

# Indian Youth in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Status , Issues, and Challenges

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## **Abstract**

*Youth constitute about 2/5<sup>th</sup> population of the country. Indian youth today are going through a period of uncertainty about their future leading to a sense of frustration and cynicism. Avenue for productive employment are limited and young people are getting increasingly involved in crime and other anti-social activities. It is, therefore, imperative that the agencies responsible for planning and delivering youth development programmes should address the concerns and problems of youth urgently. The forces of modernization, globalization and economic liberalization have created great opportunities for youth however; a large segment of youth is facing severe challenges in realizing the development potential and participation in development process. The National Youth Policy, 2014 has provided a plan of action which gives new direction and impetus to youth development programmes in the country. Present paper purports to examine the status , issues and challenges being faced by Indian youth .*

**Keywords:** *Youth, Liberalisation, Globalisation and Moderanisation, Youth Employment, Skill, Education, Violence*

## **Introduction**

Youth is commonly understood as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. Youth and adulthood have two dimensions viz., biological and social. Planning Commission, Government of India has designated youth to the age of 15-35 years. Youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5 per cent of the population. At

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present, about 34 per cent of India's gross national income is contributed by the youth, aged 15-29 years. However, there exists a huge potential to increase the contribution of youth by increasing their labour force participation and productivity. Government of India currently invests more than Rs. 90,000 crores per annum on youth development 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. A National Youth Policy, 2014 seeks to define the vision of the Government of India for the youth of the nation and identify the key areas in which action is required. The policy provides a holistic vision for the youth of India which 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. The priority areas of national policy include creating a productive work force; developing a strong and healthy generation; instilling social values and promoting community services; facilitating participation and civic engagements; and supporting youth at risk and creating equitable opportunities for all.

The approach in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan has been on putting in place a holistic and comprehensive strategy and to enable the fullest development and realization of the potential of the youth in the country as the single most important segment of the population in the context of future socio-economic development and growth. A crucial determinant underlying the approach and the suggested strategy and programmes is the current demographic scenario in the country, and the need to reap the demographic dividend before the window of opportunity closes. This would make it necessary to look at issues concerning the youth with a much greater sense of urgency than has been the case in the past and to allocate commensurate resources towards this end. This would have two elements – review of the existing sectoral programmes and schemes, and bringing into them the required specific focus and re-orientation as required, and their expansion to cover the whole country and diverse groups; and, developing and implementing specific programmes and interventions, over and above the sectoral schemes, to empower and

enable the youth to become effective and productive participants in the social, economic and political development of the country. The National Youth Policy, 2014 has given emphasis on education, employment and skill development, entrepreneurship development, health and healthy life style, promotion of social values and sports activities, community engagement and participation of youth in politics and governance. Government of India has implemented several policies for youth inclusive development, creating infrastructure and environment for youth empowerment during the Plan period.

### **Changing Youth Perspective**

In recent years, most countries in the world have been going through major economic, social and political changes that have had influence on the lives of young people. The scope of youth research in Asia is broad and varied. There is a fundamental problem about the defining themes and perspectives pertaining to different issues of development and change in the context of culture, political system, social development and traditions (Rajendran and Paul, 2005). Youth research in Asia does not have strict boundaries, theories or themes for conducting youth studies rather it has emphasized on some of the pertinent youth issues, which have significant relevance for young people and have implications for policy, plan implementation and research. Youth values refer to believes that something is important, worthwhile, good and desirable for the youth to strive for (Ngai, 2007). Youth culture can be defined as young people's ways of living, behavior and activities in the context of the wider cultures whereas youth sub-cultures are the specific forms of youth culture expression in terms of lifestyles and behaviours (Ngai, 2007). Youth identity is marked by developmental changes in various areas such as biological, social, psychological and cognitive development, and is affected by the changes in peer relations and friendship, family relationships and school institutions. It can also be shaped by neighborhood characteristics, family's socio-economic status and ethnicity. The issue of identify comes into focus of the youth because they have experienced wider interaction with people, school, work

and society and a changing relationship with family. The problem of unemployment for the youth in the phase of economic restructuring and global economy has been well realized by the policy makers and the development activists. Age, education, training, experience and cultural context become the determinant factors for the success of obtaining a job. In the recent years, advancement of computer technology and popularity of information technology centre among young people demonstrate increasingly influence on the youth's life and development. Helves Helena (2005) has pointed out that the internet offers youth tremendous opportunities to explore new ideas, visit foreign lands, meet other young people, and participate in challenging activities.

Youth development refers to the increase of youth's capacity and adaptability in terms of a transition from an ego-centric orientation to socio-tropic orientation (Rosenberg, Ward, and Chilton, 1988). Important youth development outcomes are realization of potential, skills, social wellbeing, civic responsibility, volunteerism and transcendence (Cheung, Ngai, 2004). It is believed that youth can advance positive development through participation in youth programmes, volunteering, community-based services, school-based services, intervention programmes, mentoring programmes, training programmes, etc. Youth participation has become an important research theme among academics and youth researchers in recent years. Youth participation promotes youth's opportunity to be involved in youth activities, policy consultation, service planning and implementation (Ngai, 2007). Youth empowerment is an important theme in youth research. Youth empowerment may have different meanings to different people and different fields. However, the key focus should be on the position of opportunities and support for young people to learn and acquire knowledge and skills to manage their own affairs, to solve their own problems, and participate in decisions and programmes that affect them.

