

## Development and the Next Generation

# World Development Report 2007

# REPORT



## Youth Consultations in Nepal



# INTRODUCTION

**Youth Initiative** and the **Association of Youth Organisations Nepal (AYON)** organized a series of Youth Consultations to gather the perspectives and recommendations from the young people in Nepal as inputs for the World Development Report (WDR) 2007 'Development and the Next Generation'.

## **Youth Consultations for the World Development Report 2007**

Youth Initiative and AYON conducted three **Consultation Workshops** to discuss on the five various transitions and the Global Youth Culture affecting young people to get inputs and perspectives from young people. The workshops were participated by 20-25 youth representing various fields and backgrounds. The deliberations and outcomes of these workshops were synthesized in the respective theme reports.

The 3 consultation workshops were organised on the following areas and were held on the following dates:

- Workshop 1: Transition from School and Transition to Work - January 4, 2006
- Workshop 2: Transition to Healthy lifestyles and Family Formation - January 5, 2006
- Workshop 3: Transition to Citizenship and Global Youth Culture - January 6, 2006

After the workshops, a **Youth Consultation Conference** was organized on 15 January where the six reports prepared from the consultation workshops were presented and discussed. The conference was participated by around 100 youths, youth organisations, various institutions and representatives from the media.

This Report is prepared after the conference including the deliberations, comments and suggestions made during the conference.

The outcomes of the workshops and conference have been captured in the following six chapters.

## **About the Organisers**

**Youth Initiative** is a youth run youth led not-for-profit organisation. Youth Initiative is working with mission of informing, empowering and involving young people for their own personal development and that of their communities.  
[www.youthinitiative.org.np](http://www.youthinitiative.org.np)

**Association of Youth Organisations Nepal (AYON)** is a non-political, non-religious, non-governmental, not-for profit, autonomous network of Youth Organisations and as such, a platform for collaboration, cooperation, joint action and collective endeavor between Youth Organisations in Nepal.  
[www.ayon.org](http://www.ayon.org)

# Chapter 1

## TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL

### **Introduction:**

Education is perhaps the only tool that equips us to cope up with the problems of our life thus, achieving the unachieved in every step taken. Be it a formal, academic degree or the practical work experience all contribute to our knowledge pool and provide the necessary tools for a happy and a prosperous living.

This consultation workshop has explored the transition that the young people face in their life while going for the education. Many of the following issues and case studies form the general overview of the Nepalese perspective; however can be related in the global scenario and in similar circumstances.

### **1. ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

Starting from primary and high school education to the university level, the curriculum design, present human resource, infrastructure and socio-economic factors were the major issues and concerns that were discussed in the workshop. The policy need and the inclusion of the young people in planning the education sector, which is of direct concern to them, were other important areas where the workshop explored the view.

#### **Still there aren't many people around the nation going to school.**

Many school going age children in Nepal are not fortunate enough to attend the schools. The ratio of the female students attending the schools is even less. Primary education as a birth right of every child has not yet been realized. College education is a distant dream for the most of the rural youths. Young people are going abroad as a labour due to economic, security and various other reasons leaving back the unyielding education. Parents and guardians are afraid to send their children to school for the fear of being abducted or even killed. Education is not yet established as one of the basic human needs in our mindsets.

#### **The factors contributing to the issues**

The present infrastructure of schools and colleges deprive a large chunk of the young people to go for education. Proximity of the schools and colleges, the facility of transportation and availability of enough number of schools contributes at large to the issue. A student has to walk for hours to go to a school nearby in many rural parts of

Nepal. Even if a student goes to school after walking for hours he is not sure to get a place to sit in his classroom, even if he is finally in the classroom it is very likely that there is no teacher to attend that class.

Awareness of the people is also contributing to the present state of many young people not going to school. Most of the people do not find it economically viable to send their wards to school despite of different scholarship schemes of the government. Many children contribute to their family income as a domestic labor or helping their parents in their work or looking after their younger brothers and sisters.

*Padne bhaneko tat bahun le po ho ta.... ta k padchas...???* Say the village folks.

*(Studying is only for the people of higher caste not for the people of lower castes...like you)*

Still there are many people who are not aware that they should send their children to schools. The level of awareness among people that education is a basic need is still insufficient. The awareness level is even low in the scheduled and marginalized communities. The members of scheduled community and tribes are still not given enough attention and facilities to encourage them for education.

Female enrollment in schools and colleges is even worse. As the education level goes up the female enrolment diminishes. The stereotype thoughts and other conservative notion towards female education in our society have fueled the problem.

*Arkako gharma jane jaat...padhayera k kaam ??*

*(Daughters are destined to go to other's home. So, what is the use in educating them?)*

These days a lot of young people are going to India and Gulf countries for employment. Many rural, semi-urban and also a few urban youths have been going for employment leaving behind the unyielding education. Young people find it economically more sensible to work abroad rather than continue their education. Lack of enough economic opportunities in our own country has forced this outflow of young people.

