

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Youth in the Asian and Pacific region

Youth, defined by the United Nations as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. By this definition, it represents almost 18 per cent of the current global population. A vast majority of the 1.2 billion youths in the world today lives in developing countries (84 per cent in 1995 which is projected to increase to 89 per cent by 2020).¹

In 2005, 61.8 per cent of the youth population of the world lived in the Asian and Pacific region.² Due to declines in fertility rates in the countries in the region, the Asia-Pacific has witnessed a “youth bulge” or a demographic bonus where 20 per cent or more of a national population are aged 15 to 24 and there is a growing cohort of working-age adults relative to the dependent population.

Owing to a combination of factors, youth in the Asian and Pacific region today are better poised than ever before to participate in, and benefit from the advancement of social, economic and political developments. Compared to previous generations, a higher proportion of young people in the region have completed primary schooling. They are achieving better education, with the gross enrolment rate at the tertiary level reaching 18 per cent and 15 per cent respectively for male and female youth.³ The majority of youth in the region is healthy, having survived childhood years, which only a few decades ago had considerably higher infant and child mortality. Furthermore, across the region, young people show initiatives to participate in local, national and regional development as important and equal participants, rather than as passive bystanders unable to shape their own future.

Although the present cohort of youth has numerous advantages and assets, it also faces a complex and rapidly evolving situation where new opportunities coexist with major challenges. Fierce competition is affecting the marketplace and its rules and practices in the region. Youth often remain in a vulnerable situation and lack the requisite knowledge and skills to adapt to the changing economic and social environment. In Asia, youth made up 20.8 per cent of the labour force in 2004, but unemployed youth accounted for nearly half (49.1 per cent) of the region’s jobless people.⁴ Long-term unemployment leads to a wide range of social ills to which young people are susceptible such as delinquency and substance abuse, and often feeds political unrest and violence. In addition, exacerbating the situation are very limited knowledge and poor access to health services related to the prevention of HIV infection, drug use and other health risks, particularly among those who are out-of-school in rural areas.

In the past several decades or so, a large number of countries in the region have adopted national policies and legislation on youth-related issues. Education, employment,

¹ Data were from ESCAP (2007). *Youth: Fact Sheet*. Bangkok: Emerging Social Issues Division of ESCAP.

² See United Nations (2005). *World Population Prospects: 2004 Revision*. New York: United Nations publication.

³ See ESCAP (2007). *Youth: Fact Sheet*. Bangkok: Emerging Social Issues Division of ESCAP.

⁴ *Ibid.*

health and youth participation are found to be the key components of these policies, among other areas of priority or concern. Implementation of policies and programmes on youth remains a big challenge due to various reasons, including a lack of commitments, resources, coordination, and implementation mechanisms. Furthermore, most countries do not have specific mechanisms in place for effective youth participation. They have not successfully managed to mainstream youth concerns, as the issues relating to young people fall across a variety of policy areas.

B. Global and regional initiatives towards youth issues

Young people in all countries are a major human resource for development, key agents for social change and driving force for economic development and technological innovation. Their talents, dynamism, imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. Youth is increasingly being viewed for bringing potential benefits to other generations. The significant role that youth plays to the societies has been fully recognized in various important global and regional initiatives.

At the global level, the youth development agenda received major impetus through the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 1995.⁵ The World Programme of Action for Youth represents an unprecedented initiative by the international community to recognize the value of youth as both a major human resource and as key agents for social change and economic development, and to bring the need to address obstacles to their development to the fore. It contains proposals for actions to the year 2000 and beyond to promote an improved well-being and livelihood among young people. It focuses, in particular, on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁶, which was adopted in 2000, once again placed young people at the forefront of international attention. They consist of eight goals, with each of these goals relates directly or indirectly to the well-being of children and young people.

*The World Development Report 2007*⁷ entitled *Development and the Next Generation*, which focuses for the first time on youth and development, identifies three sets of strategic policies to enhance investment in young people: 1) expanding opportunities, 2) improving capabilities, and 3) offering second chances for young people, who have fallen behind due to difficult circumstances or poor choices. According to *the Report*, developing countries which

⁵ See United Nations (1995). *The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. New York: United Nations publication.

⁶ See United Nations (2000). *The Millennium Development Goals*. [electronic version]. accessed on 10 November 2007 at < <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>>.

⁷ See World Bank (2007). *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*. Washington DC: the World Bank.

invest in better education, healthcare, and job training for their record numbers of young people could produce surging economic growth and sharply reduced poverty.

A number of Asia-Pacific initiatives further energized the youth development agenda in various specific areas at the regional level. For example, resolution 57/1 entitled “Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific”⁸ was adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2001. It affirms the importance to promote and ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and strengthen and expand prevention and care programmes for youth, giving special attention to reducing the vulnerability of girls and young women. It further requests the Executive Secretary to support member governments in expanding and accelerating HIV/AIDS programmes as well as a wide range of HIV/AIDs prevention programmes among youth.

C. Rationales

The United Nations and its Regional Commissions have an important role to play in providing regional and sub-regional forums for policy dialogue and consensus building on youth issues. UN General Assembly, through its resolution adopted at its sixtieth session (A/RES/60/2)⁹, urged the Governments to develop holistic and integrated youth policies based on the World Programme of Action for Youth in consultation with youth organizations. Each country was urged to develop a long-term, consensus-based, integrated and cross-sector youth policy. Because this is a relatively unknown and underdeveloped area, there is a great need to share experience in this specific field of public policy and to produce tools to assist national governments in addressing youth issues systematically. It is against this background that this publication by ESCAP was prepared.

