

India's youth- Its potential strength

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Abstract: The concept of youth empowerment sprang from the need to enable young people to have a say in decisions which affect them and to have lowed and heard voices. In their communiqué, Commonwealth Youth Ministers considered that "pursuing the objective of youth empowerment gave young people the economic, social, and cultural advancement of their families and countries and to gain self-fulfillment". Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions fall into four broad categories: an economic and social base; political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks; a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; and access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Social Welfare, UNICEF, Human Rights, Ethical Conduct.

Introduction

The empowerment of young people is everybody's business and involves the concerted efforts of a number of key stakeholders, including governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the media, educational and other intuitions, the private sector, family and community networks, youth peer groups and, above all, young people themselves. Youth empowerment is based on the belief that young people are themselves the best resource for promoting their development and that they must be both architects and agents in meeting the challenges and solving the problem faced in today's world and in the new millennium.

Youth development work has, in the past, been and in many cases still is centered on a social welfare approach. This views young people as presenting problems which need to be solved through the intervention of old people. This approach is limited, perceiving young people as passive objects upon which interventions must act, rather than as active subjects participating in the shaping of their lives and communities.

It tends to be based on a range of negative assumption about young people that they are, at best, unable to take care of them selves and , at worst, responsible for crime and violence. This view tends to perpetuate the very problems it seeks to solve. An awareness of the limitations of the welfare approach led, in the 1980s, to the

emergence of the participation approach, which has various interpretations, ranging from mere consultation listening to people's opinions to give them an active role in decision making processes on issues that affect their lives.

Youth is the spring of Life. It is the age of discovery and dreams. India is of largest youth population in the world today. The entire world is eyeing India as a source of technical manpower. They are looking at our youth as a source of talents at low costs for their future super profits. If Indian youth make up their mind and work in close unity with working class people, they can hold the political power in their hands.

Indian youth has the power to make our country from developing nation to a developed nation. The role of youth is of most importance in today's time. It has underplayed itself in field of politics. It should become aspiring entrepreneur rather than mere workers. It can play a vital role in elimination of terrorism. Young participation is important because youth are the country's power. Youth recognize problems and can solve them. Youth are strong forces in social movements.

Youth empowerment is based on the belief that young people are themselves the best resource for promoting their development and that they must be both architects and agents in meeting the challenges and solving the problem faced in today's world and in the new millennium. Youth empowerment should be geared also towards ensured access to business development. Today, this stands as one of the greatest obstacles towards youth economic empowerment, and addressing it would unlock then real and full potential of the youth of India.

Now its time that instead of brain drain we should act like magnets and attract world to India. India can become a developed nation only if everyone

contributes to the best of his or her capacity and ability. Youth is wholly experimental and with the full utilization of the talents of the Youth, India will become a complete Nation.

Empowering Youth in India

Youth empowerment should be geared also towards ensured access to business development. Issues such as Mentorship and coaching, Access to skills training and entrepreneurship education, Development of small business support infrastructure, identification of innovative ideas for youth involvement should be pursued as a matter of priority. Building capacity of the youth at the regional and local levels should not also be under-emphasized.

In order to fully implement youth empowerment process within the country, government, in partnership with the private and public sector, must build the capacity of the youth at regional and local levels through various interventions such as life, youth education initiatives, and other basic skills development to equip them with the capacity to access information, access support for their projects and participate in or implement those projects. Today, this stands as one of the greatest obstacles towards youth economic empowerment, and addressing it would unlock then real and full potential of the youth of India.

To ensure effective strategic interventions, Youth need to formulate the following policy objectives that should realize effective youth economic empowerment. These are as follows;

- A substantial increase in the number of young people that **earn** an income through a variety of programmes, including jobs, special programmes, self-employment and empowerment;

- A significant increase in the numbers of young people that possess **skills** that are relevant to the demands of the labour market, the fast-changing economy and that are sustainable and can lead to either employment or self-employment;
- A significant increase in the numbers of young people that involved in the ownership and **management** of economic activities vested in community, broad-based enterprises and cooperatives;
- A substantial increase in youth ownership and **control** of existing and new enterprises;
- A substantial increase in the number of **youth-owned**, youth-empowered and youth-engendered enterprises;
- A substantial increase in the **numbers** of young people in executive and senior management of enterprises;
- A substantial increase in the numbers of young people being **mentored** to own, control and manage either youth-owned or other enterprises:

Youth empowerment process can only be effective as the effective implementation of the strategies. This means implementation should be well targeted towards the youth and strategic interventions proposed should ensure that it enforces youth economic empowerment so that it is not left either to chance or the benevolence of those that can facilitate it. There should also be an effective and visible youth representation in the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) structures which are yet to be set up. There should be youth targets included in the BEE programme and sector charters – to enforce youth economic empowerment.