### **The problem of dropouts**

*The societal conviction is that it is the guardians' responsibility to marry their children. The daughters who are not doing well in their studies are compelled to quit studies and get married.*

*Pad-dainan ani k garnu ta?... Bihey gari diyo ani pathai diyo... dhukka*

Every year many students leave the school leaving their education uncompleted. The problem of dropout in the primary education is a major problem. The dropout ratio among

the female student is even worse. According to an estimated figure only 3% of the students passing the SLC go for further studies.

As dropout is a universal phenomenon the solution is not the 100% enrolment. Dropout from primary education should be checked. But in case of higher education dropouts, other opportunities should be created for their involvement in different other productive sectors. Vocational educations and technical trainings seem necessary as an alternative to formal academic education.

### **A few factors contributing to the problems**

*Talla ghare maila ko chora ley ta bidesh gayera tetro paisa kamayera ghar pathayo.... ta pani kina na janey...*

*(the son of the neighbour has gone abroad and brought a lot of money...why do you study instead of going for work?)*

The uneducated people working in the gulf regions send in more money that their educated peers. This encourages those going to school to give up education, any way education is not going to fetch them handsome salary any time in future.

It is not economically sensible to go to colleges

Awareness and economic condition of the people are the major factors leading to the massive dropout of the students. Most of the people do not find it economically viable to continue their education. Besides, education is not in harmony with the job market. Even the college graduates are not absorbed in the job market. The students do not find the university degree economically strengthening their future and career.

The students are ill treated by the teachers in many cases leading to the massive dropout in the primary education. The physical punishments that the students have to face do not encourage them to study but rather quit education.

The students do not see a visible application of anything they study in the classroom. So the question, why are we studying remains unanswered among the students. Poor curriculum and teaching methodology and lack of practical application of the syllabus has distracted the students from continuing their education.

### **The current curriculum, are we learning the right thing the right way?**

*When I was back in my high school my friend asked the teacher why are we studying this vector? The teacher answered, " To pass the exam"*

Curriculum in the Nepalese Education institution are outdated and has not been updated regularly so as to incorporate the changes in the global scenario, the technological and scientific revolution, emerging trends, scientific and methodologies etc.

Teaching methodology and curriculum are not in harmony with the present infra structure in the rural areas.

*When there are tapes and CDs to be referred in the textbooks, the schools are not technologically equipped to support those features.*

Teachers and students have very little knowledge about the curriculum. Most of the teachers regard curriculum and the textbook as the same thing. This shows us the picture on how is the quality of teaching & learning process. At this stage, use of scientific and innovative teaching methodology is a far away goal.

Most of the students and teachers feel that the present curriculum is not in harmony with the local and global market. The technical and vocational trainings are promising jobs to the youths but these trainings have not yet been recognized as a degree. This has led to the distraction of youths in this sort of job yielding technical educations.

*"I studied the same course as my uncle did; when he gave his SLC 18 years ago" says a student.*

Curriculum and books do not reach the rural areas on time. The revised curriculum and the prescribed books reach the schools years after they are formulated and published. The situation of the geographically inaccessible areas is even worse.

### **Private vs. Public**

The education sector has seen a gradual change as it is opening up to new universities. Now there are altogether 5 universities both in private and public sector. With the establishment of private universities, now the students have more choices. However, due to lack of proper infrastructure, human resource and appropriate curriculum the quality of the education they are imparting have been a matter to think about seriously. Lack of proper monitoring mechanisms from the concerned authority in this area has added up to the problem.

The private educational institutions are expensive as compared to the state run institutions but the products are visibly absorbed in different kinds of job markets. The recognition given to the graduates of private and state run institutions are different. The quality of education between the private and public institutions differs significantly thus producing two kinds of human resource.

### **Education in Nepal and Abroad**

Many young people go abroad for study due to various reasons.

Nepali Universities not well recognized globally. The qualities of the education provided here differ significantly in comparison to the global scenario. Due to course structure, duration, teaching methodology etc. student from Nepal find difficult to sell their education in the global market. Credit Transfer to the Universities abroad has been a

problem for the Nepali Students. So, the increasing number of young people from the urban areas try to pursue their higher education in other countries.

There aren't enough deemed universities in the nation. So the students do not have many options to choose as concerns choosing the universities.

The areas in which students could specialize are very less. Any students wanting to specialize in Human Resource (HR) cannot do so in his/her graduation. She will have to pursue a graduation in Management and then specialize in HR only in Masters Level. Variety of subjects are lacking in Nepali context

### **Evaluation System**

*I filled my friends answer sheets after finishing mine, in the exam... says a young boy from Western Nepal*

Our universities still follow an evaluation system outdated by most of the universities around the globe. Absolute system of evaluation rather than relative method brings with it many draw backs which prevents the fair evaluation of a student.