In addition, youth issues in the region are worthy of studying for three major reasons. First, there is no comprehensive study available on the latest development concerning youth issues in the region. Little is known, for example, about how youth policy frameworks are formulated and organized in different countries; how national youth coordinating bodies work in various countries; what are the major problems and challenges confronted by the countries in the region in the areas of youth education, health, employment and participation; and what are the proposed policy recommendations to help these countries overcome these obstacles and barriers. Youth in the Asian and Pacific countries find themselves in the midst of rapid social, economic, political and environmental changes. They face both challenges and opportunities. In order to fully understand the situation of young people in different countries in the region today it is important to understand these questions.

⁸ See ESCAP (2001). “Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific”. ESCAP Resolution. [electronic version]. accessed on 6 November 2007 from <<http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/officialdocs/index.asp>>.

⁹ See United Nations (2005). “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 60/2: Policies and programmes involving youth”. United Nations Resolution. [electronic version]. accessed on 5 November 2007 from <<http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/files/11104/11836396131N0548766.pdf/N0548766.pdf>>.

Second, there is a need to raise awareness on youth issues among stakeholders in the region. For Governments, policies related to issues such as youth education, health, employment and participation deserve particular attention as they provide a policy framework and a series of practical guidelines for both national action and international support to ameliorate the situation of young people. For civil society, more efforts can be made to educate young people about what constitutes collectively responsible action through formal and other means. The effectiveness of family and community resources can be enhanced by making use of intergenerational relationships, engaging peers and drawing on the experience of a variety of organizations to educate youth. For business sector, there is scope for greater development and capacity building with regard to matters such as youth entrepreneurship and prudent use of information and communication technologies, so that the productive contribution that young people can make to the countries of Asia and the Pacific can increase. All these initiatives require raising the awareness on youth issues to help consensus building, which provides the countries in the region with greater assistance to improve the overall situation of youth.

Third, the publication can serve as a useful reference to other countries in the region. The region covered by ESCAP straddles a considerable range of countries stretching from Turkey in the extreme west, through Central Asia to South, Southeast and Northeast Asia, and extending to the Pacific islands in the east. This publication attempts to capture the youth situation in six countries in the region, namely, Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore. Although countries covered by the publication are at different stages of development, there are many common theme areas that cut across countries, and the youth in the six countries are confronted with many challenges and problems similar to those faced by other countries in the region. In addition, the six countries have shown considerable interest, besides a few other countries, in formulating and implementing a comprehensive and integrated youth policy at the national level. It is hoped that the information and experiences of these countries on youth policy formulation and programme development will provide additional stimulus to other countries in the region. The six countries studied in the publication could be placed on the global and regional debates on good policy responses to youth issues and therefore interest in the work should not be confined to those with a concern for the six countries. It is hoped that the publication could assist in stimulating more policy debates and helping the establishment of clearer policy targets for the region as well as facilitating more regional and sub-regional co-operation in the field.

D. Objectives and structure

The overall aim of the publication is to enhance the understanding on youth issues in six countries including Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore. In order to achieve this aim, this publication focuses on the following seven priority areas: 1) Youth policy framework; 2) National youth coordinating body; 3) Youth education; 4) Youth health; 5) Youth employment; 6) Youth participation; 7) Challenges.

Thus, after the first introduction chapter, this publication consists of six chapters, with one chapter for one country. Each country is structured around the above seven priority areas.

References

ESCAP (2001). “Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific”. *ESCAP Resolution*. [electronic version]. accessed on 6 November 2007 from <<http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/officialdocs/index.asp> >.

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World Bank (2007). *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*. Washington DC: the World Bank.

IV. INDIA⁵²

A. Introduction

According to *the Census of India 2001*, the total population of India was 1,028.61 million. Nearly 40 per cent of the population was in the age group of 13 to 35 years. The number of youth aged 15 to 24 years was 195.07 million, which accounted for 19.0 per cent of the whole population.⁵³ India thus has the largest youth population in the world.

In India, the Government officially defines youth as persons between the ages of 13 and 35 years. For cross-country comparison and analysis, the youth definition of the United Nations, which defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years of age, is used in this chapter. It is projected that the percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 years will decrease in the country from 19.1 per cent in 2005 to 16.7 per cent in 2025 as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in India, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in population
2005	1,103,371	211,254	19.1
2010	1,183,293	224,657	19.0
2015	1,260,366	231,221	18.3
2020	1,322,032	232,353	17.4
2025	1,395,496	232,579	16.7

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>

About 70 per cent of the youth lived in rural areas, while 30 per cent lived in urban areas in 2001. Young women and young men constituted 48 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively, of the total youth population. The Government has recognized adolescents as an important segment of the youth population group.

B. Youth policy framework

The first National Youth Policy was formulated in 1988 which recognized youth as a vital and vibrant human resource that had both a right and an obligation to participate actively in shaping national development. It acknowledged the high aspirations of young people and emphasized the need to create increasing opportunities to make them economically productive and socially useful. Since then, the socio-economic conditions in the country have undergone a significant change and have been shaped by wide-ranging technological advancement. The

⁵² The main references were from *the Census of India 2001*, *the National Youth Policy 2003*, the annual reports from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Policy Project Report, and other official sources.

⁵³ See Office of the Registrar General Census and Census Commissioner, India at http://www.censusindia.gov.in/census_online/population.html.

National Youth Policy 2003 was designed to galvanize young people to rise up to new challenges. It aims at motivating youth to be active and committed participants in national development.

The 2003 National Youth Policy reiterates the commitment of the country to the composite and all-round development of the young people in India and seeks to establish an all-India perspective to fulfill their legitimate aspirations. The Policy is based on recognition of the contribution that the youth can, and should, make to the growth and well-being of society and endeavors to ensure effective co-ordination between the policies, programmes and delivery systems of the various ministries, departments and agencies. The thrust of the policy centred around “youth empowerment” in different spheres of national life.

