a major objective of the university which wants the future decision-makers “to advocate for climate justice.” Youth participation in climate change activities should be evident on social media and other platforms where there is a mass presence of young people who can connect and share ideas that will realise SDG 13. That goal encourages countries to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Youthful Antiguan and Barbudans must epitomise resilience and optimism, even amid disastrous circumstances.

Consideration should also be given to youth involvement in implementing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other regional and international agreements that support conservation and sustainable use. Parties to these agreements have committed to certain actions and help implement youth engagement initiatives. As future ambassadors, negotiators, and implementers, youth are also a critical voice.

Strategies for Climate Change Mitigation/Adaptation

1.	Encourage young people to join environmental groups or organisations.
2.	Boost climate change awareness among youth via social media.
3.	Integrate climate change adaptation into the school curricula.
4.	Mainstream climate change education into national policies and development plans.
5.	Offer more climate change scholarships and innovation grants to youth.
6.	Involve youth in the planning and implementing stages of environmental programmes.
7.	Provide arable land for more youth to engage in agricultural activities.
8.	Promote more tree-planting activities.
9.	Invest in schools' agricultural programmes.
10.	Promote the 3 Rs among youth: reduce, reuse and recycle.
11.	Create an enabling environment that bolsters youth engagement in climate adaptation.



*Community Development and Citizens' Engagement Division
Round South 4-H Camp*

Thematic Focus V: Gender, Leadership & Social Change



5.1 Gender Equity & Equality

During the consultative process, youth highlighted that more women were attaining top positions in fields traditionally dominated by men, but despite significant strides, Antigua and Barbuda is yet to erode existing gender inequity and inequality. Recognising that sexism and gender-role stereotyping persist, the Directorate of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy continues to fight against biases that hinder national progress. UNESCO defines gender equity as “fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs” while gender equality refers to “the situation where women and men are recognized as equal and are treated equally with the same status, power, resources, responsibilities and opportunities for fulfilling their potential” (ILO, 2019). Therefore, as UNESCO pointed out, equality between men and women “does not mean women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they were born male or female.”

Education, economic empowerment, gender-based violence, and women in political participation are few priority areas for the Directorate. The Directorate is cognizant that neither a person’s biological sex nor their gender determines their potential. The Ministry of Education has also been fostering gender equality by allowing pregnant youth back into the classroom to complete their education. Although all members of the population might not agree with this move, many young people applauded the government for being forward-thinking. They contended that youth too can make mistakes and will continue to make mistakes like adults, but denying them of an education was extremely inhumane. This National Youth Policy understands that to err is human, but habitual mistakes

can be costly and entrap youth in a vicious cycle of poverty. This National Youth Policy stands firm against any form of discrimination that denies young people opportunities to excel. Education is a gateway to opportunities—opportunities that enable even young girls in poverty stricken communities to dream big and self-actualize. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Antigua, and Barbuda also recognises the significance of promoting equality between the sexes and enabling youth to reach their fullest potential.

5.11 Self-Fulfilling Prophecy & Subject Choices

Youth argued that the achievement of universal primary and secondary education is laudable, but more needs to be done in the homes and schools to promote gender equity and equality. They insisted that parents and educators must have high expectations for all children and students, regardless of their academic grades. The authority figures must genuinely believe that everyone can be successful. This positive self-fulfilling prophecy are likely to improve student self-esteem and performance and combat gender inequality. When teachers' expectations are high, students tend to meet those expectations and vice versa. The self-fulfilling prophecy is also known as “Pygmalion in the classroom,” which is “the effects of interpersonal expectancies, that is, the finding that what one person expects of another can come to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Rosenthal, 2010).

Although males or females may outperform the other sex in specific subjects, teachers and parents must ensure that their attitudes in the classroom and at home do not deter students from showing interest in various subjects. Youth elaborated that all students should be given the freedom to choose STEAM subjects without fear of discrimination. For example, they argued that males must not feel “less of a man” for selecting Home Economics or girls feel “less of a woman” for choosing Building Technology. Students should also be exposed to non-traditional careers. Although some may argue that it does not matter which subjects students choose in school, the reality is that it does matter. Many students have limited career options because of the subjects they selected. Because youth also romanticise their future career, they must do some research, which can form part of classroom activity. They can also do some job shadowing to determine what suits them best. Until then, young people should choose subjects that provide them with alternatives (Orange Sea, 2019).

Additionally, stakeholders asserted that the protracted socio-economic and political struggle for the rights of women must never be forgotten and should be embedded in all areas of the curriculum. Since gender-role socialisation begins at the pre-birth stage, there must be a concerted effort nationwide



to create a culture receptive to change. Discussions surrounding gender and cultural inequities must not be confined to classrooms, but should also be topical issues among family members. Teachers must also discuss and analyse classroom management for equity.

5.12 Paucity of Male Teachers & Remuneration

The paucity of male teachers was another major issue that emerged during the consultations. More than 80% of teachers in private and public schools are females. Youth pointed out that like nursing and social work, many women are attracted to nurturing careers and education is no exception. They believed that this female-dominated teaching profession is indicative of the deficiencies of socialisation agents, including parents, religion, and the media, which continue to glorify females in low-paying jobs and reinforce gender inequalities. Regional gender equality advocates have argued that in the Eastern Caribbean, the teaching profession, which used to be male-dominated, has become less valued and remunerated ever since it has become widely accessible to women. However, progress is evident for women in business and management. The ILO (2019) reported that “Salaries for both women and men with similar skill and experience level were investigated uncovering little evidence of inequality between the genders in Antigua and Barbuda.”



Youth also asserted that, unlike women, males are socialised to be breadwinners and are encouraged to seek senior positions or better-paying jobs than women. They clamoured for an increase in male role model teachers who represent a positive alternative for students of violent homes. Youth explained that gender diversity in schools matters because many times male teachers better identify with the social and emotional issues that affect boys and give authentic examples male students can relate to in subjects like mathematics and science. Youth also called for the active recruitment of males in female-dominated spheres and vice versa. The increased presence of male teachers in cornerstone institutions can promote gender equality and pave the way to sustainable development.

5.13 Male Role Models & Second Shift Duties



Equally vital is the need for more male role models in the family. Youth pointed out that the absence of fathers or father figures in the homes is not helping the battle against gender inequality. Statistics from the last census conducted in 2011 showed that females comprised 52% of the population and 48.4% of all households were female-headed. The root causes for absentee fathers vary; however stakeholders identified promiscuity, lack of financial support, and teenage pregnancy as the top three reasons for their absence. Frontline fathers who are not grounded in gender-specific-roles must be viewed as a catalyst for change. Young people must not perceive fathers solely as disciplinary figures, but should also identify them as equal participants in their holistic development.



The Directorate of Gender Affairs must continue to implement initiatives promoting fatherhood engagement. Research has shown that this engagement correlates with escalated self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as better academic performance. A fatherhood engagement programme also reduces the perpetuation of gender inequality. Youth need to realise that a shared effort in second shift duties such as caring for children and completing domestic chores should not be deemed unconventional and anti-progressive. Rather, all young people should understand that expectations of equal treatment in relationships and equal opportunities in society are realistic expectations and characteristics of healthy nations.

5.14 Sexual Harassment



"Promoting gender equality at the workplace is not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do" (ILO, 2015). Young females identified sexual harassment as an issue in the workplace. Sexual harassment refers to "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). Youth highlighted that fear of unemployment, gossip, and embarrassment deterred them from reporting these incidents to the relevant authorities. Young males also mentioned that they too had similar experiences but unlike their female counterparts, did not deem the touching of their bodies by females or sexual comments as offensive or tantamount to sexual harassment. Youth called for the introduction and implementation of professional codes of conduct and ethics in all workplaces, as well as greater education on matters of sexual harassment.

The Sexual Offences Act of 1995 covers various offences such as incest and rape but does not include sexual harassment. Realising the grave omission, the government is working on establishing legislation on sexual harassment. In the Draft Discrimination and Workplace Harassment & Abuse of Authority Policy, the Directorate of Gender Affairs highlights measures to deal with issues of sexual harassment, such as abuse of authority, retaliation, complaint resolution, and mediation. Stakeholders noted that the fight against sexual harassment requires a national collaborative effort among ministries, departments, and all places of employment.

5.2 Strategic Thinking & Social Change

The issue of strategic thinking emerged during consultations, focus group sessions, and one-on-one interviews with young entrepreneurs, educators, and psychologists. Young people insisted that the failure to think strategically is likely to have serious implications for any youth's future. They asserted that when faced with difficult circumstances some youth reacted instinctively and do not think about the consequences of their actions. Strategic thinking is entrenched in logic and involves the careful analysis and assessment of situations. When youth think strategically, they tap into a critical thinking mode and navigate challenging situations effectively. Young people emphasised that this higher-level skill epitomises maturity and results in better decision-making in the home, school, and at work. Since youth are likely to spend a significant amount of time in these domains, young people encouraged families, educators, and managers to prioritise higher-order thinking.



Undoubtedly, young people belong in all spheres of decision-making. Although it may sound cliché to say that they are the future, youth contribution to national development remains paramount. The ability to think strategically enhances the value of youth input and youth output. Thinking strategically coincides with examining assumptions, unearthing latent layers, and assessing conclusions. Young people should be able to distinguish between facts and opinions, recognise patterns, view issues from multiple perspectives, and choose the best alternative. The selection process must be based on evaluation of evidence, consideration of consequences and values, as well as high-level moral reasoning. A myriad of real-life activities at home, church, and school is needed to cultivate strategic thinking among the youth, reduce cognitive dissonance and pave the way for social change.

The significance of social change merits the attention of this National Youth Policy. Youth were adamant that strategic thinking culminates in positive social progress, which is the ultimate goal of authentic learning institutions. They maintained that young people who think strategically are likely to be generators of wealth in various organisations. However, they underscored that managers and leaders should be equipped to maximise the talents and strengths of youthful employees in an enabling environment. Youth identified poor employee relationships as one area that necessitates social change.



Youth Coordinator & Mobilisation Officer

According to young people, lack of transparency, disrespect, demotivation, and low salaries are underlying factors that hinder the development of the private and public sectors. They pointed out that youth are usually optimistic when they start to work, but the cheerful disposition fades quickly when they realise the realities of work. Young employees suggested that managers and leaders can bolster productivity and initiate social change by involving them in the decision-making process and prioritising their needs. Youth declared that social

change begins with internal stakeholders who should want to work and not be driven merely by a paycheque. Once the staff's need for belongingness, security, and adequate resources are fulfilled, youth proclaimed that other aspects of social responsibility can be implemented to satisfy external stakeholders. Strategic thinking leaders are not afraid to relinquish some autonomy and create socially responsible environments. Young people insisted that less conflict



abounds in workplaces where managers respect staff input and solicit staff feedback. Such democratic spaces, youth professed, are ideal sources of youth engagement and development, which may eventually result in that coveted competitive advantage.

