

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Major General Dilawar Singh (Retd)

"My hope of the future lies in the youths of character, intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient - good to themselves and the country at large"

- Swami Vivekananda

The value of a country is assessed not by the riches or assets it possesses, but by its people. A nation may be wealthy, but what's more important than the actual wealth is the collective intellect and intelligence of the people who contribute towards earning that wealth. As you can see from this, wealthy nations can go to ruin if their newer generations are unable to keep pace with their forefathers and drive innovation and growth, and developing nations can boost their welfare with insightful planning and an enthusiastic youth. To quote the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, a youth is one who works towards his future goals, unmindful of the past.

The youth of a nation determine how it shapes up a few

years into the future; they are the future of the country, and their actions and inaction both contribute to the state of the

to battle these problems that plague the country - they can fight every social ill that keeps a nation down and prevents it

youth of a country are educated and willing to go the extra mile to effect positive change, miracles can happen.

All through history, youth have been the harbingers of change - from winning independence for nations, to creating new technologies that change the status quo, to new forms of art, music and culture. Supporting and promoting the development of India's youth must be one of the foremost priorities, across all sectors and stakeholders, of any Nation.

India has the largest youth population in the world that is poised to increase further in the coming decade. 70% of India's population is below the age of 35 years. It is indeed vital to utilise this demographic dividend and channelize the youth and their creative energies for nation-building. For this it is essential that the economy supports the increase in the labour force and the youth have the appropriate education, skills, health awareness and other enablers to productively contribute to the economy and Nation building.

Youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5% of the population. At present, about 34% of India's Gross National Income (GNI) is contributed by the youth, aged 15-29 years. However, there exists a huge potential to increase the contribution of this class of the nation's citizenry by increasing their participation and their productivity.

The National Youth Policy, 2014 (NYP-2014) seeks to define the vision of the Government of India for the Youth of the Country and identify the key areas in which action is required, to enable youth development and to provide a framework for action for all stakeholders. The vision as defined in NYP is "to empower the youth of the country to achieve their full potential, and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations". In order to achieve this vision, the 5 key objectives and consequent 11 priority areas, identified as important for youth development as well as the future imperatives are as follows:



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi interacting with the Youth

Nation. In developing and promising countries like India, the youth of the Nation can contribute to its growth by Exercising their franchise. India is proud of the fact that she is the world's largest democracy, for it to be governed efficiently, it has to be done by people who are developed for this purpose. **Bringing in positive change:** India is challenged by various social ills. The youth of the country can use their education

from progressing at the speed it should.

Using their education for the good of the country: Countries develop and become better when more of their youth are educated, and when this education is used for the greater good of the nation. India is leaping ahead of most other nations in terms of infrastructure and opportunities, but the mindsets also need to change at the same pace. If the

Objective	Priority area	Future imperatives
1. Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development	Education	• Build system capacity and quality • Promote skill development and lifelong learning
	Employment and Skill development	• Targeted youth outreach and awareness • Build linkages across systems and stakeholders • Define role of government vis-a-vis other stakeholders
	Entrepreneurship	• Targeted youth outreach programmes • Scale-up effective programmes to build capacity • Create customised programmes for youth entrepreneurs • Implement widespread monitoring and evaluation systems
2. Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges	Health and healthy lifestyle	• Improve service delivery • Awareness about health, nutrition and preventive care • Targeted disease control programmes for youth
	Sports	• Increase access to sports facilities and training • Promotion of sports culture among youth • Support and development for talented sportspersons
3. Instil social values and promote community service to build national ownership	Promotion of social values	• Formalise value education system • Strengthen engagement programmes for youth • Support NGOs and for-profit organisations working towards spreading values and harmony
	Community engagement	• Leverage existing community development organisations • Promote social entrepreneurship
4. Facilitate participation and civic engagement at all levels of governance	Participation in politics and governance	• Engage youth that are outside the political system • Create governance mechanisms that youth can leverage • Promote youth engagement in urban governance
	Youth engagement	• Measure and monitor effectiveness of youth development schemes • Create a platform for engagement with youth
5. Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all disadvantaged and marginalised youth	Inclusion	• Enablement and capability building for disadvantaged youth • Ensuring economic opportunities for youth in conflict-affected regions • Develop a multi-pronged approach to supporting youth with disability • Create awareness and opportunities to prevent youth being put at risk
	Social Justice	• Leveraging youth to eliminate unjust

tus of the youth segment, the challenges they face and the inter-linkages between these areas. Effort is also required to identify the range of stakeholders working on youth development, analyse the impact of their activities and determine how these stakeholders can be aligned and leveraged to more effectively support the youth. For this a holistic assessment of the challenges facing the youth is now being undertaken.

The objective of GoI engagement with the youth is two-fold. First, it must engage with youth in order to provide them with information and enable holistic youth development. Second, it must engage with youth in order to get inputs on issues, policies and specific programmes, especially those that directly impact youth. Engaging with the youth and ensuring youth develop leadership and other interpersonal skills, will help create a generation of individuals that are committed to civic, social and political progress.

