Youth Policy in Kyrgyzstan[1]

YOUTH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

Introduction

The change of power in March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan gave birth to new questions about the role of young people in the public life of a state, and in youth movements. The "apathetic" (as it used to be thought) youth became the driving force during those decisive events. Though young people were engaged in the activities of various civil society institutions prior and after the March 2005 events – their role in daily life is less apparent, though much more meaningful.

A lot depends on age. There is the possibility for the youth to have an influence if … there is a strong idea present… then the youth would believe in what it does and witness the results.[2]

The Youth Human Rights Group (YHRG) undertook this research within the framework of the project "Participation of Youth in the Promotion of Democracy and Youth Policy" to find out the fundamental tendencies in youth motivations to participate in civil society institutions and identify the degree of youth participation in the development of youth policy.

In 2004, YHRG undertook a research on the role of young people in civil society institutions, a kind of "analysis of tendencies."[3] The events of March 2005 inspired the carrying out of a series of additional interviews to find out whether or not the views, the state of young people's engagement in the activities of non-governmental organizations, student movements, mass media, and international organizations have changed. More detailed findings of 2006 are discussed in this research report.

The survey consisted of two parts. The first part addressed the reasons why young people participate in the activities of civil society organizations, their motives, and their vision of their roles within the organizations they work for. The survey was not a general study of the situation of the youth in Kyrgyzstan. It was a kind of "internal assessment" of why young people get involved with non-governmental organizations, international organizations, political parties, or work for the mass media. The survey compared changes in youth motivations, visions of the future and their role in the country's development before and after the events of March 2005 with the results of a similar study in 2004.

The second part of the survey studied the level of awareness of the youth about the country's youth policy, the priorities young people from different social groups saw in the youth policy, and their view on whether the actions of government were effective or not.

To meet the above objectives, YHRG developed two questionnaires, the first for the youth involved into the activity of civil society institutions and the second for the youth from different social groups.

The survey involved several meetings with the young representatives of civil society and young people from different social groups coming from different regions. These young people were interested on the topic of youth policy. After the interviews, the respondents continued to ask questions about the youth policy and

their rights. They actively participated in the discussions on different topics that were not reflected in the questionnaire.

This report presents the outcomes of two research phases (May-July 2004 and February-July2006).

The research raised some questions:

- Do the young people feel that they have an opportunity to take part in political and public life of a state?
- Why do young people get involved in the activities of civil society organizations?
- How they see their future career advancement?
- Do the young people have space for self-advancement within civil society organizations?
- How can they evaluate their performance within civil society organizations, what they consider as being positive, and calling for criticism?

Seventy-seven interviews[4] were held with young activists under thirty years old in five regions of Kyrgyzstan[5] and Bishkek. In 2006, fifty-three interviewsf covering all seven regions were held. Even though both studies are not representative, and grounded on opinions and perceptions of young people who participated in the research, they to a certain extent give an insight into modern tendencies of the youth.

Results of the Survey

Part 1

Young people's role and motivation for participation in civil society

1.   List of abbreviations

CS	Civil Society
SS	State sector
HRA	Human Resource Agency
IO	International organization
YEA	Youth Employment Agency
YHRG	Youth Human Rights Group
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PP	Political party

2.   Introduction

2.1. Aims, objectives, the target group, and the subject of research

Goals:

Identifying the role and motivation of the youth to become involved in civil society (NGO, IO, PP).

Main objectives:
- Identification of the youth's participation (NGO, IO, political parties, etc.)
- The role of the youth within civil society
- The political significance of the youth
- The influence of the youth on the political, economic, and social aspects of the country
- Awareness about policies directed towards the youth
- Identification of major problems the youth faces
- Perception of such policies

Target group:
1. Young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years involved in civil society sectors (NGO, IO, PP, etc.)
   - Youth movement activists
   - Youth involved in activity of IO
   - Student organization activists

Research subject:

Knowledge, evaluation, opinion, and settled notions relating to the objectives of the research.

2.1. Research Methodology

Data collection

The semi-standardized, face-to-face interview was applied to study young people's motivation for participating in civil society institutions.

Data was collected and modified in accordance with the specifics of each target group tool kit – guide-questionnaires for young people involved in civil society institutions. Outcomes of the given research are based on information accumulated by qualitative research methods (guide-questionnaires for face-to-face interviews).

The presented research is not all encompassing; it is based on the opinions, thoughts, and perceptions of young people engaged in civil society institutions with a sample of fifty-three people.

2.2. Confidentiality and security

During the research, each person interviewed was guaranteed full confidentiality. Private information was available only to members of the research team, contracted by the research conducting organization, in the matter of data credibility check, analysis, etc. Confidentiality was assured before the interview. The corresponding mark on the questionnaires means that the individual interviewed agreed to the interview.

