Republic of Palau
Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development

Palau National Youth Policy
2023 – 2027

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Foreword

Office of the President of the Republic of Palau

A Message from the President to the Leaders of Palau's Tomorrow

Alii!
"Our children are the future" may be a cliché but its popularity and staying power is due to the truth in it. At some point, the adults of today will no longer be here and it will be you — the youth of today — who will be at the helm of our government, our courts, our schools, our businesses and our community. You will have the responsibility of making decisions and doing the day-to-day work of protecting and perpetuating our Palauan heritage and culture, and pushing our Republic forward in this ever-changing world. This is why it's important that, as the adults of today, ***"Ke de meleketek er a rengeleked el mo klisichel a beluad."*** Translated into English, we must ensure we are "Investing in our Children for the Republic of Palau." This **National Youth Policy and Action** aims to do just that.

Palau has been through a difficult several years as the decline in tourism and Palau's overall economy was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted economies around the world. As we rebuild our nation, we also strive to build a strong foundation — a resilient economy that provides you with a quality education, a safe community, and a health system that is responsive to the needs of our Republic for years to come.

The National Youth Policy and Action takes this effort one step further. It will guide the creation of new policies and programs, ensuring they are created around you and the future of our Republic, and thus ensuring Palau is the best home it can possibly be to all Palauans for generations to come.

This Policy reflects our overall goal of ensuring Palauans are first in our own nation as we state: ***"A Kot a Rechad er Belau."***

On behalf of the people of Palau, I express our gratitude to the team at the Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development for the months of hard work spent to create this policy. And ***MESULANG*** also to the Youth of Palau, stakeholders and community partners, who contributed their thoughts and ideas to the policy.

I commend the many talented people who developed this National Youth Policy and encourage our community to continue to work together as we implement this new policy for the betterment of our Republic.

Kom kmal mesulang! God bless our Youth and God bless Palau!

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Surangel S. Whipps, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau

Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism, and Development (MHRCTD)

Message from the Minister of MHRCTD

Every young Palauan has a unique potential and should be encouraged to find their own path. The youth are our future and have the power to create the world we want. Every young person is capable of making a positive impact in our families, clans, society and the world. We should empower our youth with the proper tools to have the courage to take risks, makemistakes, think outside the box and grow in the process. We believe that this policy and its actionplan provides a road map for achieving our goals and aspirations.

For that we would like to thank our partners, particularly Coram Int'l, UNICEF, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health & Human Services and Ministry of Justice for their collaborative efforts. There is strength in our diversity and we should celebrate our differences. We can create a world of opportunity and abundance for all. It is our resolve to work together, to build a better future for ourselves and generations to come. *Your voices, ideas and dreams matter… Let us harness them to make a difference!*

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Ngiraibelas Tmetuchl
Minister of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism & Development

Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
FBO	Faith Based Organizations
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex
MHHS	Ministry of Health and Human Services
MHRCTD	Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NCD	Non-communicable Diseases
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYP	National Youth Policy
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

The Palau National Youth Policy 2023 – 2027 sets out a common vision and objectives for youth development, along with the strategies that will be pursued to achieve these objectives. The Policy recognises that supporting youth development requires a multi-sector approach: issues of concern to youth cut across different sectoral mandates, and it is crucial that key agencies work together effectively to promote the development of Palau's youth.

The Policy is accompanied by a detailed National Youth Action Plan, which provides an implementation and accountability framework by setting out concrete actions to be taken by each responsible agency, along with a framework for monitoring progress toward achieving the objectives set out in the Policy. The purpose of the Action Plan is to improve accountability and transparency and to enable the regular monitoring and assessment of actions and the impacts of these actions on improving the situation of youth in Palau.

The development of the Policy was led by the Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development (MHRCTD), Division of Youth and Career Development. Under Executive Order 451, the Division of Youth and Career Development has responsibility for "developing, initiating, coordinating and supporting youth policy development and programmes'' and has a duty to "facilitate youth policy development and its implementation framework at the national and state government."

This Policy builds upon Palau's former National Youth Policy 2016 – 2021, which included a comprehensive review of the situation of youth and, on this basis, and following through an extensive consultation process with youth and other stakeholders, set out six objectives:

1. Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to Palau's economic development;
2. Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges;
3. Instil social values and promote community service to build national ownership;
4. Facilitate participation and civic engagement at all levels of governance, and provide a platform to support positive youth development through promotion of arts, culture, sports and recreation;
5. Create equitable opportunity for all youth and support at-risk, disadvantaged and marginalized youth; and
6. Create a platform for collaboration and cooperation among youth-serving organizations while maintaining a focus on building the capacity of systems and supporting youth serving organizations and agencies.

One of the aims in developing a new National Youth Policy was to take stock of changes in the situation of youth and on the context in Palau since the former Youth Policy was developed, and to consider the continued relevance of the Policy's priorities and objectives in light of more recent data and feedback from youth and key stakeholders. Another aim in updating the Policy was to incorporate and ensure alignment to new national policy developments, including the restructuring of the (now) Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development (MHRCTD), the development of Executive Order 451, which sets out the mandate of the MHRCTD and new sector policies, plans and programs.

In recognising the vital role that youth perform within Palau, the Policy sets out a framework for supporting youth to realize their full potential and contribute to the social, cultural, creative and economic life of the country. To this end, it identifies five strategic priorities:

Policy priority	Objective
1. Health and healthy lifestyles	All youth in Palau enjoy the highest attainable standard of health through access to quality, youth-friendly programs, health information, services and support and strong, supportive families and communities.
2. Education, skills and employment	All youth have the necessary education, skills, support and services to reach their potential and succeed in the national labor market, with quality economic opportunities available within Palau to enable youth to be self-sufficient, fulfilled and active members of their communities and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Palau.
3. Justice, protection and social inclusion	Families and communities support the social inclusion of all youth; youth are safe from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, through robust processes and comprehensive services to support youth who are at risk of or have experienced violence, and supportive families and communities who encourage help-seeking; and youth in conflict with the law have access to services and facilities to support their rehabilitation.
4. Participation in politics, culture, the arts and environmental protection	All youth have the knowledge, skills, forums, opportunities and support to participate meaningfully in political decision making and develop and participate in actions and initiatives to address climate change and environmental issues, sports, and cultural and arts programs and activities.
5. Strengthening the enabling environment for youth	Youth and youth development are supported by effective coordination, strong institutions and evidence-based programs and services.

2. Background

The development of the National Youth Policy was led by the Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development (MHRCTD) and informed by a process of extensive consultation with key stakeholders and experts from the relevant Government Ministries and agencies, non-government organizations and youth representatives. It was also informed by a comprehensive review of data and evidence on the situation of youth in Palau, and a review of existing national Government priorities, policies and plans, regional (Pacific) frameworks and international standards and guidance.

2.1 Review of data and evidence

It is important that the National Youth Policy is evidence-based, and that it responds to the known challenges, risks and needs of youth in Palau, along with utilizing existing opportunities to support and empower youth. The Policy was informed by a review of existing evidence setting out the situation of

youth in Palau, including Census and other survey data and available administrative data, which details outcomes across the different dimensions of youth development, along with evidence on access to services and systems of support to youth. The findings from this evidence review are set out in section 3 and 4 of this Policy, which updates and builds upon the comprehensive review of evidence contained in the 2016 National Youth Policy. While data was available on many youth outcomes and issues relating to youth development, there are a number of gaps in the evidence base.

2.2 Alignment with national, regional and international policies and guidance

The Policy was developed to ensure alignment with other key national policies and initiatives, including Executive Order 451 which sets out the organization and mandate of the MHRCTD, and the responsibilities of the Division of Career and Youth Development; and President Surangel Whipps Jr.'s Transition Wheel, which sets out the values, priorities and results for the President and his administration. Other key national sector policies and plans were also reviewed to ensure alignment between the different national strategies and plans and the new Policy.

While the Policy embedded within the unique context of Palau and aligned to national priorities and policies, its development was also informed by regional (Pacific) and international standards, frameworks and guidance, in particular, the Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014 – 2023, by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

2.3 Youth and stakeholder consultations

The development of the National Youth Policy was heavily informed by a series of consultative meetings with Government Ministries, non-Government organizations and youth, which were carried out in August and September 2022. A full list of consultative meetings is attached to this Policy (Annex 1). A further series of meetings with representatives of key Ministries were undertaken in February and March 2023 to inform the development of the National Youth Policy Action Plan.

In addition, a youth survey was developed in an open-source, web-based data collection platform and disseminated to youth through State youth representatives and youth organizations. Paper versions of the online survey were also developed and disseminated to youth at a series of youth-related events in Koror throughout August and September 2022. The survey was designed to collect feedback from youth about their main areas of concern and their views on what areas and issues the National Youth Policy should prioritize. The results were used to inform the development of the Palau National Youth Policy 2023 – 2027 and in particular, to test the extent to which the priorities contained in the 2016 National Youth Policy remain relevant. In total, surveys were completed by 172 respondents, with even gender representation: 83 female and 82 male respondents (seven respondents did not select a gender). Responses were received from 11 States. The findings from the Youth Survey are summarized at Annex 2.

3. Context: Youth in Palau

3.1 Defining Palau's youth

The term 'youth' refers to the period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, which may be marked by the completion of formal education, entry to the labor force, marriage and / or starting a family. While this may not necessarily correspond to a fixed age

band, for the purposes of the Policy, it is important to define an age group to ensure effective targeting of programmes.

Palau's National Youth Policy 2016 -2021 narrowed the definition of youth from 15 – 35 years (which was the definition used in Palau's first Youth Policy) to 13 – 24 years. The reason for this was to allow for more focused policy interventions and for the implementation of activities aimed at a more specifically defined and focused group. This definition also aligns more closely to the United Nations definition of youth (15 – 24 years).

The current National Youth Policy retains the definition of youth as being 13 – 24 years.

The Policy recognises the substantial diversity among the youth population in Palau, all of which have varying needs and interests. In developing programs and interventions for youth, it is crucial to respond to this diversity and ensure that all groups of youth benefit from policy and programme interventions. The Policy also recognises that some groups of youth may be marginalized or living in vulnerable situations. This includes youth with disabilities, youth who are single parents, LGBTQI+ youth, youth whoare living in situations of deprivation, migrant youth and youth who are living in remote locations. Responding to marginalized youth or youth in vulnerable situations may require the implementation of initiatives that are specifically aimed at addressing the needs of these groups.

3.2 Context: Demographic profile of youth in Palau

According to recent Census data, youth (13 – 24 years) comprise 13.5 percent of the population in Palau (2,382 persons). Among persons aged 15 to 24 years, males (1,014) outnumber females (924).

Figure 1: Youth population (15 – 24 years) in Palau by gender (2020)
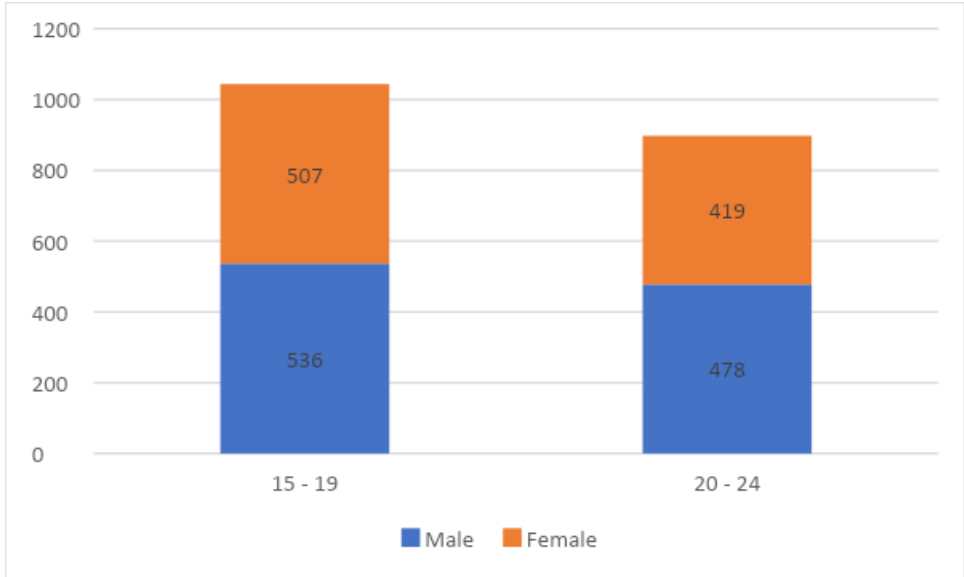
Source: Census of Population and Housing 2020[1]

Palau has an aging population: its youth population has been declining in recent years, both in numerical terms and as a proportion of the overall population. The population of 15 – 24 year olds decreased from

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[1] https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/finance/budgetandplanning/population-census/

2,708 in 1995 to 1,940 in 2020. While Palau experienced a population decline more generally between 1995 and 2020, it is notable that the number of youth *as a proportion of the overall population* also declined (from 15.7 per cent to 11 per cent) (see figure 2, below).

Figure 2: Youth (15 – 24 years) as proportion of overall population (%), 1995 – 2015
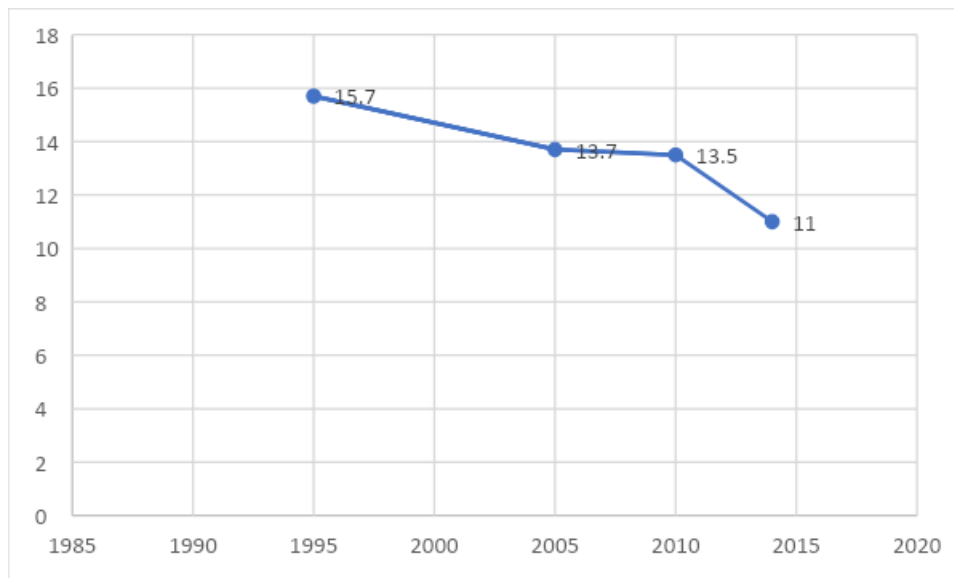
Source: Census of Population and Housing 2020[2]

The median age of Palau's population has also increased in recent years: from 25.6 years in 1990 to 33.9 years in 2020. As noted in the NYP 2016 – 2021, the youth population decline – if it continues – could have a significant impact on Palau's development, by decreasing the working age population: the youth population is critical to Palau in terms of ensuring a productive workforce and for population stability. The Policy recognises the need to strengthen opportunities to ensure that remaining in Palau is a viable and appealing option for youth. It also recognises the need to address barriers to youth returning to and remaining in Palau.

3.3 Key challenges facing youth in Palau

A review of recent data and a survey of the youth population in Palau confirmed that the priority areas of the 2016 – 2021 National Youth Policy remain broadly relevant, though some new emerging issues have also been identified.