5.3 Leadership & Meaningful Political Participation

The manifestation of bona fide social change emanates from youth engagement and passionate leadership. In its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations described young people as torchbearers “who represent the hopes and fears of many societies.” During consultations and interviews with diverse groups of stakeholders, young people insisted that more youth need to occupy positions of leadership. They argued that the dearth of youth in influential positions marginalises their views and needs. However, they acknowledged that the move by some political parties to integrate youthful members into their institutions and strengthen youth arms is laudable. But they asserted that real progression lies in the ability of seasoned politicians to listen to their youthful counterparts.



Youth senator

Meaningful political participation, however, necessitates both parties to listen critically since knowledge and creativity do not solely abound in the minds of youth. Recognising that young and old have to coexist, mutual respect is needed for youth advancement from that stage of emerging leaders to that stage of adept leadership. Youth are seeking organisations, groups, and individuals who share similar quest as they do. The truth is, we all want our young people to become

caring, compassionate individuals who are dedicated to seeking truth, standing up for what is just and right and who are models of integrity.

Youth must neither be perceived as ignorant to the world of politics nor threats to establishments. Young people are of the view that because of their age, politicians generally do not take issues that affect them seriously. They added that although this level of discrimination transcends the boundaries of Antigua and Barbuda, it warrants the intensified efforts of all stakeholders to make the voices of youth audible. On the flip side, young people also complained that many of their seniors viewed them as threatening forces that seek to undermine their power and authority when they question processes and decisions. Leaders of all domains must create an inclusive environment that values the contributions of youth. This input is even more impactful when there is adequate representation of gender diversity and a concerted effort to eliminate biases and polarised differences that breed social inequalities. Meaningful political participation means that young people must first be open-minded, well-informed, and mentally equipped—all vital prerequisites of fruitful discourse, sound decision-making, and social change.



Youth advocate

5.4 Political Spectrum

There were mixed feelings during the consultative process and interviews on the role of the church in preparing youth for political leadership. A few pastors and youth leaders were of the view that the church should not be preparing young people specifically for political positions; rather it should prepare them for leadership in general and then they would decide personally which path they wanted to choose. The pastors and youth leaders believed that the political domain was not suitable for emerging youth leaders. Describing politics in general as "dirty" and unaligned with God's work, pastors agreed that young people focus on other fields of leadership. However, other men of the cloth disagreed and emphasised that it is critically important for youth to be involved in politics. They pointed out that there is a dire need for the inclusion of Christian-minded individuals in the political sphere and concluded that youth involvement in politics is no longer an option.

They also admitted that the church has been silent for too long on political affairs and appealed for a paradigm shift, which entails training Christian youth to fulfil positions of political influence in the land. The pastors however insisted that young people must already have their values intact before they enter the political sphere, especially since all youth might not emerge unscathed like Daniel in the lions' den. Recognising politics as a different creature and sophisticated arena, the pastors were adamant that the church must remain optimistic and confident that young people who are trained in Biblical principles will take up the mantle and enact meaningful change.



Youth in Parliament

Thematic Focus VI: Values & Spiritual Development



Core values are fundamental principles and personal convictions that can shape decisions, describe character, and lead to a purposeful life. A major goal of this National Youth Policy is to ensure that young people internalise core values, which should permeate all aspects of their lives. Every youth in this country should want to epitomise these values that include: integrity, accountability, equality and social justice, respect, gratitude, and resilience. The significance of values must never be downplayed. As multiple literatures highlighted, values colour the overall way of life since they transcend any one particular situation. They also influence the types of people individuals are attracted to, the behaviour of individuals in the home and workplace, and create positive social change.

6.1 Core Values

Integrity is described as the most vital trait of principled leadership and is integrally linked to honesty and trustworthiness. Young people should understand that integrity builds character and grasp every opportunity to exercise integrity not only when someone is watching, but also behind closed doors. This value, which entails telling the truth consistently, has positive implications for the present and future generations since principled youth are likely to become principled employees, parents, leaders, and role models.



Accountability, which is synonymous with responsibility, is another core value that drives good character and bolsters youth empowerment. Parents, educators and the wider society need to teach young people to take responsibility for their actions, which will help form wholesome personalities and conscientious citizens. Youth should be cognisant that the decisions they make may have current and future repercussions. The nation must be ever mindful that young people who fail to take deserved blame for their actions may assume positions of power where they instill fear, unleash tyranny, and hinder national progress. History would have already exemplified the dangers of unhealthy personalities and countless pseudotransformational leaders—Massas, Hitlers, and Stalins—

whose distorted moral values and self-serving interests outweighed the common good.

Parents, educators, and leaders can create a culture of accountability in homes, schools, and other institutions. Youth should know what type of behaviour is expected and experience the consequences when they fail to adhere to the rules and regulations. In circumstances where young people demonstrate responsibility, they should be praised. In his operant conditioning model, psychologist B.F. Skinner describes praise as a positive reinforcer that encourages desired behaviour, while positive punishment discourages undesirable behaviour. Additionally, youth are likely to observe and model the exhibited behaviour of authority figures. Psychologist Albert Bandura highlighted the power of observation, imitation, and modeling in his theory of social cognitive learning. The theory is a stark reminder to all to be careful how they behave around young people who are watching and likely to imitate what they see.



Equality and Social Justice is also a vital core value that encapsulates a strong sense of ethics and morality and strengthens youth character. The need for young people to become aware about inequalities of opportunity that prevail in the 21st century should not be trivialised. Their purpose in this world is to become agents of positive change. Regardless of the impact—miniscule or gigantic—young people must be compassionate and help individuals of diverse backgrounds access similar social, economic and political opportunities. Youth must neither overlook social ills like racism, gender inequality, and climate justice nor classify them as issues for the older generation. Young people must recognise these issues as threats to natural human rights. For youth who encounter challenges finding their niche, they should be afforded opportunities and scaffolded to their purpose by educators, parents, and other members of society who are also capable of identifying and harnessing talent.

Respect equates to human decency and is “a fundamental aspect of how human beings relate to each other” (O’Grady, 2017). Like the dual nature of communication, young people should not only expect respect but also show respect continuously to adults and peers alike. Residents in Antigua and Barbuda complained that the heightened level of disrespect among the youth is attributed largely to dysfunctional families and a lack of positive role models. Respect sets the foundation for meaningful interaction and reduces conflict in all spheres of life, including home, church, school work, and other social



settings. Respectful youth are likely to receive opportunities for advancement. The respect of self is equally important because it adds value to character and correlates with healthy levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Gratitude is another core value that youth should possess. Accentuating the parable of the thankful leper, plus dozens of references to gratitude, the Bible highlights the importance of this critical value. Young people need to understand the significance of showing appreciation. Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson stated: “Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.” Young people must understand that they should be grateful towards individuals who contribute to their development, including family, teachers and friends. Benefits abound for those who express and those who receive gratitude. Gratitude fosters strong relationships, increases productivity, and enhances psychological well-being.



Resilience refers to “the capacity to recover from and adjust to adverse situations. It includes the ability to positively adapt from hardships and suffering” (Northouse, 2016). Resilient young people are not easily overwhelmed by challenging situations; rather they are able to bounce forward and land on a much more solid scaffold than the tremulous platform they found themselves on previously. Resilience is tantamount to a life skill, and its deficiency can have disastrous consequences for youth who may not bounce forward readily and succumb to stress and trauma.

6.2 Spirituality



As a God-fearing nation, the spiritual development of youth must never be omitted from a National Youth Policy. Spiritual growth is a core developmental process for young people, in terms of positive behaviours, feelings and relationships, self-esteem and pro-social behaviour, as well as a buffer against negative or risky behaviour. Spirituality, often equated to religious or philosophical beliefs, empowers every living being to break free from ideas and practices that impede mind imaginations and the limitations of ego. It gives a purpose to life, connects people, lays solid foundations for self-development, general well-being, including joy and fulfilment, energy and peace. More importantly it drives persons to be

ethical. Spirituality addresses human-centered questions as: How can we increase meaning in our lives? Who are we as human beings? Are we in control of our lives or is our destination a result of fate?

6.21 Religious Spirituality

Youth explained that their belief in God and daily incorporation of Biblical principles motivated them to remain productive in the workplace. Acknowledging that there is a high level of employee disengagement among young people, Christian youth asserted that they are ever reminded about labouring honestly. Other youth, who described themselves as demotivated and uninspired employees, opined that they want to be productive, but the work environment is not stimulating. Recognising that people react differently to similar situations, young people encouraged their counterparts to develop themselves spiritually and form a closer relationship with God. They insisted that reading the Bible, attending church regularly, and applying Biblical principles and values habitually in one’s life are crucial to solving many social and economic ills plaguing the nation.



Pentecostal Crusaders International-Antigua and Barbuda

Biswakarma (2018) posited that spirituality, which has five dimensions, “grounds people in their work and allows them to connect with the transcendent in all they do.”

6.22 Workplace Spirituality

Workplace Spirituality				
Meaningful Work	Sense of Community	Alignment Between Organisational & Individual Values	Sense of Contribution	Inner Life

The dimensions of workplace spirituality are not religiously oriented, but are inescapably similar to the framework of Positive Youth Development (PYD). The framework promotes the development of technical, conceptual and human skills. Youth engagement can also be manifested under three vital workplace conditions put forward by psychologist William Kahn (1990): psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability.

Meaningful work cements an understanding of self and the world and encapsulates greater good motivations to positively influence the universe (Fouche, Rothmann, & Van der Vyver, 2017).

A sense of community is entrenched in the PYD framework and Kahn's engagement theory. Youth explained that they feel more engaged when they collaborate and contribute to nation building. This is why corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are so fulfilling for young people who find a common purpose by doing what they love as they receive a paycheque; it aligns with their values of equality and social justice. CSR programmes are a medium through which young people can make a difference and experience psychological meaningfulness (Asiwe, Rothmann, Jorgensen, & Hill, 2017). Organisational leaders who understand and respect the spiritual values of young people can enhance productivity. They may also augment the inner life dimension of spirituality, which "is the field of inner consciousness where people express themselves as they labor with a sense of agreement, interconnectedness, and unanimity" (Azeez & Genty, 2018).

Psychological safety and availability are also crucial to positive youth development. Young people need to work in safe and supportive environments that will build their self-concept and self-esteem. Youth also need the resources (physical, emotional and psychological) to perform at optimal level. The PYD framework accentuates the significance of assets, which are the skills and higher-order thinking skills that are needed to self-actualize.

Spirituality is also closely aligned to positive behaviour such as mental health and resilience, but a deficiency may lead to low self-esteem and risky behaviour. Based on the connection between spiritual development and various outcome measures, it might seem obvious that spirituality should be a topic addressed in schools. However, many activities normally associated with spiritual development are not those that educators can advocate in a public-school setting. Therefore, the onus is on parents, the church, and Christian organisations like the Seventh Day Adventist Pathfinders Club and Boys' Brigade to cultivate the spiritual development of youth. The government and private sector need to support and recognise these organisations and individuals at the helm nationally for their incessant efforts in positively shaping youth in this twin island state.