3. *Social-demographic representation of the interviewed*

Table 1. Regional representation (n=53)

Region	Number interviewed	Percentage
Osh	12	23
Chui	11	21
Talas	11	21
Naryn	9	17
Karakol	5	9
Batken	3	6
Jalal-Abad	2	4

Table 2. Social-demographic representation (n=53)

Sex	Absolute number	Percentage
Male	25	47
Female	28	53
Age	**Absolute number**	**Percentage**
16-18	6	11
19-21	17	32
22-24	13	25
25-30	10	19
31<	6	11
Refused to answer	1	2
Education	**Absolute number**	**Percentage**
Secondary incomplete	3	6
Secondary	5	9
Secondary technical	5	9
Higher incomplete	14	26
Higher	24	45
Refused to answer	2	4

Table 3. Sum of the working experience in years within civil society sector (n=53)

Years	Absolute number	Percentage
>1	2	4
1 - 3	23	43
4 - 5	11	21
6 - 8	10	19
9<	4	8
3/O	3	6

Table 4. Number of years spent in a given organization (n=53)

Years	Absolute number	Percentage
>3	13	25
3 - 5	40	75

All participants in the research have a sizeable working record in the civil society sector (varying from one to eight years and more). The purpose of this solid criterion is to raise the credibility of the obtained outcomes, opinions, views and perceptions of people associated with the civil society sector.

The number of years the organizations held activities, in which interviews were conducted, is shown in Table 5. Based on the attained results, these organizations have been operating for one to nine years.

Table 5. Number of years an organization has been functioning in Kyrgyzstan

Years	Absolute number	Percentage
>1	1	2
1 - 3	13	25
4 - 5	9	17
6 - 8	12	23
9<	12	23
3/O	6	11

4. Motives for young people to engage in civil society

4.1. Motives and reasons for participation

Diagram 1: Motives for participation in civil society organizations
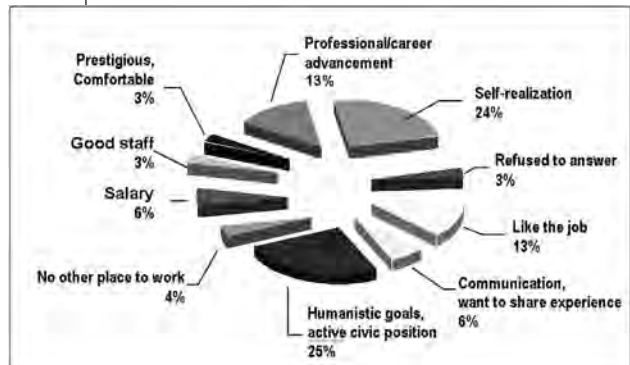

Diagram 1 shows that participation in civil society organizations is conscious, endorsed by a desire to accomplish humanistic goals and opportunities for self-advancement. Under humanistic goals, it should be understood that these actions are carried out in order to restate an active civic position. Their motives for involvement in civil society sector are expressed in the following manner:

- Helping those who are in need
- To be useful
- An interest in young people's future
- Dealing with social problems
- Greater opportunities and freedom within the non-governmental sector
- The youth is being restricted; I would like to act locally, contribute, etc.
- Working in an NGO is contribution to self-advancement. This advancement is about communicating with people and being useful to society. It is hard to attain justice and I like to give people hope
- Better working conditions.

Diagram 2: Expectations from engagement into civil society sector (n=53)

4.1. Expectations from engaging in civil society sectors

Many of those who were interviewed expected to obtain opportunities for provision of services bearing an educational or training nature from their activity within civil society organizations

- The dissemination of knowledge about healthy life styles
- To teach under "equal to equal" methodology; incorporating western culture into education
- Training in computer skills
- To develop the population's legal awareness
- To increase society's awareness.

Furthermore, most of the respondents are willing to be useful to a greater degree

- Find solution to as many problems faced by people as possible
- Be more useful
- Give help to all
- Enhance tolerance
- Activate the population
- Bring all nations together
- Destroy barriers between the state and ordinary people
- Change the situation.

