

# Gender Community Blog - UN Solution Exchange India

Aims to strengthen networking among practitioners, raise awareness on gender issues, and share experiences that motivate "stories of change."

Thursday, 29 May 2014

## **QUERY: Using Social Media Online Platforms to Facilitate a Discourse on Youth Perspectives on Development**

The Gender Community of UN Solution Exchange, the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu and Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs, New Delhi are pleased to announce their joint initiative of Using Social Media Online Platforms –Blogs; Face Book; You Tube; Twitters – to facilitate a Discourse on Youth Perspectives on Development. This is the first time that the Gender Community, RGNIYD and the Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs India will use multiple social media platforms to engage online - in a month-long discussion/debate – with the Youth of this country.

It is not enough to say that the Youth is tomorrow's leaders. We cannot overlook the fact that half of the world's population is under the age of 25. In order to understand the role of youth in the society, a deeper understanding of "youth" needs to be encouraged in public policy. This implies that the discourse needs to be broadened to promote the tremendous capacity of youth to champion the cause of justice, promote unity among disparate groups, provide stewardship for the environment and direct their energy in service to others – rather than the narrow portrayal of youth as a time of rebellion, frivolity and inability to shoulder meaningful responsibility.

The voices of the youth needs to be heard; their ideas encouraged; and their energy channeled to augment country's development framework and progress. With a new government in place, India is at a political threshold. This is an opportune time to bring to fore and create an informed (and sustained) discourse on Youth Perspectives on Development.

The online discussion on Youth Perspectives on Development will remain open on various social media platforms until 31 August 2014. You can leave your comments; upload your videos responding to all or any of the three key areas on which we are facilitating a discourse viz. Youth and Employment; Youth and Governance; Youth and Gender Based Violence Prevention.

### **Outcome of this Initiative**

The outcome of this discussion will feed into preparing three briefing notes on the aforesaid three areas; the briefing notes will be followed by a consultative process - that will directly feed into policy advocacy (led by RGNIYD) and provide tangible inputs to our policy makers (facilitated by Gender Community along with RGNIYD and Baha'í Office of Public Affairs).

Respond/Share Your Views on: Three core areas on which we are inviting responses/comments are as follows:

### **I. Youth and Employment**

How far formal academic and training institutions are successful in preparing young people for decent jobs? What can be done to address any existing lacunae?

What are the ways to strengthen the non-formal education to prepare young people who are out of education system?

Given the current situation of labour market, is it feasible to propose an employment policy for young people? If yes, what 'key issues and solutions' the policy must focus?

### **II. Involving Youth in Gender based Violence Prevention**

Suggest specific strategies/measures by which Youth can be involved in preventing gender based violence in their communities.

Share examples that highlight the positive contributions of youth to their neighborhoods in terms of addressing violence.

How can we make public places safe and women friendly with support from the youth?

### **III. Youth and Governance**

How can we create an enabling environment for youth in our approaches to governance at all levels? In other words, how do we create an environment that values and welcomes the deep participation of youth at all levels?

What are the ways to encourage youth to develop their latent capacities to contribute – beyond the narrow focus of economic wealth -- to the well being of the nation?

At the core of discourses on governance are the concepts of power and authority. As a youth, share your perspective on how to re-imagine power as a concept that includes a spiritual and moral dimension valuing the principles of equity, equality and justice.

## **Consolidated Reply**

### **1. Ashok Sharma - 11 June 2014 said...**

The initiative to use the social media online platforms to discuss Youth Perspectives on Development is a welcome step in the right direction. It would help gather relevant ideas, opinions, and fresh views, which can be put in use at the time of formulating effective policies to clear the cobwebs that seemed to have gathered for lack of cohesive direction and structured modules on three important aspects/key areas, which are the focus of this discussion. I am sharing my views on Youth and Gender based Violence Prevention.

Keeping before us the truth of recent spate of shameful incidences reported by the Press and visual media from Africa, India and elsewhere - cases of violence against women, terrifying cases of rape victims, abductions, gender mutilation and forced penetrations remain a cause of worry. Society and Governments are still groping in dark and cannot think beyond speedy justice, tight vigil while every other day new horrific violent acts keep recurring; there are increased instances of violence!

Unless, we know the target/aim, we cannot have a good roadmap and no planning would succeed. Our purpose is not to give some money to the family of victims (after rapes as a formal completion of State duty) but to see that such instances are not repeated. In spite of the fact that the real purpose and intent of State Governments is to actually see the complete cessation of such disastrous acts and ensure that such incidences are not repeated in future; we see no respite. What should worry us more is the fact that the Calls for Zero-Tolerance Strictness claims from the authorities are also ineffective !! Zero Tolerance Strictness is also ineffective! Perhaps because we are trying to address the problem from a wrong angle!

To me, everything boils down to creating a few effective programs and policies to match with the time and the hurrying levels of rapid evolution of human mind (particularly of the male youth). Unless we bring a desired level of harmony in the kind of life of millions of youth is living, working, thriving and growing in all metros, small and big cities, towns and villages; our youth shall stay condemned to live a life of uncertainty as aforesaid and, with time even more heinous incidences shall keep staring us on our face (with each passing day !)