This Policy covers all youth in the country in the age group of 13 to 35 years. It is acknowledged that since all persons within this age group are unlikely to be one homogeneous group, but rather a conglomeration of sub-groups with differing social roles and requirements. The youth belonging to the age group 13 to 19 years, which is a major part of the adolescent age group, is regarded as a separate constituency as compared to the group of people aged 20-35 years.

This Policy has the following objectives:

Instilling in the youth, at large, an abiding awareness of, and adherence to, the secular principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of India with unswerving commitment to patriotism, national security, national integration, non-violence and social justice

- Developing qualities of citizenship and dedication to community service among all sections of the youth
- Promoting awareness amongst the youth, in the fields of Indian history and heritage, arts and culture
- Providing youth with proper educational and training opportunities and facilitating access to information in respect of employment opportunities and other services, including entrepreneurial guidance and financial credit
- Facilitating access, for all sections of youth, to health information and services and promoting a social environment which strongly inhibits the use of drugs and other forms of substance abuse, wards off disease (e.g. HIV/AIDS); ensuring measures for de-addiction and mainstreaming of the affected persons and enhancing the availability of sports and recreational facilities as constructive outlets for the abundant energy of the youth
- Sustaining and reinforcing the spirit of volunteerism among youth in order to build up individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of developmental programmes
- Creating an international perspective in the youth and involving them in promoting peace and understanding and the establishment of a just global economic order
- Developing youth leadership in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and encouraging the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), co-operatives and non-formal groups of young people

- Promoting a major participatory role for youth in the protection and preservation of nature, including natural resources, to utilize their abundant energies in community service so as to improve the environment and foster a scientific and inquisitive reasoning and rational attitude in the younger generation; and encouraging the youth to undertake such travel excursions as this would better acquaint them with cultural harmony, amidst diversity in India and overseas.

The Policy has four major thrust areas, namely youth empowerment, gender justice, inter-sectoral approach and information and research network. It acknowledges that the youth of the country should be assured of a set of privileges while it exhorts the youth to fulfill their key responsibilities. It recognizes the following areas as key sectors of concern for young people:

- Education
- Training and employment
- Health and family welfare
- Preservation of environment, ecology and wild life
- Recreation and sports
- Arts and culture
- Science and technology
- Civics and good citizenship.

The Policy attaches priority to the following groups of young people:

- Rural and tribal youth
- Out-of-school youth
- Adolescents particularly female adolescents
- Youth with disabilities
- Youth under specially difficult circumstances such as victims of trafficking, orphans and street children.

The Policy envisions the following implementation mechanism:

- All ministries/departments of the union government and the state governments, particularly in the social sector are to make identifiable allocations in their budgets for youth development programmes;
- A broad based National Committee on Youth Policy and Programmes is contemplated to review and assess various programmes and schemes focusing on youth. It will also advise the Government on measures for the implementation of the Plan of Action of the National Youth Policy;
- The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (under the guidance of the National Committee on Youth Policy and Programmes) will be the nodal Ministry for programmes and schemes in the area and oversees the implementation of provisions of the Policy;

- An effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of the central ministries/departments, the state governments and community and youth organizations, would evolve in order to facilitate timely execution of youth development programmes;
- A National Youth Development Fund will be created through contributions, including from NGOs, which would be utilized for youth development activities. Income Tax exemption would be sought for contribution to the Fund.

The Committee for Action Plan of the National Youth Policy has been constituted to draw plans for implementation of programmes and activities for all round development of youth. Besides, the Lok Sabha⁵⁴ has recently constituted a Parliamentary Forum under the Chairpersonship of the Lok Sabha Speaker to consider various suggestions made in the Forum before finalizing the Action Plan. The National Youth Policy 2003 would be reviewed after five years from the date of commencement of implementation.

Besides these policies and constitutional provisions, several legislative acts have been promulgated by the National Government to safeguard the health and social protection of adolescents and youth such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1976; the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986; the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; and the Prenatal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.

C. National youth coordinating body

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India was initially set up as the Department of Sports in 1982 at the time of the IX Asian Games in New Delhi. It was upgraded to the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports during the International Youth Year in 1985. It became a full fledged Ministry on 17 May 2000. Youth which is the most vibrant and dynamic segment of the country's population constitutes potentially its most valuable human resource. To optimally tap their constructive and creative energies, the Ministry pursues the twin objectives of personality building and nation building, developing the personality of youth and involving them in various nation-building activities. As most of the issues concerning young people are the functions of other ministries/departments, such as Education, Employment and Training, Health and Family Welfare etc., the role of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is to act as a facilitator and catalytic agent.

The Ministry is divided into two bureaus, namely Youth Affairs and Sports. A Joint Secretary heads each bureau. It has a total staff of 203. The Ministry has one subordinate office and four autonomous organizations under its administrative control. The subordinate office is the National Service Scheme Organization. The autonomous organizations are:

⁵⁴ The Lok Sabha (alternatively titled, the House of the People, by the Constitution of India) is the lower house in the Parliament of India. The Lok Sabha also stands for the term of the lower house between consecutive parliamentary general elections in India. Members of the Lok Sabha are direct representatives of the people of India, having been directly elected by the electorate consisting of all eligible adult citizens of India.

- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, New Delhi
- Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamilnadu
- Sports Authority of India, New Delhi
- Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

The Ministry performs the following functions pertaining to youth affairs under the Order of the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961:

- Youth affairs
- Nehru Yuva Kendras Sangathan⁵⁵
- National Service Scheme
- Voluntary youth organizations, including financial assistance to them
- National Service Volunteer Scheme
- Commonwealth Youth Programme and United Nations Volunteers
- Youth welfare activities, youth festivals, work camp etc.
- Boy-scouts and girl-guides
- Youth hostels
- National Youth Awards
- Residual work of the erstwhile National Discipline Scheme
- All attached or subordinate offices and autonomous bodies set up by the Ministry concerning any of the subjects specified above.

