

Guinea-Bissau National Youth Policy Evaluation

Policy Brief

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1. Introduction

The project "Inclusive policies and institutions for a peaceful society: strengthening the social fabric and fostering meaningful youth participation in decision-making in Guinea-Bissau," funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and implemented by Interpeace in partnership with Voz di Paz and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), aims to strengthen the participation of youth organizations in decision-making processes and promote closer collaboration between them. The project focused on creating a common agenda for youth, also seeking to improve their influence on public policies, particularly in the National Youth Policy (PNJ). To achieve this, it became necessary to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the PNJ to ensure its relevance in light of the evolving challenges and expectations of the youth in the country.

The PNJ, adopted in 2015 for a 20-year period, aims to make youth a key actor in the socio-economic development and peace in Guinea-Bissau. It defines strategic priorities to improve education, health, employability, and inclusion of youth in political, economic, and social processes, as well as addressing issues such as illiteracy and violence. Since its formulation, the policy has been based on the participation of different key actors and seeks to strengthen collaboration between youth organizations, public institutions, and international partners to ensure its effective and lasting implementation.

The participation of strategic partners such as the Youth Institute proved essential for the success of the evaluation process. Collaboration between youth organizations and government actors played a central role in legitimizing the results, which serve as the foundation for implementing the formulated recommendations. The evaluation process also fostered greater involvement and collaboration among the various actors, facilitating political engagement to ensure support for the implementation and monitoring of the PNJ. This collective work allowed for greater consideration of youth priorities and expectations, thus emphasizing the fundamental role of youth organizations in developing a common agenda for the country's future and promoting social cohesion.

2. Evaluation Methodology

The participatory evaluation of the National Youth Policy of Guinea-Bissau was conducted by Interpeace and Voz di Paz together with the Youth Institute and supported by an expert in public policy evaluation processes (COATL). The evaluation adopted a methodological approach that actively involved stakeholders at all stages of the process, from designing tools to validating conclusions and recommendations, encompassing both members and non-members of youth organizations and associations. The aim of the evaluation was to analyze the relevance and effectiveness of the policy, focusing on its impact and suitability to meet the needs of youth. Various tools were used, such as surveys, focus groups, workshops, and document analysis. The development of data collection tools, such as guides for focus groups and a survey, was done in collaboration with youth, and the data collection was participatory, involving 436 youth, 63 youth organizations, 24 international organizations and NGOs, and 4 government entities across all regions of the country, ensuring broad representation. The results helped identify the challenges inherent to the relevance and effectiveness of the PNJ and formulate recommendations in a participatory manner to address the main challenges identified.

3. Main Results of the Evaluation

The participatory evaluation of the National Youth Policy (PNJ) of Guinea-Bissau revealed several important conclusions. Although the PNJ is aligned with regional and global strategic guidelines, a large number of youth and organizations, including some public entities, are unaware of its existence, content, and priorities. Among international organizations, most are aware of the PNJ but feel insufficiently involved in its monitoring. Moreover, some concerns of youth, and issues that have become priorities in recent years, were not included in the PNJ's diagnostic conducted 10 years ago.

While most of the projects identified since 2015 that were implemented to promote youth are aligned with the objectives of the PNJ, youth feel that their needs have not been adequately addressed, such as in the areas of employment opportunities, access to quality education, support for youth entrepreneurship, and improving mental health and well-being. Additionally, the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as inconsistencies in the definition of objectives, makes it difficult to assess the actual impact of the actions undertaken. Among the main difficulties faced by organizations, low government engagement, financial and logistical limitations, and poor coordination between actors stand out. However, despite these obstacles, organizations have shown creativity in responding to youth needs and implementing projects in urban and rural areas, although the impacts on youth and the resolution of their issues remain poorly documented.

4. Evaluation Recommendations

The recommendations were developed collaboratively during a seminar with participation from members of 16 Youth Networks and Organizations in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the Youth Institute and UNFPA, project partners. During the seminar, the recommendations were formulated based on the key challenges identified by the evaluation, namely:

- Outdated PNJ
- Lack of awareness of the PNJ
- Lack of PNJ implementation
- Difficulty in monitoring and evaluating the PNJ

Main recommendations for each challenge:

Challenge 1: Outdated National Youth Policy

- Update the PNJ by the Youth Institute.
- Involve partner organizations and NGOs in the updating process.
- Align the annual work plans of Youth Organizations with PNJ priorities.
- Strengthen the inclusion of youth entrepreneurship and girls' empowerment in the PNJ objectives.

Challenge 2: Lack of awareness of the PNJ

- Create radio programs and dissemination campaigns.
- Conduct debates and media awareness activities.
- Organize conferences with Youth Organization leaders.
- Promote training for network members on the PNJ.
- Involve Academic Associations in disseminating the PNJ.

Challenge 3: Lack of PNJ implementation

- Prioritize support for projects aligned with the PNJ.
- Create a "budget pot" in the State Budget to finance activities of Youth Organizations aligned with the PNJ.
- Include PNJ objectives in the National Development Plan.
- Create a fundraising forum for PNJ execution.

Challenge 4: Monitoring and evaluation of the PNJ

- Create a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee with technical staff from Youth Networks.
- Involve partners and funders in evaluation processes.
- Conduct semi-annual or annual evaluations of PNJ implementation with organizations.

In addition to the collaborative recommendations, the consultant who accompanied the evaluation process proposed some technical recommendations, including:

- Review the strategic guidelines and objectives of the PNJ during the

updating process, ensuring clarity in the goals and specific change definitions.

- Establish goals for each specific objective with indicators to assess progress by 2035.
- Develop an evaluation matrix with performance indicators to monitor the PNJ implementation.
- Include topics in the PNJ such as climate change, anti-corruption, access to health, transportation, agriculture, land access, and migration, which are not covered in the document but are identified as youth priorities.



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