6.23 Youth Organisations

The Seventh-Day Adventist Pathfinders Club

One organisation that is leading the charge in spiritual development is the Seventh-Day Adventist Pathfinder Club, which is a church-centered recreational and spiritual programme designed for juniors and teens in Antigua and Barbuda. The club provides opportunities for the development of new attitudes and skills that produce personal growth, team spirit, and a sense of loyalty and respect for the principles

of God, His creation and His church. Filled with action, adventure, challenge and group activities, the Pathfinders Club is committed to meeting the social, physical, mental, and spiritual developmental needs of junior and teen youth.



SDA Pathfinders celebrating Adventism

While the Pathfinder Club exists primarily for juniors and teens, one of its basic purposes is to also bring together parents, church, and community members through active involvement with the club and its members. Here, the so-called generation gap disappears as young and old worship, work and play together in a bond of common experience. Meaningful relationships are forged as leaders and counsellors join with pathfinders in sharing building confidence and working together. The whole philosophy of pathfinding is built on the premise that youth learn best by example rather than commands. As young people see leaders and parents model spiritual and social values, they too will aspire to develop high moral principles, loving and caring attitudes, and determination to excel in all their various pursuits.

The Boys' Brigade Antigua

The Boys' Brigade is a voluntary, interdenominational, uniformed Christian youth organisation that has been fostering spirituality among young people. The Brigade arrived in the Caribbean in 1892 and since then the movement spread throughout most of the Caribbean islands including Antigua where the first company was started at Freemansville Methodist Church in 1956. The Boys' Brigade emblem is an anchor and the motto 'Sure and Steadfast'. The objective of this empowering organisation is the "advancement of Christ Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness". Brigade Antigua is managed by the Island Council. The Boys' Brigade programme focuses on the holistic development of each member. It teaches Christian values and promotes life skills, as well as engages in physical activities such as sports, camping, and drills. The programme also has educational benefits since members learn valuable soft skills, including effective leadership and participate in enjoyable activities like drums, craft, and mind games. The boys also give back to the community by helping vulnerable residents and taking part in community building events.



New Testament Church of God Youth, Moravian Church Antigua Conference Youth, District Nazarene Youth International, and Wesleyan Youth of the Antigua District are other Christian organisations that are committed to spiritual development and value-based leadership.

The Antigua & Barbuda National Cadet Corps



Independence Parade



Cadets preparing food packages for community during COVID lockdown in 2020

The Antigua & Barbuda National Cadet Corps (ABNCC) is a youth voluntary organisation that is sponsored by the government and military. Established in 1966 as a unit in Antigua Grammar School, the institution initially catered for male secondary school students. The first intake of females, who came from Antigua Girls' High School, occurred in 1973. With the assistance of the Barbados Sea Cadet Unit, the ABNCC Sea Cadet Unit was established in 2003 to broaden the career options of senior cadets who were interested in seamanship. The Antigua Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard conducts training for the Sea Cadets. The Corps prioritises the holistic development and empowerment of youth and is designed to equip young people with vital skills such as discipline, punctuality, and physical and mental endurance. Under the motto Excellence through Discipline, the Corps' mission is to create responsible and loyal citizens who understand the importance of civic duty.

The Antigua & Barbuda Girl Guides Association

The Antigua & Barbuda Girl Guides Association celebrated 90 years (1931-2021) under the theme Stand Strong, Stand up, Stand Together for Peace. With its roots in England, the first girls were officially enrolled at Antigua Girls High School in July 1931. The girls in guiding include the Tweenies, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, and Young Leaders, Guides, ages 3-30. Since 1931 the association has been committed to helping the nation's girls and young women develop skills and values, which prepare them for a richer career, community, and family life. Girl Guides become productive citizens and self-actualize as they contribute to national, regional and worldwide development.



Girl Guides participating in cleanup campaign commemorating 90th anniversary

Thematic Focus VII: Protection, Safety & Security



“Care and protection of children is a moral imperative for the Government and all members of society” (UNICEF, 2017). Youth should not be subjected to corporal punishment, bullying, domestic abuse, sexual violence, or any other form of cruelty. The protection, safety, and security of young people necessitate efforts from civil society organisations and cornerstone institutions such as the family, church, and schools. The welfare of youth must also remain paramount on the government’s agenda. It is only through effective legislation, implementation, and enforcement can youth benefit from the principles and rights entrenched in various conventions, which were ratified by Antigua and Barbuda.

7.1 Corporal Punishment

Youth remain split, like the population, on the issue of corporal punishment with some siding with its continued use while others calling for its abolition. Corporal punishment has been described as “the most common form of violence experienced by children” as well as “a public health problem due to its impact on the physical, psychological, and social interactions of children” (Bassam, 2018). It refers to physical punishment or “the infliction of pain contingent upon the occurrence of a



misbehavior” (Vockell, 1991). Believing that the majority of the population was not yet ready to ban corporal punishment, the government rejected recommendations to prohibit the act during the Universal Periodic Review of Antigua and Barbuda in 2011 and 2016. In its Situational Analysis of Children in Antigua and Barbuda (2017), UNICEF highlighted a decrease in the use of corporal punishment. However, during the consultation process young people stated that the time is now ripe to abolish corporal punishment completely because it no longer serves any good purpose due to its social and psychological effects.

This National Youth Policy fully supports human rights principles, including Article 3 which stipulates, “We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety” and Article 5, “No one has the right to inflict torture, or to subject anyone else to cruel or inhuman treatment.”

While the opinions and beliefs of others should be expressed and respected, this National Youth Policy is extremely cognisant of the debate surrounding corporal punishment, including the belief that fear of its elimination will fuel a rise in delinquent behaviour. The following are the perceived benefits of corporal punishment.

Advantages of Corporal Punishment	
• serves as a deterrent	• inexpensive and easy to administer
• makes children obedient and respectful	• adjustable to suit the offence
• does no permanent or irreversible damage	• offenders learn to associate pain with the bad behaviour

Corporal punishment is prevalent in developing countries like Antigua and Barbuda because it is seen as an effective punishment particularly for youth who are recalcitrant and stubborn. Young people described corporal punishment (within the confines of the law) as a necessary disciplinary measure. They anticipated public consultations on the issue and hoped that the Ministry of Education would not suspend or abolish corporal punishment in schools. Under the Education Act (2008), corporal punishment “may be administered where no other punishment is considered suitable or effective, and only by the principal, deputy principal or any teacher appointed by the principal for that purpose, in a manner which conforms with the guidelines issued in writing by the Director of Education.”

Supporters of corporal punishment argued that physical punishment instills discipline and makes youth obedient and respectful. It also serves as a deterrent since it enables offenders to associate pain with undesirable behaviour and recidivism and helps reform individuals in the process. This cheap and easily administered punishment is adjustable since the amount of pain inflicted may vary depending on the offence. Supporters also believe that although corporal punishment may inflict physical pain, it does not have any “permanent or irreversible damage” (Clark, 2004). Realising that past beatings might be imprinted on the minds of some youth, young people remained adamant that corporal punishment is effective when used in moderation, but they admonished individuals who violate the law. Youth emphasised that the law should always be enforced when incidents of violence and abuse arise.

During consultations, parents explained that they cannot imagine an Antigua and Barbuda without corporal punishment. They predicted a society plagued with disrespect, ill-discipline, and lawlessness and urged the authorities not to yield to the popular culture of developed countries. Parents and educators also pleaded for qualitative and quantitative research that will capture the true opinions of the masses in this twin-island state.

Anti-Corporal Punishment Viewpoint

Opponents of corporal punishment insisted that the disadvantages outweigh the superficial benefits. Youth described the appeals for the abolition of corporal punishment in primary and secondary schools, as well as penal institutions, as long overdue and also looked forward to public consultations with stakeholders on the age-old issue. Youth added that many parents, teachers, and administrators may equate physical punishment to a cathartic experience, but for victims like themselves, they insisted that the experiences were nothing less than traumatic. Armed with research on corporal punishment, youth argued that there is sufficient physical, psychological, and social evidence to ban corporal punishment in all spheres.

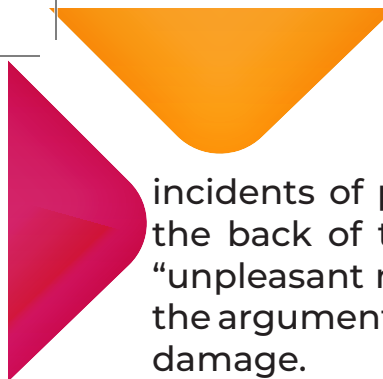
Negative Effects of Corporal Punishment	
Physical	Unsafe Environment for Youth
Psychological	Traumatic Experiences
Social	Anti-Social/Disruptive Behaviour

Corporal punishment counteracts efforts made by Antigua and Barbuda to develop a child-friendly or effective school framework in Antigua and Barbuda. Article 19 of the UNCRC highlights the importance of being protected from all forms of abuse, including mental and physical abuse. Youth maintained that there is nothing safe or youth-friendly about corporal punishment. They are of the view that frequent reports of injuries and abuse in homes and schools are proof that corporal punishment should be eliminated.

Trauma & Learned Behaviour

Youth insisted that the risks of administering corporal punishment are too great. They appealed to the “older generation” to change their mindset and realise that their one-size-fits-all approach to discipline does more harm than good. Young people contended that while many of them looked back and laughed at some





incidents of physical punishment, there are unspeakable occurrences etched in the back of their minds that emerge now and again. Describing them only as “unpleasant memories”, “endless blows”, and “murder”, youth staunchly opposed the argument that corporal punishment does not inflict permanent and irreversible damage.

Youth wish not to perpetuate the cycle and vowed to ban corporal punishment in their homes when they have children. Some young parents said that they do not use corporal punishment at all, but others disclosed that although it is traumatising, ironically, they find themselves resorting to corporal punishment even when they had no intention of doing so. Believing that behaviour is learned and difficult to unlearn, young people appealed for alternative methods of punishment. The actions of young people fall in line with Bandura’s social learning theory, which accentuated that people’s behaviour is a reflection of what they observe, model, and imitate.

Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) socio-cultural theory highlights that corporal punishment “may legitimise violence for children in interpersonal relationships because they tend to internalise the social relations they experience” (Al-Harbi, 2019). Research shows that corporal punishment contributes to mental health issues and violent and disruptive behaviours in children. A 2010 UNICEF review of the CFS programme in Antigua and Barbuda stated that “violence and aggression continue to be the major causes of trauma within schools.” The UNCRC declared that the purpose of education is to develop young people holistically. This includes the development of young people’s personalities, talents, as well as mental and physical abilities so that they could live responsible, violent-free lives. The phrase “violence begets violence” must be engraved in the minds of all authority figures who believe that deviant behaviour can be suppressed via corporal punishment.