The total budget allocation for the Ministry for 2006-2007, according to the Ministry's website, is Rs 6690 million (Rs 6000 million for planned activities and Rs 690 million for non-plan activities).⁵⁶

There are two youth coordinating bodies in India outside the Government. These are the Indian Committee of Youth Organizations and the Indian Assembly of Youth. Indian Committee of Youth Organizations was founded in 1981 and had 360 members in 1996. It is directed by a national conference and managed by elected officers. Its main aim is to provide a common platform for Indian youth organizations to establish communication channels between them and to coordinate their activities. India Assembly of Youth was established in 1955 to promote the interests and socio-economic conditions of Indian youth. It holds conferences, seminars, workshops, training courses, camps and campaigns on topics related to education and literacy, poverty and rural development and the advancement of girls and young women. It also runs an International Youth Centre (Vishwa Yuva Kendra) in New Delhi⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India was set up in 1972 as Nehru Yuva Kendra under the Ministry of Education. It currently has 500 district level offices, 2.16 lakh village level youth clubs and 80 lakh rural youth affiliated to it in the 13 to 35 age group.

⁵⁶ Indian currency is Indian rupee (abbreviation Rs). 1 US Dollar equals 39.475 Indian Rupee on 10 October 2007.

⁵⁷ Vishwa Yuva Kendra is one of the leading non-governmental organizations on youth training in India.

Established with the active support of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vishwa Yuva Kendra was inaugurated in 1968 by the President of India Dr. Zakir Hussain. Ensnconed in the prestigious diplomatic enclave of the New Delhi, the Kendra has grown to be a fountainhead of a wide variety of youth - related activities.

D. Youth education

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the primary organization which is in charge of youth education policy in India. Under MHRD, there are two Departments, namely the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, and the Department of Secondary and Higher Education. The Minister for Human Resource Development is assisted by one minister of state. Each Department is headed by a secretary to the Government of India. The Departments are organized into bureaus, divisions, branches, desks, sections and units. Each bureau is under the charge of a joint secretary assisted by divisional heads at the level of deputy secretary/director.

The National Policy on Education, adopted in 1986 and modified in 1992, recognizes the right to education for all segments of the population and made elementary education for all children compulsory, including adolescent boys and girls. It envisages the improvement and expansion of education in all sectors, elimination of disparities in access and laying greater stress on improving the quality and relevance of education at all levels, including technical and professional education. It also emphasizes that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women and securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Programmes have been developed and implemented to provide universal education and reduce school dropouts, especially among adolescent girls. In many states, the education of girls is free until the graduate level.

The Indian education system has three levels, namely primary, secondary and higher education. Secondary education which serves as a bridge between primary and higher education is expected to prepare young persons between the age group 14-18 for higher education and employment later on. The secondary education starts with classes 9-10 leading to higher secondary classes 11 and 12.

The gross enrollment rate of secondary and tertiary schools increased from 37.9 per cent and 6.0 per cent in 1985, to 53.5 per cent and 11.8 per cent in 2004, respectively as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Gross enrolment ratio in India, 1985-2004, unit: percentage

Level/year	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
Secondary level	37.9	44.5	48.8	47.9	53.5
Tertiary level	6.0	6.2	6.6	10.2	11.8

Source: World Bank (2006). *Summary Education Profile: India*.

[electronic version] accessed 5 August 2007 from

<<http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/SummaryEducationProfiles/CountryData/GetShowData.asp?sCtry=IND,India>>

The data also suggest that the primary education completion rate in the country rose from 75.4 per cent in 2000 to 83.6 per cent in 2004 while the repetition level declined from 4.2 per cent in 2000 to 3.2 per cent in 2004. Public expenditure on education accounted for 3.3 per cent of India's GDP in 2004. The ratio of pupils to teachers at primary and secondary levels of

education in 2004 stood at 40:1 and 32:1 respectively. The share of the private sector in the enrolment of students at primary and secondary levels was estimated as 17 per cent and 41.9 per cent respectively in 2004. While 48 per cent of youth were illiterate, a much higher percentage of young women (62.5 per cent) remained illiterate compared to young men (34.5 per cent) in 2004.

Integrated education for disabled children

It is estimated that there are about 20 million of disabled children in India today. Under the Persons with Disabilities Act, it has become mandatory for the central/state/local governments to provide basic education to children with disabilities up to 18 years of age. The Act also calls for a series of activities to promote the education of such persons and mainstream them in general school system.

Environmental orientation to school education

The National Policy on Education 1986 attaches great importance to the protection of environment by assisting voluntary agencies to conduct experimental and innovative projects aimed at promoting integration of education programme in schools with local environmental conditions.

National Population Education Project

The Project was launched in April 1980 with a view to institutionalize population education in the school education system. It has two objectives:

- Introduction of adolescence education (with major components such as the process of growing up, HIV/AIDS education, drug abuse in schools and teachers education)
- Re-orientation, updating and improvement of the elements of population education in the light of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1984.

Information and communication technology (ICT) in schools

India recognized the importance of ICT in education as early as 1984-1985 when the Computer Literacy and Studies in School Project was initially introduced as a pilot with the introduction of micro-computers. It was soon realized that understanding and leveraging ICT is critical for countries striving for continued social and economic progress. Today India has one of the largest ICT workforces in the world. Efforts are underway to ensure coverage of the scheme in all states and union territories of the country during the current five year plan.

Technical education

Vocational training is imparted to young people within the age group of 15 to 25 years. For this purpose 357 industrial training institutes with an overall capacity of 155,000 training places have been established in various parts of the country. The period of training ranges from one year to two years.

Vocationalization at the first degree level

In conformity with the National Policy on Education 1986, a scheme to provide career orientation to education at the first degree level was launched in 1994-1995. Under this scheme, a university/college could introduce one to three vocational courses in 35 identified subjects.