*"What is your name? The correct answer is not given a 100% grade even though the answer is absolutely right. T.U. students are mostly deprived of applying for full bright." says one of the T.U. students.*

### **Infrastructure**

*I used to carry two stones to schools. One was to use as a bench, and the other as a table. That is what I used while in school.  
- Shares a youth from Bajhang*

The physical infrastructure of the educational institutions in Nepal is very poor. The classrooms, the teaching materials even the textbooks are out of the reach of many Nepalese students. The physical distance of the schools and colleges is very far and students have to walk for hours to attend them.

### **Politics and Education**

*Lower version of the national politics is the government college says Prajwal....*

With a motive of politics there are students enrolling in the same level for the past ten years. The colleges are a center for active politics. The frequent bandhs, strikes and movements have also obstructed the teaching learning process in Nepal thus deteriorating the quality.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wider Consultation of the stakeholders from all the strata especially the young people to formulate policies and devise the education strategies of the government.
- Wider consultation with the stakeholders and experts from the relative field in the process of drafting the curriculum. The consultation with the immediate stakeholders, the students should be given the high priority to incorporate the aspirations and the need of the young people and also to harmonize with the current global scenario and the job market.
- Enough Investment in the infrastructure and human resource development of the education sector. Investment in the primary education should be prioritized.
- Vocational Educations should be included widely in the curriculum.
- Favorable environment should be given to the private sector so that more institutions delivering technical education are opened and many young people can go for them. The need of certifying the vocational and technical education with an academic degree is of equal importance so that more young people are attracted towards it.
- Proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the educational institutions should be ensured.
- Alternative means of learning like non-formal education, adult learning, distance learning etc. should also be prioritized in the sectors where the formal education has not been a success.
- The evaluation system of the educational institutions should be reviewed and for that human resource in this field should be trained accordingly.
- Nepalese educational institutions should offer courses in accordance with the present global scenario.
- Public institutions must be revamped with the new strategies so as to increase the quality of education they are providing. Public private partnership can be one of the various ways, which can really work.
- End to the present conflict is no doubt a step towards achieving all our educational targets.

# Chapter 2

## TRANSITION TO HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth has been defined by the World Health Organization as people between the ages of 15 and 24. It is the second decade in a person's life when important changes occur in different dimensions of life – physical, biological, mental and emotional. These changes may occur at different paces in different socio-cultural settings and for different individuals. Furthermore, some of these changes due to adolescence can be perceived and handled differently in different cultures. That is why it is difficult to pinpoint an age at which adolescence begins or ends. For practical purposes, adolescence can be defined as a developmental period during which a person is "no longer a child, but not yet an adult."

Nepal is facing a large adolescent and youth population in its population composition. The adolescents and youth population as they enter into their reproductive phase embody potential population growth for next three/four decades. These populations constitute population momentum of the future that has serious implications for provision of schooling, health services and other basic amenities of life for the coming decades. During the past decade young people and their health needs have been subject of great attention worldwide. Especially, the issue of adolescent reproductive health received global attention after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994.

Youth should be a concern for policymakers, stakeholders and civil society for three important reasons. First, adolescents and youths together represent a significant segment of the country's total population. This population subgroup – ages 10 through 24 – in Nepal is currently estimated to be 7.1 million, that is, 31% of the total population. Due to the phenomenon known as "population momentum", the number of adolescents will continue to grow. It is estimated to increase to 12.6 million by 2030 before beginning to decline. Second, behaviors formed during adolescence or young adulthood is known to have profound implications for the rest of the person's natural life. For example, smoking or drinking habit initiated during this period is several times more likely to lead to chronic conditions or result in worse scenarios (such as chain smoking or alcoholism) than habits picked up during later stages in life. Conversely, good habits or positive behaviors formed during adolescence and young adulthood can be expected to have salubrious effect on a person's psychosexual and psychosocial health during adulthood. Third, and finally, adolescents and youths of today are the parents and responsible citizens of tomorrow and the most important resource for community- or nation building.

## 2. HEALTH ISSUES

**Reproductive Health:** Adolescence is a time of mental and psychological adjustment. It is the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. Main reproductive health issues experienced by youth are: HIV/AIDS/STI; Sex education (Formal & Informal); Unwanted Pregnancy; Unsafe Abortion; Maternal Mortality; and Unsafe sex.

**Substance Abuse:** Diseases related to lifestyles are on the increase, particularly those due to smoking and alcohol and drug abuse. Different types of substances may be abused because of the social factors like peer pressure and the psychological factors like curiosity, low self-esteem and fashionably developed role model. Substance abuse is also growing due to family conflict, frustration, irritation, helplessness, unemployment and use of free time. The substances generally abused by the youth are: Drug abuse, Alcoholism and Smoking.