The development needs of the young people come into focus, as the demographic transition is underway in most developing country and enormous opportunities for human capital are emerging. To build

human capacity is important not just for future opportunities open to young people but also to mitigate the inter-generation transmission of poverty. Youth is an important stage of life for building the human capital that helps young people to escape poverty and lead toward better life. Young people are growing up in a more global world. Information flows have increased substantially because of the greater reach of global media, music, movies and other cultural exports. The rapid transition in communication technology has also changed the life style, working and organizational structure in most of the countries. In communication technology revolution age, a young person emerges as primary users of internet, accounting for about 40 per cent of internet users in developing countries. The effects of exposure to more information can be both positive and negative. Now internet has become an important source of information for many young people on matters related to sexual, reproductive health, violence and crime. Even internet has become important tool for criminals.

Governments do many things that affect the lives of young people. These include education, employment, and setting laws about early marriage and child labour. However, government policies should focus on broadening opportunities for young people to develop skills and use them productively. Government policies need to base themselves on more longitudinal and close researches on youth looking at its variety. Variables of class, caste, gender, region and ambition need to be appreciated as the same opportunities and stimulus is experienced differently by different people despite sameness of age. It is believed that understanding of youth values, youth cultures and youth sub-culture can have a better understanding of today's youth, their values, attitudes, behavior and life's. Due to rapid social change and wider exposure of youth in society, there is an inevitable trend that new youth values, cultures and sub-cultures emerged and become dominant identity of young people. Due to feeling of disintegration from group, community and society, lack of social support and rigid societal structure and relationship, youth are becoming delinquent expressing deviant behavior, delinquent

activities, violence drugs use and aggression.

The youth identity is marked by developmental changes in various areas such as biological, social, psychological, and cognitive development, and is affected by the change in peer relations, friendship, family relationship and school transition. Youth are becoming aggressive towards society due to their frustration, exposure to violence, crime and delinquent behavior of peer. The frustration among youth is also being reflected due to shrinking scope of youth employment in organized sector. The economic risk restructuring of global economy has also adversely affected the employment opportunity as competition is increasing. Moreover, it is sometimes believed that reservation in education and employment sector has also reduced the scope of employment for the young population belonging to the advantaged group. Since, the reservation provisions seems to compromise on merit some feel that, the meritorious youth are being deprived of better opportunities of education and employment, this causes more frustrated and occasionally aggressive involvement of youth and probability of indulging in anti-social behavior affairs becomes more (IRIS, 2012)

### **Labour Force Participation**

Youth in the age group of 13-35 years constitute more than 2/5<sup>th</sup> of the population of nation. As per Census of 2001, the proportion of youth population has been reported significantly high in Daman and Diu (53.95 per cent), Chandigarh (47.19 per cent), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (47.15 per cent), Andaman and Nicobar Island (47.05 per cent), Delhi (46.19 per cent) and Nagaland (45.68 per cent). The age specific worker population ratio shows declining trend across age groups for both rural male and female as well as for urban males. In case of urban females, except for the 15- 19 age group, the age specific worker population ratio has increased for all other age groups. The decline in work participation rate among rural females (14.2 percentage points) was steeper than the decline seen for rural males (12.5 percentage points) and urban males (3.5 percentage points) in the 15-29 age group during the period from 1999-2000 to 2011-12.

## **Youth Employment**

With the level of education, the worker population ratio tends to decline, though at higher levels it again shows a rising tendency. The declining part can be explained by the fact that once a youth pursues education he/she does not participate in the labour market until the desirable level is completed. Also, the worker population ratio among the males in the rural and urban areas are almost similar across educational categories, though among females there are substantial differences, indicating lower ratios in the urban areas compared to the rural areas. Among the illiterate or those with lesser levels of education, the worker population ratio is high because of low incomes, implying a greater number of persons have to work to meet their consumption requirements. On the other hand, with increased income only a few members within a household are required to work as the household can afford a higher dependency ratio.

Looking at the nature of employment, almost half of the rural youth are self-employed. However, among rural males, the relative size of regular wage and casual wage employment in the age group 25-29 is higher than the corresponding figure for all-age groups. A similar pattern is also distinct in the age group 20-24, implying that wage employment is relatively more prevalent among rural youth (male) compared with the rest of the rural male population. In the age bracket 15-19, only the share of casual wage employment is higher than the corresponding figure for the all-age average (individuals aged 15-59). Those who drop out from school early join as casual workers since many of these youth (especially males) may not meet the skills and experience requirements of regular wage jobs. Among rural females, self-employment in the age group 20-24 is higher than the all-age average figure. On the other hand, the proportion of workers in casual wage in the same age group is lower compared to the all-age average. Since around these ages rural women are mostly engaged in reproductive activities, casual wage jobs are less preferred in comparison to self-employment, which can be conveniently combined with household duties. In the age brackets of 15-19 and 25-29, however, more than 40 per cent of the women

workers are in casual employment while more than 53 per cent have been engaged in self-employment. Among urban males, an early drop-out from education means pursuing casual wage employment, as in this age bracket almost 35 per cent are engaged in such employment. With an increase in age, the regular wage share rises from 32 per cent in 15-19 age groups to 44 and 49 per cent in the other two age groups, respectively. On the other hand, among urban females, an early drop out from education means a higher rate of self-employment, while those who complete higher levels of education tend to get regular wage employment. This category comprises almost half of the workers in the age brackets 20-24 and 25-29.