Table 6 shows the number of years that the respondents are willing to spend within civil society sectors and whether they have any intention of leaving for another sector.
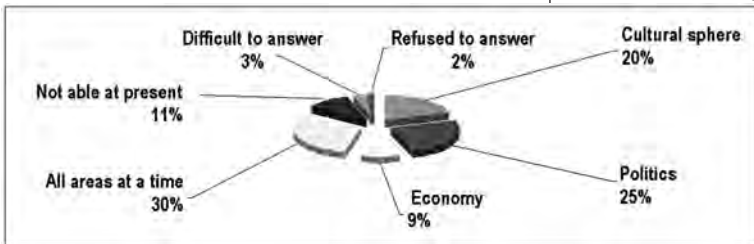
Table 6. Years spent within an organization

Years	Absolute number	Percentage
1 - 3	20	38
4 - 5	6	11
5<	22	42
Difficult to answer	4	8
Refused to answer	1	2
Are you planning/willing to move to other sector (state agencies, private sector)?		
Variations	**Absolute number**	**Percentage**
Yes	21	40
No	26	49
Difficult to answer	1	2
Refused to answer	5	9
If "yes", then where? (n=21)		
Spheres	**Absolute number**	**Percentage**
Business	2	10
Other NGOs	2	10
State bodies	11	52
Difficult to answer	6	29

From Table 6, it is clear that most respondents are willing to stay within civil society organizations for five or more years. A little over half of the respondents are willing to move to a state sector. Young people involved in civil society sectors frequently face problems such as lack of understanding or simple ignorance. Therefore, some respondents are willing to enter the state sector in order to change the situation and attitude towards young people from the inside.

5.   The influence of youth movements

According to opinions expressed by those interviewed, young people are able to influence all spheres of society, especially politics and cultural.

Diagram 3: Possible areas in which youth and youth movements could have influence (n=53)

Respondents pointed out that young people are able to hold various actions, festivals, competitions and share experiences and knowledge with each other within cultural bounds.

- "participation in state governing, first of all in politics (via participation in public marches)"
- "a lot depends on the age. An effect will occur only if there is a strong leadership, strong idea. Then young people will start to believe

in what it does and see the achievements"
- "I am sure that it is possible with culture, but for politics and the economy it is going to be a hard task. It is hard to make information reach the state bodies. In most of cases, information brought by young people is being filtered"
- "currently there are not enough opportunities for youth, and it is not tied to youth itself, but to political environment, in which there is no space for self-advancement."

5.1. Effect of March events

Further, a few questions on the role and state of young people prior to the March events, during the events and afterwards, were raised in order to study its impact on societal life, opportunities for the youth and youth movements.

In general, the respondents shared common opinions that the youth were inactive and insignificant:
- There was no trust in the government
- There was a large information gap
- The youth were pessimistic about the future
- There was no special treatment for the youth. No one took them into account.

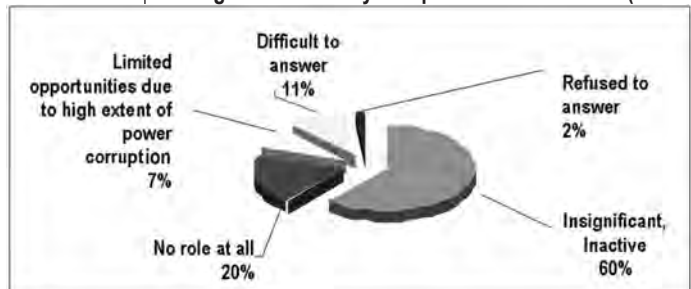**Diagram 4: Role of youth prior to March events (n=53**

**Table 7. Role of youth and youth movements
prior to March events**

%	n=11	n=3	n=9	n=11	n=2	n=5	n=12	
Role	Chui	Batken	Naryn	Talas	Jalal-Abad	Karakol	Osh	Total
Insignificant, inactive	64	67	89	73	100	80	25	64
No role at all	55	0	0	18	0	0	25	21
Limited opportunities due to high extent of power corruption	9	0	0	0	0	20	17	8
Difficult to answer	0	33	11	0	0	0	33	11
Refused to answer	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	2

Table 8. Young people's role during the March events

%	n=11	n=3	n=9	n=11	n=2	n=5	n=12	
Role	Chui	Batken	Naryn	Talas	Jalal-Abad	Karakol	Osh	Total
I didn't participate by force of circumstances	27	0	0	18	0	0	25	15
Was against the Revolution	18	0	0	0	50	0	0	6
Engaged with personal matters	0	0	22	0	50	0	0	6
Active	18	33	67	0	0	20	17	34
Passive	73	67	33	45	0	80	58	49
Difficult to answer	0	0	11	18	0	0	0	2
Refused to answer	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	4

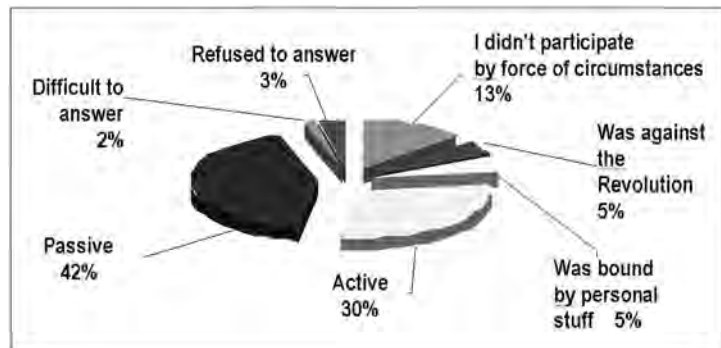Frequently, there were respondents who claimed that there was no role for the youth at all.