3.3.1 Summary of evidence on youth outcomes

A detailed analysis of key data on youth is set out below under each priority area. However, in summary, the evidence review identified the following challenges facing Palau's youth population:

- Palau's youth have quite high rates of **drug and alcohol use** and engagement in risky behaviors, including binge drinking, vaping and the use of tobacco such as betel nut.
- The youth **suicide rate** is quite high, and many youths are experiencing **mental health issues** and challenges accessing support;

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[2] https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/finance/budgetandplanning/population-census/

- The **rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** is quite high and rising, with youth exposed to NCD risk factors, including overweight, obesity, and poor nutrition;
- Palau's adolescent fertility rate is quite high and youth experience challenges accessing quality, confidential youth friendly **sexual and reproductive health** information and services;
- Educational enrollment rates and educational achievement at the secondary level is quite sound, though there are some issues with **repetition and student drop** at Grade 9 level.
- **Limited post-secondary education and economic opportunities** and minimum wages that are quite low in light of the cost of living have resulted in many youths leaving Palau, creating a 'brain drain'.
- There are limited pathways for **youth with disabilities** to access post-secondary education and the labor market, to support independent living.
- Youth are exposed to **violence, abuse and exploitation**, including new and emerging forms such as online and technology-related violence, bullying and exploitation; in addition, reporting levels are quite low, particularly in the case of sexual and family violence, and there is limited coordination in referral and service provision.
- There are limited community-based rehabilitation opportunities for **youth who are in conflict with the law**.
- While opportunities and forums exist for youth to be **meaningfully engaged in political decision making**, cultural and social norms requiring deference to community leaders and elders has created a barrier to their active participation in these forums.

3.3.2 Youth survey

The youth survey also identified challenges or **issues of concern** to youth (the results are set out comprehensively in Annex 2). 'Drug and alcohol abuse' and 'mental health issues' were identified as the top problems facing youth in Palau. These two problems received around double the number of responses than the next two most selected problems ('limited education or training opportunities after high school' and 'financial problems'). Other problems selected commonly by participants were bullying; sexually transmitted infections and risky sexual behaviour; unemployment; and violence in the family.

Respondents were also asked to write what they thought should be the **top three priorities** for the new National Youth Policy. The results of this broadly reflected the top issues of concern to youth. Most responses concerned the need to address mental health issues / suicide and drug and alcohol abuse among youth. Other most identified priorities related to the need for more educational and skills development opportunities and more job opportunities. Respondents also identified the needs of particularly vulnerable or at risk groups as requiring prioritizing within the Policy, including priorities related to addressing poverty and financial problems, and providing support to families. Also, protection from violence, including bullying and family violence in particular, and ensuring safety and better law enforcement emerged as other priority areas.

Maintaining connection to culture and community also emerged as an identified priority. This concern emerged in the consultative meetings carried out with youth and other Government and non-Government stakeholders that shaped the development of the Policy. In particular, the desire for cultural connection and retaining the unique cultural customs and practices of their communities was a priority to youth, along with the need for a better understanding of how to navigate between cultural roles and values and the demands of modern life and expectations. This tension was identified by youth and other stakeholders as a complicating factor in the transition from childhood to independence among youth in Palau.

Respondents were also asked to select from a non-exhaustive list the top three areas in which they perceived the **Government to be performing well** and three areas in which they perceived the **Government not to be performing well**. This provided insight into the issues on which youth feel the Government should be focusing and the areas in which they should look to strengthen their policies and programmes. The responses also give a further indication of the areas that are important to youth. Among the areas in which respondents thought the Government was not performing well, the most selected areas were addressing mental health issues among youth; supporting youth victims of violence;addressing drug and alcohol abuse among youth; and providing financial and other support to families inneed. This indicates that youth wish to see greater efforts from the Government to respond to youth who are in vulnerable situations or situations of risk or need. However, interestingly, 'addressing drug and alcohol abuse among youth' was the most selected area in which respondents thought the Government was performing well.

The survey also asked respondents to select who, in their view, are the **most vulnerable population groups** in Palau (they were asked to select, from a non-exhaustive list, which groups face the most challenges in Palau). It is clear from this that youth recognise all marginalized groups as facing challenges, with single parent youths, youth with disabilities and youth living in poverty among the mostvulnerable, according to respondents. However, a substantial number of respondents also selected LGBTI+ youth and (to a lesser extent) youth living in remote areas and migrant youth as among the groups facing the most challenges in Palau.

4. Vision, mission and guiding principles

4.1 Vision

The vision for the National Youth Policy is a Palau in which all youth are healthy, happy, respected, safe and empowered to contribute to the social, cultural, economic and sustainable growth of the country.

4.2 Mission

The Policy's mission is to ensure that youth are supported and empowered with the knowledge, skills, opportunities, programmes and services to enable them to grow into independence, achieve to their full potential and contribute to happy, healthy and sustainable communities and families.

4.3 Guiding principles

The National Youth Policy is underpinned by the following principles and core values:

(a) **Cultural connection**: The Policy is embedded within the unique cultural and social structures of Palau, which govern social and family life through a complex system of mutual aid, obligations and customary exchanges between family and clan members and between clans affiliated through marriage. To provide a strong basis for positive youth development, it recognises the need for youth to participate actively in and maintain connection to the culture of their communities.

(b) **Strength-based**: The Policy recognises that its youth are culturally aware, motivated, socially conscious and family oriented and that supporting these strengths and empowering youth is key to advancing inclusive economic, social and cultural growth in Palau.

(c) **Family and community embeddedness:** The Policy recognises that positive youth development relies on supportive families and communities. It recognises the need to support youth to contribute to positive family and community life, and that youth initiatives should be designed by and embedded within communities.

(d) **Holistic and coordinated**: The Policy views youth not as a series of disconnected issues or problems, but as requiring solutions that are holistic and integrated and recognises the need for a coordinated, multi-sector approach among Government Ministries and agencies, NGOs, FBOs and the private sector.

(e) **Diversity and inclusion**: The Policy celebrates diversity among Palau's youth population; it acknowledges that different youth have different needs and that there is a need to ensure inclusion with communities, institutions and services of diverse young people.

(f) **Innovation and adaptation**: The Policy recognises that youth are creative and that it is vital to support youth to derive their own innovative solutions to address their needs.

(g) **Ownership and participation**: The Policy recognises the importance of youth participation in all stages of youth policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

5. Policy priorities: Outcomes, objectives and strategies

This section outlines outcomes, objectives and strategies for each priority area, which aim to ensure alignment of key Government Ministries, Divisions and Agencies towards common priorities and objectives for youth.

Policy area 1: Health and healthy lifestyles

5.1.1 The situation and key challenges

Drug and alcohol use were among the top three issues of concern to youth according to the Youth Survey which was carried out to inform this Policy. It was also among the top three issues of concern to youth according to the Youth and Agency Survey that was administered as part of the process for developing the former Policy. Palau's State Government Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child during its last period review noted that the National Youth Congress had identified substance and alcohol abuse among the top issues of concern to youth (unemployment and 'external influences' were other priority issues).

According to the 2017 Non-communicable Disease & Risk Factor Surveillance Survey,[3] 37 percent of 18–24-year-olds and 31 percent of 25–34-year-olds self-reported as a smoker.[4] Betel nut use was even higher, with 41 percent of 18–24-year-olds and 42 percent of 25–34-year-olds reporting everyday use. Binge drinking was reported by similar proportions of 18–24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds (32 and 33 per cent, respectively). A 2021 study into determinants of alcohol consumption and marijuana use among young adults in Palau found lower proportions of self-reported alcohol consumption, with the majority of respondents stating they drink alcohol less than once a month, though 32.8 percent of men and 19.7 percent of women reported using marijuana in the last 30 days.[5] According to a 2018 study, 10 percent of respondents reported smoking two joints of marijuana per day. Respondents first tried alcohol at 13 years old, on average.[6]

Mental health issues are also a cause for concern among youth, and among the top issues of concern to youth according to the Youth Survey. According to the 2017 Youth Risk Behaviour Surveys (YRBS),[7] a high proportion of students (42 percent of girls and 32 percent of boys) reported that in the 12 months preceding the survey, they had felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or longer during which they stopped doing some of their usual activities. Suicide is a critical concern, including amongst youth. The suicide rate between 2003 and 2012 was roughly double the global suicide rate, averaging at 21.7 per 100,000 during this time period.[8] A 2018 study noted there to have been a marked increase in '*the number of students who experienced depression as well as the thought of harming oneself,*'[9] with 15 percent of students reporting that they require help with '*psychosocial issues and concerns*.'[10] The 2017 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS)[11] found that 38 per cent of middle school students and 25 per cent of high school students had seriously considered suicide. Alarmingly, suicide attempts were reported by over a quarter of girls (28 per cent of middle school girls and 25 per cent of high school girls) and almost one in five boys (18 per cent of middle school boys and 19 per cent of high school boys).

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[3] Non-communicable disease and risk factor surveillance: Palau. 2017. Available at: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/palau/palau_2016_hybrid_report.pdf?sfvrsn=6a306f97_1&download=true.

[4] This combines daily smoker and non-daily smoker responses.

[5] Sata, M. et al, Determinants of alcohol consumption and marijuana use among young adults in the Republic of Palau, 2021. available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33482714/#:~:text=The%20proportions%20of%20current%20drinking,in%20men%20and%2056.1%25%20vs.

[6]US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA Maternal and Child Health, Needs Assessment- Palau – 2021. Available at: https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/ce592406-92b1-44f8-9880-f77e1f6b35d7.

[7] Available from Results | YRBSS | Data | Adolescent and School Health | CDC

[8] Government of Palau, Palau Hybrid Survey, Final Report, 2017. Available at: https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Palau-Hybrid-Report_FINAL.pdf.

[9] US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA Maternal and Child Health, Needs Assessment- Palau – 2021. Available at: https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/ce592406-92b1-44f8-9880-f77e1f6b35d7.

[10] US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA Maternal and Child Health, Needs Assessment- Palau – 2021. Available at: https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/ce592406-92b1-44f8-9880-f77e1f6b35d7.

[11] Available from Results | YRBSS | Data | Adolescent and School Health | CDC

Rates of overweight / obesity are quite high among the adolescent population, at 62 per cent,[12] owing to poor nutrition and exercise habits amongst youth. A school health needs assessment published in 2021 found that around half of students had consumed a carbonated drink in the previous 24 hours and half had eaten pre-packaged food at least once in the seven days prior.[13] Another study found 22 percent of 18-24 year olds and 20.7 percent of 25-34 year olds consumed less than one serving of fruit and vegetables per day, and a significant proportion of these populations consumed more than two servings of processed meat per day (31.5 percent of 18-24 year olds and 17.2 percent of 25-34 year olds).[14] According to an unpublished situation analysis of children in Palau in 2022, a policy to address unhealthyfood marketing to children is under development, but Palau does not have any food fiscal policies like taxation against the unhealthy food or subsidies for healthy foods. Nor has Palau introduced a healthy food policy for schools or food-based dietary guidelines.[15]

Poor nutrition and substance use are contributing to the burden of **non-communicable disease (NCDs)** across the population. The Government of Palau carried out a population-based survey examining NCDs and associated risk factors in 2017, which showed high incidence of chronic conditions including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol.[16] While these conditions generally increased in prevalence with age, there were significant proportions of the younger generation (18-34 years) with hypertension (11.5 per cent), diabetes (13.2 per cent) and elevated cholesterol (30.9 per cent).[17] The rise in NCDs and the related risk factors have been attributed to the "*drastic changes in lifestyle in the Republic of Palau […] from mostly subsistence living and reliance on locally produced crops and fish to a more Western lifestyle of sedentary occupation and more reliance on imported foods, as well as the introduction of many illicit substances.*"[18] In May 2011, a Presidential Executive Order (Order 295) was issued declaring a state of emergency related to NCDs and mandating a government-wide response.[19] The Healthy Communities, Healthy Palau, Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Strategic Plan of Action was adopted in 2015, and a National Coordinating Mechanism for NCDs was established to review and approve funding for programmes aimed at addressing five action areas for the reduction of tobacco and harmful use of alcohol, increasing physical activity and improving nutritional intake, and reducing the prevalence of metabolic risk factors that precede major NCDs.

Access to sexual health rights is another issue of concern. Palau's total fertility rate is estimated at 2.21, while adolescent fertility is quite high, at an estimated 27 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19.[20] In 2020,

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[12] State Of the World's Children, 2019 report.

[13]US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA Maternal and Child Health, Needs Assessment- Palau – 2021. Available at:
https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/ce592406-92b1-44f8-9880-f77e1f6b35d7.

[14] Government of Palau, Palau Hybrid Survey, Final Report, 2017. Available at:
https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Palau-Hybrid-Report_FINAL.pdf.

[15] Pacific Monitoring Alliance for NCD Action (MANA Dashboard)2019),
https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2019/07/pacific-monitoring-alliance-for-ncd-action-mana-dashboard.

[16] Government of Palau, Palau Hybrid Survey, Final Report, 2017. Available at:
https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Palau-Hybrid-Report_FINAL.pdf.

[17] Government of Palau, Palau Hybrid Survey, Final Report, 2017. Available at:
https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Palau-Hybrid-Report_FINAL.pdf.

[18]Non-communicable disease and risk factor surveillance: Palau. 2017. Available at:
https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/palau/palau_2016_hybrid_report.pdf?sfvrsn=6a306f97_1&download=true.

[19] Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.

[20] Ibid.

24 women and girls aged 16-19 years old were mothers to surviving children, which equates to 6 percent of that age group. In contrast, 38 per cent of women aged 20-24 had children. [21] Palau's contraceptive prevalence rate is relatively low compared to other Pacific Island Councies (at 22.3 percent[22]), which suggests that youth do not have reliable access to sexual and reproductive health services. According to the Census 2020, two children aged 12-15 years old (one male and one female) were legally married, and one male was 'consensually married' in 2020, which equates to 0.2 and 0.1 per cent of the population that age, respectively. The rate of marriage increases incrementally with age; 1.2 percent of 16-19 year olds, 9.8 percent of 20-24 year olds and 25.6 percent of 25-29 year olds were legally married in 2020.[23]

Across the Pacific, **sexually transmitted infection** (STI) rates are high amongst young people, though no recent figures are available on Palau in particular. One behavioral study looking into the risk factors for contracting HIV and other STIs found that people were apprehensive about getting tested given the small size of the island and small population size, increasing the likelihood of being seen by a friend or relative at the clinic.[24] An attitudinal survey on the delivery of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education in schools found that SRH education was '*happening at some level at many schools*', with HIV, STIs and safe sex covered in grades 8–12.[25] Palau has a Health Education curriculum framework (Life Skills) for grades 1−12, with HIV and SRH appearing in "Growth and Development" and "Prevention and Control of Disease."[26]

Palau has a **mandatory and graded health curriculum** which is tailored to the issues faced by Palauan youth, including 'life skills' topic, which is delivered to students from Kindergarten to the end of High School. Further, MOE initiatives include increasing the number of physical education (PE) classes children take per week to two days and changing the classes to become graded to improve student attitudes and commitment. They have also introduced after-school sports programmes, as well as a student cross-country initiative, both of which are intended to help children obtain 60 minutes minimum of exercise as recommended by the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). With regards to sexual and reproductive health, the MOE has developed school-based programmes for school aged youth (9 – 17 years) on teen pregnancy. To support student's mental health, the MOE has introduced a 'social emotional intelligence curriculum', aligned to Palauan culture. The MHHS provides yearly school health screening; children who are identified as at risk are referred to community health centers or public health clinics for early interventions and management of health risks.