**Trafficking and Commercial sex work:** Criminals are now moving away from 'guns and drugs' to marketing women. With as many as 2 million women worldwide forced into sexual slavery, the sex trade seems to have replaced narcotics as the favored illegal trade activity. During the last couple of decades, prostitution and sex trafficking has reached an alarming magnitude throughout the world. Each year 5000 to 6000 Nepali women and children, some as young as 9, are trafficked into India. Sex trade is considered as one of the factor for the increasing prevalence of STDs and HIV/AIDS. Beside this, labours migrating from Nepal to India and Gulf countries also bring back HIV/AIDS with them

**Youth Friendly Services:** Many service providers do not fully understand the psychosocial context within which the youth lives because they may not have had sufficient interaction with the youth or have not had training specifically related to young people. The quality of care given to youth may increase substantially when providers understand the cross cutting issues of youth's development. When providers have basic understanding of the issues and health needs specific to youth, they can build communication and counseling skills to establish a better sense of trust between the client and service provider. Unavailability of resources in general health services make youth reluctant to utilize these services.

**Lack of improper implementation of Programmes and policies:** Policies are formulated but there is still lack of proper implementation of these policies. There is an imbalance in the health workforce due to shortages of personnel and geographical misdistribution. Though post has been sanctioned for health personals in rural areas very few actually make it to the field. Government has allocated more of its budget on security services rather than on health.

**Road Traffic Accident/Violence:** Youth are usually involved in risk taking behaviour, which makes them vulnerable to road traffic accidents and violence. Road traffic injuries constitute a major public health problem. Rapid urbanization and motorization in developing countries will account for much of the rise and the rise will be steeper due to lack of appropriate road engineering and lack of injury prevention programs in the public health sector. By 2020, it is projected that road traffic disability-adjusted life years lost will move from being the 9th leading cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost to the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause DALYs.

**Depression/Suicide:** Good mental health is an integral part of overall health and well-being. Mental health influences the ways individuals look at themselves, their lives, and others in their lives. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life. Suicide and other health-damaging behavior often result from unidentified and untreated mental health issues and depression.

**Gender based violence:** Violence against women presents a global overview of violence against women, particularly as it pertains to the health of women and girls. The package focuses on violence in families, rape and sexual assault, violence against women in situations of conflict and displacement, dating violence, as well as violence against the girl child. During armed conflict, assaults against women escalate, including those committed by both “hostile” and “friendly” forces. Children and adolescents who have been victimized are at increased risk for HIV infection, unplanned pregnancy and other negative outcomes.

**Lack of Sanitation and Hygiene:** The main environmental issues are water pollution, air pollution, land pollution and sand pollution. Water is polluted due to poor sewerage and sanitation, industrial discharge and wastes, and pesticides from agricultural sources. Air pollution is due to combustion of fossil fuels, vehicular emissions, industrial emissions and combustion of bio-mass. These have caused deterioration of air quality, especially in urban areas, resulting in respiratory and eye problems. The urban population with access to safe drinking water is about 61% and how much of that is safe is yet another question. Rapid urbanization, diminishing spring sources due to deforestation, pollution of surface water sources by industrial waste and sewer lines fed into rivers has led to contamination of water.

**Nutritional deficiency:** youth is a period of growth and development. There is an excess demand on nutrition during this period but because of lack of knowledge or because of unavailability of resources, young people face different kinds of nutritional problems like malnutrition and anemia.

**Misuse of mass communication:** Mass communication is an effective way of communicating people to raise awareness regarding different health issues. But nowadays it has become more focused on entertainment and on personal benefit rather than on providing factual information to general population.

**Lack of consciousness:** *A coup d'etat* is not possible among youth until and unless they are conscious of their strength. Consciousness is developed through rational way of thinking. Youth age is immature; due to immaturity there exists the conflict of yes or no on many issues, which leads to devastating results. There is growing acceptance of the fact that youth need information and education so that they can protect themselves and make informed decisions regarding their health. Young people often lack skills and information to deal with the many physical, social, and emotional changes associated with this type of rapid change. Education helps young people make responsible choices and decisions.

**Conflict:** Conflict is one of the burning issues. Due to the existing conflict, most of the people are bound to migrate in search of better opportunities to the urban areas from the rural areas. This leads to overpopulation and social miseries as well as leads the young girls to work as a commercial sex worker, making them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

**Lack of space & Lack of Physical exercises:** - The rapid urbanization has exceeded the capacity of municipal services to provide basic services and the concept of healthy cities has been limited to discussion only. With the over growth of population and unplanned

urbanization, people are being technophile acknowledged by the modernization. People rely on the modern equipments to overcome their day-to-day activities rather than doing it by themselves. So, there exists more use of brain than the physical parts and people do not have adequate time to have physical exercises even though it is obviously important for the development of individual either physically or mentally.

