

## PROCEEDING

15 December 2013: 4.30 pm to 7 pm

### **Pre-Conference Event: SARNET Symposium on “Youth Bulge in South Asia: Meeting the Employment Challenge”**

Venue: Committee Hall, Convention Centre, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi..

The session on Youth Bulge in South Asia was chaired by **Dr. Nagesh Kumar**. He welcomed all the eminent panelists, discussants and participants from various international as well as national institutes and universities. As per the need of the hour, Nagesh Kumar emphasized importance of various issues ranging from skills deficit specifically global deficit of skills in the global economy to investment in education, health and capacity building and raised an important widespread question that how to get the young people who are more vulnerable, specifically in the labour market, employed. With these words, he called upon **Prof. Alakh N. Sharma**, Director, Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi who elaborated upon the incidence of unemployment among youth in general and among educated youth in particular. He cited from the recent study done by IHD that overall, educated youth unemployment rate is found to be 13-14 per cent out of which the share of young women is found to be around 23 per cent, regarded as the most vulnerable section of the society.

Further, in his opening remarks **Dr. Edgard Rodriguez** from International Development & Research Centre, talked about differences in labour market across South Asian regions & focused specifically on learning from these peculiar regions. Further, he pointed out that integrating youth in the labour market is a major challenge.

### **Presentations**

**Speaker 1: Dr. Sher Singh Verick, Senior Employment Specialist, International Labour Organization (ILO), Decent Work Team (DWT), South Asia**

***Theme: A Global Perspective on Youth Employment***

The speaker mainly stressed on key issues falling in the ambit of youth employment such as the demographic dividend, nature of youth unemployment, inactivity status of youth and their vulnerability arising from the lack of education & skills, job search abilities, work experience and most importantly, financial resources. Further, the rising levels of unemployment and underemployment among youth have various economic and social costs in the form of rising levels of crime, mental health problems and other ills to the society. He also noted that “spells of **unemployment**, particularly long-term durations, can lead to **scarring effects** in terms of a higher likelihood of being unemployed later in life and a wage penalty”. In order to respond to such scarring effects, measures including investment in better quality education; supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment; rights at work; targeted youth policies, etc. can lead

to better outcomes. In order to support the above argument, Jovenes programme in Latin America was illustrated.

**Speaker 2: Dr. Dilliraj Khanal, Institute of Policy Research & Development, Nepal**

***Theme: Youth Bulge in Nepal: Meeting the Employment Challenges***

Various issues were touched upon by Dr. Khanal specific to Youth labour market. He suggested that Youth should not be defined by particular age group but by abilities & capabilities. Further stating that the multi-dimensional problems like Jobless growth, rapid informalisation accompanied by political disorder and contemporary challenges lead to poor employment opportunities for youth. Underutilization and lack of earning opportunities among youth is a major problem in Nepal and nearly half of the youth are estimated to be underemployment in urban areas. To conclude specific policy areas were pointed out: Vocational education and training, youth self-employment schemes, priority to employment enhancing productive sectors like agriculture, agro-industry, water resources and tourism in Nepalese context.

**Speaker 3: Dr. Asad Sayeed, Collective for social science, Karachi, Pakistan.**

***Theme: Youth Bulge in Pakistan: Dividend or Chaos?***

Like the rest of South Asia, Pakistan is also on the Youth Bulge end of the Demographic Transition but the question of whether it is actually a dividend or curse was raised by Dr. Sayeed. Characteristics of Youth labour market are found to be in line with the other South Asian countries. Labour force participation rate has been analyzed for the youth indicating a falling trend. Two Thirds of Employment in Urban Areas across gender is in Services, incrementally increasing. For males, share in manufacturing is declining and Lower than that of 29+ Cohort. Further, female share in manufacturing has increased and then declined. Three policy areas have been identified to focus on: Social Protection such as improvement in human capital indicators, vocational training and regional trade.

**Speaker 4: Dr. Ganga Tilakaratna, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka.**

***Theme: Youth Bulge in South Asia: Meeting the Employment Challenge- The Case of Sri Lanka***

Sri Lanka's position with regard to 'youth bulge' is somewhat different to the other South Asian countries since it experienced the youth bulge at a much early stage, between 1970-1990, and now the proportion of youth population is on a declining trend (declined from 30% in 1981 to 22% by 2011). At present, Sri Lanka is experiencing a different demographic challenge, i.e, the rapid ageing of population. The key factors that have contributed to the current trend of youth population include, the decline in fertility rate and increase in life expectancy since 1960s and the increasing trend of migration (particularly among the youth). Despite the decline in the youth population, Sri Lanka is faced with a number of challenges with regard to youth

employment. Unemployment rate among youth is found to be 4 times higher than the overall unemployment rate. Further, it is found to be highest among educated youth. Lack of skills in demand, shortage of jobs to match the needs and aspirations of job seekers, queuing for public sector jobs, gender-wage gap, and inequitable gender division of labor are some of the key issues that need to be addressed. As concluding remark, she pointed out some of the key policy areas such as the need for improvement in the quality of education, expansion of the tertiary education sector, vocational training, career guidance, revisiting current labor regulations and measures to address low female labor force participation and the gender-wage gap.

**Speaker 5: Prof. J. Krishnamurthy, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi.**

**Theme: Youth Bulge in India**

Starting from the critics of methods of population measures and labour force projection, he pointed out some of the essential issues related to youth labour market. In the age cohort of 15-29, the situation of those who have already crossed the schooling age will be worse than those who are into education process since the earning potentials of the latter category will be much higher. The central issue discussed among the participants is how to improve the education for poorly educated people as the country has not invested in the education programmes specifically designed for adults. In addition to this, our training institutes are not able to meet the rapidly changing needs of the market as there is a dire need for training and re-training of the people employed. Some of the key policy areas such as guidance in employment; coordination between public and private partners; institutions for providing training with the new innovative tools like training vouchers and value chain have been suggested.

**Discussion:**

Harvinder Kaur, Punjabi University, Punjab expressed her views on the youth labour market in specific relation to composition and investment in education and raised the issues of deteriorating employment conditions in the northern states like Punjab and Haryana.

Balram Rao, IIT, Roorkee, asked Dr. Asad Sayeed regarding the low female labour force participation rate in the context of Pakistan with comparison to India. The collective answers were given by the Chair Prof. G.K. Chadda that no differences among female labour force participation have been registered as far as India and Pakistan are concerned as low levels of education among Muslims in general & Muslim women in particular have been found.

The discussion concluded that the facts and issues will remain the same inspite of change in the percentage of young population. Government at the same time cannot ignore this youth bulge. Despite some notable differences, there are similarities among South Asian Countries in terms of issues and contents. Hence there is a need of learning from each other's' experiences.

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