Young women are engaged more in the agriculture sector compared to males in rural areas. However, it is interesting to note that, among young men and women, the share of the secondary sector exceeds that of the tertiary sector in rural locations. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which involves construction activities, may be an explanation for the dominance of the secondary sector over the tertiary in rural areas. In other words, rural industrialization does not seem to be the force behind this phenomenon (Goldar, Mitra and Kumari, 2011). Indeed, looking at more disaggregated figures shows that the employment share for the construction sector is 13.9 per cent for young men (aged 15-29) in rural areas compared with 8.6 per cent for the manufacturing sector.<sup>5</sup> In the case of young women, the situation is reversed: the sectoral share for the manufacturing sector is 10.8 per cent, while it is just 4.6 per cent for the construction sector. During 2009-10, about 19.5 per cent persons were self employed while 16.7 per cent were casual wage earners. More than half of the population was out of the labour force. More than 3/4<sup>th</sup> females were out of labour force as against about 30 per cent males during the period. The proportion of self employed persons was recorded high among males (29.3 per cent) as compared to females (9.3 per cent). Again, the proportion of self-employed persons was recorded high in rural areas (22 per cent) as compared to urban areas (13 per cent). However, 17.6 per cent persons were regular salaried and wage earners in urban



areas as compared to only 4.1 per cent persons in rural areas. An interesting change in the period of 2004-05 to 2009-10 is that the share of primary sector in employment decreased from 67 per cent to 63 per cent while share of secondary sector increased from 17 per cent to 21 per cent. For young men in rural India, share of secondary sector increased from 19 per cent to 23 per cent. For rural young women, share of tertiary sector increased from 7 per cent to 9 per cent. Share of tertiary sector in employment for urban young women increased from 52 per cent to 55 per cent. While share of higher order occupation in formal employment in secondary sector increased from 13 per cent to 19 per cent while it had decreased from 31 per cent to 46 per cent in tertiary sector. The share of higher order of occupation in informal employment during the corresponding period has also been in the same direction. The share of higher order of occupation in informal employment in tertiary sector increased from 16 per cent to 25 per cent.

### **Unemployment among Youth**

In different youth age groups, unemployment rate is high among the entry age group 15-19 across all categories and tend to decline as age advances but remains higher than the national average. High unemployment rate in the initial years (15-19) could be due to the mismatch between job expectations and availability of jobs. In terms of sectoral participation, the Labour Bureau data suggests that proportion of youth engaged in agriculture was 50 per cent, followed by secondary 20.6 per cent and tertiary 29 per cent in 2012-13. This calls for need to focus on rural industrialization. The industry should rethink its strategy of moving to the rural areas and setting up units aligned to the natural resources of the region. This could be storage and packaging units, food processing industries, weaving and craft units, export oriented garment units etc. Creation of job opportunities in rural areas would also increase the female labour force participation rate which at present is below 20 per cent due to non-availability of suitable job opportunities in rural areas outside of agriculture (Sanghi and Srija, 2014). A look at the unemployment rate among the educated youth shows that unemployment rate is high

among the educated. This strengthens the earlier observation that with education attainment, the job aspirations increase and non-availability of jobs matching these aspirations leads to high educated unemployment .. Among the two demographic groups, the trend of unemployment is the same, indicating higher unemployment among the educated that progressively increases with the level of education. Further, educated unemployment among females is higher than the males among both the demographic groups. When looking at the educated unemployed, it may be seen that apart from unemployment level being high among the formal educated, it is also high among the vocational qualified labour force i.e. the diploma or certificate holders. This raises the question of the employable skills of the courses that are rendered especially from Higher Secondary and above. Employable skills involve communication skills, problem solving skills apart from the technical skills required for the job. Expansion of higher education institutions has taken place at a rapid pace in the last decade but issues of the curriculum content, course work done, lack of industry exposure through internship, inexperienced faculty are causes of concern, requiring immediate attention ( Sinha,2013). National Employment Service which functions within the framework of the Employment Exchanges Act, 1959 and 1969 provides registration, placement, vocational guidance and career counselling services to the job seekers and is the joint concern of both the Central and state government. During 2010, about 40 million registered job seekers were reported in 969 Employment Exchanges in India. There has been fluctuating trend in the registrations of job seekers in Employment Exchanges over the period of 2001-2010. However, placement has increased significantly over the period. As per NSSO 2011-12, unemployment rate was 2.4 percent for males and 3.7 percent for females as per usual status among all age groups, while the unemployment rate among the youth (15-29 years) varied in between 6.1 percent to 15.6 percent across the different categories. The unemployment rates among different age groups increased significantly with urban female experiencing the highest unemployment. The data shows that during the last decade, while unemployment rate among the rural

male (15-29) increased only marginally by 1 per cent, among rural females it doubled to reach a level of 7.8 per cent. In contrast, in the urban areas, while the unemployment rate of urban males declined by 2.6 per cent that of urban females reduced by 1 per cent. But it emerges from the above that the unemployment rate for the urban females is the highest among all the categories. High unemployment rate among females may possibly be due to the family support to remain unemployed for a longer period of time as compared to that of males, who are considered to be the main breadwinners.