The approved Tenth Plan (2002-2007) outlay was Rs 438.25 billion: Rs 138.25 billion for the Department of Secondary and Higher Education and Rs 300.00 billion for the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy respectively. The approved annual plan outlay (2004-2005) was Rs 60.00 billion for the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy and Rs 22.25 billion for the Department of Secondary and Higher Education.

E. Youth health

Youth health is the domain of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Departments of Health and Family Welfare of the states. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is significantly involved in the issues of nutrition and development of children, particularly girl children. The National Health Policy of 1983 (and later modified as the National Health Policy 2002) aimed at attaining health for all through primary health care. While the policy did not mention youth specifically, it emphasized safe motherhood and child survival as well as the need for the provision of health care for school-going children through the school health program. The major thrust to youth health was given in the National Population Policy 2000. Adolescent health is also covered as a sub-section under the health sector in the National Youth Policy. Youth empowerment and gender justice are recognized as the major thrust areas of the policy.

Recognizing that the needs of youth, including the need for protection from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), were specifically addressed in the past, India's National Population Policy 2000 underscored youth health as a strategic focus in achieving socio-demographic goals. The policy aims at ensuring that

- Adolescents' need for information, counseling, population education, and contraceptive services are accessible and affordable;
- Food supplements and nutrition services are available;
- The legislation on restraint of child marriage is enforced.

The National Population Policy also emphasized that reproductive health services for adolescent girls and boys are especially needed in rural areas, where adolescent marriage and pregnancy are most prevalent. The Policy underscored the need for programs that encourage delayed marriage and childbearing and the need for education about the risks of unprotected sex.

High fertility rates, high rates of teenage pregnancy, high risk of STIs and HIV, and poor nutritional status are the main health problems among the youth population in India. High fertility is related to early marriage. The age-specific fertility rate among 15-19 year-old

female adolescents is as high as 10.7 per cent. There are wide urban and rural differences in the age specific fertility rate. The rural age specific fertility rate is twice that of urban areas.

Adolescence is often shrouded in myths and misconceptions about sexual health and sexuality. Little information is provided by educational institutions to adolescents about sexual health. Young people usually learn more about sexual and reproductive health from uninformed sources, which results in the perpetuation of myths and misconceptions about puberty, menstruation, physiological and body changes and STIs.

Reproductive tract infections and STIs are not uncommon. In India, STIs rank third among the major communicable diseases. Of concern, however, is that approximately 25 percent of all STI cases are among teenage boys. STIs often go undetected or untreated among young women, who embarrassed or stigmatized by the presence of an STI. These women are usually reluctant to seek help. The Ministry of Health has a number of programmes to address HIV/AIDS problem. Notable amongst these are the School AIDS education, the University Talk AIDS and radio and TV programmes which target adolescents. The Ministry is also collaborating with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in running drug de-addiction centres and supporting NGOs to do the same.

Nutrition is a significant indicator of the overall well-being and development of adolescents and youth. Most of the current programmes of the Government are focused either on pregnant and lactating mothers or pre-school children. Adolescent nutrition has not been given the attention it deserves except for a limited nutrition programmes for adolescent girls under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The rapid growth of under-nourished children during adolescence may increase the severity of under-nutrition. Iron is deficient in almost all age groups. Naturally, the shortfalls create more vulnerability for adolescent girls. Pre-pregnancy anemic status of adolescent girls is crucial and has long-term inter-generational consequences. Anemic adolescent mothers are at a higher risk of miscarriages, maternal mortality and giving birth to stillborn and low birth weight babies. Early marriage and pregnancy perpetuate both maternal and child under-nutrition. Under-nutrition in adolescents also leads to poor academic performance in schools and low productivity in the work force later in life.

A recent study revealed that in the rural areas of Rajasthan State, 93.3 per cent of all girls suffered from first to third degree chronic energy deficiencies. The caloric intake of nutrients for adolescent girls was deficient by 26 to 36 per cent with a 23 to 32 per cent deficiency in protein.⁵⁸ There is also evidence to show that there has been an increase in obesity among adolescents especially among affluent groups, both in rural and urban areas. There is therefore a need to combat both under-nutrition and obesity.

There is a high correlation between the age at marriage, fertility management and family health with educational levels. The age at marriage for illiterate females is usually 15 years. It is noted that in India 30 per cent of adolescents in the age group of 15 to 19 years are married. In India most fertility occurs within marriage and the age at marriage is of paramount

⁵⁸ Data were taken from *India Country Paper for South Asian Conference for Adolescents* (1998) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

importance for fertility rates. According to the National Family and Household Survey India (1992-1993), 36 per cent of married adolescents in the age group of 13 to 16 and age group of 17 to 19 respectively were already mothers or were pregnant with their first child. There is a great need of contraceptive services as 27 per cent of adolescent girls did not have access to these services. The male female differential in mortality rate among adolescents is very noticeable. This is probably due to the lower nutritional status of girls, early marriage and high adolescent fertility often leading to maternal mortality.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing two major programmes for adolescents using Integrated Child Development Services Infrastructure.⁵⁹ The Adolescent Girls Scheme, now renamed Kishori Shakti Yojana, focuses on school dropouts. It aims at improving the nutritional and health status of adolescent girls (11-18 years old), providing literacy and numeric skills through the non-formal system, training and equipping adolescent girls with home-based and vocational skills, and promoting awareness and encouraging them to marry after 18 years. The Balika Samridhi Yojana aims at delaying the age of marriage and finally eliminating child marriages.