Challenges, barriers, and bottlenecks
- There are limited data to allow a more comprehensive understanding on the context of youth health problems, including on the drivers of mental health problems and suicide, and of drug and alcohol abuse. Limited data has caused challenges in the development of effective, evidence-based solutions.

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[21] Table 106a: Fertility by Labour Force Status: Palau Census 2020.

[22] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CONU.ZS?locations=TO-AE&view=chart

[23] Census 2020, Population Ages 12+ by Marital Status and Sex: Palau 2020.

[24] Worth, H. et al. Pacific Multi-Country Mapping and Behavioural Study: HIV and STI Risk Vulnerability among Key Populations, undated, available at:
https://sph.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sphcm/Centres_and_Units/Palau-HIV-STI-Risk-Report.pdf

[25] UNESCO, Attitudinal Survey Report on HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health Education in School Settings, 2015. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232550

[26] UNESCO, Attitudinal Survey Report on HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health Education in School Settings, 2015. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232550

- Social and cultural norms can prevent youth from speaking openly about their feelings (particularly to adults) and this has had a negative impact on their mental health and ability to get help when needed. Displays of emotion are stigmatized, particularly among males, as is asking for help or support when facing problems.
- There is limited access to youth-friendly and confidential counseling services, and professionalization of counseling is lacking. There is a limited supply of counselors and other mental health professionals (e.g. psychologists) to meet demand, particularly for youth outside Koror. School-based counseling services only exist in some public schools, and they are housed separately in an allocated building, creating barriers to access for youth seeking confidential information and advice.
- NCD grants are quite small and project-specific, limiting the ability of the fund to support multi-year projects aimed at generating sustained / longer-term outcomes. There is no specific budget for youth-focused programmes aimed at addressing NCD risk factors.
- Sexual health is a sensitive topic for youth and speaking to parents is difficult, as is seeking information and services where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Community health centers can be intimidating and are not youth-friendly.
- The awareness of risks associated with drug and alcohol use is quite limited among youth and within communities, and certain risky behaviors (e.g. binge drinking) are socially condoned, which can have the effect of promoting drug and alcohol use among youth.

5.1.2 Outcome

All youth in Palau enjoy the highest attainable standard of health through access to quality, youth-friendly programmes, health information, services and support and strong, supportive families and communities.

5.1.3 Objectives

(a) Improved mental health for youth through increased knowledge and skills in preventing mental health issues and improved avenues and access to youth-friendly services and support within families and communities that support strong mental health.

(b) Reduction in the harmful use of drugs and alcohol through effective public health initiatives that increase awareness of the risks and impacts of drug and alcohol use, and through the development of youth programmes that provide positive recreational and learning opportunities.

(c) Increased physical activity and better nutrition among youth to reduce the risk factors associated with NCDs through the development of after-school and intersessional activities focused on increasing physical activity and developing connections to traditional customs and food production.

(d) Increased access to sexual and reproductive health rights through the strengthening of youth-friendly community health services and development of alternative outreach modalities (e.g. virtual and text messaging services).

5.1.4 Strategies

- **Gain a better understanding of the drivers of youth suicide:** Carry out a comprehensive study on the drivers, including underlying or core factors and more immediate triggers, of youth suicide to inform the development of evidence-based, effective policies and programmes aimed at reducing youth suicide.

  Development of youth activities: Ensure availability and access to a range of after school and inter-sessional programmes and activities for youth aimed at addressing NCD risk factors and mental health risks. Ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and that they are communicated to MHRCTD and added to the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(see priority area 4).*

- **Increased funding for youth activities:** Develop a ring-fenced budget as part of the NCD mechanism to support long-term, sustainable youth-focused programmes aimed at addressing NCD risk factors.

- **Strengthening and development of youth-friendly support services:** Ensure access to quality, confidential face to face professional counseling services for youth at risk, including those experiencing mental health problems, and the development of alternative support modalities for at risk youth, including eHealth / text-based and peer outreach and support services.

- **Strengthen school counselling services**: Professionalise school counselling services and ensure counsellors are available at every school, are part of the school staff and accessible to all youth students who require support.

- **Sexual and reproductive health services:** Ensure availability and access to inclusive, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services for all youth; and

- **Community mobilization:** Develop communications and community mobilization programmes, including in schools and through youth representatives in state governments to: raise awareness of and destigmatize mental health issues; and raise awareness of the health impacts and other harms caused by substance abuse and promote help-seeking in communities.

Policy area 2: Education, skills and employment

5.2.1   The situation and key challenges

There are 17 public elementary schools across Palau, in addition to religious / private schools, which all fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Palau has **high rates of secondary enrolment** for adolescents. In 2018/19, there were 3,052 students enrolled across the 23 schools in Palau, including 897 at secondary level.[27] Though within the secondary level, Grade 9 is the area of concern for attrition of students, where **repetition and dropout rates** are highest (at 8.9 and 10.1 per cent respectively) and promotion rate the lowest (at 81 percent).[28] As this is the "transition year" from primary to secondary,[29] This is likely linked to the fact that all but one of the secondary schools are located in the central region,

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[27] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, website. Available at: http://173.230.128.80:8002/, www.palaumoe.net
[28] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2017,* p 17..
[29] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2017,* p 17..

which creates barriers to access for children living in the outlying areas. However, the government is focussed on introducing strategies to minimize the risk of students dropping out of school, including free bus fares to and from school and workshops for students in grade 8 to encourage them to transition.[30]

The **literacy rate** is high amongst the youth population (age 15-24) at 97 per cent, which exceeds the literacy rate for the whole population (above 15 years), at 94 percent.[31] The curriculum at secondary level is made up of a combination of mandatory academic courses as well as vocational programs ('career academies'). The Stanford Achievement Test 10th Edition (SAT10) is the examination used by the Ministry of Education to measure secondary student performance. Most recent data for Grade 9-12 outcomes (period 2015-17) shows a ranking of 4 on the SAT10, which is considered "average."[32]

The Education Master Plan 2017-2027 of the Government of Palau prioritizes the development of **student readiness to enter post-secondary education, training and the world of work**, including through the provision of alternative education options; establishing a vocational / technical center; and undertaking early identification and intervention for at-risk youth.[33] There are a number of programmes for Palau students to study in the USA or students may enroll in community college and continue vocational training. There is a new 'employment services' programme which provides students with resources on alternative education.

There are two **Universities** in Palau: Pacific Islands University (Palau Campus) and Palau Community College. The latter has received accreditation by the U.S. Western Association of Schools and Colleges and offers students a range of options for further study (from certification to Bachelor degrees). Though exact figures are not available, it is reported that many young people chose to attend University abroad instead in pursuit of better qualifications. This is contributing to a "**brain drain**" in Palau, particularly as those students are likely to accept offers of employment in their country of study rather than return home after graduating.[34] In a bid to retain high school leavers, the Palauan government introduced the Palau Post-Graduate Scholarship Act of 2019, which provides for free university education for students who complete their studies in Palau and work in the country for five years post-graduation.[35]

According to the Education Statistical Yearbook 2017, there were 354 freshmen (56 per cent female) and 130 sophomore students (53 per cent female) enrolled in **Palau Community College**.[36] Latest available census data from 2015 showed 46 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men to have post-high school education.[37] However, **gender parity levels** differ significantly. Only six per cent of Palauans with an engineering or construction qualification are female, signaling an underrepresentation of women in Science, Technology, and Engineering (STEM) fields, whereas a significantly greater share of women (71 per cent) than men (29 per cent) study business and law.[38]

As displayed in Table 4, gender differences have been observed in the selection of careers too; men make up a majority of the employees within sectors such as machine operating, craft / trades,

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[30] Inclusive education Country Profile, Palau, 2020-2021.
[31] Indicator G.4.6.1 & P(MDG).4.6.12 - Census 2020.
[32] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2017*, p 25..
[33] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, Education Master Plan 2017-2027.
[34] Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.
[35] Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.
[36] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2017*, p 16.
[37] Census, 2015, cited in: Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.
[38] Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.

agriculture, fisheries and forest workers, whereas women make up a larger proportion of the clerical support workers and professionals. There are roughly equal numbers of men and women working in the services and sales sectors and a greater number of male managers than female.

Table 4: Sectors population 16+ working across, 2020
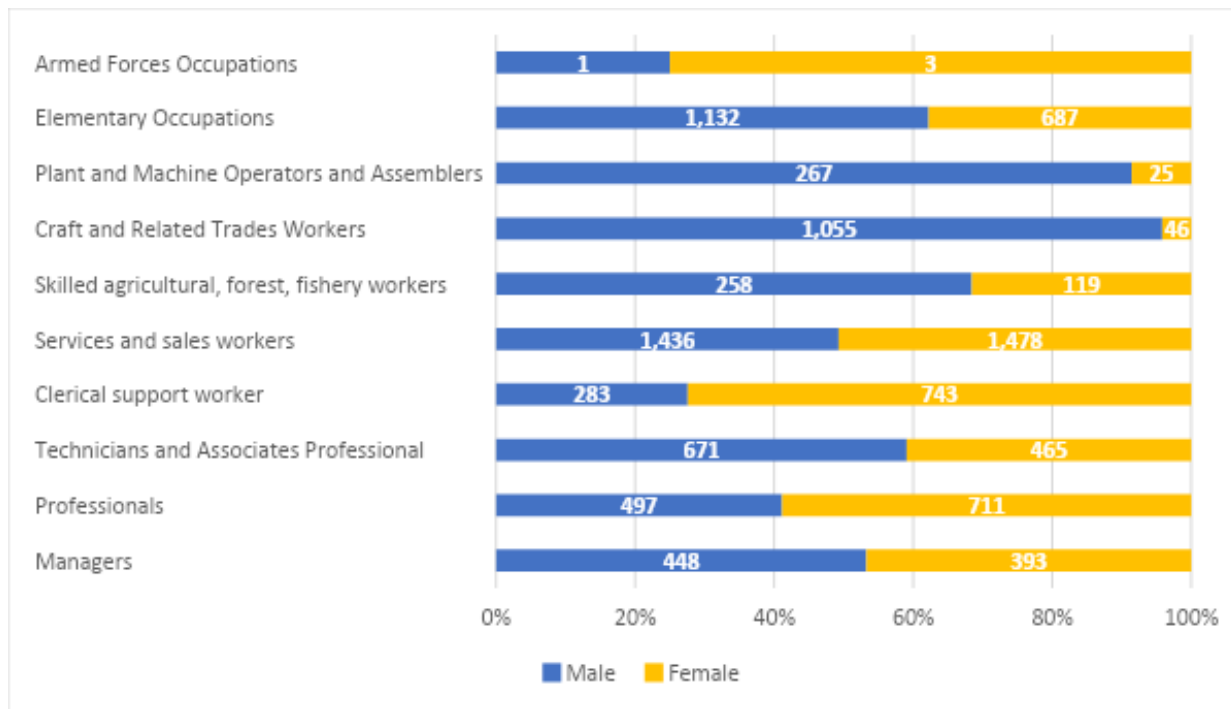
Source: Census 2020.[39]

According to the most recent Census data (2020), 72 percent of the population above 12 years old were in the **labor force** and 62 per cent were in paid employment in 2020.[40] Unsurprisingly, the proportion of youth in employment increases incrementally with age, with 3.6 percent of 15-19 year olds, 54.7 percent of 20-24 year olds and 81 percent of 25-29 year olds in paid employment in 2020[41] (see table 5). Whilst a consistently higher proportion of the male population were in the labor force than the female population (across all age brackets), there was minimal gender disparity in the proportion of unemployed 15-19 year olds (0.7 per cent for males and 0.4 per cent for females) and 20-24 year olds (1.3 per cent for males and 1.4 per cent for females) – see table 5.

Table 5: Proportion of population in labor force and employment, by gender and age

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[39] Republic of Palau, Census, 2020, Table P.5.5.3.
[40] Republic of Palau, Census, 2020, Table 105: Population 12 Years and Over, by Age and Sex by Labour Force Status: Palau Census.
[41] Republic of Palau, Census, 2020, Table 105: Population 12 Years and Over, by Age and Sex by Labour Force Status: Palau Census.
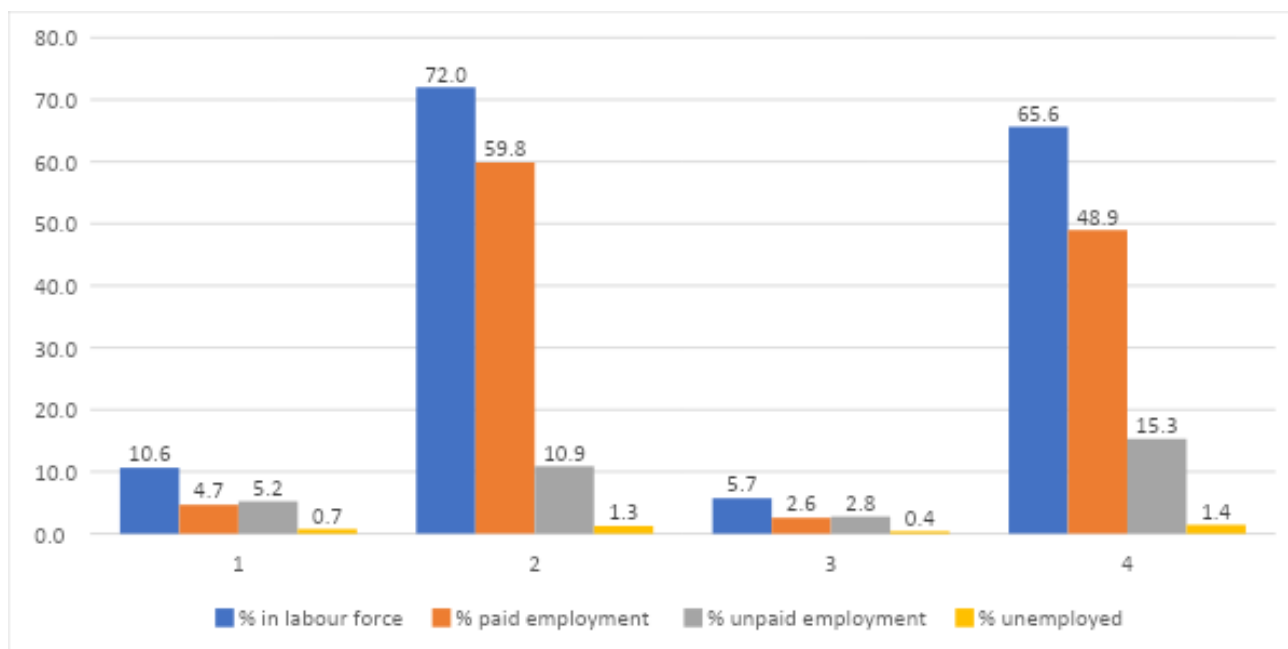
Source: Republic of Palau, Census, 2020.[42]

The **'NEET' rate**, which measures the share of youth not in education, employment or training, was 12.9 per cent in 2014,[43] which is lower in comparison to other PICTs, such as Fiji (20.1 per cent in 2016).[44] The lack of more recent data makes it difficult to assess the employment situation of youth in the post-Covid-19 environment, but in 2019 it was noted that young people generally seek employment abroad due to the higher wages, causing a reliance on foreign labor to fill the gap.[45]

There are a number of programmes in Palau which support **training and career development for youth**, including the WIOA (Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act), which is a federally funded office (Department of Labour, USA), supplemented by funding from the Palau national government. The WIOA Office in Palau offers job placements (through subsidized salaries) and provides training and skills development to support people (including youth) to get into the workforce; helps in upskilling them; and provides in-service training in workplaces.