### **Education among Youth**

As per National Family Health Survey (2004-05), many youth are illiterate or have very low educational attainment. Thirty-one percent of young women and 14 percent of young men are illiterate. However, literacy is much higher among the youngest youth age 15 years (77 per cent among women and 92 per cent among men) than among youth only a decade older (63 per cent among women and 84 per cent among men). Despite improvements over time, educational attainment remains very low even among youth: only 29 percent of young women and 38 percent of young men have completed 10 or more years of education. Urban-rural differentials are much wider for women than men in literacy and educational attainment and the gender gap is also much greater in rural than in urban areas. Only 41 percent of adolescents age 15-17 were attending school in the school year 2005-06, suggesting a very high school dropout rate. School attendance rates for youth age 15-17 years increase sharply with household wealth. The gender gap is also much narrower in wealthier households than in poorer households.

Literacy rates among Muslims in all the age groups have been recorded low as compared to the literacy rates among other minorities as well as General and OBC communities of Hindu religion. Literacy rates among minorities have been reported high in the age group of 16-17 years and 6-13 years age group while it was recorded low in the age group of 23 and above years. There is marked contrast between rural and urban India in the distribution of educational attainment of employed youth in 2009-10. While 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of

urban employed youth have at least higher secondary level education, in rural areas, this proportion is just 1/10<sup>th</sup>. In the period of 2004-05 to 2009-10, the percentage of illiterate employed youth decreased significantly from 33 per cent to 23 per cent, while the share of those having secondary education increased from 9 per cent to 14 per cent. In the same period, the share of graduates in youth employment in the urban sector increased markedly from 11 per cent to 15 per cent. During the year 2030, the estimated population in the age group of 18-23 years is likely to be 142 million. This shows high demand of higher education institutions in India. Though, gross enrolment ratio in higher education is low as compared to many developed and developing countries however, the expansion of higher education institutions will be imperative to achieve the target of 30 per cent gross enrolment ratio by the year 2030 ( Singh and Pandey,2014). Gross enrolment ratio in higher education has grown tremendously with the increase in the number of higher education institutions in India. However, gross enrolment ratio is still low as compared to many countries. During the year of 1979-80, gross enrolment ratio was recorded 5 per cent which increased by 22.5 per cent in the year 2013-14 .Out of total enrolled students; about 86 per cent students were graduates while 12 per cent students were postgraduates. Out of total enrolled students, about 58 per cent were males and 42 per cent were females. The proportion of female students was recorded slightly high for post-graduation and diploma/certificate courses. Globalization, economic liberalization and wider application of computers have widened the scope of distance learning in higher education. Enrollment in distance education programmes during the period of 1980-81 to 2013-14, grew by 10.9 per cent. Enrolment in distance education programme during 1980-81 was recorded 0.17 million while it increased by 5.17 million during 2013-14 .

### **Skill Education among Youth**

According to International Labour Organization estimates, by 2020 India will have 116 million workers in the age group of 20-24 years as against 94 million in China. In addition to this, the average age of

Indian population by 2020 will be 29 while many developed countries will be in early or late 40s. To take advantage of this demographic dividend, this massive workforce would need to be gainfully employed. This means that our country must have the foresight to create systems and capacities to educate and skill such large numbers of people. Emphasis will also have to be laid on giving an education that supports and promotes employment generation, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation as these are the factors that will help in creating enough sustainable job opportunities within India (Earnest and Young, 2014).

Government of India has set a target to impart the necessary skills to 500 million peoples by 2022. The 12<sup>th</sup> Plan has embarked on a relatively modest target for providing skills to 80 million people until 2017, which leaves around 400 million people to be trained in the 13<sup>th</sup> Plan by 2022. The country faces a considerable skill development challenge. Around 12 million people are expected to join the work force every year over the next decade. In contrast, the country has a total training capacity of around 4.3 million, thereby depriving around 64 per cent entrants of the opportunity of formal skill development every year. Moreover, net enrolment in vocational courses in India is estimated around 5.5 million per year, while in China, it is 90 million and in US, it is 11.3 million. The country faces a major challenge of imparting employable skills to its growing work force over the next few decades. National Skill development Mission demands focused efforts on the part of government, as well as non-government agencies. Considering the vast scope and scale of operations, various ministries, departments and organizations have been entrusted with the responsibility of achieving the overall skill development target. Current statistics indicate that the government and its partner agencies are expected to run short of achieving their skilling targets for 2012-13 by wide margin. Ministries such as Labour and Employment and Textiles had not achieved even half of the annual target by January, 2013. The Government constituted a Task Force on Skill Formation in Unorganized Sector in 2005 in view of the recognizing the need for expanding the skill base of the

economy,. In its report, the fact has been highlighted that electrical and electronics followed by mechanical engineering, driving, civil engineering, health and para- medical and office and business work are the most popular trades for skill training. Among women, there has been concentration of vocational training in computers followed by textile related trades. The next most popular trades among women are in the area of health care. Formal vocational training received by youths is shown in Table 23. Computer, electrical and electronic engineering, driving and motor vehicle work, mechanical engineering and health and personal services related work were the main trades in which youth attend vocational training/ education. There has been marked variation in receiving of vocational education among youth across the sectors. The proportion of computer related trade was found higher in organized sector as compared to unorganized sector. However, textiles related trade was found higher in unorganized sector as against organized sector (IIPS, 2007).