**Sexuality:** Homosexuality, lesbians, gay marriage etc are emerging concerns, which exist in Nepalese society. In past people were not able to discuss this and now they are becoming more open towards it. Most of the homosexuals are of young age. Because of their sexual orientation, they are involved in unsafe sexual behavior, which makes them particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and STDs. There are not many instances of homosexuals actually being imprisoned for their sexual preferences, but they are frequently abused with harassment, blackmail and extorting bribes. As same-sex love is legally unacceptable, many gay men and lesbians marry members of the opposite sex – with consequent deception, frustration and misery for all concerned.

### **3. WHAT HELP DO YOUTH NEED?**

1. First, encourage communication by reassuring that they can talk to you about anything.
2. Take advantage of teachable moments. A friend's pregnancy, news article, or a TV show can help start a conversation.
3. Listen more than you talk. Don't jump to conclusions.
4. Answer questions simply and directly. Give factual, honest, short, and simple answers.
5. Respect your child's views. Share your thoughts and values and help your child express theirs.
6. Reassure young people that they are normal—as are their questions and thoughts.
7. Teach your children ways to make good decisions and coach them on how to get out of risky situations.
8. Love, care and trust.
9. Teach young people how to refuse offers for cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. Denying "sleep on it" attitude.
10. Talk to young people about how to avoid undesirable situations or people who break the rules.
11. Nurture strong self-esteem. Strong self-esteem helps children and adolescents make decisions and follow them, even if their friends do not think some choices are "cool."

### **4. WHAT YOUTH CAN DO?**

1. An active lifestyle can help every youth.
2. Read books or magazines that inspires us.
3. Set specific, short-term goals, and reward yourself when you achieve them.
4. Avoid exploitative and manipulative relationships
5. Identify and live according to our own values
6. Take responsibility of our own behaviour
7. Communicate effectively with peers, family and partners
8. Seek new information and resources
9. View family as a valuable source of support
10. Develop and maintain meaningful relationships

11. Be aware about health and Practice healthy habits
12. Try to develop an alternative thinking for every incident
13. Make right decisions
14. Hope for the best and get prepared for the worst
15. Develop Sense of learning and teaching
16. Avoid junk foods
17. Be a role model
18. Motivate the community for healthy lives
19. Listen more than we talk. Don't jump to conclusions
20. Organize youth groups in different communities to work together with parents, local organizations and local authorities.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

1. Involvement of the young people in the design and implementation of adolescent health programs.
2. Involving parents and community and fostering an enabling environment by equipping them through training and sensitization programs.
3. Parents, policy makers, educators, and health care providers should work in partnership to provide youths with the tools they need to have a healthy and satisfying life and to become healthy, productive adults.
4. Health in Nepal is more institutional based. But, the adults do the management of these institutions not the youths. They are not aware of the youth problems and generation gap is there. So, we should involve young people as key decision-makers in program design, implementation, and evaluation
5. Provide comprehensive, accurate information in a manner appropriate to their age group and sex.
6. Address barriers to accessing health and information services.
7. Empower the youths to make life choices that are best for them.
8. Discourage traditional practices that lead them astray.
9. Improve the quality of care provided through the public and private organizations by total quality management of human, financial and physical resources.
10. *Involve* in recreational and creative activities.

### **2.2 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION**

#### **HIV/AIDS/STDs:**

- Anti retro viral should be made accessible to all HIV patients in health centers.
- Voluntary counseling and testing should be strengthened in district level.
- Community based rehabilitation centers on regional level.
- Home based care and support programs.
- Income generation and micro credit schemes.
- Confidentiality should be maintained.
- Awareness raising programmes amongst the labour migrating especially to India and the Gulf countries.

#### **Unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion:**

- Contraceptive devices to be promoted.

- CAC and PAC services to be strengthened at district level.

**Smoking:**

- Smoking area should be specified in public areas such as cinema halls to protect non-smokers from secondhand smoking.

**Trafficking and commercial sex work:**

- Strengthen the networking system and the rescue and referral of those trafficked.
- Strengthen the checkpoint at the border areas.
- Strengthen the rehabilitation centers.
- CSW should be legalized and the Red Light areas should be specified.
- Condom promotion and availability at the working place of the sex workers.

**Youth friendly services and resource centers:**

- Need based assessment should be done.
- Focus group discussion and interaction with youth of the local area for resource mapping.

**Road Traffic Accident/ violence:**

- Behavioral modification programmes regarding RTA for those involved in the risk behaviour.
- More focus on individual counseling.

**Depression/ Suicide:**

- Both individual and family counseling should be provided.
- Employment opportunities should be increased to tackle the frustrations arising mostly due to economic crisis.