In true fact, such harrowing acts are bound to register an exponential increase in the very near future even if all the militaries, para-military forces or police vigils at the disposal of state machinery are pressed in service and operations to help assist law and order; or even if new contingents of restoration-forces be created and summoned-up to patrol every nook and corner of all cities. So where is the hope then? The only hope lies in correctly analyzing the root cause of the problem and apply correct remedial measures supported by framing and putting into practice suitably effective programs and policies - which must match with the general timing, and be tuned-in with (to get effectively-fused with) that of the present physiological, psychological, mental and the intellectual levels of ascension to where our youth globally has rapidly quickened and landed itself in recent years; as well be aware of the factors which do suddenly become compulsive, and take over such notorious cells that jump inside the skull, and suddenly start behaving erratic!

Sincere regards,  
Ashok Sharma (ntatsouthwestasia@yahoo.co.in)  
Dev. Advisor  
New Delhi-India

## **2. Mohd Irfan - 18 June 2014 said...**

The initiative to use social media online platforms to discuss Youth Perspectives on Development could be very handy if it could be nurtured in the right direction. Otherwise it could also end up just like many other discourse that has happened in the past. My views is on Youth and Employment, especially on "impact of formal and informal education on decent employment." When we talk about Indian education scenario, we can easily find that most of the educational institutions emphasize on theoretical aspects of education rather than provide core practical knowledge to the students which is very much essential in the job or labour market. We can say that this is one of the main reason that even after getting good or higher education (Graduation/Post-graduation) people find it difficult to find their first 'decent job'. If we talk about the ways to find solutions or strengthen the non-formal education then the government should promote vocational education which are truly job oriented in nature. However, one thing is there i.e. interest of people must be considered as at the end of the day their interest will matter the most. Whatever policies or planning will be there in this regard, it must ensure that the target group should be involved to make it effective and also people need to be aware regarding to the initiative or mass awareness programmes must be initiated by the respective State governments to see the impact of these initiatives.

Mohd Irfan (mohdirfan1991@gmail.com)  
2nd Year Student- Development Practice.  
RGNIYD- Sriperumbudur/Tamil Nadu

## **3. Avinu Veronica - 19 June 2014 said...**

Through this platform, I would like to share on - Involving Youth in Gender based Violence Prevention.

With the alarming rise of gender based violence which has become an everyday affair and taking off in newer forms, penetrating every home, community, neighbourhoods, Involving young people to address the problem is very crucial. But how do we involve them? Sadly many are the victims or perpetrators themselves?

Unless the young generation is sensitive enough and fight proactively against the problem, the problem will continue to be at loose ends. Young people need to realize they are the crucial stakeholders to address this problem and the way forward is instilling among them a sense of ownership towards this commitment.

How to engage them?

Just as we have informal associations, clubs etc of all nature, for all causes, why not introduce an innovative concept of 'Gender Clubs/ Gender Groups' into these existing structures. We can learn from the informal associations found at the grassroots, and in urban areas, the neighbourhoods, inside formal institutions such as the schools, colleges, universities, etc., that young people are active and committed and they mean business when it comes to their membership in any of these associations be it formal or informal. These groups of young people can be sensitized and mobilized towards the larger commitment

of promoting and having 'Gender Violence – free' families, communities, and institutions be it in the private or public spaces.

Purpose of the 'Gender Clubs/ Gender Groups' – To involve and engage Youth towards their active involvement in prevention and protection concerning Gender based violence.

Where can we have them? – Community groups, neighbourhoods, universities, schools, colleges, etc.

Plan of action – Formation/ introducing the concept of Informal/ formal Gender clubs/groups involving young people.

How will they operate? - Modalities need to be worked out suitable to region, communities, etc. Extensive and In-depth Gender sensitization programmes is essential to be carried out at different levels to sensitize the youth which can be initiated by the gender clubs/ groups as well in their communities. However, gender based violence due to its delicate, visible/invisible nature and interrelated with the so called 'personal affairs – don't interfere', intimidation, muscle and money power, needs to be strategically planned and be practical to make our society women friendly and safe.

Avinu Veronica  
Training Officer  
RGNIYD/Tamil Nadu

#### **4. Neeta - 20 June 2014 said...**

Indian economy is considered as one of the fastest growing economies globally alongside the Increase in the demographic dividend with population growing from 1 billion in 2001 to 1.4 billion in 2026 indicates that a time is close where India will have a very large number of youth and those many aspirations. In fact, it would be 25% of world's total workforce. The task in hand is, thus to, convert the work force into productive units. More employment avenues have to be opened to allow the group to fit into apart from agriculture sector.