Challenges, barriers, and bottlenecks
- Youth living in states in outer lying islands face barriers accessing secondary education. Secondary schools are located in Koror and there is no dormitory accommodation in the public High School to support access for youth who do not live within travel distance to Koror.
- There are limited programmes available to engage youth who are at risk or who have dropped out of secondary school.
- There are limited economic opportunities for youth within Palau, and high costs of living relative to the minimum and average wages. This creates barriers to youth who wish to stay in or return

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[42] Republic of Palau, Census, 2020, Table 105: Population 12 Years and Over, by Age and Sex by Labour Force Status: Palau Census.

[43] World Bank, NEET rate. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=PW
[44] World Bank, NEET rate. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=FJ
[45] Pathway to 2030: 1st Voluntary National review on the Republic of Palau, June 2019.

to Palau following secondary or post-secondary education. Cultural customs and roles also place cost and time burdens on youth that are difficult to navigate alongside modern life and job expectations.

- Youth require support in transitioning to the workforce, including training in office skills and computer literacy.
- There is limited understanding of the different training, skills and employment support programmes available to youth; programmes are scattered across different agencies and there is no central place to pull them together.
- There are limited youth-focused programmes and activities to support out-of-school youth (many programs are carried out with existing students).

5.2.2   Outcome

All youth have the necessary education, skills, support and services to reach their potential and succeed in the national labor market, with quality economic opportunities available within Palau to enable youth to be self-sufficient, fulfilled and active members of their communities and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Palau.

5.2.3   Objectives

(a) Youth have increased access to secondary education, including through extending virtual classrooms into every community, where required, and consideration of construction of a new High School (Babeldoab).

(b) Youth have increased access to accredited education, skills development and training programmes to support youth transitioning into and development within the labor market, through strengthening of academies and targeting of programmes to needs of the local labour market.

(c) Youth have access to a range of programmes to support them in entering and remaining in quality employment, including through partnerships with the private sector.

(d) Youth develop knowledge and skills in business and entrepreneurship to enable them to generate sound and innovative business initiatives.

(e) Youth in Palau can enjoy just and favorable conditions of work, including a wage that ensures an adequate standard of living, to ensure that remaining in and returning to Palau is a viable and attractive option for youth.

5.3.4   Strategies

- **Provision of virtual secondary education**: Extend virtual secondary classrooms to all communities, where required.

  Development of education and training programmes that respond to the needs of students and the local labour market: Develop a range of education and training programmes through the strengthening of academies and streamlining of college certification programmes to extend viable pathways for youth into employment.

- **Mapping of youth education, training and skills development programmes and incorporation into database and dashboard:** Map existing programmes and ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and that they are communicated to MHRCTD and added to the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(See Priority area 4).*

- **Develop innovation among youth:** Develop a programme to deliver education, training, skills development and mentoring for youth in innovation and entrepreneurship.

- **Ensure working wage:** Take action to raise the minimum wage across all industries to ensure that youth enjoy a living wage to support them living in Palau independently.

Policy area 3: Justice, protection and social inclusion

5.3.1   The situation and key challenges

Data indicate that **violence against women and violence against children** is a pervasive problem affecting Palauan youth, though recent data are limited. The Belau Family Health and Safety Study foundsignificant proportions of respondents had experienced physical violence (23 per cent); sexual violence (10 per cent) and emotional violence (23 per cent) at the hands of a partner in their lifetime.[46] Younger women (aged 15-24) were 77 per cent more likely to have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime and 94 per cent less likely to report current partner violence than women aged 15-24.[47] **Reporting levels were very low**, with 37 per cent of ever-abused women reporting not telling anyone about the experience and 67 per cent of those who experienced physical or sexual violence refrained from seeking assistance and services from the authorities.[48] The study also revealed serious physical andmental health consequences of violence against women, with 11 per cent reporting losing consciousnessand 19 per cent reporting requiring healthcare for their injuries. There appears to be a link between experiences of violence and mental health issues: women who had experiences of violence were significantly more like to report experiencing thoughts of suicide than those that had not (20 per cent versus 4 per cent, respectively).[49]

Results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)[50] suggests little has changed with regards to violence against women and girls, with 14 per cent of high school students reporting having been physically coerced to having sex against their will (no statistically significant differences by gender), while 34 per cent of boys and 25 per cent of girls reported having been coerced into other forms of intimacy (e.g., kissing and touching). Among high school students, 30 per cent of boys and 20 per cent of girls reported

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[46] Australian Aid, UNFPA, Belau Family Health and Safety Study, 2014, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Palau%20Fact%20Sheet%20240315.pdf.
[47] Australian Aid, UNFPA, Belau Family Health and Safety Study, 2014, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Palau%20Fact%20Sheet%20240315.pdf.
[48] Australian Aid, UNFPA, Belau Family Health and Safety Study, 2014, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Palau%20Fact%20Sheet%20240315.pdf.
[49] Australian Aid, UNFPA, Belau Family Health and Safety Study, 2014, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Palau%20Fact%20Sheet%20240315.pdf.
[50] Available from Results | YRBSS | Data | Adolescent and School Health | CDC

violence in a dating relationship, and 34 per cent of boys and 25 per cent of girls reported being forced into unwanted sexual intimacy.[51] A recent, unpublished, child protection system assessment[52] found evidence of abuse and neglect in the home, school and community. It was suggested by participants that corporal punishment is accepted by parents as normal form of punishment, having grown up with it themselves.[53] Sexual abuse is a significant taboo in Palau, and the study found this contributed to a reluctance on behalf of children to report abuse or seek help on account of a fear of reprisals and stigma.[54] It has been reported that the **Covid-19 pandemic** has triggered an increase in rates of domesticviolence against women and girls.[55]

Bullying in schools is also an area of ongoing concern. According to the YRBS,[56] 60 percent of middle school students and 20 percent of high school students report being the victims of bullying. In a 2018 study, almost half (46 per cent) of students reported being bullied in the previous 30 days, with 18 per cent reporting this involving being *'hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors.'*[57]

A more recent and growing protection concern for children and youth is **online safety**. According to a recent report, children are commonly encountering situations online where sexual information, images and videos are solicited from them, or where they are engaged in unwanted sexual conversation. Four out of five (82.1 per cent) children reported having encountered sexual images over their social media accounts in the past year, while three out of five (60 per cent) had received sexual content over their social media account. In total, 30 per cent had been asked for sexual information about themselves that they did not want to answer, while one in five (19 per cent) reported being asked specifically for photos or videos of their private parts when they did not want to send them. A similar percentage of children (18.5 per cent) reported that they had received an unwanted sexual image or video of someone else. Parental knowledge of the range of risks and potential harms that children are exposed to online appeared limited.[58]

Youth justice is another issue in Palau, particularly for youth under the age of 18 years, who – according to international law – are entitled to special protections under the law. Palau is yet to introduce comprehensive child protection or child-sensitive justice legislation. There is a Child Abuse Act (21 PNC Subchapter 6), though this doesn't establish a framework for prevention and response to violence against children. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that the Juveniles Act is not in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and recommended reform. It called on the government to review the Juveniles Act to adopt diversion and raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility; adopt standard operating procedures for the prosecution of children in conflict with the law and guidelines for dealing with child victims and child witnesses; ensure the provision of

[51] Available from Results | YRBSS | Data | Adolescent and School Health | CDC
[52] Government of Palau, Child Protection Systems Assessment and Mapping, 2021, (unpublished), quoted in: UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children in Palau, 2021 , Coram International (unpublished).
[53] Government of Palau, Child Protection Systems Assessment and Mapping, 2021, (unpublished), cited in in: UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children in Palau, 2021 , Coram International (unpublished).
[54] UNICEF Child Online Protection in Palau, 2020, unpublished
[55] UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children in Palau, 2021 , Coram International (unpublished).
[56] Available from Results | YRBSS | Data | Adolescent and School Health | CDC
[57] US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA Maternal and Child Health, Needs Assessment- Palau – 2021. Available at: https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/ce592406-92b1-44f8-9880-f77e 1f6b35d7.
[58] UNICEF (2020) Child Online Protection in Palau.

psychosocial support, counseling, recovery and reintegration services for child victims and offenders; and ensure the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law at an early stage during and throughout the judicial process.[59]

Sections 4 and 5 of Article IV of the Palau Constitution grant the right to all persons to be secure and equally protected under the law.[60] **Children with disabilities** are guaranteed the right to education by law and constituted 4.4 per cent of the public secondary school population in 2017.[61] Students with a disability in Grade 8 are provided with a personalized programme to support their transition to high school. However, pathways for children with disabilities to get into employment or post-secondary education require strengthening. Recent data on **economic inequality** in Palau are not available. However, the 2014 HIES found that the poorest 50 per cent of households accounted for only 15 per cent of the total household income, and on average urban households received an income that was 20 per cent greater than that of rural households.[62]

Challenges, barriers, and bottlenecks

- There is no referral guidance, system or mechanism to guide responses to children and youth who are exposed to or at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect, and services are fragmented throughout different Ministries and agencies, with limited coordination in the provision of services and support, and limited supported placements for children and youth who need to live outside of their families.
- While the Family Protection Act 2012 provides a legal process for survivors of family violence, there is no referral guidance, system or mechanism for youth (or individuals in general) to coordinate services for survivors, including accommodation, counseling, material support etc.), and limited services and support in place.
- Social stigma is a barrier to youth reporting crimes of violence, particularly sexual violence, and in seeking support and taboos prevent youth from reporting cases of violence occuring within the family.
- There appears to be a rise in cases of online or technology-assisted violence, abuse and exploitation (for example, online bullying and non-consensual online disemmination of sexual images) with no specific law or guidance on preventing and responding to these cases, and limited skills among youth on identifying and responding to online / technology-assisted risks.
- There are very limited social workers in Palau and they tend to be focused on the elderly population, with an absence of professionals to support children, youth and families who are at risk or in need.
- There are limited professionals in Palau to assess and provide support to youth with disabilities, and there are challenges for youth with disabilities in transitioning from school toward independence and engagement in the workforce.
- There are limited programmes to support youth who have been or are at risk of coming into conflict with the law, either through diversion or alternative sentencing programmes.

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[59] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Palau, CRC/C/PLW/CO/2, 28 February 2018, para 5-6, 57.

[60] Constitution of the Republic of Palau, Palau Constitution Convention, January 28 - April 2, 1979,available at http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/c4679995d1bddd3ef509ddc66c3cb38e80d492fe.pdf.

[61] Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2017.*

[62] Palau 2014 HIES. Available at: https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2014-ROP-HIES.pdf

5.3.2 Outcome

Families and communities support the social inclusion of all youth; youth are safe from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, through robust processes and comprehensive services to support youth who are at risk of or have experienced violence, and supportive families and communities who encourage help-seeking; and youth in conflict with the law have access to services and facilities to support their rehabilitation.

5.3.3   Objectives

(a) Youth who are at risk or in need (e.g. those living in situations of deprivation) have access to a comprehensive system of support and services to meet their needs.

(b) Effective prevention programmes are in place to reduce experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of youth, including online and technology-related violence and bullying.

(c) Youth who are at risk of or who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation in the family and community are supported through coordinated and comprehensive services.

(d) Youth in conflict with the law have access to a justice system that respects their human rights and prioritizes diverting youth out of the formal criminal justice system to rehabilitative, community-based programmes and measures.

(e) All youth are socially included in families, communities, institutions and youth programmes, including youth with disabilities and other youth who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations.

5.3.4 Strategies

- **Develop coordinated referral mechanism for youth and families in need or at risk:** Develop legal guidance and a mechanism for the identification, referral and assessment of youth and families in need or at risk and to provide for the coordinated delivery of a comprehensive set of services that are available to respond to these needs.

- **Develop child protection law / process for youth under 18 years:** Develop a child protection law or guidelines for the identification, referral, assessment, provision of prevention and response services, alternative care and after care services for children who are at risk of harm. The law / guidelines should include powers to remove children from their families where necessary and for supported placements for children at risk (e.g. supporting extended family with material items and counselling services etc.).

- **Strengthen comprehensive services for survivors of family violence:** Support the development and coordination of comprehensive services for survivors of family violence, including supported accommodation placements, counselling services and material support, through Government and NGO partnerships.

- **Carry out community mobilisation programmes to destigmatise and raise awareness of family and sexual violence:** Carry out community mobilization campaigns with partner organizations

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and NGOs in communities and schools to combat stigmatisation of family and sexual violence and raise awareness of services and support.

- **Strengthen legal responses and guidance on online and technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation:** Develop legal guidance, based on international standards and best practices, to address technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation, including cyber and mobile-phone assisted bullying, and online sexual exploitation, including non-consensual sharing of sexual images.

- **Develop knowledge and skills among youth of online and technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation:** Provide education programmes to be delivered through schools, colleges and inter-sessional programmes to educate youth on staying safe online.

- **Ensure educational institutions are free from bullying**: Ensure all schools and colleges have a commitment to address bullying and a policy and complaints mechanism in place to prevent and respond effectively to cases of bullying.

- **Develop a child justice process for youth under 18 years:** Develop a human rights complaint procedure and services for children who are in conflict with the law, including adopting and providing effective community-based diversion programmes; adopting standard operating procedures for the prosecution of children in conflict with the law; providing for psychosocial support, counseling, recovery and reintegration services; and ensuring the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law.

- **Develop strengthened rehabilitative options for youth in conflict with the law:** Ensure that a range of community-based pre-trial (diversion) and sentencing options exist for youth in conflict with the law to minimize the use of detention, including counseling, skills training, sports and cultural programs.

- **Strengthen access to programmes and pathways for youth with disabilities, deprived youth and LGBTQI+ youth**: Ensure a range of tailored pathways exist to link youth with disabilities, deprived youth and LGBTQI+ youth to responsive youth programmes and activities.

Policy area 4: Meaningful engagement of youth in politics, culture, sport, the arts and environmental protection

5.4.1 The situation and key challenges

There are a range of institutions and avenues in Palau to encourage the engagement of youth in political processes at the state and national levels, along with programmes to support their engagement in sports, arts, cultural and environmental activities. The Palau National Youth Council (PNYC) is an NGO that, according to its Constitution, aims to *"serve and enable all youth to develop to their full potential."* The PNYC is a member of the regional Pacific Youth Council and serves as link between the youth in Palau and the Government, Regional and International youth bodies and oversees the development of youth associations in each State. While the PNYC has been inactive for the past few years, the MHRCTD is currently in the process of considering its revival and funding for the PNYC has recently been approved by the Cabinet to support its revival.

At the State level, State Youth Representatives are appointed by State Governments to guide youth programmes and development. There are a range of active youth groups and leaders at the state levels, some of which have been formed into NGOs. These groups have been active in initiating locally-led environmental, sports and cultural programmes for youth. Student Councils are in place in secondary schools and in Palau Community College (PCC) and PCC includes students in key decision-making bodies.

Women have traditionally held positions of power in Palau and have been treated with a similar respect to men, owing to the matrilineal aspect of the society which sees lineage and titles being inherited from the mother's side.[63] This appears to have endured in aspects of society given the high participation rates of Palauan women in education and the workplace. Whilst women are well represented in the judiciary and on public sector boards and commissions, they remain under-represented in the highest levels of the political sphere (i.e., the national congress or the cabinet). There is also the organization, Mechesil Belau, a grouping of traditional female leaders, who have been instrumental in amplifying women's voices on key issues in Palau.[64] The group has successfully advocated for 25 national laws, three constitutional amendments and one traditional law on culture, health, education, and the environment.[65]

Youth are also key to the fight against the climate emergency, though they require support and strengthening to enable them to play a greater role in this area. Palau faces extreme risks from the impacts of climate change, namely rising sea levels and the increase in extreme weather events[66] such as storm surges, droughts, typhoons. Palau was ranked in the Index for Risk Information 2021 at 131 out of 191 countries.[67] Indigenous communities, particularly young people, are at the forefront of the fight against climate change, such as the Te Ara Whatu young leaders,[68] who recognise they face the biggest threat from the climate emergency and are best placed to offer the solutions. They were formed after a group of young Māori and Pasifika spoke at the 23rd Session of the UN Climate Talks in 2017.[69] The Micronesia Climate Change Alliance has a programme for Indigenous Youth Leading Climate Justice in Micronesia, including in Palau. The programme is based on the premise of "*resourcing young people with the tools and financial support to engage in climate justice work in their communities*",[70] by way of workshops and the distribution of advocacy tools to participate in rights-based climate justice work.