**Nutritional deficiency:**

- Promotion of kitchen garden.
- Awareness on diseases and deficiencies due to malnutrition.
- Income generating activities to increase the purchasing power of the poor people.

**Misuse of mass communication:**

- More focused on edutainment (education +entertainment) based on local culture and using local resources.
- Entertainment packages, which encourage violent and aggressive behaviour, should be screened.

**Conflict:**

- Health related activities should not be disrupted. Health should be regarded as a conflict free zone.
- Youth should act as a mediator to negotiate agreement between government and rivalry.

**Lack of utilization of indigenous ideas and values:**

- Traditional medicine (*ayurvedic*) should be encouraged.
- Skill transformation from generation to generation.
- Media should promote healthy activities that have indigenous values.

**Homosexuality:**

- Counseling and treatment
- More focus on combating stigma and discrimination related to one's sexual orientation.

**Physical exercise and open space:**

- Planned urbanization with open space

**Occupational hazards:**

- Occupational safety should be provided.
- Space creation for new generation by giving opportunity for new employees.

**6. CONCLUSION**

Adolescents and youth constitute a large section of the population in Nepal. They are the population at a special stage and are generally neglected. For overall development of these people, there is a need of universal education, improved quality of life, equitable opportunities, and access to health care, confidential counseling and information services. Moreover, understanding and supportive parents are essential for them to develop the critical period of their life. Youth migrate to urban areas and are living apart from their families. Reproductive health services need to be provided with urgent attention. Since these groups are prone to risk taking behavior, a more detailed examination of these groups is essential for policy recommendations.

# Chapter 3

## TRANSITION TO WORK

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Work is defined as the exchange of physical and mental services for monetary or other material and non-material gains. Here, transition to work mainly refers to the difficulties and hardships faced by the youth while they try to or enter their respective work. Transition to work has been linked with many broad issues like employment opportunities, and quality education. In large, the opportunity and obstacles faced during the entry into working group is the core matter of 'transition to work'.

Today, employment has been a subject of concern for all countries. But in Nepal, we have witnessed that employment opportunities have not grown in proportion to the demand. This has created a problem for all, but its effect more largely strike the youths because we are

*The total number of jobs created in Nepal's job market is one hundred fifty thousand. This means that, the remaining half has to either remain unemployed or enter the agricultural sector.*

ones who are largely entering the work force. Study has shown that every year two and half to three lacs of youths are ready to enter the job market. In order to address this population, the country needs to have an economic growth rate of 6% per year. But unfortunately, the economic growth rate of the Nepal is 2.3% p.a. Furthermore, work demands experience, but the youth that have just completed their education find it difficult to compete because they lack experience. Besides, the quality of education that we receive, imposition of educational career by the guardians, lack of employment facilities, are other major issues that affect the 'transition to work' in Nepal.

### 2. ISSUES AND CONCERNS

#### Subject of interest!!!

It was found that the guardians often overlooked the interest of the individuals. Emphasis was given to the jobs (Doctor) and education (Science) that had high social status. Students had to follow the wishes of their parents and get into the type of education that did not match their interest. This instead affected their performance during both education and work. Further, students too often failed to realize their own interest and entered the type of education, which they later had to drop, because they found the subject of their interest.

*Rabi had already completed B.Sc. when he joined SPW and realized that his real interest was away from science. He later joined Master in Rural Development. Couldn't a small aptitude test help Rabi find his subject of interest?*

## Is education applicable?

Education should equip us with the competencies needed to enter the job market. But, the responses of the participants clearly showed that Nepal lacked such education. Even participants who had studied in relatively costlier private college and schools were not satisfied with the quality and facilities they obtained. Hence, one can easily imagine the condition of other school and colleges in rural areas. It was said that academic institution should provide them with

*Nutan took up teaching after SLC because it was said to be the best job for a girl. She has majored in English and now teaches intermediate level. But, she often questions herself, “what can a person who is not much interested in the subject teach her students?” Besides, she is restricted to give her best to her students because of objections from the school authority. She panics, “they have become too commercial”*

opportunities to enhance their skills needed to enter the work force. The out-dated course which mainly emphasize on theory, little opportunity for field placements or interns, evaluation system that relied on examination marks, teaching of contents not relevant to the job market were some of the problems identified.

## Starting your own business?

Self Employment could be a good solution to reduce the amount of pressure in the job market. But this is not a spontaneous phenomenon and needs to be backed by preparation as well as business culture. The participants reported that they were not ready to take up such ventures. Many of them had vibrant business ideas but they said, “I do not know where to start from.” The process to start a business and the lack of financial capital were among

*Sushma has since long been interested in processing Turmeric, which are relatively cheaper in the rural areas, and selling it for high value in the urban centers. But, lack of knowledge and capital to start an enterprise has been a great hindrance for her. Will she find her way and be a successful entrepreneur or will she follow the legacy and join an organization letting her idea die?*

the major obstacles to starting an enterprise. Self-employment is not given importance in schools and colleges’ too. Further, the family’s emphasis on jobs made it difficult for youths to try self-employment. Hence, the need for organizations that provide financial and technical assistance was felt among the participants.