Table 7 shows a high percentage rate for those who found it difficult to determine young people's role prior to March events in Osh and Batken in particular. Interviewed persons from Chui, Naryn, Karakol and Talas believe that the youth's role before March events was passive and of no importance.

The role of the youth during March events was also passive, particularly in the opinion of people interviewed in Karakol, Chui, Batken and Osh regions.

Here are some interesting excerpts from interviews:

- Young people's activities were evident during the March events
- The youth were in fear; they were wait-

Diagram 5: Young people's role during March events (n=53)

- Young people were significant; they were both initiators and organizers
- The youth belongs to a social group that can easily manipulate what is happening. It can stand for a mighty power if inspired by the idea that something could be changed within the state. Young people behaved differently during those events
- Talas witnessed a negative side to the events: robberies. The youth were turned into a tool to overthrow the current power. Some were bribed, others were given money during meetings and so on.
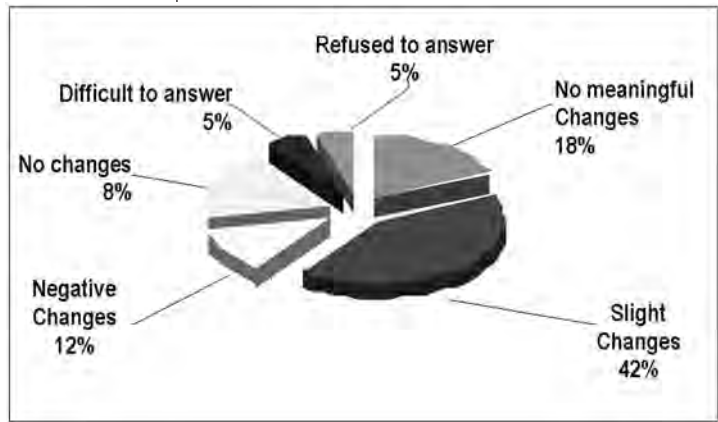
Were against the Revolution
- They were against the meeting in the city; they were involved in an election campaign of a pro-governmental candidate.

Young people's passiveness was evident
- There were no mass disturbances within the city
- The youth were calm
- They were neutral observers
- I did not participate in those events. In my opinion, a third party manipulated the youth to change the regime, but still there were also those who put forward their own motives and interests, but they were few.

Diagram 6: Young people's role after March events (n=53)

No meaningful changes occurred
- There are no meaningful changes
- Nothing has changed in our city.

There are slight positive changes
- Life has become easier, young people are paid more attention, more vacancies are available, and it has become easier to enter the state bodies
- Until these events, little attention was paid to the youth and the youth itself remained inactive

Table 9. Young people's role after March events

%	n=11	n=3	n=9	n=11	n=2	n=5	n=12	
Role	Chiu	Batken	Naryn	Talas	Jalal-Abad	Karakol	Osh	Total
No meaningful changes	36	0	22	18	50	0	17	21
Slight changes	64	67	44	36	50	60	33	47
Negative changes	18	0	33	18	0	0	0	13
No changes	36	33	0	9	0	0	58	21
Difficult to answer	0	0	11	0	0	40	0	6

- Young people invested trust on the new government and the country's future
- Young people stopped fearing the state and respected the state bodies
- They started to hold meetings
- Authorities started to take the youth into account
- It has become easier in a psychological sense; people are more confident in their future
- There was a period when the youth was actively engaging into politics, but then again, there were only a few of them.

Negative changes
- The youth has become more aggressive, nationalism among young people sharpened, "showdowns" with the use of arms taking place more often, they have no respect for law and order.

No changes
- Nothing has changed
- My role has not changed
- There are no changes in the youth
- Everything is the way it was prior to the Revolution.

There are no significant changes in the performance of the organizations. Only a few respondents wished to initiate positive changes. It is possible that serious changes may occur if this initiation is transformed into a concrete set of actions. (see Table 10).

Table 10. What and how has changed in performance of YOUR organization after March events?

%	n=11	n=3	n=9	n=11	n=2	n=5	n=12	
Changes	**Chui**	**Batken**	**Naryn**	**Talas**	**Jalal-Abad**	**Karakol**	**Osh**	**Total**
No significant changes	82	33	33	0	0	40	8	30
No changes	9	33	33	9	50	0	67	28
Positive intentions came out	9	33	0	55	50	20	8	25
Revision of values	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	2
Negative changes	0	0	11	9	0	0	8	6
Difficult to answer	0	0	11	0	0	20	0	4
Refused to answer	18	33	11	18	100	20	8	13

Here are the excerpts from interviews with respondents.