Challenges, barriers, and bottlenecks

- Cultural norms and traditions function as a barrier to youth engaging in political discussions at the village, state and national levels, owing to hierarchies and practices that require youth to be deferential to leaders and remain silent when in political forums at which elders / leaders are present. This has had the effect of discouraging youth participation in political decision making.

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[63] Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, 2019. Available at: https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/pwspd-palau-summary.pdf
[64] Pacific Women, 16 Days, 16 Stories, 2015. Available at: https://pacificwomen.org/news/16-days-16-stories-niue/
[65] Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, 2019. Available at: https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/pwspd-palau-summary.pdf
[66] World Bank Group and ADB, Climate Risk Country Profile: Palau, 2021. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/15820-WB_Palau%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf
[67] Index for Risk Management 2021 (INFORM). Available at: https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index
[68] Te Ara Whatu webpage: https://tearawhatu.org/who-are-we
[69] Te Ara Whatu webpage: https://tearawhatu.org/who-are-we
[70] ICAAD, Youth Climate Justice: https://icaad.ngo/youth-climate-justice/

- There appear to be some barriers to more marginalized groups of youth participating in political decision making at all levels, including youth migrants or youth who are children of immigrants.
- There are challenges ensuring that youth remain connected to the culture of Palau and their communities, which traditionally encourage environmentally friendly practices, such as sustainable fishing and food production practices.
- While many youths in Palau are actively engaged in environmental initiatives and climate action, they require support in developing knowledge of environmental issues and skills in organizing effective action.
- There is a need to improve the skills of youth, including State youth representatives and community youth groups, in programme development, drafting funding applications and grant management to ensure that youth programmes.
- There is a need to establish a structure and mechanism to encourage youth groups and organizations to develop locally led programmes and initiatives and receive funding to implement these.

5.4.2 Outcome

All youth have the knowledge, skills, forums, opportunities and support to participate meaningfully in political decision making and develop and participate in actions and initiatives to address climate change and environmental issues, sports activities and cultural and arts programmes and activities.

5.4.3 Objectives

(a) Youth and youth organizations are supported through skills development and financing to initiate and implement locally focused environmental, sports, cultural and arts programmes for youth in their communities.

(b) Youth have access to information to identify and engage in a range of political, arts, cultural, educational, skills and training, sports and environmental after-school, intersessional and online / remote programmes and activities.

(c) Youth are supported and empowered to engage in global, regional and inter-country exchanges and forums.

5.4.4   Strategies

- **Develop cultural programmes for youth:** Support the development of inter-sessional and after school programmes and activities, including cultural programmes for youth to learn traditional skills (building fish traps, weaving etc.).

- **Development of integrated database and dashboard of youth activities, programmes and organisations:** Ensure availability and access to a range of educational, skills building, training, and after school and inter-sessional sporting, cultural and social programmes and activities for youth. Ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and develop an online searchable database of youth programmes and activities to ensure their accessibility to youth.

Policy area 5: Strengthening the enabling environment for youth

5.5.1 The situation and key challenges

It is important that youth development is supported by a strong enabling environment, including a robust evidence base, a national coordinating body to monitor and oversee results on youth development and strong youth-focused intuitions. The enabling environment for youth could be strengthened in Palau through improved coordination and reporting of key data on youth outcomes andthe generation of an evidence base on effective programmes to support improved youth outcomes.

Also, there is currently no national multi-sector coordination mechanism to steer, oversee and monitor the implementation of youth policies and programmes. This is a crucial gap: youth development is a multi-sector issue which requires a coordinated response from a range of different Government, NGO, FBO, private sector and youth agencies. It is important that a strong body is in place at the national level to steer and guide youth development.

5.5.2 Outcome

Youth are supported by effective coordination, strong institutions and evidence-based programmes and services.

5.5.3 Objectives

(a) Capacity of Division of Youth, MHRCTD strengthened to support youth to engage in discussions in their communities and schools.

(b) A robust, comprehensive evidence base exists on youth, including through improved data collection and monitoring and evaluation systems, and improved reporting of data on youth.

(c) Coordinated, multi-sector oversight and direction is provided on youth development through the designation of Youth Focal Points in key Ministries and the establishment the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group.

(d) Youth are supported through strong youth organizations and institutions, and a linked-up system from state and national levels of Government.

5.5.4 Strategies

- **Development of data repository on youth:** Develop a central data repository for the collection of all existing data on youth and publish a regular 'youth profile' on the situation of youth according to key indicators.

- **Build capacity of Division of Youth to oversee youth development:** Recruit additional full-time role of Youth Officer to oversee youth development and develop their capacity to deliver technical support to state / local youth organizations.

- **Strengthen State Youth Representatives:** Devise criteria for State Youth Representatives, including that they must be within the youth age range (13 – 24 years), and provide stipends to

ensure their effective participation in meetings, training, coordination etc., including learning exchanges between different States.

- **Improve cross-sectoral coordination:** Improve cross-sectoral coordination on youth issues through the establishment of a Palau National Youth Policy Working Group and a mechanism to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy, youth programmes and activities (see section 6, below).

6. Implementation, coordination and management of the policy

Implementation of this Policy will take a multi sectoral approach involving all stakeholders in youth development at National and State levels. These include National Government Ministries and Divisions, State Governments, in particular State Youth Representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), the private sector and youth organizations.

6.1 Palau National Youth Policy Working Group

Implementation of the Policy and the monitoring and reporting on its implementation will be overseen the Palau National Youth Working Group, which will be chaired by the Minister, MHRCTD / Director of Human Resources, MHRCTD, with membership from the following Ministries:

- Office of the President, Assistant to the President on Youth Matters;
- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Health and Human Services;
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment;
- Ministry of State;
- Ministry of Finance; and
- Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Industries.

Each of the above Ministries shall be responsible for designating a Youth Focal Point whose role it will be to collect and disseminate information to and from the Ministry to the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group to drive the implementation of the National Youth Policy and inform the monitoring of its implementation.

In addition, representatives from the following supporting organizations and agencies will be members of the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group:

- Palau National Youth Council;
- Palau Community College, Cooperative Research and Extension and Continuing Education;
- Palau Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Palau Small Business Development Center;
- Palau National Scholarship Board;
- Palau Community Action Agency;
- Youth Ministries;
- Belau Association of Non-Government Organisations; and

- Chamber of Commerce.
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The role of the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group will be to:

- Coordinate the implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy by the Ministries, States, agencies and other partners, as indicated in the Palau National Youth Action Plan;
- Create sub-committees as appropriate to oversee implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy;
- Monitor the implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy and Action Plan, in accordance with the Monitoring and Evaluation framework;
- Carry out assessments of the needs of youth and available youth programmes, to be updated on a quarterly basis, and recommend changes to the Policy and Action Plan as appropriate; and
- Report to Cabinet on the implementation of the Policy on a yearly basis.

The Chair will convene a meeting of the Working Group twice every month during the operational period of the Palau National Youth Policy 2023 – 2027.

6.2 Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development

The MHRCTD is the lead Ministry in ensuring the implementation of the National Youth Policy, along with its oversight and monitoring. The Division of Youth and Career Development will be responsible for:

- Developing a registration system for youth groups, activities, organisations and initiatives;
- Developing and publishing a searchable database and calendar of opportunities for youth (scholarships, career development, training etc.) and for youth activities, organisations and initiatives;
- Identifying funding opportunities for youth organisations, initiatives and programmes, developing a mechanism for youth to apply for funding and communicating these opportunities to youth organisations and groups, informed by the objectives of the Palau National Youth Policy;
- Providing technical assistance and support to youth groups, activities, organisations and initiatives in devising programmes, securing funding and reporting;
- Ensure effective communication of Government policies, plans and initiatives to the youth organizations; and
- The Division will also convene regular meetings of PNYC and the Advisory Committee.

6.3 Supporting organisations and agencies

Each supporting organisation and agency listed in section 6.1 shall be responsible for communicating existing opportunities and programmes to the MHRCTD to be included in their youth database. This will be done on a monthly basis. They will also be responsible for assessing and identifying new programmes and opportunities in line with the objectives of the Palau National Youth Policy.

Palau National Youth Policy: Detailed Action Plan 2023-2027

This Action Plan has been developed to support the implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy 2023 – 2027 (NYP); a strategic document that takes a whole-of-Government approach, bringing together key Government Ministries, Departments and Authorities and their partners to work in a coordinated way toward achieving strategic goals for Palau's youth.

Structure of the PNYP Action Plan

The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide a framework for operationalizing the priority objectives and strategies set out in the PNYP. As primary duty bearers for youth, the focus of the Action Plan is on Government institutions; though it is noted that, in order to implement certain activities contained in the Action Plan, non-Government actors may be engaged, including non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), Faith-based organizations (FBOs) and the private sector.

The Action Plan sets out key milestones and corresponding outcome indicators against the PNYP's objectives, which can be used to benchmark progress in relation to the five priority areas. In addition, the Action Plan sets out the following:

- Key activities (actions that the different Ministries and other duty bearers agree to implement);
- Timeframes within which the activities will be carried out;
- Key outputs expected from these activities;
- Output indicators to measure completion of activities; and
- Responsible agencies for implementing the activities and budget source.

Monitoring outputs and outcomes

The Action Plan includes a framework for monitoring the Action Plan on two levels:

1. Output indicators are included as a way to measure the extent to which an activity has been completed (*e.g. how many training sessions have been carried out? How many people have been provided with community mobilization / awareness-raising interventions etc?*).

2. Outcome indicators are included to measure the impacts of multiple activities on improving outcomes of youth. For each broad objective under the priority areas, a milestone and corresponding outcomes indicator is included. These indicators are broader and aim to measure whether activities have achieved improved outcomes for youth (*e.g. has youth unemployment been lowered? Has obesity among youth reduced?*). Data to measure outcome indicators will be available through existing routine survey data and Ministerial / sector administrative data.

Being a longer-term, multi-sector Action Plan, it does not set out specific targets for the activity outputs or outcomes. It also does not contain a detailed costing for activities. It is expected that the activities within the Action Plan will be incorporated into the yearly Strategic and Operational Plans of each responsible Ministry and budgeted for in each fiscal year.

Palau National Youth Policy Working Group
Implementation of the Policy and the monitoring and reporting on its implementation will be overseen the Palau National Youth Working Group, which will be chaired by the Minister, MHRCTD / Director of Human Resources, MHRCTD, with membership from the following Ministries:

- Office of the President, Assistant to the President on Youth Matters;
- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Health and Human Services;
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment;
- Ministry of State;
- Ministry of Finance; and
- Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Industries.

Each of the above Ministries shall be responsible for designating a Youth Focal Point whose role it will be to collect and disseminate information to and from the Ministry to the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group to drive the implementation of the National Youth Policy and inform the monitoring of its implementation.

In addition, representatives from the following organizations and services will be members of the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group:

- Palau Community College, Cooperative Research and Extension and Continuing Education;
- Palau Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Palau Small Business Development Center;
- Palau National Scholarship Board;
- Palau Community Action Agency;
- Youth Ministries;
- Belau Association of Non-Government Organisations; and
- Chamber of Commerce.

Coordination and reporting

In order to monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy and Action Plan, the Minister of MHRCTD will:

The role of the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group will be to:

- Coordinate the implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy by the Ministries, States, agencies and other partners, as indicated in the Palau National Youth Action Plan;
- Create sub-committees as appropriate to oversee implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy;
- Monitor the implementation of the Palau National Youth Policy and Action Plan, in accordance with the Monitoring and Evaluation framework;
- Carry out assessments of the needs of youth and available youth programmes, to be updated on a quarterly basis, and recommend changes to the Policy and Action Plan as appropriate; and
- Report to Cabinet on the implementation of the Policy on a yearly basis.

The Chair will convene a meeting of the Working Group twice every month during the operational period of the Palau National Youth Policy 2023 – 2027.

Priority 1: Health and healthy lifestyles		
Lead Ministry: Ministry of Health and Human Services		
Expected outcome	Specific objectives	Outcome indicators
All youth in Palau enjoy the highest attainable standard of health through access to quality, youth-friendly programmes, health information, services and support and strong, supportive families and communities.	Improved mental health for youth through increased knowledge and skills in preventing mental health issues and improved avenues and access to youth-friendly services and support within families and communities that support strong mental health.	Milestone: Reduction in number of youth suicides and reports of suicidal thoughts. Indicators: Number of youth suicides (vital statistics data); percentage of youth reporting suicidal thoughts; percentage of youth reporting self harming (School Health Screening data).
	Reduction in the harmful use of drugs and alcohol through effective public health initiatives that increase awareness of the risks and impacts of drug and alcohol use, and through the development of youth programmes that provide positive recreational and learning opportunities.	Milestone: Reduction in use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol among youth. Indicator/s: Percentage of youth reporting use of alcohol, tobacco

				and other drugs (School Health Screening data).
	Increased physical activity and better nutrition among youth to reduce the risk factors associated with NCDs through the development of after-school and intersessional activities focused on increasing physical activity and developing connections to traditional customs and food production.			<u>Milestone</u>: Decreased overweight and obesity and increased extent of physical activity among youth. <u>I ndicators</u>: Prevalence of overweight and obesity among youth; percentage of youth reporting involvement in physical activity; proportion of youth reporting excessive screen time (School Health Screening data).
	Increased access to sexual and reproductive health rights through the strengthening of youth-friendly community health services and development of alternative outreach modalities (e.g. virtual and text messaging services).			<u>Milestone</u>: Improved access to SRH information and services. <u>I ndicators</u>: Rate of adolescent fertility (vital statistics / Census; Proportion of youth accessing Family Health Services (Family Health Centre user data by age).
Strategies	**Action/s**		**Outputs indicators**	**Responsible agencies**	**Timeline and budget source**
1.1 **Gain a better understanding of the drivers of youth suicide:** Carry out a comprehensive study on the drivers, including underlying or core factors and more immediate triggers of youth suicide in order to inform the development of evidence-based, effective policies and programmes aimed at reducing youth suicide.	1.1.1 Develop a process for recording vital statistics so that cases involving suicide can be identified in administrative data. 1.1.2 Carry out comprehensive psychosocial autopsies on all deaths involving suspected youth suicide and report results to the National Youth Policy Advisory Group. 1.1.3 Commission a comprehensive study which analyses the		Vital statistics routinely record suicide in cause of death data. Comprehensive psychosocial autopsy carried out in all cases involving suspected suicide of youth. Study on youth suicide completed, published and	<u>Lead</u>: MHHS <u>Partner/s</u>: MHRCTD, Office of Planning and Statistics	2023: Cause of death data records suicide. 2024: Study completed and action plan developed. 2024 – 2027: Action plan implemented. <u>Budget</u>: MHHS (Seek donor / CDC funding to carry out study on youth suicide and development of Action Plan).