Anti-Social Behaviour/Poor Relationships

Corporal punishment may also lead to anti-social behaviour and poor relationships with parents and educators. Youth indicated that physical punishment made them feel depressed, unloved, devalued, and disrespected in school and at home. Male teenagers described the feeling as “childish”. They indicated that parents should not be using corporal punishment once their children pass primary school level. Like their counterparts, the teenagers participated less in class or isolated themselves in their rooms where they did not have to communicate with their parents. For those who did not have a room of their own, they found the outdoor and other company more inviting. Youth pointed out that corporal punishment did not always instill non-deviant behaviour; rather they learnt how to outsmart their parents and rebelled passively. Youth believed that the use of corporal punishment was due to the stressful nature of the job as parents and employees, as well as frustration with their socio-economic plight.

Older youth mentioned that the relationship with their parents only improved after they became parents. They compared corporal punishment to a wedge that created distance between parents and children. However, youth admitted that sometimes the physical punishment forced them to “do the right thing,” which many parents reinforced.

Parental Right

Parents insisted that the choice to use corporal punishment should always remain a parental right. They said that sometimes corporal punishment is the only way they could get their children “to stay on the straight and narrow path.” Parents however endorsed calls for the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. They believed that corporal punishment should be reserved for the home, which they claimed should have more rights than the school. Some educators disagreed and suggested that the school too is trying to instill discipline and should have the right to exercise corporal punishment when necessary.

Other Punishments & Alternatives

This National Youth Policy recognises that corporal punishment is one form of discipline that should be eliminated. Youth indicated that there are other forms of punishments such as denying them the right to eat their lunch, standing outside in the sun, and writing hundreds of unnecessary lines which negatively affect students’ self-esteem and self-concept. Young people understand that the school environment must be conducive to learning, but they emphasised that some disciplinary measures are archaic and should be banned. This policy promotes effective alternatives which foster life skills, responsibility, a sense of belonging, and youth empowerment.

Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

1.	Apologise to the person you have offended.
2.	Perform community services.
3.	Perform classroom chores.
4.	Praise good behaviour.
5.	Incentivise positive behaviour.
6.	Enforce detention in schools.
7.	Suspend the offender.
8.	Withdraw privileges.
9.	Take a time-out.
10.	Seek professional counseling for the offending child.
11.	Create an enabling environment that bolsters youth engagement in climate adaptation.

7.2 Bullying

The issue of bullying also emerged during discussions with various members of the population, including students, educators, and parents. Although the definition of bullying varies, this scourge involves aggression between powerful and defenceless individuals. Bullying can be manifested verbally, physically, socially, and virtually. Its roots may be found in the following:

Reasons for Bullying	
• lack of parental attention	• desire for popularity
• parent bullying	• desire for power
• sibling bullying	• struggle socially

Youth argued that bullying on school compounds is evident where students who are extremely poor and might stand out because they cannot afford to buy updated phones or fashionable clothes are usually targeted. They also pointed out that males who do not exemplify traditional gender stereotypes were also victims of bullying. They accused some teachers and authoritative figures of ignoring homophobic bullying because of their personal or religious stance but commended those who demonstrated values of fairness and compassion.

7.21 Cyber Bullying

In-person bullying remains a challenge but young people suggested that law enforcement officers need to pay closer attention to cyberbullying, which they claim is very prevalent in Antigua and Barbuda. They insisted that both the youthful and older generations are guilty of this underreported crime and hope that the Electronic Crimes Act (2013) will reduce incidents of bullying. Under the Act, offences include “(a) information that is offensive or threatening; (b) information which is false, causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, intimidation, enmity, hatred or ill will, persistently by making use of such electronic system or an electronic device.” Persons can be fined up to \$500,000 and/or serve up to seven years in prison. While this National Youth Policy acknowledges the right for youth to express themselves, the responsibility to respect the rights and



feelings of others, as Article 13 of the UNCRC indicates, must also be considered. This policy promotes the responsible use of all electronic devices and supports responsible behaviour on all social networks or communication spheres. Youth need to understand that there are major repercussions if they fail to respect the rights of individuals, including their peers. Recognising a major omission under the Electronic Crimes Act of 2013 and an avenue to obtain valuable data and evidence, in 2019 the government authorised the police to seek search warrants and the court to grant these warrants for electronic devices.

Efforts of Non-Profit Organisations

Youth lauded the efforts of some schools and non-profitable organisations that implemented effective anti-bullying strategies aimed at reducing incidents of bullying. Among them was the Junior Chamber International (JCI). The anti-bullying campaign of the JCI Antigua Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) continues to raise awareness about the dangers of bullying. So too has the Halo Foundation, which facilitated bully prevention training for parents and teachers in secondary institutions such as the Ottos Comprehensive School, Pares Secondary School, and Antigua Grammar School. Young people encouraged students to report incidents of bullying and urged officials to punish perpetrators. Youth argued that a zero-tolerance approach and cooperation among stakeholders are necessary to curb bullying.



7.22 Workplace Bullying

Young people also compared some employers to bullies. They emphasized that manytimes individuals confine bullying to the school environment and do not realise that workplace bullying is also a real issue. Workplace bullying refers to “repeated hurtful negative act or acts (physical, verbal, or psychological intimidation) that involve criticism and humiliation to cause fear, distress, or harm to the individual” (Akella, 2016). Youth accused some bosses of managing their departments or organisations in an autocratic manner that undermines productivity and employee well-being. The issues of unwarranted micromanagement and harassment were also highlighted and youth commended unions for trying to address these issues. Young people said that although matters before the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Court in Antigua take so long and can be demotivating, this type of bullying can be fought successfully if persons document their experiences and unionise.

The issue of bullying among youth should not be taken lightly because bullying can negatively affect not only victims, but also bullies and bystanders (Wolke & Lereya, 2015) who may become traumatised by the act. Although many people believe that bullying is attributed to low self-esteem, research by Fanti and Kimonis (2012) and Reijntjes et al. (2016) associated bullying with “narcissism, or a sense of grandiosity

and entitlement, as well as callous-emotional traits” which are characterised by lack of empathy and shame. Young bullies tend to develop antisocial personality disorder as they get older and struggle with mental health issues. Similarly, bullying lowers the self-esteem of victims and makes them vulnerable to assorted clinical problems such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders. Also, bullied students often develop concentration problems and learning difficulties (Jan & Husain, 2015). This can lead, by extension, to loss of instructional time, as teachers now have to act as counsellors to the bullied students and adopt specialized teaching methods to meet the needs of affected students.

Strategies to Combat Bullying	
1.	Employers should introduce harassment policies in the work-place. This should include a mechanism for redress which fosters confidence in employees that their complaints will be heard fairly and treated justly, especially if it is against a supervisor or other high ranking officer.
2.	The government should conduct research on bullying at home, work, and school to make informed decisions.
3.	Build trust between counselors and students to help the latter capitalise on counselling.
4.	Encourage educators across all disciplines to teach youth coping skills.
5.	Develop anti-bullying policies in schools to prevent and reduce bullying.
6.	Utilise interventions found to be effective through rigorous evaluations.
7.	Foster effective communication in the home, school, and work-place.
8.	Strengthen PTAs to bridge the gap between home and school.
9.	Introduce support groups in the schools and workplace.

7.3 Gender-Based Violence

As a signatory to the Beijing Platform to Action, Antigua and Barbuda is committed to fighting all forms of inequality, including gender-based violence (GBV), which contravenes fundamental human rights and threatens youth existence. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines GBV as “violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.” Although the number of reports might not seem high, the social and psychological impacts of GBV are grave and cannot merely be reflected in statistics. Antigua and Barbuda has made significant strides in empowering males and females, but crimes of GBV remain underreported. One reason for the underreporting of GBV crimes may be that some persons are unable to identify what constitutes an act of GBV. A wealth of information is available at the Directorate of Gender Affairs, including a booklet entitled *Understanding Your Rights: A Guide to Gender Based and Sexual Violence Laws*. The booklet highlights constitutional rights and the laws related GBV in Antigua. While this problem is not specific to Antigua and Barbuda, its presence disempowers youth and instills an unnatural fear that should not abound into the minds and hearts of young people. Although there are laws that protect youth and give them autonomy in their homes, workplace, and any other venue in this twin-island state, some youth have personally felt the sting of GBV, which, in extreme cases, has led to injury and death.

Domestic Violence

The Domestic Violence Act authorises the police to “respond to every complaint or report alleging domestic violence whether or not the person making the complaint or the report is the victim.” The police are to take each report seriously regardless of the victim's identity or sex. This National Youth Policy wants to enhance young people's awareness about discrimination, which is neither gender nor race specific. Men too have been victimised by women and can seek a Protection Order (restraining order) against their persecutor. This court order prohibits the abuser from committing any further act of domestic violence and going near the victim. The Directorate of Gender Affairs has brought this reality to the forefront through countless public awareness campaigns on domestic violence. Young females must dismiss dominant stereotypes and patriarchal ideologies that associate masculinity with aggression and emotional restraint. Like their perceived antithetical counterpart, men hurt, cry, and bleed. However, even with this acknowledgment of the very human traits of men, women and girls continue to be a core focus of gender work as they have been documented as facing greater risk worldwide. The World Health Organisation (WHO) indicated that approximately 1 in 3 (30%) of women globally were subjected to either physical and/or sexual



intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to fighting domestic violence and this National Youth Policy welcomes the news the government is considering adopting a no-drop prosecution policy that allows “prosecutors to vigorously prosecute domestic violence cases regardless of victim cooperation” (Decarlo, 2016).

Nevertheless, all youth need to familiarize themselves with the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda that outlines their rights to protection from discrimination and inhuman treatment. Life is not without challenges, but young people are entitled to live in a violent free environment, devoid of physical, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse. However, young people must first be able to recognise the characteristics of GBV, which may manifest itself in various forms, including sexual offences.

Strategies for Fighting Domestic Violence	
1.	Educate young people on the laws which protects them from incidents of abuse, the process for seeking justice, and avenues for support. The support should also be extended to perpetrators of abuse. Sometimes they can be reformed; they themselves may be acting out emotions from past incidents of abuse.
2.	Educate young people about the health impacts of domestic violence.
3.	Use social media and other platforms to raise awareness about domestic violence.
4.	Challenge “macho” stereotypes of masculinity and be a model of positive masculinity.
5.	Teach youth safe and healthy relationship skills such as communication and problem-solving.
6.	Strengthen capacities of relevant institutions to effectively provide support services to victims of domestic violence.
7.	Form support groups for victims of domestic violence.
8.	Apply for a Protection Order.



President of WAR Alexandrina Wong chairing a coding exercise for Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)

Sexual Offences & Human Trafficking

Sexual offences include rape, buggery, incest indecent assault, serious indecency, and procurement. Offenders can face up to life imprisonment for these offences. Youth indicated that all sexual offences were serious crimes but contended that the definition of rape needs to be changed to reflect modern realities. Under the Sexual Offences Act “A male person commits the offence of rape when he has sexual intercourse with a female

person who is not his wife” without her consent. Youth argued that the law, which should protect young people, ironically discriminated against married women, who also comprise the youthful population. This definition also discriminates against males since it seems to suggest that only a female can be raped. What about males? Can’t a male rape a male, or female rape a male? What about a female raping a female? The laws of Antigua and Barbuda should be amended to reflect that all individuals, regardless of sex, should be protected from violence and abuse.