No significant changes
- We keep doing what we did; revolutionary events did not change our field of work since our organization is out of politics.

Nothing has changed
- Nothing has changed
- The state has not changed

Positive intentions came out
- Goals of helping the state and people getting educated appeared
- The new government is proposing new ideas that are disadvantageous for the former government and favorable to the new one.

Values revised
- It is first of all necessary to learn the objectives and reasons of a leader
- March events were a kind of a lesson to me.

Negative changes
- March events were a bad representation of our organization.

The large majority of respondents stated young people's valuable role in society's development. However, this depends greatly on the youth itself and youth movements in particular. Young people must be highly organized with a clearly set strategy and be able to unite in common opinion.

6.   *Youth policy*

Before going into deep research on the perceptions of young people and youth policy in Kyrgyzstan, its notion, problems, solutions and possible ways of its betterment, we tried to find out what is being undertaken by state bodies to resolve already existing youth challenges. The overwhelming majority responded that nothing is being done:

- I don't feel any efficient support
- I try to deal with problems on my own
- State agencies are of no help and whenever we are undertaking something the state has no interest
- We offered to have cooperative entertaining events and public debates
- State bodies provide assistance; the ministry of education helps with projects such as the legal aid centers to become an indivisible part in Universities
- Local administration is willing to help, but they do not possess sufficient financial support.

6.1. *Vision of youth policy*

According to the majority of respondents, youth policy ought to be effective, functional and flexible.

Effect
- More attention should be paid to young people, especially to those at the "middle" level in order to support their growth
- Approved programs should be youth needs oriented
- Programs should be affordable and financially efficient
- The state should undertake studies and learn about problems of young people; there should be more young people employed within the state sector.

Function
- To recruit clever young people
- To stand up not only for interests of the state, but that of the youth also
- To be guided by experienced people
- To solve youth unemployment and living standard problems
- To improve education quality.

Flexibility
- More friendly to the youths for them to be able to express their opinion freely
- Removal of language barriers (Russian, Kyrgyz and Uzbek)
- Should answer current demands
- Focus on personality
- Focus on the youth and the growing generation
- It is possible for the state bodies to recruit more young people.

6.2. *State policy's priorities toward young people*

The majority of civil society sector representatives agreed that finding a remedy to unemployment, educational issues, financial support, and ideological training should be among the youth policy's priorities.

Finding a remedy to unemployment
- Human resource policies should be clear and foreseeable, easing the procedures of recruiting young people in the state bodies

- Enact a law to defend the working youth
- Create working places for young people
- The state should attract and develop interest in state services.

Finding solutions to educational problems
- Improve education; make it more sensible to needs
- Education at schools and Universities is of a poor quality and inaccessible
- There is a need for higher quality education.

Ideological training
- Initiate ideological training at schools and universities
- Carry out the state's ideology within rational bounds.

6.3. Young people's rights

Within the framework of the research, it was also suggested to find out which rights of the young people were being violated. The majority of respondents put stress on human dignity and frequent cases of unjustified "interest" on behalf of law enforcement bodies.

Violators and violations of human dignity
- Law-enforcement agencies, state bodies
- Administration of schools and universities
- Teachers at universities
- Children who get humiliated and insulted
- Children at school are persistently put under pressure.

Young people complain that the absence of work experiences is the main reason of professional inapplicability. Some respondents mentioned frequent cases of students' manipulation during the elections (see Table 11).

Table 11. Which rights are violated most often?

Rights	Percentage
Right to employment	32
Right to education	17
Right to adequate living standards	11
Right to Human Dignity	45
Freedom of assembly	6
Freedom of speech	28
Freedom of expression	21
Access to information	2
Difficult to answer	8
Refused to answer	9

7.   Problems faced by young people in civil society organizations

Lack of financial resources, philosophical misunderstandings, and difference in viewpoints are the major issues faced by the youth involved in the civil society sector.

The creation of obstacles on behalf of the state bodies
- State bodies do not take young people seriously
- There are difficulties when communicating with the state authorities. They think of us as the enemies.

Table 12. What kind of problems do the young people involved in civil society sector frequently face?

Problems	Percentage
Financial limitation	28
Limitation of time	6
Ignorance/ creation of barriers by state agencies	21
Disagreement in views	28
No problems	2
Young people's passivity	4
Lack of information	2
Difficult to answer	19
Refused to answer	13

The respondents see the solution to the abovementioned problems by calling on youth to take action.