		drivers of youth suicide in Palau, with concrete recommendations on evidence-based actions to prevent suicide among youth.	disseminated among policy makers and youth. Implementation plan developed and adopted.		
	1.1.4	Implement the study's recommendations through development of an implementation plan.			
1.2 **Development of youth activities:** Ensure availability and access to a range of after school and inter-sessional programmes and activities for youth aimed at addressing NCD risk factors and mental health risks. Ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and that they are communicated to MHRCTD and added to the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(see 4.2)*.	*1.2.1* 1.2.2	Map all existing youth activities and programmes and input these into the database / dashboard of youth programmes and activities *(see 4.2)*. Develop an online process for youth to apply for and receive NCD funding for locally-initiated programmes and activities.	Mapping of health-related youth organisations, activities and programmes completed. All health-related youth organisations, activities and programmes entered into database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes. Online funding process in place for youth programmes funded by NCD grant.	<u>Lead</u>: MHRCTD <u>Partner/s</u>: MOE, NGOs, CSOs, State youth representatives, youth organizations.	2023: Mapping completed. 2023 – 2027 (rolling): Enter youth organisations, programmes and activities into youth database and dashboard. <u>Budget</u>: MHHS
1.3 **Increased funding for youth activities:** Develop ring-fenced budget as part of the NCD mechanism to support long-term,	1.3.1	Complete an analysis of NCD grant recipients to identify the proportion of NCD funding currently allocated to	EO revised / passed that creates separate funding stream for youth-related	<u>Lead</u>: MHHS <u>Partner/s</u>: MHRCTD, NGOs, CSOs,	2023/24 financial year: Youth-related NCD funding stream developed.

sustainable youth-focused programmes aimed at addressing NCD risk factors.	youth-focused programmes and activities. 1.3.2 Consider designating a proportion of the NCD mechanism to programmes that address the priority areas of the NYP. 1.3.3 Develop specific criteria to guide NCD youth grants, including criteria that permits multi-year programmes with long-term goals and aligns with the priorities of the National Youth Policy 2023 - 2027; *1.3.4 Link State and community youth initiatives and youth NGOs to NCD funding through youth database and dashboard (see 4.2).*	programmes under NCD mechanism.	youth organisations, State youth representatives	2024 – 2027: Funding granted to youth-related progrmames. Budget: MHHS (NCD grant)
1.4 **Strengthening and development of youth-friendly support services:** Ensure access to quality, confidential face to face professional counseling services for youth at risk, including those experiencing mental health problems, and the development of alternative support modalities for at risk youth, including eHealth / text-based and peer outreach and support services.	1.4.1 Develop confidential health messaging text-based outreach and messaging services for youth at risk of or experiencing mental health challenges and develop process for identification of youth through School Health Screening process. 1.4.2 Develop peer to peer support programmes for youth in schools and for youth who are not in school, through training of students at High School,	Health messaging service developed. Process developed to flag at risk students during School Health Screening. 'Peer counsellors' identified and trained.	Lead: MHHS Partner/s: MOE and MHRCTD	2023/4: Virtual and text-based health messaging and outreach systems established. 2023/4: Peer to peer support programmes developed. Budget: MHHS (with donor funding to support development of virtual and text-based services).

			College and through community outreach (for out of school youth).			
1.5 **Strengthen school counselling services**: Professionalise school counseling services and ensure counselors are available at every school, are part of the school staff and accessible to all youth students who require support.	1.5.1	Designate counsellors / community behavioural health workers within schools.	Community behavioural health worker posts filled across schools.	Lead: MHHS\n\nPartner/s: MOE	2024 (designation and training of school counsellors).\n\n2024 (development of online resources).
	1.5.2	Develop intensive training and coaching programme for school-based behavioural health workers.	Training and coaching programme delivered to community behavioural health workers.		
	1.5.3	Develop online resources and tools up support school-based behavioural health workers.	Online resources developed.		
1.6 **Sexual and reproductive health services:** Ensure availability and access to inclusive, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services for all youth.	*1.6.1*	Include sexual and reproductive health information and signposting to services as a component of the confidential virtual health messaging and text-based outreach and messaging services for youth *(see 1.4.1, above).*	*(See 1.4.1, above).*	*(See 1.4.1, above).*	*(See 1.4.1, above).*
1.7 **Community mobilization:** Develop communications and community mobilization programmes, including in schools and through youth representatives in state governments to: raise awareness of and	1.7.1	Deploy peer to peer supporters *(see 1.4.2, above)* to communities to carry out engagement with youth and community members aimed at destigmatising mental health and help seeking and raising	*(See 1.4.2, above).*	Lead: MHHS\n\nPartner/s: State Youth Representatives	*(See 1.4.2, above).*

destigmatize mental health issues; and raise awareness of the health impacts and other harms caused by substance abuse and promote help-seeking in communities.	awareness of the impacts of substance misuse.			

Priority 2: Education, skills and employment

Lead Ministry: Ministry of Education

Expected outcome	**Specific objectives**	**Outcome indicators**
All youth have the necessary education, skills, support and services to reach their potential and succeed in the national labor market, with quality economic opportunities available within Palau to enable youth to be self-sufficient, fulfilled and active members of their communities and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Palau.	Increased access to secondary education, including through extending virtual classrooms into every community, where required, and consideration of construction of a new High School (Babeldoab).	Milestone: Increase in completion of secondary education. Indicator/s: Percentage of all 18 year olds who complete secondary school (Education administrative data)
	Increased access to accredited education, skills development and training programmes to support youth transitioning into and development within the labor market, through strengthening of academies and targeting of programmes to needs of the local labour market.	Milestone: Increase in number of academy programmes; enrolments in academies, tertiary education and training programmes. Indicator/s: Number of academy programmes; youth enrolled tertiary education and training programmes (Education administrative data).
	Increased access to a range of programmes to support youth in entering and remaining in quality employment, including through partnerships with the private sector.	Milestone: Increase in number of programmes supporting youth entering into employment. Indicator: Number of programmes; number of youth completing progammes who gain

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				employment (MHRCTD programme data).
	Increased development of knowledge and skills in business and entrepreneurship to enable youth to generate sound and innovative business initiatives.			Milestone: Increase in engagement of youth in entrepreneurship and business start-ups. I ndicator: Number of youth involved in business start-ups (MHRCTD programme data).
	Just and favorable conditions of work, including a wage that ensures an adequate standard of living, to ensure that remaining in and returning to Palau is a viable and attractive option for youth.			Milestone: Increase in number of youth in quality employment. I ndicator: Median wage for youth; proportion of youth in contracted work (Labour survey)
Strategies	**Action/s**	**Outputs indicators**	**Responsible agencies**	**Timeline and budget source**
2.1 **Provision of virtual secondary education**: Extend virtual secondary classrooms to all communities, where required.	2.1.1 Assess need for virtual secondary classrooms across all States in Palau. 2.1.2 Extend virtual classrooms to all communities, where needed.	Assessment completed. Virtual classrooms available in communities, as needed.	Lead: MOE Partner/s: PHS	2023: Assessment completed. 2023 – 2027: Virtual classrooms. Budget: MOE
2.2 **Development of education and training programmes that respond to the needs of students and the local labour market**: Develop a range of education and training programmes through the strengthening of academies and streamlining of college certification programmes to extend viable pathways for youth into employment.	2.2.1 Assess labour market needs to inform development of targeted education and training programmes. 2.2.2 Expand programmes offered through academies to respond to the needs of students and the local labour market. 2.2.3 Streamline college certification requirements in key fields (e.g. key trades) and consider	Labour market assessment completed. Academy programmes extended. Certification requirements for key trades are streamlined and	Lead: MOE Partner/s: MHRCTD	2023: Labour market mapping completed) 2023 – 2027: Academy programmes extended; quality internships and apprenticeships in place. Budget: MOE

		development of paid apprenticeship / on the job training for trades.	apprenticeships are in place.		
	2.2.4	Develop quality internship programmes for youth, through developing cooperative relationships with key business leaders.	Quality internship placements are available.		
	2.2.5	Carry out routine data collection to monitor outcomes for youth after they leave secondary education.			
2.3 **Mapping of youth education, training and skills development programmes and incorporation into database and dashboard:** Map existing programmes and ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and that they are communicated to MHRCTD and added to the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(See 4.2).*	2.3.1 *2.3.2*	Map all education, training and skills development programmes. Incorporate programmes into the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(See 4.2).*	*(See 4.2).*	Lead: MHRCTD Partners: MOE; WIOA; PNYC; PCC; BANGO	Mapping and incorporation into the database by the end of 2023. Budget: MHRCTD (with donor support)
2.4 **Develop innovation among youth:** Develop a programme to deliver education, training, skills development and mentoring for youth in	2.4.1	Work with international education systems (e.g. Taiwan) to provide online / virtual education modules to schools in Palau on technology and innovation.	Education modules in technology and innovation developed and delivered to students.	Lead: MHRCTD and MOE Partners: PHS; WIOA; PCC; BANGO; Palau	2023/4: Technology and innovation education modules developed and internships established. Budget: MOE and MHRCTD.

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innovation and entrepreneurship.	2.4.2	Establish quality internship programmes for youth to gain skills in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.		Small Business Development Center	
2.5 **Ensure working wage:** Take action to raise the minimum wage across all industries to ensure that youth enjoy a living wage to support them living in Palau independently.	2.5.1 2.5.2	Carry out cost of living analysis and labour market research to determine minimum working wage. Amend law / regulations to increase minimum wage.	Analysis completed. Law / regulation amended.	<u>Lead</u>: Office of the President <u>Partner</u>: MRHCTD	2023: Minimum wage increased.

Priority 3: Justice, protection and social inclusion

Lead Ministry: Ministry of Justice

Expected outcome	Specific objectives	Outcome indicators
Families and communities support the social inclusion of all youth; youth are safe from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, through robust processes and comprehensive services to support youth who are at risk of or have experienced violence, and supportive families and communities who encourage help-seeking; and youth in conflict with the law have access to services and facilities to support their rehabilitation.	Increased access to a comprehensive system of support and services to meet the needs of youth who are at risk or in need (e.g. those living in situations of deprivation).	<u>Milestone</u>: Increased access to support for youth in need. I<u>ndicator/s</u>: Number of youth accessing support services (Administrative data – MHHS).
	Increased availability of and access to effective prevention programmes to reduce experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of youth, including online and technology-related violence and bullying.	<u>Milestone</u>: Reduction in experiences of violence and exploitation among youth. I<u>ndicator/s</u>: Proportion of youth who report experiences of physical, sexual violence and family violence (School Health Screening data).

	Increased access to coordinated and comprehensive services for youth who are at risk of or who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation in the family and community.			Milestone: Increased access to support for youth at risk. Indicator/s: Number of youth at risk accessing support services (administrative data – MHHS).
	Improved access to a justice system that respects the human rights of youth and prioritizes diverting youth out of the formal criminal justice system to rehabilitative, community-based programmes and measures.			Milestone: Increased access to restorative justice (diversion and alternative sentencing). Indicator: Proportion of youth in conflict with the law diverted to community-based / restorative justice programmes (MOJ – Police and Court administrative data).
	Improved social inclusion for all youth in families, communities, institutions and youth programmes, including youth with disabilities and other youth who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations.			Milestone: Increased access by youth with disabilities, youth from deprived backgrounds and LGBTQI+ youth to education, employment, social and cultural programmes. Indicator: Proportion of youth with disabilities, youth from deprived backgrounds and LGBTQI+ accessing youth programmes and activities (Youth dashboard and database data – MHRCTD).

Strategies	Action/s	Outputs indicators	Responsible agencies	Timeline and budget source
3.1 **Develop coordinated referral mechanism for youth and families in need or at risk:** Develop legal guidance and a mechanism for the identification, referral and assessment of youth and families in need or at risk and	3.1.1 Develop a central referral and assessment process for youth and families who need access to services and support; 3.1.2 Develop training to support implementation of the referral process;	Referral and assessment process adopted. Service delivery MOUs in place. Youth and families in need are	Lead: MOJ Partner: MHHS	2023: Development of referral mechanism 2024: Training and mapping completed. Budget: MOJ and MHHS

to provide for the coordinated delivery of a comprehensive set of services that are available to respond to these needs.	3.1.3	Conduct comprehensive mapping of government, NGO, CSO and FBO services and support to refer youth and families at risk or in need and develop MOUs for delivery of services with key service providers.	supported through a referral and assessment process.		
3.2 **Develop child protection law / process for youth under 18 years:** Develop a child protection law or guidelines for the identification, referral, assessment, provision of prevention and response services, alternative care and after care services for children who are at risk of harm. The law / guidelines should include powers to place children at risk in alternative care, which builds on existing support systems (e.g. supporting extended family with material items and counselling services etc.).	3.2.1 3.2.2	Develop child protection law / EO / administrative order to support the identification, assessment and referral of children who are at risk of harm, including developing support for traditional systems (kinship / guardianship care). Develop supported alternative care placements for children at risk (prioritising supported kinship guardianship care placements).	Child protection Law / EO adopted. System for supported kinship / guardianship placements in place.	Lead: MOJ Partner: MHHS	2023: Law / Order developed and adopted. 2023/4: Develop supported placements. Budget: MOJ and MHHS
3.3 **Strengthen comprehensive services for survivors of family violence:** Support the development and coordination of comprehensive services for survivors of family violence, including supported	3.3.1 3.3.2	Map existing services (Government and NGO) and identify gaps. Develop a plan to address gaps and support strengthened services for survivors of family violence.	Range of services are in place to support survivors of family violence.	Lead: MOJ Partner: MHHS, NGOs	2023: Mapping finalised. 2024 – 2027: Action plan developed and implemented. Budget: MHHS

accommodation placements, counselling services and material support, through Government and NGO partnerships.					
3.4 **Carry out community mobilisation programmes to destigmatise and raise awareness of family and sexual violence:** Carry out community mobilization campaigns with partner organizations and NGOs in communities and schools to combat stigmatisation of family and sexual violence and raise awareness of services and support.	3.4.1 3.4.2	Deploy peer to peer supporters *(see 1.4.2)* within schools and into communities to carry out engagement with youth and community members aimed at raising awareness of and destigmatising help seeking for cases of family violence. Include sexual and reproductive health information and signposting to services as a component of the confidential virtual health messaging and text-based outreach and messaging services for youth *(see 1.4.1).*	*(See 4.1 and 4.2 in Priority 1).*	<u>Lead</u>: MOJ <u>Partner</u>: MHHS, NGOs	*(See 1.4.1 and 1.4.2).*
3.5 **Strengthen legal responses and guidance on online and technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation:** Develop legal guidance, based on international standards and best practices, to address technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation, including cyber and mobile-phone assisted bullying, and online sexual exploitation, including	3.5.1 3.5.2	Develop and adopt a law / legal guidance on responding to online and technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation that is consistent with international law and best practice. Provide training to law enforcement, teachers, healthcare professionals and other frontline workers on the provisions of the law.	Law / guidance adopted. Training provided to key duty bearers.	<u>Lead</u>: MOJ <u>Partner</u>: MHHS	2023: Law adopted. 2024: Training rolled out. <u>Budget</u>: MOJ