The Department of Family Welfare through its Reproductive and Child Health Programme provides maternal care, including safe motherhood and nutrition facilities, prevention of unwanted pregnancies, safe abortion facilities to all women etc. Adolescents get subsumed under the general target group of women. However, the atmosphere and environment within which these services are provided are not conducive for adolescents. Besides there being an unwritten code denying services to unmarried adolescents, lack of privacy and confidentiality prevent adolescents from accessing these facilities. Unfortunately there is no mention of adolescent boys in the Reproductive and Child Health Programme.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports set up an Adolescent Cell in January 2005 to facilitate effective management of the Adolescent Development and Empowerment Scheme of the Ministry and to operationalize the United Nations Population Fund supported project on adolescent health and development. The project focuses on:

- Strengthening capacity of the Ministry for implementing Adolescent Development and Empowerment Scheme
- Advocacy on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and life skills
- Capacity building of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development⁶⁰, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Service Scheme⁶¹ and NGOs for implementing adolescent health programmes using a life skills approach.

⁵⁹ Integrated Child Development Services, with its opportunities for early childhood development, seeks to reduce both socio-economic and gender inequities. This is aimed at breaking the intergenerational life cycle of nutritional disadvantage and providing a supportive environment for self-development.

⁶⁰ Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports fully funded by the Government of India.

⁶¹ The National Service Scheme is an experiment in the academic framework. It inculcates the spirit of voluntary work among the students and teachers through sustained community interaction. Over the years it has emerged as the India's largest student-youth movement in linkage with the community.

Violence against girls and young women is a global phenomenon and India is no exception. Crimes are perpetuated both against adolescents and by adolescents. Several studies have revealed that the major causes of violence against adolescents are the social custom of dowry, low status of women and girls in society, false sense of superiority of adolescent boys and young men and the desire to show-off and take revenge.⁶²

In India, there is an appreciable surge in policy initiative in various concerned ministries and departments and the right policy environment exists at the national and state levels. NGOs have exhibited high levels of enthusiasm about youth health and development issues, especially sexuality, HIV/AIDS and STIs, and reproductive health. Several programs have been initiated in the public and NGO sectors. It is a good time to use the potential of these sectors to promote sexual and reproductive health among youth. Important recommendations are briefly outlined below:

- Strengthening the public health care system at all levels, particularly reproductive and child health services
- Promoting and strengthening inter-sectoral coordination at the policy and programme levels
- Developing a systematic and in-depth assessment of adolescents' health and developmental needs
- Networking with and involving NGOs to a much greater extent
- Providing mechanisms for resource mobilization for funding long-term youth health programs and interventions to ensure the sustainable flow of funds and program activities
- Developing interventions to modify various levels of school curricula to incorporate lessons on reproductive biology, sexual health, and contraception
- Involving parents in reproductive education and one-on-one and home-based counseling
- Activating youth forums at the village level
- Encouraging community involvement to mobilize youth, increasing the age of marriage, promoting the use of contraception, and implementing various programs aimed at adolescent health and development.

F. Youth employment

The Government of India has stressed the goal of increasing employment opportunities and eventually eradicating unemployment from the country. Awareness about the difficulties of eliminating unemployment has, over the past three decades, led the successive governments at both the central and state levels to formulate and implement schemes for promoting employment.

Despite high rates of economic growth for the last one decade, unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains one of India's biggest challenges. According to indirect estimates based on the National Sample Survey⁶³, almost 70 per cent of the persons on

⁶² See *Report of the Working Group on Adolescents for the Tenth Five Year Plan*, Planning Commission, Government of India.

⁶³For details, see National Sample Survey at http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_nssso_rept_pubn.htm

live registers of employment bureaus were in the age group of 15 to 24 years in 2004. Almost 72 per cent of unemployed youth in urban areas were looking for jobs for the first time. College-educated rural youth also seek work opportunities in urban areas. Factors such as accelerated population growth, lack of training for work, massive expansion of education, lower quality of education leading to lower employability of the educated have all contributed to the high rates of unemployment among young people. The problem has been recognized as part of the overall problem of employment creation or development⁶⁴.

The National Youth Policy, which was adopted in 2003, recognized the severity of the problem of youth unemployment. The policy explicitly recognized that “the most important component of the youth programme” has to be the removal of “unemployment - rural and urban, educated and uneducated”.⁶⁵ The Indian Government has taken steps to reduce youth unemployment both as a specific phenomenon and within the broader context of reducing general unemployment. Special employment schemes have aimed to improve the training, skills, capacities and job potential of young people and to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. Such schemes include

- Efforts to re-orient the Indian educational system in the direction of vocational education
- Apprenticeship Training Scheme supported by legislation passed in 1961 and amended in 1973 and 1986
- Centrally sponsored Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment since 1979
- Prime Minister’s Rozhar (Employment) Scheme since 1994.

Apart from these national schemes, several state governments have been operating self-employment schemes. Some of the schemes have been modified in the light of experience and the findings of evaluations undertaken by various agencies and institutions on behalf of the government.

While young people comprise 25 per cent of the labour force, 59.5 per cent of youth remain unemployed. Thus the youth unemployment rate is much higher than the general unemployment level in the world, which is about 13 per cent. The average annual increase in the youth labour force was around 1.3 million during the period 1991-1997 but it almost doubled to 2.4 million during 1997-2007.

As shown in table 5 the rate of unemployment increased in rural areas from 57 per 1000 in 1993-1994 to 71 per 1000 in 2004-2005 for males and from 39 per 1000 to 80 per 1000 for females during the same periods. It is also found that the rate of unemployment among youth was significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas (133 males in urban areas compared to 71 in rural areas and 207 females in urban areas compared to 80 in rural areas during 2004-2005). It is also found that women are more unemployed than men both in rural and urban areas and the disparity is strikingly high in urban areas.

⁶⁴ See *World Employment Report 1998/1999* by ILO.

⁶⁵ See <<http://www.yuva.nic.in/downloads/NATIONALYOUTHPOLICY2003.doc>>.