7.1. Satisfaction with performance within the organization

The majority of the respondents are satisfied with their performance within civil society organizations. Many find support for their ideas within organization; however, there are many who do not. Some entered the organization by themselves, got involved and stayed (see Table 13).

Table 13. Are you satisfied with your performance within organization? (n=53)

	Percentage
Yes	87
No	4
Partially	9
Do your ideas always enjoy support within the organization?	
Yes	57
No	11
Not always	32
How did you get recruited to this organization?	
Via advertisement in press	13
Helped by friends/ relatives	28
Own initiative	40
Via YEA, HRA	6
An offer from employer	11
Difficult to answer	2

Part 2

Awareness, Participation and Perspectives of Youth Policy

Socio-demographic background of respondents

Breakdown of the respondents according to regions is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Regional representation of respondents (n=73)

Region	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Issikulskij	14	19
Chujskij	12	16
Talasskii	9	12
Batkenskii	11	15
Oshskii	12	16
Jalalabadskii	9	12
Narynskii	6	8

Breakdown of the respondents according to socio-demographic parameters is shown in Tables 2 and 3:

Table 2. Socio-demographic parameters of the respondents (n=73)

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Male	40	55
Female	33	45
Age	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
16 - 18	20	27
19 - 21	26	36
22 - 24	16	22
25 - 30	11	15

Education	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not completed	6	8
Secondary	7	10
Technical	7	10
Some years in university	37	51
University	16	22

Table 3. Occupation and type of activity (n=73)

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Employee of a private firm	18	25
Employee of a state organization	5	7
Student	40	55
Schoolboy/schoolgirl	4	5
Temporarily unemployed/housewife	1	1
Self-employed in the bazaar	3	4
Employee of an NGO	2	3
Position/Status	**Number of respondents**	**Percentage of respondents**
Waiter/waitress	4	5
Manager	10	14
Student	38	52
School attendee	4	5
Salesperson	4	5
Salesperson in the bazaar	1	1
Average specialist	11	15
Unemployed	1	1

Participation in Youth Programs

The respondents were asked if they had participated in social youth programs in order to determine the level of youth participation. 53 per cent of the respondents answered that they had not participated in social youth programs The respondents interpreted 'social youth programs' as participation in the KVN ("Club for the Lightheaded and Quick-witted", a widespread entertainment contest among youth) both as a member or an observer, participation in youth festive events, participation in seminars and attending discos. Table 4 details the response.

Table 4. Participation in youth programs (n=73)

Participation	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Participation in the KVN	4	5
Observing the KVN	2	3
Involvement with IO	8	11
Festive events	7	10
Participation in organizing seminars	3	4
Discos	7	10
No participation	32	58
Difficult to answer	3	4
Refused to answer	7	10

The reasons for passiveness and non-participation of the respondents who stated that they did not participate in the youth programs are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Reasons for non-participation in youth programs (n=42)

Reasons	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Work, school, engagement with sports	29	40
Personal matters	8	11
No interest	5	7

51 per cent of the respondents do not know who is involved in organizing youth programs. One-fifth of those interviewed thought that NGOs, international organizations, university students, and student councils mostly organized youth programs. The city council and local administrations were also recognized as providers of leisure for the youth through their organizing of festive events. Table 6 provides details.

Table 6. Organizers of youth programs (n=73)

Organizers	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Local self-governments	10	14
Artists of theaters and philharmonic	2	3
Civil society	14	19
Student councils	7	10
Students themselves	8	11
Church	2	3
Difficult to answer	21	29
Refused to answer	16	22

Main Problems of Youth

One of the main problems for the youth is unemployment. This unemployment is caused by the lack of vacancies as a result of economic and political instability. 8 per cent of respondents also noted corruption as a cause of unemployment. One-fifth of the interviewed young people noted the absence of finances as the main reason for unemployment. However, the absence of finances in turn is the result of unemployment and corruption. Because 60 per cent of our target group included university students and schoolchildren, the problem of corruption in universities and schools and their depressing financial situation came up as well. The following are the excerpts from the interviews:
- There are no books…
- The quality of education is very low…

The absence of recreational activities and choices for organizing leisure was determined as one of the problems for the youth.

Potential Role of the Government in Assisting the youth

According to the respondents, the state could have a positively influence on the quality of education and the potential employment of the youth. These problems were a big concern to the interviewed representatives of the youth.