### **Media Exposure among Youth**

As per NFHS-III (2005-06) Report, most youth are exposed to some form of media. Seventy percent of women and 88 percent of men age 15-24 have at least weekly exposure to television, radio, or newspapers/magazines or monthly exposure to the cinema. Media exposure is much lower in rural than in urban areas. The most common form of media to which youth are exposed is television. Women are much less likely than men to be exposed to each type of media. Women with no education and women in rural areas have particularly low levels of regular media exposure. Social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since society began. Human beings have always sought to live in social environments. The proliferation of social networking sites and their pervasion in everyday practices is affecting how modern Indian youth societies manage their social networks. To a significant extent, Social networking sites have shifted social networking to the Internet. In less than five years, these sites have grown from a niche online activity into a phenomenon through which tens of millions of internet users are connected, both in their leisure time, and at work. There are

various factors which have prompted us to consider the implications of these technologies for policy-making. One of these is the willingness of users to embrace social networking sites as a means of communication and social networking in everyday life. The increasing dependence on technology for basic communication also highlights the importance of analyzing how social networking sites are affecting daily processes. Sites like Face book, Friend ster and LinkedIn are influencing the way users establish, maintain and cultivate a range of social relationships, from close friendships to casual acquaintances. There has been significant interest and concern about the risks of online social networking because of access to personal information and the anonymity that the system allows. A number of public cases of bullying and identity theft have put this issue in the public arena. In the survey participants were asked whether they have ever had a bad social networking experience. No doubt that social networking's sites have great impact on the Indian youth it has lot of challenges which we have to face (Patil, 2014).

### **Health Status of Youth**

Adolescents are vital human resources. The problems of adolescents are increasing since social forces have put tremendous pressure on them. A large number of adolescents are facing problems of increased vulnerability and risk pertaining to health due to their risky behaviour. A large number of adolescent girls are also being exploited both physically and sexually. The wider exposure to pornographic literature and sites has also created problems for them. The proportion of premarital sex relations among adolescents is gradually increasing while on the other hand the proportion of married adolescent is still high in India. Reproductive and sexual health status among the adolescents has been reported to be poor since their knowledge regarding it is found to be very low. The dynamics of social change has its implications on health. The socio economic and political forces are rapidly changing the ways that young people must prepare for adult life. The changes have enormous implications for adolescents' health and well being. The sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents and young

people are firmly on national agendas in the South Asian region. There is growing recognition that adolescents themselves must be given a role in articulating and designing such programmes. However health programmes generally make provisions for adults and young children but adolescents have largely being overlooked (Pandey and Singh,2013).

As per NFHS-III (2005-06) Report, most youth lack basic knowledge of women's menstrual cycle. A large proportion of youth, both women and men, are not aware that a woman is fertile only during specific days in her menstrual cycle. Only 5 percent of women age 15-19 and 14 percent age 20-24 know that a woman is fertile only during the middle of her menstrual cycle. An even lower proportion of men have correct knowledge of a woman's fertile period. Messages about family planning are not reaching all youth. Only 65 percent of women and 84 percent of men have heard or seen a family planning message on TV, radio, wall paintings, or in newspapers/magazines. Many youth have not heard of available modern contraceptive spacing methods. Ninety-three percent of women know of female sterilization, but only 83 percent know about pills and 71 percent each know about IUDs and condoms. Ninety-three percent of men know about condoms, but only 78 percent know about pills, and 37 percent know about the IUD. Only 8 percent of women and 15 percent of men know about emergency contraception. A majority of youth lack comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS. About two-thirds of women and 88 percent of men have heard of AIDS. Three out of four men know that the risk of HIV/AIDS can be reduced by condom use and by limiting sex to one uninfected partner; however, less than half of women know about these means of HIV/AIDS prevention. Only 20 percent of women and 36 percent of men have comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS, i.e., they have correct knowledge of all the ways of transmission and prevention of the infection. In many states, less than one-half of women have heard of AIDS (IIPS, 2007).

In India, child marriage is a centuries old tradition, where children as young as two to three years were often married or given away in



marriage. However, in traditional societies in spite of early commitment of children into wedlock, marriages were not consummated till children were much older and were perceived to be able to understand the responsibilities intrinsic to marriage. Over time, giving children in marriage has turned into major social evil entailing issues of child rights, dowry, and sexual abuse, among others detailed earlier. Some of the emerging trends in child marriage have far-reaching adverse consequences in the life of a child. For example, child marriages have come to be used as a means to traffic young girls and women into the sex trade and labour both within the country and outside. Children are married, trafficked and sent to work in places like Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Kolkata. Imbalance in the sex ratio in some states is emerging as a reason for trafficking of young girls for the purposes of marriage. In states with very low sex ratio, there is a tremendous shortage of marriageable girls, resulting in the need to buy young brides from other states. In some cases, these girls may be forced to serve as a wife to two or three brothers in the same family. In some situations, economic circumstances have forced parents to give away their young daughters in marriage to much older or physically or mentally challenged men. Incidents of girls being given away to rich/old Arab 'sheikhs' in the city of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh have received much attention nationally and internationally (Usmani,2013).