Youth also praised the non-governmental organization Women Against Rape (WAR) which continues to partner with stakeholders and push for the adoption of policy and legislation change that fosters the realization of gender equality. The organisation’s mission statement, which is rooted in the values of equality, justice, partnerships, and trust, reads. “Promoting inclusive health parity and victim justice through advocacy, education and direct services geared towards direct services to women and families affected by sexual violence.” Young people can access critical services such as psychological and spiritual counseling, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis counseling, Sexual Assault Response Training for Outreach Workers, as well as Client Advocacy and Referrals to sensitive agencies (including HIV Voluntary Counseling Testing, legal counsel, and other government and private health services).

In its 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, the U.S. Department stated that the Government of Antigua and Barbuda made significant efforts but did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Antigua and Barbuda maintained a Tier 2 status amid increasing awareness and anti-trafficking law enforcement training and investigations and prosecutions. Based on regional studies, UNICEF (2017) indicated that the sexual exploitation of women via human trafficking was common in the region. Three primary factors accounted for the prevalence: 1. ease of travel in the Caribbean waters 2. close proximity of islands to international water highways, and 3. popular tourist destinations are particularly vulnerable. The trafficking in persons continues to be an unquantifiable scourge that victimises young people, irrespective of their nationality. Under the Trafficking in Persons Act officials are tasked with formulating “policies and programmes to

prevent and suppress trafficking in persons.” Protective programmes for trafficked persons have already been established and victims can also contact the hotline 1-800-TIPS (8477). However, government agencies complain that inadequate funding remains “a key deficiency in increasing their anti-trafficking efforts” (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

Youth explained that the origins of human trafficking can be found in materialist and capitalist desires that obscure moral principles and values. Many young people worldwide, particularly women, are coerced into prostitution, which robs youth of their dignity and dehumanises them repeatedly. Human trafficking is a risky business. Sexual slavery endangers the health of young people who are likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases and suffer from different types of trauma. Young people must understand that there are many misconceptions about human trafficking including the belief that it does not occur in Antigua and Barbuda. Youth must also recognise that their youth and naivety make them ideal targets for traffickers. They should be vigilant of their surroundings and report suspicious activities to trustworthy individuals. Youth should also keep abreast with the local, regional and international news so that they are not caught off-guard by predators in this globalised community. The following include prioritised strategies from the U.S. Department and UN.

Strategies for Fighting Human Trafficking	
1.	Recognize the complexity of the crime which cannot be tackled in a vacuum.
2.	Implant anti-trafficking strategies in every policy area.
3.	Provide adequate funding to implement the national action plan across all agencies.
4.	Intensify awareness training in schools, churches, workplaces, and wider community.
5.	Train the police and social care officers to provide the necessary care for victims of trafficking (like rescue operations, psychosocial care, and employment and academic opportunities). Sensitise the public on how to react to victims of trafficking since this will help in rescuing and reintegrating them back into society.
6.	Develop protocols in schools for identifying and reporting a suspected case of human trafficking or responding to a potential victim.

Strategies for Fighting Human Trafficking

7.	Volunteer and support anti-trafficking efforts in your community.
8.	Conduct and publish analysis of government anti-trafficking efforts and accomplishments.
9.	Increase efforts to identify victims through proactive screening of vulnerable populations, such as migrants and individuals of commercial sex.
10.	Post signage in public places.

Statutory Rape

This National Youth Policy vehemently condemns statutory rape and child pornography. The Sexual Offence Act establishes that children under sixteen (16) years of age cannot in law give consent to sexual intercourse and various sexual activities. If the minors are under 14, perpetrators can serve a life sentence. Youth insisted that more needs to be done to protect underage youth and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted. They explained that some young people under the age of 16 have sexual intercourse not just for pleasure, but also because it is a means of providing basic things their parents cannot afford.

Youth emphasised that they are not excusing the actions of their counterparts, but the nation needs to realise that the plight of poor people is very real. They described parents, teachers, and officials as "living in a bubble," and explained that their detachment fuels deviant and criminal behaviour among children. Youth added that absolute and relative poverty, along with misguided values and parents' failure to make their children a priority force the latter to end up in the arms of sexual predators. Young people argued that their faith in the law diminished especially when predators evade the law. Youth also encouraged the police to enforce the law. They admonished parents accused of accepting payoffs and "making-up cases" involving statutory rape.

7.4 Decriminalisation of Marijuana



Youth expressed mixed feelings about the decriminalisation of marijuana in Antigua and Barbuda. The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act, 2018 made it lawful to possess up to 15 grammes for personal use and cultivate a maximum of four cannabis plants per household. A public poll that indicated that 70 percent of the population was in favour of decriminalisation was conducted

before the amendment. Some youth viewed decriminalisation as progressive and anticipated a decline in demand for marijuana. They were also content that marijuana convictions that entailed 15 grammes or less were expunged. Youth noted that the legislation would ease the overcrowding at Her Majesty's Prison and give young people who committed minor offences a second chance. Youth indicated that fears among the population were unwarranted and unnecessary and commended the government for making use of its natural resources by investing in medical cannabis under the Cannabis Act. Youth also lauded the government for the establishment of the Antigua and Barbuda Medicinal Cannabis Authority charged with regulating the cultivation, processing, extraction, and sale of medicinal cannabis and cannabis for sacramental purposes. The Authority awarded its first licence to Grow Antigua and Barbuda in June 2021.

However, other youth condemned the legislation as reckless and expected a rise in deviant behaviour among young people. While they acknowledged the potential medicinal properties of marijuana, youth said its decriminalisation was a dangerous move. Pastors, probation officers, counselors, and youth leaders shared similar sentiments and described the legislation as “a slap in the face” to individuals who were trying to help youth fight marijuana addiction and drug-related issues. Pastors painted a grim picture of the future plagued with an onslaught of social and psychological problems. Legislation would not be able to curb the next pandemic this nation would face in the coming years, they warned. Although the penalties for the sale of cannabis remain intact, youth argued that the government needs to ensure that sufficient rehabilitation facilities exist to help young people in Antigua and the sister isle Barbuda. They also appealed for more local research on the marijuana issue so that the discourse can be supported by scientific evidence. During focus group sessions, youth warned that while attention may largely be on marijuana, alcohol and other drugs are also popular among young people. They also highlighted that school compounds are ideal venues to sell alcohol confectionaries and marijuana-laced ‘edibles’ such as brownies and candies.



Youth also identified vaping as a new norm, especially since vape pens are easily accessible. Young people explained that youth are marketing some of these ‘businesses’ online in certain spaces where the older generation in Antigua and Barbuda are not present. They also called on teachers to be more vigilant. Youth shook their heads at the ignorance of some teachers whom they claimed do not realise that school bathrooms are havens for young addicts—addicts who cannot last a double period in class. More drug education programmes are needed in schools to prevent

substance abuse. These programmes can warn students about the dangers of using drugs and inform them about appropriate action that should be taken when dealing with intoxicated individuals. The school should also partner with parents and community agencies to develop comprehensive programmes.

7.5 Youth Intervention & Juvenile Justice Reform

Antigua and Barbuda has implemented multiple strategies and established several educational programmes aimed at combatting youth crime and violence, as well as enhancing the holistic development of young people across the island. These youth intervention programmes are a manifestation of synergised efforts among departments, ministries, and civil society organisations. During the consultative process, stakeholders identified poverty, dysfunctional families, and limited opportunities as key factors hindering positive youth development.

Whether relative, absolute, or situational, poverty is a societal scourge that increases the risk of mental health challenges, low educational attainment, and criminal activities among vulnerable groups. Although the absence of updated data is a major problem in Antigua and Barbuda, youth noted that poverty has serious ripple effects such as self-esteem and self-confidence, which impede young people’s academic performance and social interactions. Poverty, in all its forms, breeds levels of shame, which may be excessive and unresolved. Youth from

poor socio-economic backgrounds highlighted that they faced discrimination in schools because they lived in deprived communities.



During focus group interviews, youth explained that their poverty and places of residence prevented them from truly feeling equal among their counterparts. Young people said the marginalised feeling escalated

on Mod Days or days when students did not have to wear uniform—days when clothes were another indicator of economic status. They also spoke of the iPhone-Samsung cellphone culture which was arguably the biggest display of elite status. Youth stated that the absence of high-end phones in teens' hands displays poverty and generates an apologetic feeling of shame and depression. It is this reason, youth added, why some teens resort to stealing iPhones and Samsungs.

Youth also pointed out that it is hard to focus on academics when teachers keep demanding stationery and other materials parents cannot afford. The school too has a culture, according to youth, that forces students to buy unnecessary items—some they hardly ever use or do not need. They called on teachers to be more sensitive and realise that many young people are not as fortunate as others, especially those who live in single-parent homes. In these settings, young people noted that meeting basic needs becomes problematic, especially when one parent refuses to pay child support, despite stipulations about parents' educational and financial responsibilities under the Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008. Youth urged the government to create a type of fund that will help students to buy well-needed resources and pay for their CXC exams. This assistance, they claimed, would also help lower dropout rates and curb deviant behaviour, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth said if the government really wants to help them it should invest more in schools, which can reduce juvenile delinquency and crime.

The Boys Training School

The Boys Training School is a government-run institution at Comfort Hall in Willikies for juvenile boys (10-18) who have violated the law. The Ministry of Social Transformation, specifically the Family and Social Services Division, is responsible for the school that was being renovated in 2021. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and OECS contributed \$300,000 towards the renovation project, which forms part of a Juvenile Justice Reform Project (JJRP) Phase II. With limited resources due to COVID-19, the Division indicated that the 2020/2021 period has been challenging but youth graduated from secondary school and vocational centres and acquired certified skills training in areas such as baking and plumbing. However, the government needs to make arrangements for residents who were not academically inclined or expelled from school to attend remedial classes or learn a skill on the compound. The staff also managed to secure permanent jobs for young men in the private and public sectors and assists them in opening personal bank accounts before they leave the institution. Sports programmes such as boxing, football, and music were implemented as anger management and skill development strategies. The Big Brother mentoring summer programme, which included visiting all historical sites in Antigua and Barbuda was also established for residents.

Youth who are mentally challenged or who have been diagnosed with mental health issues, are also sent to the institution to reside until the age of 18. While some youth were able to function in society, the mentally challenged required greater care and protection, as well as alternative housing. The staff remains at risk, especially since they were not trained to work with mentally challenged youth, who can become violent and attack other residents and staff members. There have been instances where staff members were attacked and injured by these residents who were also bullied by other residents. Sometimes the latter use them to carry out violent and other illegal activities.