If we look at the preferred skills that the youth has aspirations for, the list includes (not ranking them under any priority and there could be more to this list), yet high ranking sectors are: Computer and IT; Electronics; Automobile repairing; Sales at the retail stores; Banking (to some extent among girls too); Sewing (mainly by girls); Beautician (mainly by girls); English language; Customer dealing

Agriculture based skills, such as skills for food processing, even demand of skills for commercial farming of medicinal plants & low cost extraction is not found. Likewise, the aspiration for skills based on travel and tourism is also not a priority. Health- paramedics is another area. This could be due to – one, agriculture is still not considered an industry and traditionally the household engage in it, a vision for tourism is still nascent among the masses, except those among those communities who belong to places that have tourism based economy; secondly, there is no exposure and dissemination of information to help change the mindset, next, even the industry is not paying enough attention for making these sectors as secured opportunities of employment or high income areas. We should also not forget that

youth still looks for government job after completing basic schooling.

All of us working in the development sector also have interacted with the youth in different contexts and know that they would prefer to be unemployed rather than going for a job that offers low salary or if the job opportunity is not in close proximity of place of residence.

Moving on to think about barriers in skill development, some of the major ones could be location of institutes, poor road connectivity and hence the transportation, lack of security, especially for girls, lack of quality trainers, lack of proper machinery / training infrastructure.

I would like to draw attention of the members to the National Skills Development Corporation founded for skills development initiatives through Public Private Partnership. NSDC has conducted studies on 22 skills sectors across the country. A skills based profiling of the States is also available at <http://nsdcindia.org/>. Several agencies, from almost all skill sectors, are affiliated with NSDC.

Increase in CSR component and its mandatory application is showing a ray of hope of participation of big corporate houses in developmental matters. At the level of the government the focus should be “convergence” between the schemes and “decentralization of planning” as measures to bring change. For example, a corporate house may plan to upgrade the school building or integrate some skills training component within the existing school infrastructure, the education department may plan to improve the accessibility (road/ transportation etc) in convergence with the related department. The funds allocated to the education department may be utilized for equipping the school with better library, on-site teacher training etc. This planning should be done with “bottom up approach”, sitting with the real stakeholder- industry, teachers, parents, students and community at large.

We really need to think beyond. It is not that the education system only needs reforms; it's our society that has to change its mindset. Skill enhancement is still not a priority. We have to change our outlook of judging a person through a “degree” and not the skills; generate respect for “skills” not for a “person”.

#### **5. Pallavi Bhadoria - 23 June 2014 said...**

I am sharing my views on all the topics covered under Youth Perspectives on Development.

##### **Youth and Employment**

**On Decent Jobs:** If you speak of decent jobs, the formal education prepares an individual. Unfortunately in any economy, the number of decent jobs are minimal and majority of youth has to be self employed with that entrepreneurship acumen. Unfortunately our education system, which is British macaulean based is unable to prepare our youth for it. How to look for opportunities and prepare with the changing environment. Education system needs to be revised to build the confidence and spirit of entrepreneurship. I know it is easily said given the investment and man power/ teachers required for the game but that is the only answer. We will have to build again our education system at grass root level in the government schools to make the youth empowered and confident.

**Strengthening non-formal education:** An engaged approach involving local available resources (both in

shape of workshop and mentor) should be the first step in supporting these youth. Providing financial resources to identified mentors will provide initial results. The first step is to give them the confidence in available opportunities and showing the right path. Once the initiation has happened, then we focus on a semi formal approach and moving to informal. We will have to think out of box and provide localised initiative for each.

On Employment Policy: All government should have an employment policy to cater for the youth and a progressive approach in the plan. It is not mandatory that employment policy needs to guarantee job but should cater to build an ecosystem to generate jobs. It should focus on defining key opportunities which will be available and plan on how to prepare youth to fulfill the gap. A case in example is call center developed in gurgoan. A proper policy could have developed youth to fill the expertise gap and fill the vacancies which came with the existing opportunities. In absence of an approach, the jobs could be given to local available youth/ lack of talent, which also causes resentment. In the same way, government should focus on developing skill sets which will be required in near future. If a refinery is developed, policy should help develop skill set of local available talent for basic semi skilled jobs.

#### Involving Youth in Gender based Violence Prevention

- All formal and informal process of engaging with youth can provide specific measures of preventing gender based crime. Involving them in what they want to do, identifying alternate job opportunities for them. Monitoring drugs and other things which are eating into our society can be monitored by engagement. Making the local elders part of the reform and providing them tools, training and network will help.
- Violence is output of neglect. When we do not engage and isolate youth, it comes out in form of violence and reaction to the weaker section of the society. Where they can control and show their animal power. When we start engaging them in relevant activity, providing them tools and measures to earning along with ecosystem where they are treated as human being, things improve.
- I do not think direct involvement of youth can provide effective tool to make the society women friendly. We will have to engage with the youth through formal and informal process, involving their community elders.

#### Youth and Governance

- Only an engaged approach will help us creating an enabling environment for youth; an ecosystem which cherishes and empowers youth.
- The prime factor will have to be to make them economically independent. Only once they gain financial independence, they can think beyond their personal self and be engaged.
- Only an engaged ecosystem will improve spiritual and moral dimension. Once we start providing financial independence, it will boost confidence of our youth, and they will feel part of a bigger whole. The absence of this, is the main issue, which we need to address.

Regards,  
Pallavi Bhadoria  
Mumbai