The Rights and Responsibilities of Youth

The rights of our youth come from two sources: convention and written law. The law as it relates to the youth confers certain rights primarily to meet the needs of young people who require physical, material, and moral support because of their young age. These laws are basically protective in nature. And the notion of laws specifically for the youth is a recent development. The legal rights to which an individual is entitled begin at birth, and as the individual grows in age entitlement to rights increase as too the responsibilities.

On December 10, 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. After the adoption of this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration principally in schools and other educational institutions irrelevant of the political status of countries or territories. This was because the Declaration contained several articles of special interest to youth.

The following are the responsibilities as enumerated by the National Youth Policy:

- To contribute to sectoral, family and self development and to promote social and inter-generation understanding and gender equality
- To extend respect to teachers and elders, parents and the family, in consonance with our cultural norms and traditions
- To uphold the unity and integrity of the Nation, maintain peace and harmony, observe Fundamental Duties and respect the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution to all sections of the people

- To respect others' faiths and beliefs in the religious, cultural and social spheres and to different schools of thought and to neither exploit nor be instrumental in the exploitation of fellow citizens and other persons, especially women
- To promote appropriate standards of ethical conduct in individual and social life, to maintain honesty and integrity of character and be committed to fight against all forms of corruption, social evils and practices
- To preserve and protect the Environment; and
- To commit themselves to create a discrimination and exploitation free environment and to devote their time and energy in nation building activities

Sustainable Youth Initiatives

- Strengthen partnerships among government, civil society, and networks in the youth sector.
- Increase youth participation in all aspects of public life and support their right to play a significant role in identifying and shaping responses to their problems, in close cooperation with families, communities, and civil society.
- Scale up community-based best practice projects and promote the inclusion of youth from different marginalized groups in community development programs.
- Establish, or strengthen, mechanisms for youth policy development at all levels and in all relevant ministries.
- Designate strong focal points to coordinate and monitor youth policy. Country experiences (for example, Macedonia and

Moldova) show the potential of youth ministries in this respect.

- Transfer know-how from NGOs/UNICEF to Youth Ministries, agencies and local governments, especially for building capacity on participation, empowerment and community driven development.
- Create conditions for making youth relevant data reliable and regularly available through strengthening the capacity of national statistics systems and qualitative research to assess youth conditions and needs.
- Develop robust indicators and adequate, participatory mechanisms for monitoring the development and implementation of youth policy.
- Increase human and financial investment in youth in the region.
- Facilitate horizontal dialogue and sharing of experiences by youth institutional and civil society representatives from various countries.

Challenges of the Youth in Social Development

It is of vital placement that the strength of future development a nation has is a sole function of its youth. The bright future of any country is always predicated on its present youth productive force. A society with a mirage youth force is not far from an abyss of serious irreparable damage. It is therefore imperative that government should not wait on a soothsayer before embarking on program policies that can impact positively on its youth.

The challenges of youth in social development are many; these have grown into more trouble which if possible may require a state of emergency. The youth are the major direct victim of the current moribund economy situation of the country. It is no

longer news today that youth are easy target in criminal activities, violence, prostitution, teenage pregnancy and abortion. Well, not their fault really, Unemployment, unfavourable policies, stagnant undynamic education system, lack of basic attitude to think and excel, and lack of appropriate parental guidance have been the major challenges militating against the youth. The basic fact about this problem is mainly the parental aspect. Parents no longer spend quality time with their wards.

The parents have to play in shaping the future of this great nation positively by taking time to grow their children in a socially acceptable manner. Parents should encourage their wards and plant firmly into them the attitude to excel and self confidence. It is also very pertinent that government should put the right conditions in place for youth empowerment. The most important also, is the programme policies that will benefit the youth, free and fair with no iota of discrimination by any means. Government should realize that national development is a collective issue that requires all hands on deck, with the youth as the springboard to its realization.