non-consensual sharing of sexual images.					
3.6 **Develop knowledge and skills among youth of online and technology-related violence, abuse and exploitation:** Provide education programmes to be delivered through schools, colleges and inter-sessional programmes to educate youth on staying safe online.	3.6.1	Programmes on internet safety and anti-bullying modules developed, including teacher tools and resources.	Internet safety and anti-bullying modules developed.	<u>Lead</u>: MOE <u>Partner</u>: PHS	2023: Module and tools developed 2024 – 27: Modules rolled out to all schools and colleges.
	3.6.2	Internet safety and anti-bullying modules rolled out to all schools and colleges.	Modules rolled out to all schools.		
3.7 **Ensure educational institutions are free from bullying**: Ensure all schools and colleges have a commitment to address bullying and a policy and complaints mechanism in place to prevent and respond effectively to cases of bullying.	*See 3.6, above.*		*See 3.6, above.*	*See 3.6, above.*	*See 3.6, above.*
3.8 **Develop a child justice process for youth under 18 years:** Develop a legal process for children who are in conflict with the law, including adopting and providing effective community-based diversion programmes; adopting standard operating procedures for the prosecution of children in conflict with the law;	3.8.1	Carry out consultation exercises to inform development of the child and youth justice process.	Law / SOP is adopted. Training provided to duty bearers.	<u>Lead</u>: MOJ <u>Partner</u>: MHHS	2023: Consultations completed. 2024: Juvenile Justice Law adopted. 2024/2025: Training rolled out. <u>Budget</u>: MOJ
	3.8.2	Develop and adopt a law / standard operating procedure for children and youth in conflict with the law, including setting out the legal mandate for the Division of Juvenile			

providing for psychosocial support, counselling, recovery and reintegration services; and ensuring the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law.		Justice within the Ministry of Justice. 3.8.3 Provide training to key personnel to implement the law / standard operating procedure.			
3.9 **Develop strengthened rehabilitative options for youth in conflict with the law:** Ensure that a range of restorative options (diversion and sentencing) exist for youth in conflict with the law to minimize the use of detention, including counselling, skills training, sports and cultural programs.	3.9.1 3.9.2	Carry out a mapping of key services (government and NGOs) that can provide community-based rehabilitation support and services for children and youth in conflict with the law, develop a directory of services and a mechanism for referral to these services. Develop counselling services for youth undergoing restorative justice programmes, through linking to and building capacity of behavioural health.	Mapping completed and referral process in place.	<u>Lead</u>: MOJ <u>Partners</u>: MHHS, NGOs, Community leaders	2023: Mapping and directory completed. 2024: Referral mechanism developed and counselling services in place. <u>Budget</u>: MOJ and MHHS
3.10 **Strengthen access to programmes and pathways for youth with disabilities, deprived youth and LGBTQI+ youth**: Ensure a range of tailored pathways exist to link youth with disabilities, deprived youth and LGBTQI+ youth to responsive youth programmes and activities.	3.10.1	Support the development of programmes aimed at addressing the needs of and ensuring inclusion of youth with disabilities, deprived youth and LGBTQI+ youth through awareness raising of funding opportunities and a review of data on youth programmes and activities to	Youth programmes and activities inclusive of marginalised groups of youth.	<u>Lead</u>: MHRCTD <u>Partners</u>: MOE, NGOs, WIOA, PCC, Small Business Development Centre, youth organizations.	2023 – 2027: Review of youth organisations, programmes and activities to ensure inclusion of marginalised groups. <u>Budget</u>: MHRCTD

ensure programmes are reaching all youth.		

Priority 4: Meaningful engagement of youth in politics, culture, sports, the arts and environmental protection

Lead Ministry: Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development

Expected outcome	Specific objectives	Outcome indicators
All youth have the knowledge, skills, forums, opportunities and support to participate meaningfully in political decision making and develop and participate in actions and initiatives to address climate change and environmental issues, sports activities and cultural and arts programmes and activities.		
	Increased skills among youth and youth organisations through skills development and financing to initiate and implement locally focused environmental, sports, cultural and arts programmes for youth in their communities.	Milestone: Increased skills and capacity for youth to develop and implement community programmes. Indicator/s: Number of youth-led organisations and initiatives (Database and dashboard of youth programmes, MHRCTD).
	Increased access to information to identify and engage in a range of political, arts, cultural, educational, skills and training, sports and environmental after-school, intersessional and online / remote programmes and activities.	Milestone: Development of database and dashboard of youth programmes. Indicator: Number of youth accessing database of youth progrmames ((Database and dashboard of youth programmes, MHRCTD).
	Improved access to global, regional and inter-country exchanges and forums.	Milestone: Increased access for youth, including marginalised youth, in forums outside Palau. Indicator: Number of youth accessing youth forums outside Palau (MHRCTD programme data).

Strategies	Action/s	Outputs indicators	Responsible agencies	Timeline and budget source
4.1 **Develop cultural programmes for youth:** Support the development of	4.1.1 Development and publication of a calendar of youth events.	Calendar published.	Lead: MHRCTD	2023 – 2027 (rolling) Budget: MCRCTD

inter-sessional and after school programmes and activities, including cultural programmes for youth to learn traditional skills (building fish traps, weaving etc.).	4.1.2	Map and incorporate inter-sessional programs of cultural activities into the database and dashboard of youth organisations and programmes *(see 4.2, below)*.	Inter-sessional cultural programmes incorporated into the youth database and dashboard.	Partners: Youth groups / organisations; State youth representatives.	
4.2 **Development of integrated database and dashboard of youth activities, programmes and organisations:** Ensure availability and access to a range of educational, skills building, training, and after school and inter-sessional sporting, cultural and social programmes and activities for youth. Ensure that these programmes are available across the country, including in smaller island states, and develop an online searchable database of youth programmes and activities to ensure their accessibility to youth.	4.2.1	Develop a searchable online database and dashboard targeted at youth to enable youth to search for an enrol in a full range of physical, cultural, educational and environmental programmes, and to enable MHRCTD to monitor youth engagement in programme effectiveness.	Database and dashboard completed and available for youth and MHRCTD. Process in place for funding of locally-led youth programmes.	Lead: MHRCTD Partner/s: MOE, NGOs, WIOA, PCC, Small Business Development Centre, youth organizations.	2023: Development of a dashboard / database 2023 – 2027: Integration of all youth programmes, organisations and initiatives into the database and dashboard. Budget: MHRCTD (and donor supported).
	4.2.2	Map all existing youth activities and programmes and input into the database and dashboard.			
	4.2.3	Disseminate information about the database widely among youth, through State youth representatives, and youth organizations.			
	4.2.4	Integrated into the database a process for youth organisations to apply for and receive funding for locally-initiated programmes and activities.			
	4.2.5	Support the Division of Youth, MHRCTD to provide technical			

	support and training to youth organisations on applying for funding, monitoring and reporting on youth programmes.			

Priority 5: Strengthening the enabling environment for youth

Lead Ministry: Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism and Development

Expected outcome	Specific objectives	Outcome indicators
Youth and youth development are supported by effective coordination, strong institutions and evidence-based programmes and services.	Capacity of Division of Youth, MHRCTD strengthened to support youth to engage in discussions in their communities and schools.	Milestone: Two full-time staff members allocated to Division of Youth, MHRCTD.
	A robust, comprehensive evidence base exists on youth, including through improved data collection and monitoring and evaluation systems, and improved reporting of data on youth.	Milestone: Data repository developed.
	Coordinated, multi-sector oversight and direction is provided on youth development through the designation of Youth Focal Points in key Ministries and the establishment of a multi-sector Youth Advisory Committee.	Milestone: Youth Advisory Committee established; completes quarterly meetings; and submits yearly report on Action Plan implementation.
	Youth are supported through strong youth organizations and institutions, and a linked-up system from local and national levels of Government.	Milestone: Mechanism to support youth initiatives and programmes established and operational.

Strategies	Action/s	Outputs indicators	Responsible agencies	Timeline and budget source
5.1 **Development of data repository on youth:** Develop a central data repository for the collection of all existing data on youth and publish a	5.1.1 Develop indicators to measure progress in youth development.	Portal for youth data developed.	Lead: MRHCTD Partner: Office of Planning and Statistics	2023 and once a year thereafter. Budget: Office of Planning and Statistics (with donor funding).

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regular 'youth profile' on the situation of youth according to key indicators.	5.1.2	Map and identify existing data sources against these indicators.	Youth profile published annually.		
	5.1.3	Develop data collection mechanisms to address gaps.			
	5.1.4	Develop an online, searchable data portal for youth, and publish a youth profile annually, containing data on youth indicators.			
5.2 **Build capacity of Division of Youth to oversee youth development:** Recruit additional full-time role of Youth Officer to oversee youth development and develop their capacity to deliver technical support to state / local youth organizations.	5.2.1	Recruit additional Youth Officer to Division of Youth, MHRCTD	Youth Officer recruited.	Lead: MHRCTD	2023: Youth Officer recruited.
	5.2.2	Youth Officer supported to deliver technical support to youth organisations in programme development, budgeting, monitoring and reporting.	Technical support delivered to youth organisations.		2023 – 2027: Youth organisations provided with technical assistance.
5.3 **Strengthen State Youth Representatives:** Devise criteria for State Youth Representatives, including that they must be within the youth age range (13 – 24 years), and provide stipends to ensure their effective participation in meetings, training, coordination etc., including learning exchanges between different States.	5.3.1	Age criteria established for State Youth Representatives.	Age criteria established and applied.	Lead: MHRCTD	2023: Age criteria established and applied.
	5.3.2	Stipend provided to State Youth Representatives to facilitate involvement in meetings and oversight of youth activities.	State Youth Representatives actively engaged in oversight of youth activities.	Partner/s: State Youth Representatives	2023 – 2027: Oversight of youth activities by State Youth Representatives.

5.4 **Improve cross-sectoral coordination:** Improve cross-sectoral coordination on youth issues through the establishment of a Palau National Youth Policy Working Group and a mechanism to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy, youth programmes and activities.	5.4.1 5.4.2 5.4.3	Executive Order adopted, establishing the Palau National Youth Policy Working Group. Monthly meetings held by Palau National Youth Policy Working Group to provide oversight of the implementation of the National Youth Policy. Progress reports against output and outcomes indicators developed and reported to Cabinet annually.	Executive Order adopted. Monthly meetings held. Annual progress report submitted to Cabinet.	<u>Lead</u>: OP and MRHCTD	2023: Executive Order adopted. 2023 – 2027: Monthly meeting convened and annual report submitted to Cabinet.

Annex 1: List of consultative meetings (2020)

- Minister, MHRCTD
- Programme Manager, Division of Youth and Career Development, MHRCTD
- Director, Division of Human Resources, MHRCTD
- Chief of Ethnography, MHRCTD
- Vice President and Minister for Justice, Director of Public Safety Bureau, Chief and Juvenile Justice and Chief of Transnational Crime, Ministry of Justice
- Minister of State
- Director of Curriculum and three Representatives, MOE
- Minister, MHHS
- Representative, Division of Behavioural Health, MHHS
- Director, Division of Primary and Preventative Services, Bureau of Public Health MHHS
- Office of Planning and Statistics
- Legal Counsel, Office of the President
- Director, Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act Office, Palau
- Palau's Ambassador to the UN

NGOs, UN and youth representatives
- Representative, UN Multi-Country Office in Micronesia
- Youth Representatives, Palau Red Cross Society
- Representative, PCC Student Body and State Youth Representative
- Secretary General, President and Sports Education Officer, Palau National Olympic Committee

Presence at youth events
- Youth workshop on building capacity for anti-corruption and integrity, Koror
- Youth Job Fair, MHRCTD, Koror
- Meeting of Palau State Youth Representatives, Koror
- Youth Forum on Climate Change, Koror

Annex 2: Results of Palau youth survey (2022)

Researchers disseminated a survey to youth and youth representatives in August / September 2022. The Survey was developed in ONA – an open-source, web-based data collection platform – and disseminated to youth through State youth representatives and youth organisations. Paper versions of the online survey were also developed and disseminated to youth at a series of youth-related events in Koror throughout August and September 2022. The survey included a mix of closed and open questions.

The survey was designed to collect feedback from youth about their main areas of concern and their views on what areas and issues the National Youth Policy should prioritise. The results were used to inform the development of the National Youth Policy 2022 – 2027 and in particular, to test the extent to which the priorities contained in the 2016 National Youth Policy remain relevant.

The findings of the survey are set out below.

1. Profile of respondents

In total, surveys were completed by **172 respondents** (though some surveys contained blank fields for one or more questions). There was roughly **even gender representation** among respondents, with 83 female and 82 male respondents (seven respondents did not select a gender).

Responses were received from across **11 States**, though the majority were received from Koror as illustrated in Figure 1. However, it should be noted that the survey asked where the respondent was currently living, so it is possible that a selection of Koror-based respondents originated from other States).

**Figure 1:** Respondents by State (N = 162)[71]

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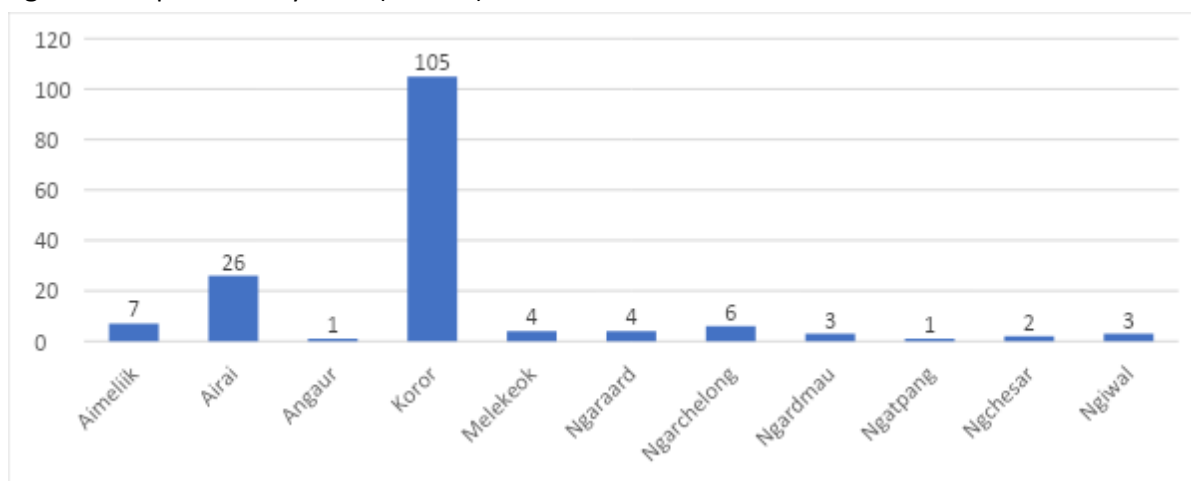
[71] Note that 10 respondents did not answer this question.

The vast majority of respondents (150) were **within the 13 – 24 years age range**; though 22 respondents were able this age range – of these, 10 were under 30 and 12 were above 30 years (13 respondents did not select a year of birth).

2. Top problems facing youth in Palau

Respondents were asked to select the top three problems facing youth in Palau from a non-exhaustive list. The results are displayed in Figure 2, below. The most selected problems were 'drug and alcohol abuse' (98) and 'mental health issues' (89). These two problems received around double the number of responses than the next two most selected problems ('limited education or training opportunities after high school' – 50; and 'financial problems' – 49). Other problems selected commonly by participants were bullying (39), sexually transmitted infections and risk sexual behaviour (31), unemployment (30) and violence in the family (29).