The following are excerpts from the interviews
- The state could have provided a starting capital for our businesses
- The state could have provided possibilities for organizing leisure by building recreational facilities, which would have prevented the youth from being involved with drugs and alcohol
- The state could have improved the quality of education, provided books for universities, and improved the selection of professors
- The state could have
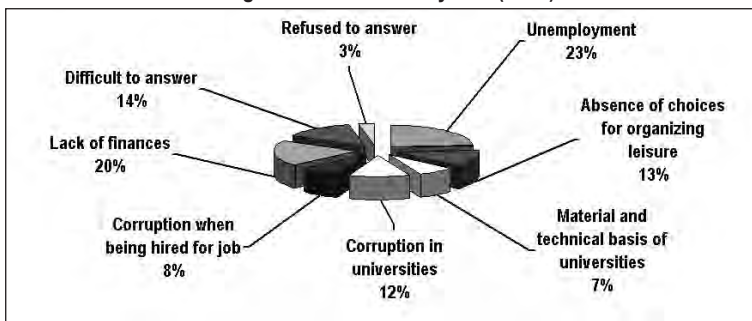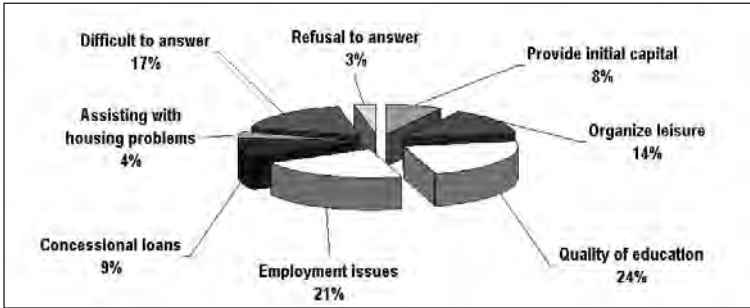
Diagram 7: Problems of youth (n=73)

Diagram 8: What problems of the youth can the state solve? (n=73)

assisted with employment, for example, by negotiating conditions for legal employment in Russia
- The state could have provided loans for youth with low interest rates and without collateral
- The state could have assisted with housing problems.

Awareness of Youth Policies

Most of the interviewed respondents could not articulate an answer to the question about youth policies. This is not surprising, considering that the youth policy is vague and confusing.

This was the reason why most of the respondents gave the following answers:
- I have heard something about it, but it does not strike deeper
- I have heard something, but I do not know who they are.

A large number of respondents admitted that they knew nothing about the youth policies.

A very small number of respondents knew some of the youth movements:
- I know the youth movement KEL-KEL…
- In Karakol, there was a leader of youth organizations who ran for presidency,

promising to do a lot for the youth, but as soon as he became a deputy he forgot all his promises.

There were some who noted some mobiliza-tion of youth movements:
- I see on the television that the youth is becoming more active, which is good.

Table 7. What do you know about youth policies? (n=73)

Youth Policy	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Youth movements	6	8
No knowledge	19	26
Mobilization of youth movements	11	15
I have heard something	21	29
It is difficult to answer	17	23
Refused to answer	1	1

Most of the respondents characterized the youth policies as weak. Some noted that the centralized youth policy exists only in Bishkek and does not reach the other regions.
- I think that the state faces many other economic and social problems, which is why the youth is ignored

The existing problems is also the result of passivity among the youth itself:
- The youth does not have the inspiration to move forward and the state does not have the will to assist the youth

Table 8. How would you characterize the youth policy in Kyrgyzstan (conditions, weaknesses)? (n=73)

Characteristics	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Weak	31	42
Centralized	3	4
Affected by negative influence of state organs	8	11
Most of the youth is passive	7	10
Mobilization	1	1
Difficult to answer	21	29
Refused to answer	2	3

When asked whether or not they would like to influence the youth policies, most respondents sounded confused. One-third of the interviewed people had difficulty in answering the question. The same number said that they would like to influence the youth policies but did not know how. There were a considerable number of respondents who wanted to influence the youth policies and knew how to get results.

Table 9. Do you want to influence the state youth policies? How? (n=73)

Willingness to influence	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	21	29
Yes, but do not know how	17	23
No	8	11
Difficult to answer	24	33
Refused to answer	3	4

Table 10. How can the youth policies be influenced? (n=21)

Influence	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
By my activity	16	76
Psychological training seminars	1	5
By organizing leisure	1	5
By meeting officials of state organs	3	14

According to most of the respondents, the foremost attention must be given to the issue of legal awareness of the youth:

- Laws on youth rights: young people should be informed about these laws so that they know their rights. Attention much be paid to the level of awareness of all youths; youths should be encouraged to conduct scholarly research in order to get information about politics, meetings and so on.

Table 11. What issues are of foremost significance for you in the youth policies? (n=73)

Characteristics	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Increased legal awareness of youth	32	44
Job creation	19	26
Quality of education in universities	20	27
Difficult to answer	12	16

The respondents listed a sufficient number of rights that the youth should have. 47 per cent of the respondents mentioned the right to education.