Table 5. Unemployment rate among the youth (15-24 years) per 1000 persons, India

Age groups and periods	Rural areas		Urban areas	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<u>1993-1994</u>				
15-19 years	47	33	134	168
20-24 years	67	45	139	277
15-24 years	57	39	137	223
<u>1999-2000</u>				
15-19 years	65	31	154	155
20-24 years	62	49	139	226
15-24 years	64	40	147	191
<u>2004-2005</u>				
15-19 years	79	67	140	156
20-24 years	62	93	125	258
15-24 years	71	80	133	207

Source: "Employment and unemployment situation in India 2004-2005", National Sample Survey 61st Round (July 2004-June 2005), Government of India

The high rates of youth unemployment need serious attention by policy makers not only to mitigate the frustrations faced by the new entrants into the workforce but also to minimize the likely alienation and widespread evidence of deviant behavior of the youth throughout the country. The unemployed youth have partly been responsible for the tensions leading to the "sons-of-the soil"⁶⁶ movements in different parts of the country and perhaps also the unrest in several of the border states of the country. Several schemes initiated by the Indian planners and policy-makers during the past several decades merit a careful scrutiny to assess and evaluate their impact on the employment situation.

The Indian trade unions have been quite effective in safeguarding the interests of their membership; but they have taken little interest in issues of promoting employment of the unemployed persons seeking work for the first time. The employers have been forced to participate in the efforts to raise the skills of the potential young workforce through training. Many employers recognize such activities to be in their own medium and long-term interest and help to identify the skills in short supply or those likely to become important in the years ahead. However, the scale of the problem is much larger than what the employers can grapple with and it needs a larger perspective.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports provides financial assistance, under the scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Youth Activities and Training, to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations. It recognizes educational institutions,

⁶⁶ When groups that have a regional base face demographic pressure through internal migration, they become likely candidates for rebellion. These groups are called "sons of the soil" (Weiner 1978).

polytechnics including universities, regional centres of National Service Scheme and colleges having National Service Scheme units, Nehru Yuva Kendras, Bharat Scouts and Guides⁶⁷, Panchayati Raj Institutions⁶⁸ and NGOs, public trusts and non-profit making companies registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (Act XXI of 1860) or any corresponding state act, who have completed at least three years on the date of application for conducting the following programmes:

- Vocational training to
 - Prevent migration of the rural youth to cities by enabling them to realize that agriculture and other rural occupations are rewarding as those in urban areas
 - Create new skills among rural youth through which villages can become self-reliant
 - Inspire youth to set up their own training centres in their areas.
- Entrepreneurship development to
 - Promote among the youth an understanding of the process of entrepreneurship development
 - Equip the youth with the skills in designing and planning projects for enterprise development
 - Enable them to set up and successfully run micro-enterprises of their own in conformity with local skills and demands for goods and services
 - Help the unemployed youth with entrepreneurship and management skills.

There is a widespread recognition of the need to bring about a match between the demand for and supply of work opportunities. The Ministry of Labour runs nearly 900 employment bureaus throughout the country to provide vocational guidance and employment counseling. However, over the years, the number of persons registered with these bureaus each year has far exceeded the number of placements.

The special government schemes that have attempted to bridge the gap between education and employment through training and vocational guidance have been of uneven quality. Hence there is enormous potential for youth services to address the issue of youth unemployment. Given the large numbers of unemployed, it is not feasible for the youth service to directly provide employment to young people. However, the potential lies in training young people adequately and in providing stronger linkages with micro-finance facilities (for initial seed capital) and with the labour market (to provide avenues for private placement). Training for rural youth, who are typically excluded, and harnessing the potential of information technology sector to provide new opportunities are necessary steps to ensure that young people survive and grow in a changing economic environment.

G. Youth participation

Some of the significant schemes of the Government that promote youth participation are mentioned below:

⁶⁷ The Bharat Scouts and Guides is the national Scouting and Guiding association of India.

⁶⁸ Panchayati Raj Institutions are seen as tiers of self governance below the level of states in India.

National Service Scheme (NSS)

Launched in the Mahatma Gandhi birth centenary year 1969, as a student youth service programme, NSS aims at arousing social consciousness of the youth with an overall objective of personality development of the students through community service spanned over a period of two years. It is guided by the motto “Not me, but you”. NSS attempts to establish meaningful linkages between campus and community (colleges and villages), and knowledge and action. Its programme comprises special camp (10 days) and community work (120 hours in a year).

Activities undertaken as part of community work include:

- Improvement of campuses
- Tree plantation
- Constructive work in adopted villages and slums
- Work in welfare institutions
- Blood donation
- Adult and non-formal education
- Health, nutrition, family welfare, AIDS awareness campaigns
- Construction of durable assets
- Sustainable development with emphasis on wasteland development and watershed management.

One NSS unit consists of 100 student volunteers led by a teacher in-charge called “NSS Programme Officer”. Currently it has more than 2.4 million student volunteers on its roll spread over 198 universities and 41 senior secondary councils and directorate of vocational education covering more than 10,313 institutes/colleges of higher education and 7,542 senior secondary schools all over the country.

National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS)

The objective of this Scheme is to provide opportunities to students who have completed graduation to involve themselves in nation-building activities for a specific period (one or two years) on a full time basis. Each of the volunteer is paid a monthly stipend. NSVS gives intense training on induction, which primarily focuses on personality development, public speaking, positive thinking and a basic capsule of event management so that participants can organize small campaigns and awareness programmes. Subsequently they are given refresher courses. The number of national service volunteers sanctioned by the Ministry during the year 2005-2006 was 5,300.