## Government and Foreign services

Government services were not found to be appetizing for the participants. It was considered to be low-paid and full of deficiencies like red-tapism and corruption. The entry system into government service was tough for students

*Rabi says, “Government service has its deficiencies but young people like us should get into it and change the whole scenario. Fresh enrollment of youngsters is a must.”*

who were educated in English medium schools. Government job was considered to lack facilities and the service holder would be left with no benefit after the retirement. It was also considered to be stagnant and full of sycophancies. But, there were participants who were interested to join the service and bring about positive changes.

Participants had mixed response about going abroad. Some of them wanted to go study and then come back. Some were against going abroad. They claimed there were many opportunities in Nepal. Many participants said that family pressure was the major reason that compelled them to go abroad. It was also reported that once one is gone abroad he/she had to be selective about jobs in Nepal because many jobs will be considered to be undignified for him. Further, with the amount of capital needed to go abroad one could easily start a business here.

### **Wrong practices**

Practice like employing one's own people was found to be great problem for many youths. It was said that even in NGOs and INGO's this practice was highly prevalent. Social responsibility and accountability of these organizations can play a vital role in setting up the transparency standard for other government and private institutions.

### **Vicious circle of traditional jobs**

It was reported that youths had problems to get way from traditional jobs. The rural youths who were engaged in agricultural activities were even more affected by this problem. They considered it risky to try new enterprise and things like 'opportunity cost' were not taken into account.

## **3. RECOMMENDATION**

**The recommendations obtained from the participants are as follows:**

1. Career counseling section should be opened in schools and universities. Test to identify ones interest and ability should be conducted among the students especially in grades 10 and 12, when the students are about to make major educational decision. The result of the tests should then be provided to their respective parents.
2. Before designing and launching any new subject, university should be aware of its job market and it should put effort to make its students as competent as possible by providing them with exposures like Intern opportunities. Timely update of course of study so as to make it applicable to the prevalent environment is equally essential.
3. Area specific vocational training should be given to students keeping in mind the potential of their area. For example, the students of Jumla (a remote district) can be trained to process apples and the students of Kathmandu can be trained on conducting small business.
4. In order to enhance the exposure of the youth's programs like national development service and SPW should be widely extended. It should not be limited only to social field but include technical students also.

5. Schools should be judged based on exposure imparted to the students, infrastructure, applicability of the things taught, etc rather than highlighting on students grade.
6. Entrepreneurship skills should be a component of course content at the school level. Institutional support in matters related to credit, networking, and technical assistance should be provided. Further identifying new entrepreneurship and awarding them could be an incentive for many others.
7. Funding assistance to the young entrepreneurs should be made an issue of continuous discussion. Soft loans and loans without any collateral should be provided to the young ventures.
8. Motivation for setting up of one's own business should start at from the school level.
9. The government service should be improved in matters related to wage and other facilities and the process of selection made more favorable to attract competent individuals.
10. Healthy competition should be encouraged instead in private sector and especially in service oriented organizations like NGO's, INGO's and Educational institutions.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

“Work” has been the major problem faced by youths in Nepal. But a huge range of external factor affects a person's ability to obtain and work satisfactorily. His/her upbringing, education, government policies are some of them. With the appropriate management of problems related to work a number of problems can be automatically solved.

This consultation targeted to finding out the problems and opportunities related to work has bore fruit. Some of the major concerns raised by the participants were inadequacy of their educational institutions to sufficiently prepare them for the job market, the lack of government initiative to provided job opportunities, social pressure regarding education and job matters, incompetence to start business on own. But the solution sought by the participants themselves was a reflection of the fact that there is no problem, which doesn't have a solution. But, it is not enough to blame others. If all of us take the trouble to shoulder a small amount of responsibility majority of the problems shall no longer exist.

# Chapter 4

## TRANSITION TO FAMILY FORMATION

### 1. BACKGROUND

*Family is a social context within which each member experiences health, illness, recovery and a meaningful life.*

Family formation is a natural phenomenon of a society. When a child enters into youth phase then he/she has to pass through different transitions, among them the transition to family formation is a major one. During this phase youths have to pass through many psychological, economical and emotional stresses. If youths are not provided with correct information regarding marriage and family formation they may end up choosing a wrong path. So it is very much necessary to provide youth with correct information regarding family formation and marriage.

For every individual family formation is an important breakthrough. There are many factors that influence an individual's decision for family formation. And consecutively the decision made by an individual about family formation influences his health and life. Decisions like the age to leave home, age at marriage, age for childbirth, family size etc certainly affect other aspects of life. However there aren't any hard and fast rules or age barrier or number for these life events. These vary according to region (urban and rural area) and socioeconomic condition of youths.