GoI, through MoYAS, runs several programmes for youth engagement with the objective of promoting holistic youth development and leadership. Leadership and personal development is often a by-product of youth schemes such as NYKS, NSS and NCC.

While there are some unstructured interactions between policy makers and young Indians in forums such as educational institutions, however, there is a need for structured channels for engagement with young citizens to provide inputs to government. This gap has in part been filled by some organisations that provide analysis and commentary on public policy issues.

In view of the vast diversity of the country and the need to address region-specific needs and concerns of young people, State Govts are now formulating their own State Youth Policy.

In view of many Central Ministries having significant components of their policies and programmes that are relevant to the youth, an inter-sectoral approach is imperative for dealing with youth-related issues and gradually this is taking shape besides a coordinating mechanism at the Centre and State levels.

It is important to identify the most appropriate set of interventions for youth development, and invest in the ones that will have the maximum impact in each of these priority areas. This triggered a range of initiatives and new schemes and programs by the current Government for the youth development besides an increase in investment in the youth to capture the demographic dividend.

It is evident that the youth will play a crucial role in the future development of the nation. Hence it is important that the issues related to youth are mainstreamed and youth become a national priority. This can be achieved in several ways, including Building youth development into RFDs, Key Ministries should develop a 'Youth Connect' programme and regular holistic reviews.

There are several channels that the government may leverage to effectively engage with youth and promote youth development.

By 2020, India's population is expected to become the world's youngest; more than 500 million Indian citizens will be under 25 years of age and more than two thirds of the population will be eligible to work. This means that a growing number of India's youth need the right educational infrastructure to develop skills and adequate opportunities to get employed or become entrepreneurs. The wide gap between those who have access to education and skill development opportunities and those who do not, has to be overcome and the Government is addressing this including the needs of the unemployed youth, marginalised women and rural communities.

The Make in India, Digital India, Skill India (PMKVY), Start up India, Stand up India, Mudra Yojana, Khelo India and Rashtriya Yuva Karyakram, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao are a few of the major schemes already launched cultivating and encouraging innovative entrepreneurs is the ultimate goal of these initiatives.

Technology has a potential to change the world and improve people's lives, now being exploited for youth development it is developing the incredible spirit of a youth-led enterprise and initiative, demonstrating how being empowered and encouraged can help an individual realise their full potential.

India's overall rank in 2016 Global Youth Development Index' report has registered an impressive improvement in its youth development scores. The report shows that youth development levels in India need to improve particularly in the domains of health, education and employment. Improvements in these sectors will give India a much bet-

5. Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all disadvantaged and marginalised youth	Inclusion	• Enablement and capability building for disadvantaged youth • Ensuring economic opportunities for youth in conflict-affected regions • Develop a multi-pronged approach to supporting youth with disability • Create awareness and opportunities to prevent youth being put at risk
	Social Justice	• Leveraging youth to eliminate unjust social practices • Strengthen access to justice at all levels

In order to work towards closing the gaps identified in the 11 priority areas of action, it is imperative to have a concerted effort from all stakeholders. The government may increase its investment in youth in order to capitalise on the opportunity they present.

'Youth' is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she leaves compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. In the National Youth Policy-2014 'youth' the youth age-group is defined as 15-29 years with a view to have a more focused approach, as far as various policy interventions are concerned. Different needs and concerns as per age and background of the youth, need to be addressed.

The Government of India (GoI) currently invests more than Rs. 1,00,000 Crores per annum through a wide range of programmes of different Ministries on youth development through youth-targeted (higher education, skill development, healthcare etc.) and non-targeted (food subsidies, employment etc.) programmes. In addition, the State Governments and a number of other stakeholders are also working to support youth development and to enable productive youth participation. The State Governments also incur substantial expenditure on these heads, over and above the expenditure being incurred by the Government of India. Hence, the aggregate expenditure on youth (Central and State Governments combined) is much higher.

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with youth

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India's overall rank in 2016 Global Youth Development Index' report has registered an impressive improvement in its youth development scores. The report shows that youth development levels in India need to improve particularly in the domains of health, education and employment. Improvements in these sectors will give India a much better chance of reaping a handsome demographic dividend. The improvement in India's score are explained by a rise in the proportion of young people with a reduction in the adolescent fertility rate (29 percent fall), and improvement in the gross secondary enrollment rate (9 percent rise).

The fellowship programs in the Government sector as well as those conducted by the PSUs and other organizations are contributing to the youth development for example the Fellowship in the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and State Bank of India. SBI, YFI offers a wide range of projects that cover the entire gamut of rural development. Fellows can either choose to work on an existing project or can implement a new project in a focus area of the partner NGO. SBI YFI ensures that necessary support and guidance are made available to the fellows.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan is one of the largest Youth Organisations working under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. Under the leadership and guidance of Shri Vijay Goel, the Organisation is opening newer avenues for youth development for Nation Building. Recently it has conducted large number of new programmes at thousands of locations in all States and UTs mainly in the rural and farflung areas across the country involving lakhs of youth. It is currently engaged in a country wide programme for training on cashless transactions with the target to train 1.27 Crores persons across the country in 60 days.

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