There is a vast amount of land at the Boys Training School that can be utilised to place additional temporary, separate, and secured housing for the mentally challenged residents. This would allow them to be engaged in separate programmes based on their needs. Residents who are sent to the institution for care and protection as well as those who have committed offenses are housed in the same space. This has long been an outstanding problem that harms the rehabilitation process. Offender-residents can negatively influence those in need of care and protection.



Boys Training School

The government needs to employ persons who are qualified and trained to work with at-risk youth and deliver quality services that are in keeping with the rehabilitation of residents. Retired individuals who are trained in various disciplines should be appropriately vetted and brought on board to assist with academics and skills training. They should be paid a stipend for their efforts. The government also needs to increase the staff numbers to strengthen security at the school.

The Salvation Army Sunshine Home for Girls

The Salvation Army Home Sunshine for Girls is an NGO for girls under 18 who have been either abused, delinquent, or in conflict with the law. According to the Home's mission statement: "The Sunshine Home for Girls provides a holistic program that assists the girls in reaching their full potential through building self-worth and empowerment. Through God's grace and Christian compassion, the girls will return into the Antiguan society as independent individuals and valued contributors." The government, private sector, and NGOs have supported this institution. During the COVID-19 period, giant organisations have made valuable donations towards the development of a computer area to facilitate remote schooling and assist in covering the major expenses of operational costs.

Stakeholders recommended that the younger girls should not be placed with delinquent teenage girls in the Home since the latter might be a negative influence on the impressionable girls. Stakeholders appealed for a government-run facility, equipped with trained staff and intervention programmes to meet the needs of diverse girls. Counselling and similar therapeutic services for children in need of care and protection should be provided, according to the Childcare and Protection Act (2003). Additionally, stakeholders appealed for the development of recreational areas that will deter girls from running away. Recreation not only encourages a sense of initiative, but plays a significant role in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of youth. Through recreational activities, youth find an avenue for emotional release as they exercise critical thinking skills and learn the value of teamwork.



Youth Intervention Unit

The Youth Intervention Unit of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda continues to assist scores of young people under the age of 18. It deters and prevents youth from becoming involved in delinquent and criminal activities. The Youth Intervention Unit identifies problem areas and utilises alternatives to the justice system. It also seeks to address issues of gang related crime and violence and provides various services. These include guidance through the criminal justice system, counselling for parents and juveniles, support and assistance to young persons at risk, diversion and rehabilitative programmes, and parenting classes. Persons who committed non-indictable offences and victims or witnesses can access the services. Youth can be referred by the police, school, child and family services, concerned citizens, parents, and guardians. The unit continues to collaborate with the Department of Youth Affairs and other organisations on various initiatives to empower young people.

Juvenile Justice Reform Programme

Antigua and Barbuda is among six Eastern Caribbean countries that have benefitted from the JJRP, which focuses on three components: diversion, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in conflict with the law. The OECS Commission collaborated with USAID to highlight the achievements of Caribbean youth and the JJRP. Under the JJRP, scores of service providers in the OECS territories were trained to improve the quality of programmes delivered. Youth from across the six independent Member States of the OECS, including Antigua and Barbuda, were able to capitalize on the training offered through the Project. They participated in the Aggression Replacement Training (ART), which focused on three coordinated and integrated components: social skills training, anger control, and moral reasoning. The JJRP stated that 68% of the participants reported an increase in self-control after the training. The JJRP continued to build the skillset of youth in conflict with the law by furnishing well-needed equipment. This included programmes such as poultry farmings, welding, hydroponics, woodwork, film training, and peer mediation. This investment can pave the way for successful reintegration. Below are other recommendations by UNICEF and other organisations:

Other Strategies for Protection, Safety and Security of Youth

- | | |
|---|--|
| • | Collect more data on child protection to appropriately allocate budgets to attain the goals and objectives needed to realize the rights of children and youth. |
| • | Maintain funding of projects addressing troubled children and dropouts. |
| • | Promote programmes for improving parenting skills, expand their reach, and include men in their parenting role. |
| • | Provide quality and continuous training to counselors and staff. |
| • | Provide more Aggression Replacement Training for youth. |
| • | Abolish corporal punishment. |

Thematic Focus VIII: Health, Sports & Psychosocial Support

The government's management of the coronavirus was highlighted as "the singular most important accomplishment in 2020." In the 2021 Budget Speech themed "Maintaining a Healthy Nation and Restoring a Vibrant Economy," the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment received the second-largest allocation of \$113.4 million. The ministry strategically curbed the spread of the COVID-19 virus as it provided access to health care at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The dashboard became a key focus as residents tried to acclimatise to a new normal that not only lowered productivity and created unease, but also increased the risk for frontline workers and resounding calls of psychosocial support for individuals with mental health challenges.



8.1 Mental Health & Psychosocial Support

Like education, the mental health of youth must be prioritised for them to reach their fullest potential. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and can make a contribution to his or her community." Mental health issues were magnified during the COVID-19 period, which coincided with a barrage of webinars and discussions on how to cope with the pandemic. However, there were mixed views among stakeholders about the impact of the pandemic on mental health. Youth and other stakeholders argued that the pandemic did not give rise to mental health problems; rather it brought to the fore existing mental health issues. On the latent level, they pointed out that youth have long been struggling with mental health.

While others agreed that mental health problems did not emerge solely because of the pandemic, counsellors attested that since 2020 they have seen an increasing amount of cases with mental health and behavioural issues. The Family and Social Services Division also recorded a rise in cases in 2020 for both males and females ages 3-35. In 2020 the cases (121) more than doubled compared to 2019 and 2018 where there were 59 and 49 cases respectively. The cases included depression, self-harm, drug use, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and suicidal attempt.



Dysfunctional Families & Quality Time

Youth intervention officers argued that the pandemic and its rippling effects escalated stress levels and highlighted familiar, but deep-rooted social issues. Among them, the plight of single parents and dysfunctional families. UNICEF (2017) accentuated that “Children living with high levels of poverty, disabilities and/or dysfunctional home environments are at greatest risk of experiencing psychological, social and developmental barriers during their primary years.” These children who usually emerge from single parent homes are also likely to perform poorly in school “due to improper nutrition, attention deficit disorders and inability to concentrate due to dysfunctional family environments and domestic violence” (UNICEF, 2017).

The absence of role models in the home, coupled with little or no community support, impedes real progress and perpetuates the vicious cycle of deviant behaviour. Youth officers added that some parents provided all the essentials in the home, but the most important factor that continues to elude them was quality time. Parents’ failure to spend quality time with their children and model positive behaviour were identified as key accelerators to mental health problems. Stakeholders pointed out that many cases involving drug use, self-mutilation, and suicide can be traced back to dysfunctional homes, where negative words are ingrained in youth’s subconscious and validation of self is non-existent. In these homes devoid of Biblical literacy and healthy personalities, mothers and fathers have problems saying “I love you.” Youth are shamed into action and many times become consumed with the problems of their parents who are also victims of mental illness.

Gender & Mental Health Challenges

A question emerged about which gender is more susceptible to mental health issues and the consensus was that women were more prone since they are largely responsible for raising children, taking care of the household, in addition to working outside the home. While women are known to be matriarchal or dominant figures in the Caribbean, young people must understand that mothers are also skilled in camouflaging their mental health problems. However, stakeholders insisted that this issue appears to be more prevalent among males who tend to live up to conventional stereotypes depicting men as towers of strength. This false perception of masculinity created a distorted reality where men are not emotionally troubled like women. This National Youth Policy encourages all individuals experiencing mental health challenges, including young men, to defy the prevailing culture of silence and seek help.

Youth & Counsellors

The consultations, focus group sessions, and questionnaires also revealed that many students who indicated that they wanted help chose not to tap into the counselling services at the schools. Youth explained that the issue of trust was the main factor, as well as the fear that others would believe something was wrong

with them. Some youth said that they preferred dealing with their problems on their own. Schools must work on building trust between counsellors and students. Counsellors are assets to any institution since they empower young people; allow youth to vent or express their emotions without judgement, and understand the bigger picture. However, lack of resources often results in teachers doubling as counsellors. This can be detrimental to some youth in need of professional help—help that can distinguish between behavioural and psychological issues. Stakeholders also pointed out that not every pastor has the ability to counsel and warned that untrained and uncertified individuals can do more harm than good. They called for more conversations, structured programmes, refresher courses, and mental health stimulation exercises in schools.

Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital

Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital is the country's only mental care facility and home for several young people. Youth described the institution as “the end of the road” or “a death sentence” since many members of society continue to label former patients as crazy even after successful rehabilitation. Though taken lightly at times, mental health has grave implications for youth existence, development, and prospect. The quality of care at Clarevue should be on par with international standards. Hence the need for a suicidal room and better access to computers and internet, which can assist with rehabilitation. Patient care at the hospital is not limited to medication management but also ensures that patients adhere to strict dietary guidelines. The institution also offers social activities that assist in patients' reintegration into society. This National Youth Policy is of the view that a nation which forsakes its vulnerable population plans for regression. Taking care of the vulnerable must not be optional for any government, even in times of dwindling resources. Young people who are well-positioned must understand that they too should assist vulnerable family members. Implementing effective strategies and realising visions to protect those who cannot protect themselves, are all emblematic of civilisation. Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital needs adequate resources to achieve its vision of delivering quality health care. The government must prioritise mental health since neglect of this vital area will have grave implications for the development of Antigua and Barbuda.



Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital

Additional strategies from the WHO to combat mental health are highlighted in the following table:

Strategies for Fighting Mental Health Problems

- Strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health.
- Provide comprehensive, integrated, and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings.
- Strengthen information systems, evidence, and research for mental health.
- Provide more training for counsellors.
- Provide more resources to rehabilitation centres.
- Tailor age-appropriate mental health education.
- Hold national consultations on mental health.
- Encourage employers to prioritise employee well-being.
- Provide more assistance to parents whose wages/salaries fall below the minimum wage.
- Provide spiritual support for individuals with mental health problems.
- Teach stress management in schools.

8.2 Lifestyle Diseases

Because of their age, youth sometimes take for granted that they are susceptible to diseases that affect their elders. Lifestyle diseases deserve its place in this National Youth Policy because the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) identified diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension as “the leading causes of death and disability in Antigua & Barbuda.” While being young should be “the age of ease,” it should also coincide



with responsible behaviour. Youth must understand that the way we eat and live today may cost us in all spheres of our lives—socially, economically, and psychologically. Tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana abuse among teenagers (13-17-year-olds) can jeopardise their health and well-being since this abuse “has strong associations with mental illness, academic difficulties, and conflict with the law” (UNICEF, 2017).