Among women age 20-24, there has been a one-third decline in the same time period in the proportion married before age of 15 years. Age at marriage for women and men also increases with education and wealth. Sixteen percent of ever-married women age 15-49 are married to men who are 10 or more years older than them. Spousal age difference decreases as age at marriage increases and this relationship is evident in all three NFHS surveys. Percentage of Women in the age group of 18-29 years who were first married by exact age of 18 years and percentage of men in the age group of 21-29 years who were first married by exact age of 21 years, by residence and state in India during 2005-06. The proportion of women who marry before the legal minimum age at marriage has been reported

higher in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas. It has been significantly reported high in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. Rural Urban differences in the proportion of women marrying before the age of 18 years are largest in Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The mean age at marriage has increased from less than 15 years prior to 1961 to around 18 years in 1981 and is likely to increase in the coming years. Still there is a large variation in child and adolescent marriages across the states. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have witnessed a large number of child and adolescent marriages while Kerala, Punjab have higher age at marriage. Moreover, 75 per cent of the total married women in the age group of 10-14 years come from large northern states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These few states also contribute as much 51 per cent of the total married women in the next age group of 15-19 years. The data on early motherhood in India reveals the percentage of women who were married before 18 years. India figures stand at 44.5 per cent. As per survey of DLHS 2007-08, the prevalence of child marriage is showing a declining trend in India, however, this has been found still high in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. However, the prevalence rate of early marriage has declined significantly if we compare the rate of prevalence of child marriage during 1980s and 1990s. There has been significant improvement in the maternal health care during the period of 1992-03 to 2004-05. During 2004-05, less than half of the deliveries were assisted by health personnel and still most of the deliveries are being taken in the home. As per 1998-99, NFHS-II survey, 20 per cent mothers receive antenatal care while only 33.6 per cent births are delivered in medical institution. Only 42.3 per cent deliveries are being assisted by health professional. The states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have shown poor health status as per health indicators.

Overweight and obesity another form of malnutrition with serious health consequences is increasing among other young people in India. There is also a challenge of nutritional transition as Indians are moving away from traditional diets high in cereal and fiber to more western pattern diets high in sugars, fat, and animal-source food (fast food culture) that are closely associated with different non communicable diseases seen in later years. . High-risk sexual behaviour is a broad term covering early sexual activity especially before 18 years of age and includes unprotected intercourse without male or female condom use except in a long-term, single-partner relationship, unprotected mouth-to-genital contact except in a long-term monogamous relationship, having multiple sex partners, having a high-risk partner, exchange of sex for drugs or money, having anal sex or having a partner who does except in a long-term, single-partner relationship and having sex with a partner who injects or has ever injected drugs ( Singh and Gururaj, 2014). It is a known risk factor that puts individuals at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS and a range of other sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea, herpes, genital warts, Chlamydia, syphilis, *etc.* The National Family Health Survey (2005-06) indicated that 4 per cent of young women and 15 per cent of young men had ever experienced sex before marriage and only 14.1 per cent (14.7 per cent urban years 13.9 per cent rural) of unmarried sexually active adolescent females used a contraceptive. Young people aged 15 to 24 years commonly engage in premarital sex more so in men (15-22 per cent) as compared to women (1-6 per cent).

Stress is a consequence of or a general response to an action or situation arising from an interaction of the person with his environment and places special physical or psychological demands, or both, on a person. The physical or psychological demands from the environment that cause stress, commonly known as stressors and the individual reaction to them take various forms and depends on several intrinsic and/or extrinsic factors. Significant difficulties have been experienced in quantifying and qualifying stress. Some studies have tried to quantify the stress levels among young people, while

others have given a mean stress score (influenced by methods of measuring stress (Sahni). According to the World Health Organization estimates about one million people commit suicide each year. In India, nearly 1,36,000 persons voluntarily ended their lives in a suicidal act as per official reports in 2011. . The official report indicates that age specific suicide rate among 15-29 years is on the rise increasing from 3.73 to 3.96 per 1, 00,000 population per year from 2002 to 2011. About 40 per cent of suicides in India are committed by persons below the age of 30 years.

### **Violence among Youth**

The WHO defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation. . Interpersonal violence among youth ranging from minor acts of bullying to severe forms of homicide contribute greatly to the burden of premature death, injury and disability; harming not just the affected but also their families, friends and communities. An average of 565 adolescents and young adults between the ages of 10 and 29 years die each day as a result of interpersonal violence across the world. NFHS-3 from India revealed that 27 per cent married young females experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their spouse and 7 per cent of all females and 11 per cent of married females experienced sexual violence (NCRB,2013).

Crimes against women are on the rise, along with crimes in general. The brunt of the resulting violence is borne by the marginalized sections of society, women in particular. Most crimes against women go unreported for understandable reasons: attached social stigma, drawbacks in legal mechanism, fear of retaliation and so on. Institutional indifference makes matters worse. It is almost impossible to lodge a complaint against men in the police and the armed forces, or in government services. Importantly, crimes against women have roots in the male dominated socio-economic, legal and political order. Assaults on women are often visibly associated with

their social status, their communal, and ethnic and caste identifies (Singh and Pandey, 2009). Police records show that reported crimes have been rising. Violence against women is of undoubted importance in the context of assessing women's status. However, the commonly used incidences such as the gender development index and gender related empowerment index ignore this aspect of the well being of women. Crimes against women identified under the IPC are the following: (1) rape; (2) kidnapping and abduction for different purposes; (3) homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or attempts to commit such crimes; (4) torture, both mental and physical; (5) molestation; (6) sexual harassment; and (7) importation of girls. Various crimes are identified under special and local laws, enacted from time to time to deal with specific social and economic problems effecting women. These are (i) Commission of sale; (ii) Immoral traffic; (iii) indecent representation of women; (iv) Dowry cases (Singh et al., 2009).