Figure 2: Respondents to the question 'What are the top three problems facing youth in Palau?' (N = 476 selections)
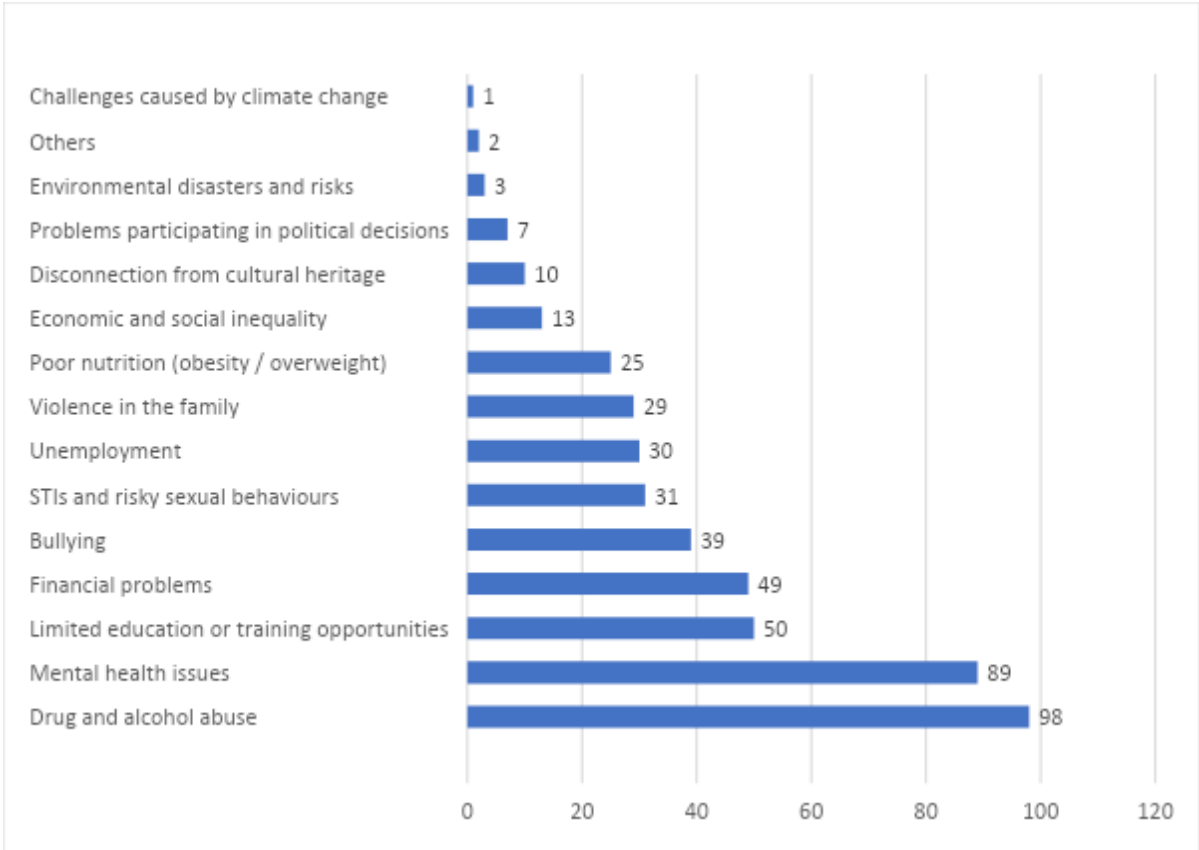

The survey also asked respondents to select who, in their view, are the most **vulnerable population groups** in Palau (they were asked to select, from a non-exhaustive list, which groups face the most challenges in Palau). The purpose of this was to collect feedback to help identify who, according to youth

themselves, may be in particular need and / or at risk of social exclusion, which will help inform the NYP's priorities and actions. It is clear from this that youth recognise all of the groups below as facing challenges.

As displayed in figure 3, the most selected response was single parent youths, youth with disabilities and youth living in poverty. However, a substantial number of respondents also selected LGBTI+ youth and (to a lesser extent) youth living in remote areas and migrant youth. Among those respondents who selected 'other', two specified 'out of school youth' and one wrote 'all of the above.'

Figure 3: Responses to the question 'Which youth populations face the most challenges in Palau?' (N = 453 selections)
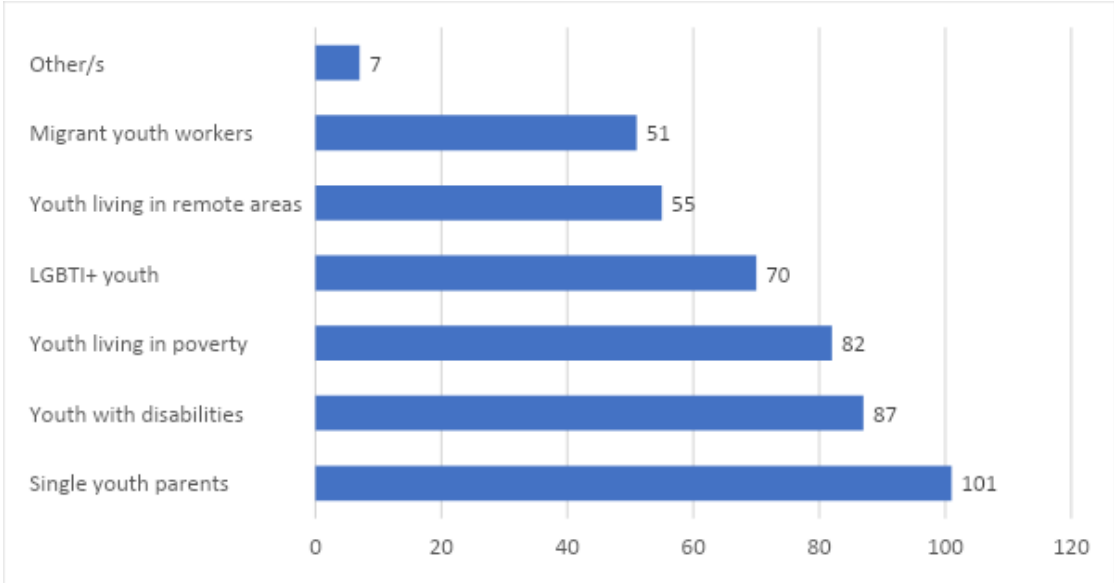

3. Top strengths among the youth population in Palau

Respondents were asked to select the top three strengths of the youth population in Palau from a non-exhaustive list. The purpose of this was to assess the importance attached to different values among youth and to inform the strengths-based framework of the National Youth Policy, which aims to draw and build on strengths among youth and within the Palau context.

As displayed in figure 4 below, respondents selected rather evenly among the different options, though culturally aware (76), motivated (71), socially conscious (61), well educated (57), and family oriented (56) were the most selected strengths.

Figure 4: Responses to the question 'What are the top three strengths of Palau's youth population?' (N = 466 selections)
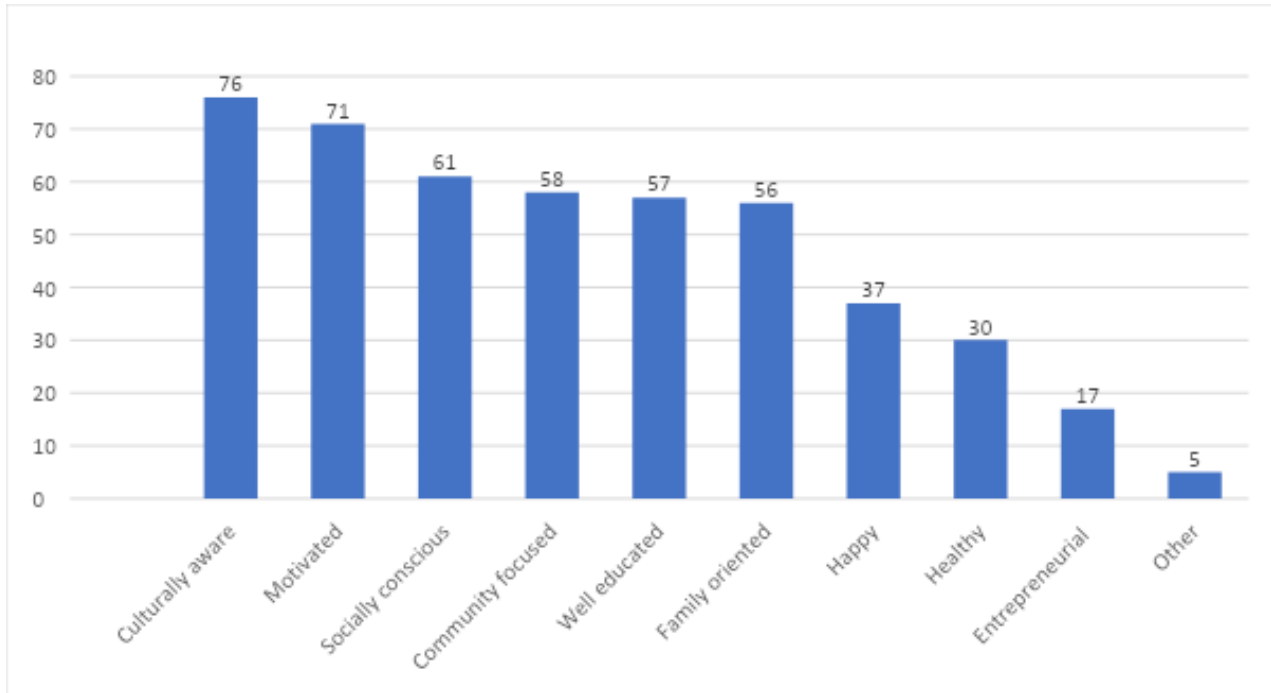
4. Views on government response in relation to common issues affecting youth

Respondents were also asked to select from a non-exhaustive list the top three areas in which they perceived the Government to be performing well and three areas in which they perceived the Government not to be performing well. The purpose of this was to provide insight into the issues on which youth feel the Government should be focusing on and the areas in which they should look to strengthen their policies and programmes. The responses also give an indication of the areas that are important to youth.

The results were quite mixed, though they appear to give some insight into the areas of concern to youth and the issues which they view require more focus and strengthened efforts from Government duty bearers.

Among the areas in which respondents thought the Government was not performing well, the most selected areas were addressing mental health issues among youth (80); supporting youth victims of violence (55); addressing drug and alcohol abuse among youth (50); and providing financial and other support to families in need (49). This indicates that youth wish to see greater efforts from the Government to respond to youth who are in vulnerable situations or situations of risk or need. However, interestingly, 'addressing drug and alcohol abuse among youth' was the most selected area in which respondents thought the Government was performing well (102). Other areas in which respondents thought the Government was performing well included: providing education and training opportunities after high school (77) and ensuring that you are taught the skills they need to achieve (57).

Figure 5: Responses to the question 'What are the top three areas in which the Government of Palau performs well / is not performing as well in meeting the needs of youth?' (N = 463 / 466 selections)
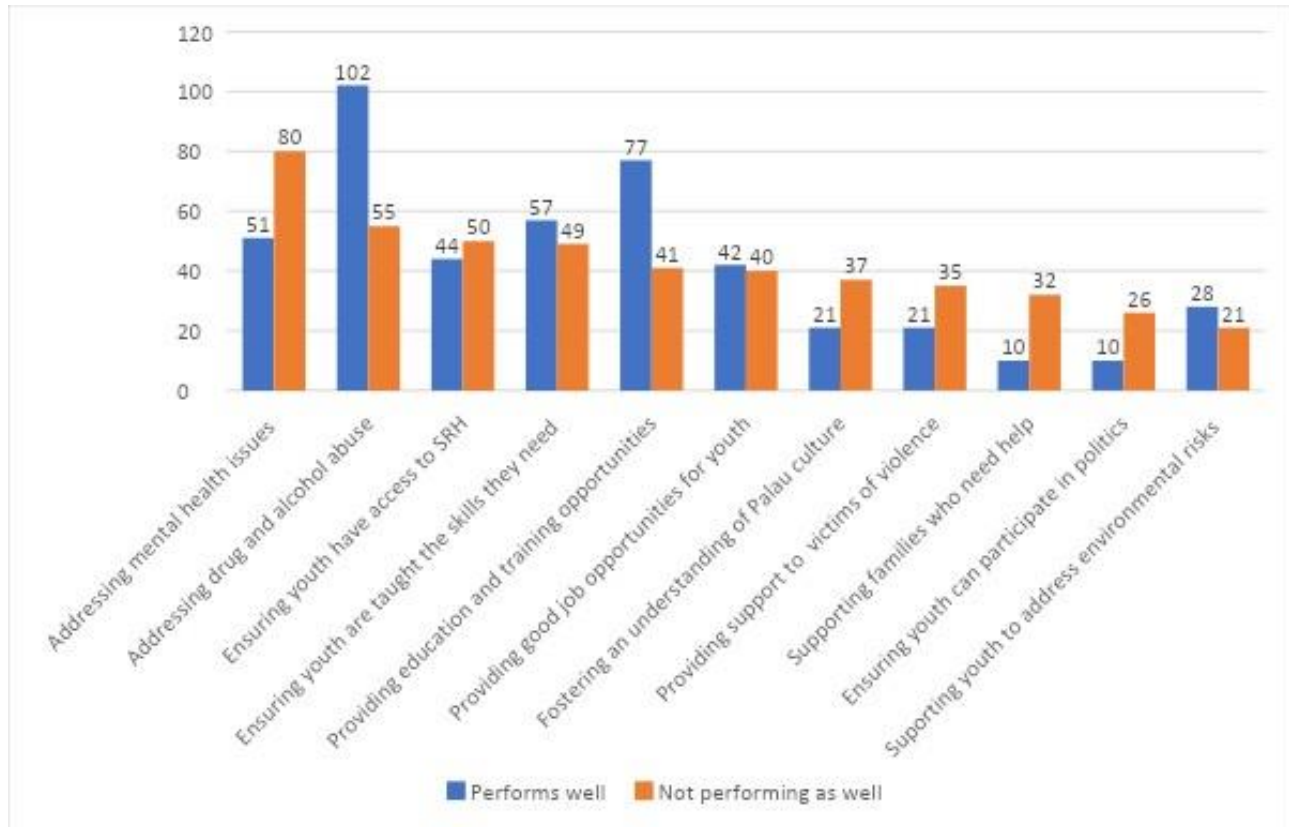
5. Views on priorities of National Youth Policy

Respondents were asked to write what they thought should be the top three priorities for the new National Youth Policy. This provided a free space and opportunity for youth to identify any issues or areas that they wished to see included in the NYP without being confined to a pre-determined list. It also provided further insight into the areas of most concern to youth. Responses were categorised and collated.

Interestingly, the responses tended to reflect the prioritisation exercise set out above, with most selections relating to the need to address mental health issues / suicide among youth (66) and drug and alcohol abuse (42). In addition, 12 respondents wrote 'health' more generally as a priority. Other most identified priorities related to the need for more educational and skills development opportunities (52) and more job opportunities (26) (this was sometimes framed in terms of ensuring that viable opportunities exist within Palau to encourage youth to return or to keep youth in the country).

Again, respondents tended to identify the needs of particularly vulnerable or at risk groups as requiring prioritising within the Policy: 35 respondents wrote priorities that related to addressing poverty and financial problems, and providing support to families. Also, protection from violence (16), including bullying and family violence in particular, and ensuring safety and better law enforcement (12) emerged

as other areas of concern to youth. Maintaining connection to culture and community also emerged as an identified priority (14). The need to develop / ensure access to youth activities (9) and encourage physical activity / nutrition (11) were priorities identified by respondents. Other priorities included ensuring youth can engage in politics (9); ensuring access to sexual health (8); equality / inclusion (particularly for LGBTI+ youth) (5); ensuring a clean environment / addressing environmental risks (4); protecting the rights of youth (2); and providing spiritual awareness (1).

In addition, respondents were asked to write a sentence or a few key words to summarise what they wish for the youth of Palau. This exercise was intended not only to inform the development of priority areas for the NYP, but also to inform the vision and mission statements. Words commonly used by respondents included: healthier, better mental health, growth, leadership, community, understanding, independence, opportunities, cultural connection, happy, productive, opportunities.