AGHS mural on childhood obesity

Obesity is another lifestyle disease that endangers the quality of life. MBS reported that more than 60% of adults in Antigua and Barbuda were obese and overweight. It also reported growing cases of childhood obesity. Parents must play a vital role in the alleviation of obesity. When they habitually make healthy food choices and incorporate physical activity into their daily lives, children will follow

suit. Schools must also take the lead in promoting healthy lifestyles and regulating the types of foods that are served in their cafeterias. A few have already banned the sale of sodas on their compounds. The OECS, Ministry of Health, Rotary Club of Antigua, and Antigua Girls' High School (AGHS) partnered on a project entitled "#ArtStudentsAgainstObesity". Art students decorated the walls of the school with a health mural which brought further awareness to childhood obesity. Obesity can result in other diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and coronary heart diseases. Young people should be selective in the food they eat since obesity may also be fatal.

8.3 HIV/AIDS

One strategic objective of the National Strategic Plan for Health 2016-2020 was to "Reduce the number of new HIV infections by 50 percent; and increase the number of persons diagnosed with HIV infection receiving sustained antiretroviral treatment to 90 percent." This is yet to materialize, but Antigua and Barbuda made significant strides in fighting HIV/AIDS following an upward trajectory between 2012 and 2014. As the table below reflects, there were 221 reported cases from 2016-2020. The nation recorded 33 cases in 2020—the lowest total in the five-year period.

The 25-29 age group had the highest for the five years, 35 cases; the 20-24 age group followed with 28 cases. The statistics are indicative of the intensified efforts by the AIDS Secretariat which remained committed to educating the masses and providing HIV sexual health services, prevention commodities, and free confidential HIV testing. Regardless of nationality, youth have the same level of access to all HIV and AIDS preventative services, which are free of cost. However, adolescents (ages 12-18) need parental approval. The AIDS secretariat reported that more people,

Cases of Reported HIV in Antigua and Barbuda 2016 to 2020						
Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total Reported Cases
Total	53	50	43	42	33	221

desirous of knowing their HIV status, were using its testing services. The secretariat suggested that more meaningful conversations on HIV/AIDS are needed to engage youth in primary and secondary schools. It also recommended developing the skillset of teachers so that they can effectively overcome communication and other barriers that hinder meaningful discourse on the epidemic.

Although reported cases of HIV infections were reduced, young people are still at risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as gonorrhoea, genital herpes, and chlamydia. Participants explained that the feeling of invincibility propels youth to engage in unprotected sex. However, they emphasised that poverty was also a real threat. Youth asserted that COVID-19 coincided with increased unemployment and some young people's involvement in illicit sexual activities. Seeing themselves as so-called "breadwinners," youth explained that their counterparts felt justified. Their parents, according to participants, operated on a "Don't ask, don't tell policy" as they implicitly encouraged their children to take up their financial responsibilities. Youth stated that such behaviour, which increased the risk of becoming pregnant and contracting HIV, was not uncommon in poverty-stricken homes and dysfunctional families.

8.4 Wealth of Sports



High jumper Priscilla Frederick

It would be remiss of the Department of Youth Affairs to complete this National Youth Policy without underscoring the significance of sports. Why should young people participate in sports? It may sound like a rhetorical question, but it is one deserving of a response. Sports is "a double-edged sword" that has positive and negative health implications (Malm et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, sports are associated with the risk of injury and reports of physical and psychological abuse cannot be ignored. However, sports

play a fundamental role in enriching young people's personal and psychosocial development. Physical exercise strengthens the immune system, enhances different metabolic and cognitive functions, and combats depression and stress Garcia-Falgueras (2015). Inactive youth who indulge in unhealthy foods are at risk for developing chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, which take an economic toll on nations' coffers and millions of families worldwide.

The objectives in the Draft National Policy on Sports and Recreation 2011-2014 emphasised the importance of total participation and total training. It also envisioned that residents of Antigua and Barbuda will increase their participation in sports and recreation and actively encourage the establishment and development of Physical Education Programmes. The policy also pushed for the fullest participation of women and girls in all areas of sports, which is consistent with the 1994 Brighton Declaration on Women in Sport. The government of Antigua and Barbuda is dedicated to gender equity and equality. Their commitment is not only reflected in educational and political domains, but also in sports where youth, regardless of their sex, are recognized and rewarded nationally. Although sports remain a male-dominated arena, female youth recognise that they too can rise to prominence like Sir Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards. Their inspiration, bolstered by the World Wide Web and good governance, is key to changing deeply rooted cultural mindsets, which breed discrimination and marginalise authentic talent. More investment in sports at the school and community levels is needed. So too is ongoing assistance from developed countries that are not free from inequalities, but can build capacity and facilitate the modernisation of sports. The once-dominant ideology that sports are reserved for the non-academics has held back its development in Antigua and Barbuda.



Sprinter Joella Lloyd

Young people should be cognisant of multiple intelligence theories that transcend intellectual capacity. Youth should also be mindful that while talent is an asset, so too are higher-level qualifications, which augment their power in the labour market, even when they are no longer physically fit for the game. The acquisition of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees can empower youth, differentiate them from their counterparts, and broaden career opportunities. Youth must get away from the mindset that there are no prospects and no pay to match those qualifications. They must remember that globalisation has made many possibilities realities. The purpose of acquiring tertiary level education must not be merely for a paycheque; it must also be tied to one's personal desire for growth and self-advancement.



Shot-put athlete Jess St John

Despite the global economic slowdown due to COVID-19, sports continue to play a major role in revenue generation. Sports tourism is just one aspect. Countless people



Basketballer Kevin "Loopy" Samuel

travel to various destinations to either watch or participate in sports. For many individuals, it is just a relaxation venture, but for others, it is their livelihood. Benefits abound not only in the games themselves but also in other types of tourism that feed off sporting events. Young people can also find profitable sources of income in displaying the flora and the fauna and heritage sites that have always captivated tourists. There are also sports-related avenues that can stem youth unemployment and lead

to fulfilling careers. These include nutritionists, manufacturing of sportswear, physical therapists, sports journalists, coaches, sports marketing, and digital content coordinator. The nation must continue to show unwavering support to youth in the diaspora who are involved in sports or studying sports-related fields. Although some may find permanent homes abroad, Antigua and Barbuda must realise that youth in the diaspora possess a wealth of knowledge and were also exposed to sophisticated levels of training. The nation must capitalise on that competitive advantage to develop local sports programmes. These ambassadors who perpetually promote Antigua and Barbuda in the stadium or on the field must never be forgotten or discarded after their youthful years come to an end. Like our youth at home, there should always be a seat for them at the table—whether it be in education or at the helm of sports.

Youth should feel safe as they engage in practice or competitive sports. A clean, safe environment, free of litter is conducive for peak performance. Young people must take pride in sports facilities and avoid defacing them. The government must also realise that for some youth, sports is their one-way ticket out of poverty and the only means of fighting delinquency. Because of its socio-economic implications, the government must prioritise a strategic plan for the development of sports. It must also take the lead in protecting and providing psychosocial support for impressionable youth who may fall under the supervision of male or female paedophiles. In cases where adults abuse their authority, the law must be



Sprinter Cehjae Greene and Swimmer Samantha Roberts

applied without fear or favour. This National Youth Policy wholeheartedly supports the establishment of a mandatory code of ethics and registration of private sports facilities, as suggested in the draft sports policy. Abuse—whether it be sexual, physical, or verbal—must never be ignored, especially since it aligns with symptoms of complex trauma that may linger for a lifetime.

Stakeholders noted that the government's input into the development of sports is needed strictly from a policy perspective. There are no clear policies or structural guidelines where it pertains to sports development. For instance, stakeholders pointed out that there is no national sports council that would dictate how sports should be funded, managed, and structured. Stakeholders recommended an investment in the development of sporting facilities, community parks, and education of coaches so that youths can perform at a higher level. Additionally, stakeholders lamented that the government gives a lot of educational scholarships, but very few to sports. They appealed for the government to build human capital by granting more scholarships for sports.



Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys



Swimmer Aunjelique Liddie



West Indies fast bowler Alzarri Joseph



West Indies all-rounder Rahkeem Cornwall



Tennis player Brasha Dyer



Golfer Tianja Payne

Thematic Focus IX: Media & Department of Youth Affairs



Although supporters of the critical cultural theory believe that the media operate primarily to support the status quo, the media have a vital role to play in youth development. The media's role is not merely to disseminate information, but also to educate the population, strategically raise the consciousness of young people, and promote them as catalysts for positive social change. The media's role entails feeding the public with information in the digital and non-digital world so that they can become fully equipped to tackle social and economic issues, as well as cope with psychological challenges. Through electronic, print, and web media, mass communication is possible and so too is change.

9.1 Value of the Media

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives: There is much value in the media, especially for the Department of Youth Affairs which aims to magnify the achievements of young people engaged in CSR initiatives. These initiatives



address the ethical, social, and environmental concerns of stakeholders (Grewal & Levy, 2016) and should be a priority for youth and media organisations. The Antigua and Barbuda Broadcasting Services (ABS), Observer, ZDK Liberty Radio, and other media agencies must continue to incorporate youth programmes into their agenda and publicise issues affecting young people, as well as their fight against mental illness, misinformation, environmental degradation, COVID-19, poverty, and all forms of inequalities. Because of their mass audience and impact on shaping mindset, media agencies should also participate frequently in CSR initiatives and broadcast their involvement so that other organisations and youth would be willing to follow suit. CSR “might also be regarded

as a key instrument that paves the way for having more hardworking and loyal employees” (Birim, 2016).

Social Media: Despite the drawbacks of escalating fake news, privacy violation, and defamation, social media remain an effective channel to communicate with diverse groups of young people and facilitate positive youth development.

Disruptive platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram continue to defy geographical barriers and fuel interactive discussions on issues affecting young people. During the national consultations in 2021, young people from various political youth arms in Antigua and Barbuda discussed pertinent issues such as the emerging blue economy, youth unemployment, and entrepreneurship. In another consultation, youth in the diaspora were able to participate and highlight different challenges they were facing. As some elderly persons tried to use the technology, youth said they felt quite comfortable at home and expressed their views online for more than two hours. The consultations revealed a hunger among youth for their voices to be heard. Many young people said they felt marginalized. They want the older generation to actively listen to their concerns and take their appeals for inclusion seriously.



With all of its human-like features, social media have created an avenue where young people can hone their communication skills and think of creative ways to boost their business. Youth in Antigua and Barbuda understand that social media is an ideal source for building customer networks and generating capital. They continue to exploit various e-commerce platforms as they buy, sell, and market products and services via online spaces.

However, more education on the responsible use of social media is needed in this twin-island state. Social media is also a channel for young people to share pornographic images, blasphemy, defame, and shame their counterparts and authority figures who may have offended them. Even in the professional sphere, young and old are guilty of this act. Youth must recognise the power of pictures and words, immortalised via screenshots and online transfers. They may seem harmless in the digital world, but very damaging in reality. In a culture that stresses “talk is free” and “talk as you like,” youth should realise that there are severe repercussions for unbridled discourse and harassment inside and outside the virtual world. For those who suffer from addiction to social media, this National Youth Policy recommends that they seek professional help to avert further damage.