In India, we have unique situation of co-existence of all forms of violence especially of elimination of women, e.g. selective female foeticide, female infanticide, bride burning and sati. The incidence of violence of all forms within family has also gone up. Even today, various forms of violence against women are prevalent in our society, though many cases remain unreported due to cultural norms, apathy or ignorance. They may manifest themselves directly in wife battering, abduction, eve-teasing, verbal abuses or verbal rebukes. Women on many occasions are victimized by all sorts of discriminations, deprivations and obstructions in goal achieving and responses. These incidents may occur in the family, offices, agricultural fields, industries or even public places. It sounds surprising that on animal level predatory aggression (killing and eating) occurs between the species and not within the species, but a human being, the highest on the evolutionary level, kills another human being of his own species (Srivastava, 1988). Inflicting and experiencing violence in many subtle forms causing and suffering mental pain in day-to-day life has become ways of our world in interpersonal relationships. The cruelty, the hate that exists in ourselves is

expressed in the exploitation of the weak by the powerful and the cunning (Krishnamurthy, 1977). The worst part of the problem is that women today are not feeling safe and secured even in the family. The concept of home, sweet home is no more, so far many women, who suffer violence against themselves by the members of the family. Home is no safe place when it comes to aggressive behaviour. Fitz and Gerstenzang (1978) observe that episodes of verbal or physical aggression are most likely to occur in the home and the relatives (such as parents' offspring and spouses) were the most frequent targets of aggression. Steinmetz and Straus (1973) described the family as "cradle of violence". Stratus (1975) drawing from incidences of violence between spouses called "the marriage license as a hitting license". Domestic violence knows no age, socio-economic, religious, racial, gender or educational barriers. It is a myth that only the poor or uneducated are victims of domestic abuse. Most studies indicate that there are also high incidences of spousal abuse in the more affluent neighborhoods. Although a poor victim has the terrible problem of not having resources available, the more affluent spouse may also be in an equally desperate trap due to social stigmas, greater economic pressures and the increased social position and power that the partner may have at his or her disposal (Singh et.al., 2013). The National Family Health Survey (NFH-III) carried out in 29 states during 2005-2006 and released in 2007 reveals over 37 per cent married women in the country are victims of physical or sexual abuse by their husbands. Over 40 per cent of Indian women have experienced domestic violence at some point in their married lives, and nearly 55 per cent think that spousal abuse is warranted in several circumstances. The survey showed that countrywide more women face violence in rural areas (40.2) as compared to those in the urban areas (30.4). NFHS-III found that over a third of women who had been married at any point in their lives said they had been pushed, slapped, shaken or otherwise attacked by their husband at least once. Slapping was the most common act of physical violence by husbands. More than 34 per cent of women said their husbands slapped them, while 15 per cent said their husbands pulled their hair or twisted their

arm. Around 14 per cent of the women had things thrown at them. The survey also found that one in six wives had been emotionally abused by their husbands, while one out of 10 has experienced sexual violence like marital rape on at least one occasion.

Trafficking, a growing problem in India can be most aptly defined as being the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, by means of threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, abuse of power, deception or payment for the purposes of exploitation. While trafficking is often thought of solely in terms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, marriage, and the removal of organs are also common purposes for trafficking. Throughout the world, more than two million people are reportedly trafficked every year. The most common uses for trafficked children are for labour exploitation in brick kilns, factories, construction work, sweatshops, domestic settings, and on plantations. Camel jockeying in the Middle East, and, of course, sexual exploitation in the form of prostitution and pornography are also common. Worldwide, prostitution alone is thought to yield at least Rs. 315 million for the traffickers. In India, trafficking has been recognized as an organized crime and thus needs a holistic approach for its eradication.

The greatest challenge in any plan for intervention is lack of a thorough understanding of the problem and the absence of reliable data on the magnitude of the problem. Even the definition of “trafficking” is still confined to trafficking for prostitution. But, as the recent National Human Rights Commission report states, “it goes beyond trafficking for prostitution. The globalization and liberalization came as a tidal wave on top of ongoing processes of structural changes in the economy and society. Growing urbanization has led to congestion, overcrowding and a near breakdown of services in most cities. Public spaces, including play spaces for young are disappearing and many schools do not have playgrounds or access to one. Travel time to work and school has increased, and has the length of the working day, leaving parents with little time to spend with their young.. Marriage has become unstable and with the stigma

on divorce slowly disappearing, marital breakdowns are increasing. Other social and demographic trends, such as the growth of nuclear family, breakdown of traditional extended family support system and the phenomenon of separated families have compounded the effects on young. Environmental pollution has reached unprecedented levels, with children worst affected on account of their small size and low body mass. Youth are becoming the victims of social tension, exploitation, and destitution due to poverty, backwardness and other factors. The menace of destitution among the children is growing rapidly while there are grossly inadequate child care and rehabilitation services for them. Thus, it is imperative to provide the child care protection and rehabilitation services for the destitute children in a systematic and proper way for their reintegration into the society. Trafficked young are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labor, work as house servants or beggars, are recruited into armed groups and are used or sports. Trafficking exposes young to violence, sexual abuse and HIV infection and violates their rights to be protected, grow up in a family environment and have access to education. Ending trafficking requires international, regional and national cooperation.