Table 12. Do you know your rights and can you list them? (n=73)

Rights	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Consumer rights	3	4
Right to leisure	3	4
Right to change a name	2	3
Right to education	34	47
Right to freedom of belief	13	18
Right to medical service	9	12
Right to personal property	5	7
Right to work	18	25
Right to freedom of expression	18	25
Right to decent lifestyle and security	10	14
Right to freedom of religion	2	3
Right to form coalitions	7	10
Difficult to answer	12	16

23 per cent of respondents admitted that law enforcement organs, including arbitrary actions of militiamen, had violated their rights:

- It is hard to prove your innocence because I am a male and cannot avoid harassment of the militia; in detention facilities, I saw how the militia was violating the rights of suspects, they can beat them up without any justifications for doing so.

Right to choose:
- Violation of the right to choose mostly happens in universities; you are not free and you are told what to do and what to say.

Exploitation of students and schoolchildren:
- I know that children in schools are forced to work in the fields.

Table 13. Which of your rights are/have been violated most often? In which circumstances? Who were the violators? (n=73)

Rights	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Arbitrary actions of militia	17	23
Freedom of expression and consciousness	8	11
Right to choose	13	18
By teachers	2	3
Exploitation of youth labor	9	12
No violation	10	14
Difficult to answer	24	33

Recommendations

The goal of our research was not to delve deeply in the spheres of the youth policies underlined by the law.[7] We are confident that, in order to formulate recommendations for each sphere of the youth policies (healthcare, education, support of young families etc.[8]), it is necessary to conduct a thorough monitoring, and clarification of which legislations work and which do not. Further, it is crucial to have an open discussion and cooperate with specialists and NGOs working in those spheres.

In our research, we stress the issues of youth participation in formulating youth policies, its involvement in the decision-making processes, and the existing mechanisms of law enforcement.

Changes to approaches in the field of youth politics

1. The state should recognize young people as a major societal resource and provide young people with opportunities to become free, active, and responsible people.
2. Modify approaches to participation of young people in all spheres of public life at the national, regional and local levels. Local and regional state authorities, when developing strategies for advancement, which cover all spheres of state and societal life, should ensure the presence of youth components and various ways for young people to participate in societal life, determined by the youths themselves and their representatives.
3. Youth policy should ensure special support and answer the needs of the youth living in provinces for their interests in the advancement of their own village communities.

Priorities of youth policies

It is necessary to specifically identify youth sectors as priorities within the framework of the national development strategy and that of youth policy implementation:

1. Enhancement of youth participation in the field of public policy.
2. Support for young people to access services and information in order to establish a comfortable atmosphere for their advancement.
3. Establishment of opportunities for young people to get employed.

Amendments to legislation and programs in the field of youth policy

1. Amend Article 2 of Law "On fundamentals of youth policy" by introduction of concrete, clear and employable tasks for state departments in each of the primary youth policy spheres and fixed duties of those departments.

2. Improve the implementation mechanisms of the law "On Foundations of Youth Policy" to raise the efficacy of its implementation.
3. Generate the decentralized system of youth policy implementation by state and local self-governing bodies.
4. Introduce into the law "On Foundations of Youth Policy" clear procedures of control and reporting for state bodies responsible for its implementation. The reporting of state bodies upon carrying out strategies of youth policy implementation should cover not only undertaken measures, but also the evaluation of their influence on young people and attainment of set goals and tasks.
5. Introduce into the law "On Foundations of Youth Policy" mechanisms of youth participation in formation of the youth policy and decision-making when it is to be realized at the local and national levels.

Endnotes

[1] This is an edited excerpt of the survey report of the Youth Human Rights Group (YHRG) with L. Chelnokova as editor and A. Shelestova doing the text edit.

[2] Interview by the YHRG with an employee of an NGO – Research 2006

[3] M. Lisitsyna undertook a contributing research work in the 2004 Research during an internship at the International Forum for Democratic Research under the National Endowment for Democracy (Washington, USA).

[4] Thirty-three males and forty-four females (relatively equal to 43 per cent and 67 per cent respectively) represented the respondents of the 2004 survey.

[5] Interviews were conducted in Osh, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Chui regions.

[6] Respondents of 2006 included 25 males (47 per cent) and 28 female (53 per cent).

[7] Law "On fundamentals of youth policy", Chapter 2

[8] Ibid.

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2. Strategy for youth of Moldova Republic (Strategiya dlia molodeji Respubliki Moldova).

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4. Law of Kyrgyz Republic "On fundamentals of youth policy" (Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki, 27 January 2000.

5. Concept of state youth policy development of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2010 (Konzeptsiya razvitiya gosudarstvennoi molodejnoi politiki Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki do 2010 goda).

6. National program "Kyrgyzstan Jashtary" for 2006-2008 (Natsional'naiya programma "Kyrgyzstan Jashtary" na 2006-2008).

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