Bharat Scouts and Guides

Began well before independence, Bharat Scouts and Guides opens up an opportunity to young boys and girls to build their character and inculcates in them a spirit of patriotism, social service and communal harmony. It also promotes endeavors for their all round development to make them responsible citizens of the country. It is one of the largest voluntary bodies in India

with nearly 3.2 million as its members. It is an apolitical and educational organization that aims at:

- Community-building
- Self-development
- Character development and education

Nearly 80 per cent of scouts (referring to boys), and guides (referring to girls) units are affiliated to educational institutions, with the faculty involved as trainers. Each state has scout and guide associations that are further divided into district-level and regional associations.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatana (NYKS)

The 25th anniversary of India's independence in 1972 provided the impetus for the launch of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatana. This Scheme provides rural non-student youth with an opportunity to participate in the process of community and social development, as well as opportunities that were already available to urban and student youth through NSS and NSVS. NYKS is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. NYKS has its presence in 500 districts of the country. It has become one of the largest grass-root level organizations in the country, catering to the needs of more than eight million non-students rural youth enrolled through about 230,000 village-based youth clubs. These youth clubs work in areas like education and training, awareness generation, skill development and self-employment, entrepreneurial development, thrift and cooperation, besides development of the body through sports and adventure and mind through sustained exposure to new ideas and development strategies. For implementation of the programmes, every district NYKS has a trained cadre of district youth coordinator, national service volunteers and youth leaders.

Rashtriya Sadbhavana Yojana

This came into effect from 1 April 2005, replacing the earlier National Reconstruction Crop Scheme. Under this scheme, 10 to 20 volunteers in each of 500 districts in the country, selected from amongst the rural sports club, youth development centres and Mahila Mandals, would be deployed for a period of one or two years at a monthly honorarium of Rs1000.

National Integration Scheme

This provides for greater exchange and understanding among young people belonging to different states and union territories of the country. Assistance is provided for youth programmes, which inculcate the spirit of national integration and communal harmony amongst the younger generation. Under the Scheme of Promotion of National Integration, assistance is provided to NGOs so as to involve them in the process of nation and community building.

The main programmes covered under this scheme are National Integration Camps and Inter-state Youth Exchange Programmes. National Integration Camps are held with the aim of forging a national cultural bond between various communities and regions. These camps

further seek to remove a sense of alienation from amongst youth and provide an opportunity for people belonging to north, south, west and east regions to intermingle. Inter-State Youth Exchange Programmes take student and non-student youth of one or more states to other states to understand and appreciate the diverse culture of India.

Sub-national and national youth festivals, youth exhibitions, leadership training, research, publications, symposia and seminars, celebration of National Youth Day, National Youth Award and National Adventure Award are also integral parts of the National Integration Scheme.

National youth festivals are held annually from 12 January to 16 January on a mega scale in one of the selected states to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.⁶⁹ During this festival, youth from all over the country with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, converge on a single platform displaying a strong commitment to “Unity in Diversity”. Competitive and non-competitive events, cultural programmes, adventure performances, national youth conventions and other activities are organized during the festivals with a view to enabling every youth to display his/her skills and talents. The National Youth Day is celebrated on 12 January to focus on youth development and contributions to the country. National Youth Awards are conferred on youth and youth organizations for their outstanding work for the community.

H. Challenges

Young people in the age group of 13 to 35 years constitute the most vibrant and dynamic segment of India’s population. To optimally tap their potentials for national development, the Government of India pursues the twin objectives of personality-building and nation-building. Standardized programmes are not necessarily the most effective in a country with India’s ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. It is critical to meet the real needs of each youth community for programmes to be effective – these needs may differ markedly from one region to another, impeding the large-scale replicability of national programmes. It is important to support and build creative and decentralized youth service programmes that are community-led.

Young people have many needs – economic, educational, social and health. Programmes sometimes tend to address one need to the exclusion of other related needs, leading to ineffective outcomes. In a country like India, where complexities of poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and lack of opportunities combine with a scarcity of resources, it is vital for programmes to understand the integrated nature of young people’s needs.

Multi-disciplinary dialogues and discussions on the ways and means of raising the capacity of the Indian society to confront and alleviate the problem of poverty and unemployment are urgently required to tackle the problems of youth.

⁶⁹ Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863 – 4 July 1902), whose pre-monastic name was Narendranath Dutta, was one of the most famous and influential spiritual leaders of the philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga.

Effective youth programmes are those that meet the self-defined needs of youth, rather than perceived needs. Therefore, it is important to support initiatives that strengthen young people's voices, build youth leadership and role models, and those that enable young people to assert and demand their rights. Most national youth service programmes aim to inculcate among youth a sense of community service, rather than strengthen their work skills or generate employment for them. Creating employment and livelihood opportunities for young people is a priority as the youth unemployment rate in India is more than double the general unemployment rate. It may not be realistic to expect young people to serve the community without addressing their own needs. There is an urgent need to support quality training programmes, strengthen the linkages between education and employment, and encourage youth service programmes to generate livelihood options for youth.

A majority of unemployed youth are persons with no prior experience or new entrants into the workforce. The major challenge before the country is to improve the employability of the young people by training them adequately for productive work, by imparting to them marketable skills. Closer association between the private sector employers and educational institutions can help to minimize the gap between needs for and supply of skills.

The special schemes of the Government have not focused sufficiently on the problems and needs of the youth in the age group 15 to 24. In addition, the general tendency to underfund the programmes leads to compromises with quality. Failure to recognize fully the real costs of many of the planned activities largely explain the delays in the achievement of the goals relating to vocational education. However, the current accelerated rate of economic growth in the country could indeed generate pressures for enhancing the training of youth in skilled activities and thereby help to moderate, if not eliminate, the problem of their absorption in productive economic activities.

There is a need to promote gender awareness and gender equality in the implementation of youth service programmes. It is critical for youth programmes to become more gender-sensitive and to develop programmes that respond to the specific needs of young women and young men respectively.

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