Harmful drinking among young people is an increasing concern in many countries and is linked to nearly 60 health conditions. It increases risky behaviours and is linked to injuries and violence resulting in premature deaths. A national review on harmful effects of alcohol reported greater social acceptability of drinking, increasing consumption in rural and transitional areas, younger age of initiating drinking, and phenomenal socio-economic and health impact, more so among young people. Data from the National Household Survey by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2002 covering urban and rural areas of 24 states of India revealed a prevalence of 21.4 per cent of alcohol use among men aged 12 to 18 years. The World Health Survey - India reported that among individuals aged 18 to 24 years, 3.9 per cent were infrequent heavy drinkers and 0.6 per cent was frequent heavy drinkers. The NFHS-3 survey showed that 1 per cent



women and 11 per cent men aged 15-19 years and 1.4 per cent women and 28.8 per cent men aged 20-24 years consumed alcohol. Substance abuse apart from tobacco and alcohol is one of the major emerging problems among the young population and needs to be tackled effectively. The National Household Survey by UNODC showed that 3.0 per cent of males consumed cannabis and 0.1 per cent opiates with common substances used being alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, cocaine and heroin. The data from the National Health Survey suggested that about 0.1 per cent of the male population (12-60 years) reported ever injecting any illicit drug. Injecting drug use was reported more often from the north east region of the country.

### **Participation in Civil Society and Governance**

As per NFHS (2004-05) Report, participation in civil society, as measured by participation in community-led activities or membership in an organized group, was limited among youth, particularly among young women. Specifically, 45 per cent of young men compared to only 15 per cent of young women reported that they had participated in any community-led programmes such as cleanliness drives, health promotion activities, and celebration of festivals and national days. Far fewer young men (11 per cent) and women (10 per cent) reported membership in organized groups such as self-help groups, and sports and social clubs. In total, 48 per cent of young men and 23 per cent of young women reported participation in civil society. State-wise differentials in participation in civil society were marked, with considerably more youth in Maharashtra and the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu reporting such participation than those in the northern states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. Indeed, while just 24–35 per cent of young men and 5–15 per cent of young women from the northern states had participated in civil society, a much larger proportion 56–66 per cent of young men and 25–39 per cent of young women of those from Maharashtra and the southern states had done so. Considerable proportions of youth reported disillusionment with the commitment of political parties to work for change at the community level. Indeed, 68 per cent of young men and 57 per cent of young women believed that improvement in

their village (rural youth) or neighbourhood (urban youth) was unlikely, no matter which political party governed the state. It is notable, however, that the majority of youth 83–86 per cent — perceived that the electoral process was fair and one could vote without fear or pressure. Even so, slightly less than one-sixth (14–17 per cent) were unsure or felt that one could not vote freely (Agochiya, 2005).

The Youth Clubs and Women Associations are the vital social capital which can work effectively with local governments in mobilizing people for plan preparation and collecting required information from the people and other organizations. The Youth Clubs have to work further with the local governments to implement the development plans. For social development activities, people have to be mobilized frequently (Palanithurai, 2005). The increasing participation of youth in electoral process has drastically changed the political landscape and political parties are coming into power with absolute majority. The political parties are also giving due share to youth in political space both at the decision making process and political mobilization (IIPS, 2010). The major challenges being faced by Indian youth include enrolment in higher education institutions, skill training, entrepreneurship development, employment, poverty, violence, conflict with laws, frustration and cynicism, cultural identity, mental stress, drug addiction, high prevalence of life style induced diseases, sexually transmitted infections, etc. The nature of youth problems may be related with economic, socio-cultural and psychological dimensions (Singh, 1960). Thus, the approach to address the problems and challenges of youth demands overall national planning for rapid inclusive economic growth and participatory development models. The social planning is another instrument which may enormously help to check and minimize the process of dysfunction in the social structure under going too fast changes. In order to make such planning effective, the internal contradictions in the policy and plans with reference to various sectors of society and economy should be obliterated.

Sports and recreational activities are essential component of the

growth and development of youth. Sports activities promote physical, mental and emotional growth of youth and adolescents. These activities support a healthy life style and ensure the engagement of youth in productive activities. Participation in sports can inculcate the spirit of competitiveness and team work for holistic development of youth. The government is working towards promotion of sports by providing access to sports facilities and coaching to youth in both urban and rural areas. Organizations like Sports Authority of India, national sports federations and state level organizations are also working towards promotion of coaching facilities, organizing competitions, selecting talented sports men and support their development. National Institute of Sports and Laxmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education provide academic courses at graduate and postgraduate levels in the area of sports. However, access to sports and physical education opportunities still remains highly inadequate, especially in rural areas and backward states in India. Participation of youth in sports activities is also reported to be low as compared to developed and developing countries.

India is a diverse nation with respect to ethnicity, religion, language, caste and culture. However, socio-economic disparity prevails in Indian society. Thus, it is imperative to inculcate a sense of harmony and togetherness among youth. It is also important to develop inner values like compassion, kindness, sympathy and empathy among youth. There is also essential need to inculcate the spirit of integrity and truthfulness among youth. Youth must be encouraged to strive for excellence in all spheres of development. The role of youth in environment and climate protection has been well realized for ensuring sustainable development of nation. Youth may also play an important role in the conservation of cultural heritage, traditional arts and culture. Value education is not only the responsibility of education system but it starts at home with family and society. Inclusion of socio-cultural values in course curriculum both at the secondary and higher education system will inculcate cultural values among youth. The role of education in fostering socio-cultural values

has been well emphasized in educational policies in India. The organizations such as National Service Scheme, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghathan and National Credit Corps are involved in the engagement of youth in various initiatives like rural development, environment protection, blood donation, immunization, disaster management, etc. These have potential to foster national and social values among the youth and develop a sense of responsibility towards the nation. The Centre for Cultural Resource and Training under Ministry of Culture administers a scheme under which youth are taken to heritage monuments/sites, museums, etc. for promotion of cultural exchange.

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