9.2 Role of the Department of Youth Affairs



The DYA is charged with the development of youth in Antigua and Barbuda—an extraordinary responsibility that it takes very seriously. To promote the holistic development of young people, the department recognises that the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework adds much value and aligns with organisational goals. From an amalgamation of definitions, PYD is best described as a four-dimensional prosocial approach to healthy youth engagement and optimisation, which involves the development of their assets, agency, and contribution in a buttressed, enabling environment. The DYA understands the significance of developmental assets—internal and external. For youth to thrive to their fullest potential, they must possess psychosocial competence.

The internal development asset includes valuable traits such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity (Shek et al., 2019). The DYA is cognisant that continuous learning and school engagement, coupled with the values like integrity, responsibility, and restraint, arm youth with the resources they need to self-actualize. Young people should be able to function in an intellectually charged and supportive environment. External development assets include youth support and acceptance by peers, family, and the wider community. Under the PYD, youth use their time constructively. They feel valued and empowered, but are aware that certain boundaries exist as expectations remain high. The DYA is also dedicated to building youth self-efficacy, which are feelings of competency that reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's motivation, behaviour, and social environment. Self-efficacy is important to agency and youth engagement. Through its human resource development programmes, the DYA also promotes critical thinking, time management, interpersonal skills, resilience, as well as emotional intelligence (EQ) that helps to solidify a sense of self. However, more needs to be done to reach a greater number of young people who are yet able to tap into the Leadership and Training Programme. The number of participants in the Literacy Programme also remains low due to a shortage of manpower and resources. By diverting resources, establishing a solid volunteer corps, engaging in better strategic planning, and restructuring, the department should be able to strengthen these



programmes so that they become more impactful and help realise DYA goals.

Despite the ardent efforts of the DYA, the government needs to address the challenges hindering the development of the department. The following highlights a few of those issues.

Staffing

The DYA needs more professional staff who are committed to youth development. The government has already begun to gradually increase the number of employees in the DYA, but several more will be needed to have a greater reach and impact. Diversity must be taken into consideration as officials recruit more staff to better meet the needs of different groups of young people.

Training and Development

It is vital that all staff at the DYA participate in more training and development programmes that are aligned to organisational goals. Training and development initiatives should be continuous since they help enhance motivation and build competencies. This can translate into escalated levels of productivity and employee engagement.

Data Collection

Special emphasis must also be placed on the collection of data in the DYA. The government must focus on installing competent research officers in various departments to better guide decisions, programmes, and policies.

Cognisant that the 2030 SDGs can only be realised with strong global partnerships and cooperation, the overarching goal of this National Youth Policy is to form strategic alliances that will bolster the holistic development of young people. Very much aware of its limitations, the DYA plans to synergise with various departments and organisations locally, regionally, and internationally. The Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy is one massive organisation, but the departments remain divided. There is much wealth to be generated if the departments work together as a team. For example, one objective of this National Youth Policy is to fight against gender inequity and inequality. The DYA can collaborate with the Directorate of Gender Affairs and the international organisation Deeds Driven Dads Inc. on various initiatives to fight all forms of discrimination. Collaboration between the Community Development and Citizens' Engagement Division and the DYA is already underway to get youth to play an active role in various communities. Young people also get the opportunity to connect with





UNICEF trainee

the elderly and fulfill that sense of purpose. Forging ties between the young and old is a major goal of the DYA.

On the regional level, the DYA continues to capitalise on alliances. The development of this National Youth Policy, largely under the guidance of the specialists at the OECS Commission, exemplifies regional collaboration. The DYA hopes to forge stronger ties with the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN), along with the Barbuda Youth Affairs department, National Office of Disaster Services, and Department of Environment to raise awareness about climate change and disaster resilience among youth. This policy recognises that education builds capacity and combats

youth unemployment. Therefore, it is imperative that the DYA continues to partner with internationally renowned institutions. UNICEF, for instance, has contributed



DYA member of staff Melanie Williams

sophisticated technology to the DYA and trained a number of young people in photography and videography.

As the DYA focuses on supporting youth organisations, special emphasis is placed on rewarding young people for their nation building efforts. The DYA recognises that all young people might not be able to join formal organisations. The plan is to reach out to scores of unattached and unemployed youth and get them to participate actively in social initiatives that would enhance their self-esteem and confidence. The plan is also to reward them. One of the challenges facing the DYA is that youth are so busy raising families and making a living that they are unable

to participate in many initiatives. The COVID pandemic has also limited the active role of youth. This National Youth Policy applauds young people who are holding their families together and surviving under unprecedented circumstances. While it may not be possible to take part in every activity, their inclusion is necessary and is encouraged by the DYA.





*President of the National Youth Council
Guishonne Powell*



*National Youth Ambassador
Julien Kentish*



*CARICOM Youth Ambassador
Lyle Jackson*



*President of the National Youth Parliament Association
Kamalíe Mannix*



*Vice-President of the National Youth Parliament Association
Launée Richards*



*National Youth Ambassador
Ewarla Piper*

The 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development describes youth as active change agents who are “taking matters into their own hands, leading initiatives in their communities, countries, and at the global level.” Under the guidance of the DYA, the National Youth Ambassadors Corps (NYAC), National Youth Council (NYC), and National Youth Parliament Association (NYPA) continue to collaborate with stakeholders and educate the masses under difficult COVID norms. The NYC is an umbrella body that represents youth organisations in Antigua and Barbuda. The Council’s vision is “For Antigua and Barbuda to be a safe and healthy nation for youth involvement and development, where young people are empowered, have equal access to opportunities and can maintain and lead the national development agenda.”

Aims of the National Youth Council

- ensuring that representations are made to the Government and other interest groups on matters affecting youth
- lobbying government and submitting guidelines for the creation and amendments of legislation to the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda
- supporting all youth bodies in developing and implement a national youth advocacy agenda
- building and implementing a national strategy for youth human rights awareness and education
- providing advice to the Department of Youth Affairs and any other ministry
- disseminating information pertinent to youth through the use of all necessary media
- facilitating and providing opportunities for young people to meet, exchange ideas, and share best practices
- acting as a central point of contact and representation for all youth bodies, networks, and unattached youth in Antigua and Barbuda

• **Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentorship Programme**

The National Youth Ambassadors have been involved in several activities, including the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentorship programme. The ambassadors collaborated with the police, including the Youth Intervention Unit of the force, and the Ministry of Education. A total of twenty police officers were among the first set of mentors who will offer guidance, friendship, and leadership training to secondary students in five schools. However, the officers will have to undergo mentorship training, which started in January 2021. The DYA and ambassadors understand the significance of pooling resources and forming alliances with other ministries to help young people.



Police, DYA, and Education Officers assemble for mentorship training



Counselling Psychologist Alaina Gomes presenting during mentorship training

- **Caribbean Tree Planting Project Antigua and Barbuda**

Antigua and Barbuda was the first CARICOM state to initiate the “Caribbean Tree Planting Project Antigua and Barbuda,” which forms part of the Regional Tree Planting Initiative by the Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance (CariPhil Alliance). The National Youth Ambassadors led the way as the island was tasked with planting 20,000 trees. Since 2020, several planting projects have taken place at various locations such as the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Christ the King High School, Antigua Girls High School, Victory Centre, and the Police Headquarters. The project aimed to enhance youth engagement in environmental matters.



National Youth Parliament Association



The National Youth Parliament Association has also been extremely active during COVID-19 pandemic. It continues to enhance skills of public speaking, legislative drafting, parliamentary debate, and civic engagement. In 2021, the association partnered with Rotary Club Antigua to train its members on managing non-profit organisations. The focus was on creating internal processes, resource management, and developing and implementing strategies. The association has also been assisting the elderly with well-needed resources to fight against the coronavirus.



A member of the National Youth Parliament Association assisting the elderly in Barbuda



CONCLUSION



Members of the DYA Team

It has been more than a decade since a National Youth Policy was formulated. The social, economic, and political landscape has changed tremendously. This new policy magnifies the concerns of youth, significant strides the government and civil society organisations have made over the years, as well as realistic recommendations and strategies that can augment nation building. The DYA appreciates all stakeholders who participated on virtual platforms and various media that were utilised to generate valuable information. The DYA applauds the scores of young people who expressed themselves candidly on critical matters that have implications for all in Antigua and Barbuda. Their views on issues such as environmental sustainability, leadership, mental health, and education, reverberate throughout this policy, which will guide decision-making.

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Appendix A

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Mrs. Wanda Marcellin	Executive Assistant

Ministries

- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs
- Ministry of Public Utilities, Civil Aviation, Transport and Energy
- Ministry of Finance, Corporate Governance & Public Private Partnerships
- Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration
- Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment
- Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Legal Affairs, Public Safety and Labour
- Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy
- Ministry of Tourism and Investment

Public & Private Organisations

AIDS Secretariat	Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union
ABLP Youth Arm	Entrepreneurial Development Programme
Antigua and Barbuda Warri Academy	Examinations Office
Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union	Family and Social Services Division
Advent Youth Society	Fullness Ministries
All Saints Church of the Nazarene	Glanville Secondary School
All Saints SDA Community Services	Guiding Lanes
All Saints Secondary School	Halo Foundations and Generation Y
Antigua & Barbuda Association of Persons with Disabilities	Iron Sharpens Iron Ministries
Antigua and Barbuda Broadcasting Services	Jennings New Testament Church of God
Antigua & Barbuda Employers Federation	JMVI Reality
Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education	Measurement and Evaluation Unit (Education)
Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Information Technology	Medical Benefits Scheme
Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party	Mental Health Talk Antigua
Antigua and Barbuda National Cadet Core	National Office of Disaster Services
Antigua and Barbuda National Training Agency	National Parent Teachers Association
Antigua and Barbuda Science Innovation Park	National Parks Antigua
Antigua and Barbuda Statistics Division	National Youth Council
Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority	National Youth of the Zion Church of God

Antigua Girls' High School	National Youth Parliament Association
Antigua Junior Chamber Youth	National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre
Antigua Leo Club (Alpha)	New Testament Church of God
Antigua Leo Club (Omega)	Nesco Limited
Antigua Public Utilities Authority	OECS Commission
Antigua State College	Optimist St. John's
Antigua Trades & Labour Union	Packed Grocery Delivery
Antiguan Beacon	Pares Secondary School
Boys' Training School	Party Perfect Antigua
Caribbean Youth Environment Network	Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies District Youth—Antigua and Barbuda
Circle K International	Princess Margaret School
Clare Hall Secondary School	Ray of Sunshine Enterprise
Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital	Salvation Army Church
Community Development and Citizens' Engagement Division	School Attendance Counsellor Unit
Deeds Driven Dads Inc.	Shiva's School of Dance
Democratic National Alliance	Sir McChesney George Secondary School
Department of Agriculture	Sir Novelle Richards Academy
Department of Labour	Spirited Optimist of Wadadli
Department of Social Policy, Research & Planning	St. Mary's School of Excellence
Department of Sports	TK's Bath & Body line
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Department of the Blue Economy	United Progressive Party
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“Empowering youth to self-actualize.”