Economic insecurity among the youths of the world has led to the phenomenal growth of the informal economy during the past three decades. Slow economic growth, rapid increase in the number of youths graduating from educational institutions and inability of both private and public sectors to accommodate them. This has posed a major challenge for world economies to develop skills and knowledge of youths as away of promoting decent work in both formal and informal economy.

"India's youth that accounts for over 50 percent of the population is an advantage for us when compared to the rest of the world - but this can

become a disadvantage if their energy and capacity is not channelised properly."

India's youth- Its potential strength

India's resurgence potential as an economic and a socially responsible power rests on the Indian youth. Statistics like 72 % of India's population is below the age of 40, 47% of Indians is under the age of 20 and 10% of the world population is an Indian under 25 is a common assessment of India by all countries now. It is this population of young people which constitutes, for India, a potential demographic dividend.

This predominance of youth in the population is expected to last until 2050. The "BRIC Report" by Goldman Sachs predicts that the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China would become larger forces over the next 50 years and mentions that India's economy could be larger than Japan's by 2032, that the combined GDP of the BRIC countries would cross that of the G6 by 2039 and that India could show the fastest growth in the next 30 years.

This fastest growth over the next three decades will prove to be the biggest opportunity for India, and especially its youth, whose potential needs to be harnessed rightfully and beyond boundaries. India's youth have a very unique advantage, a combination of mobility, language, education, a thirst for knowledge and a technology-savvy nature, qualities that will drive the nation's growth in the coming years. What the youth can expect in the years to come will depend on how well they understand and leverage their rights and how willingly and efficiently they are able to shoulder their responsibilities. Fortunately, the current knowledge base of the society, as also the experiences of the past, is broad enough to help the present generation overcome the challenges with confidence and zeal.

With the "youth" advantage positioning India as a rising power in all spheres and sectors, and all reports and studies giving a positive result for India, it's the youth of this country that needs to make things happen and make the dreams of the earlier generation a reality. After all, this is the generation that is reaping the benefits of the struggle of its forefathers who fought for the freedom of this nation and this is the same generation that will reap the benefits of its work, determination and attitude.

India's youth are already having an enormous impact: on the economy, on companies hoping to sell them products, on the media, and on the culture. Unlike previous generations, today's youth are not obsessed with the ins and outs of politics. "It has little relevance for them." Liberalization's children also differ from their conservative, insular parents in that they proudly mix Indian values with Western packaging. As this group, with its more materialist, more globally informed opinions, comes into its own, sociologists predict India will gradually abandon the austere ways and restricted markets that have kept it an economic backwater. These youth will demand a more cosmopolitan society that is a full-fledged member of the global economy. They will start their own businesses and contribute to a more vibrant economy. They also are likely to demand more accountability from their politicians. "This is India's 'found' generation."

The Indian youth have, at their disposal, a very unique set of advantages in the form of mobility, language, education, thirst for knowledge and techno-savvy nature. However, the extent to which these advantages can be harnessed depends upon their ability to understand and leverage their strengths, while efficiently shouldering their responsibilities. To their benefit, the current knowledge pool of our society, coupled with

experience of the past, is vast enough to assist them in effectively overcoming their challenges.

Conclusion

Youth are the future of a country. Any idea of national social development is just a myth without the active participation of youth in it. Social development is like a relay race. The old generation passes on the baton to the waiting team. The young have dreams, passion and hopes. They are impatient and dynamic. Their bubbling enthusiasm has to be regulated and utilized. Their surplus power has to be exploited for the welfare of the country. Proper guidance and direction can bring them in the forefront of national development.

In the present scenario of the society, youth has to play a prominent role to provide leadership for the future and also in implementation of the developmental programmes. In order to create awareness among the youth about their roles to be played in the society, there by enhancing their capabilities in leading society towards development. Empowerment is a challenging concept to define precisely, as well as to deliver in practice. Most importantly, practical empowerment requires a change in the balance of power - away from the 'expert' to the 'beneficiary'. So, it signals a major change which needs fresh thinking and new approaches.

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