There has been a tradition since time immemorial in many ethnic communities in Nepal for youths to migrate to distant places for different reasons. For example *Brahmins* used to go to different places in India like 'Varnasi' for education; Young people from *Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu* community used to go to India and Britain to enroll in the Army, youths from high Himalayas used to go to Tibet for business. However these traditions have been changed these days and the destination of migration and reasons for migration has also changed a lot.

Though the average family size in Nepal is around 5.6, youths these days tend to have family of smaller size. The joint family system these days is also broken down to nuclear family system. Living together before marriage is socially not acceptable in Nepal but it is also emerging in Nepal as a result of modernization.

## **2. ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

The main issues that were raised during our discussion on “transition to family” workshop were:

- Reasons to leave family
- Age at marriage
- Decision making authority in youths
- Consequences of early marriage
- Growing up and Generation Gap

### **Age of leaving home**

The age at which youths leave home depends on several factors. For example, youths in rural areas are more likely to begin family earlier than the youth in urban areas, youth from poor socio-economic background form families earlier than youth from better to do families and youths who are out of school are likely to form families earlier than those who are in school

In Nepal, the tradition to leave family in urban areas is quite rare in comparison to rural areas. In rural areas the tradition to leave family may begin from as early as six or seven years. However most of the youths leave their family during the age of 15-19 years. The causes for these family tragedies may be economic hardship, education opportunity, high ambitions of individual and conflicts etc.

Youths mostly migrate from rural areas and work as porters or workers in urban areas. But their dream of earning more money and acquiring education remains unrealized baring some exceptions.

### **Reason for leaving home**

In urban areas youth rarely depart from family for economic hardship but in most of the cases youth depart from their family and go abroad for higher education. Beside economic reasons family conflicts, interest to lead an independent life and the generation gap are the main contributing factors. More youths from rural areas leave home and migrate to distance places. These days due to the ongoing conflict in Nepal the situation has become more chronic. The main reasons for youth to leave their families are – search for better economic opportunities, higher education, big ambition, generation gap, ego and the present conflict situation.

### **Marriage**

Nearly half (50%) of 15-19 years old girls and a fifth (20.6%) of adolescent boys aged 15-19 years are married (2001 census). Child marriage below the age of 14 years is also seen abundantly in the rural areas. Youths from rural areas and poor socio-economic background marry at earlier age than youth from urban areas and well to do families. The age of marriage also differs among boys and girls. Girls marry at earlier age in comparison to boys. Though the age of marriage for boys and girls is legally defined, but reality portrays a different picture. Generally boys prefer to marry at the age of 26-29 yrs, whereas girls get married at the age of 20-24 yrs.

In our Nepali culture boys possess the right to make decision regarding their age of marriage and selection of partner, where as girls don't enjoy that right. Most of the girls have to marry under the pressure of their guardians. Elopement is also quite common in Nepal among young generation if there is no parent acceptance of the relationship.

### **Age at pregnancy**

One fourth (24%) of adolescent girls in Nepal are already pregnant or mothers with their first child (NDHS 2001). Even though couples marry at early age they cannot postpone their first birth for several reasons - they are forced by society to prove their fertility, lack of knowledge on measures of birth control, access to contraceptive and other birth control measures and lack of healthy discussion between the couples. Thus the girls who marry at early age also become pregnant at early age. Girls from rural areas become pregnant at early age in comparison to girls from urban areas. Most of the couples are not aware about the consequences of the early pregnancy.

### **Consequences of early Marriage/ early pregnancy**

Early marriage leads to large family size. People who marry at early age tend to have more children in comparison to those who marry at a later age. Similarly girls who become pregnant at younger age are also at risk of maternal death (i.e. death related to pregnancy). It is due to this reason that Nepal has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world.

The children borne by young mothers are likely to be underweight and such children are likely die before reaching their first birthday, thereby resulting in high infant mortality rate.

The girls who marry at young age cannot complete their education and are also unable to fine-tune their carriers. As a result the girls have to become dependent on other family members throughout their lives.

### **Growing up and Generation Gap**

An individual while growing up sees a lot of transition in his/her life at different stages. Poor nutrition, lack of education, unhealthy lifestyle and lack of proper environment hinders the physical and mental development of a person. Poorly developed individual do not form good families. The case in Nepal is worsened by the poverty, illiteracy and lack of access to basic health care. Generation gap is seen in most of the Nepali families due to lack of awareness, education and stereotype mentalities, thus hindering the family formation process.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

Family formation is one of the major transitions in youth's life. Marriage is a pre-requisite for family formation. Youths should be physically, mentally and economically well prepared before they opt for marriage.

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Youths should have school/College/University education finished before they leave families.
2. Child marriage, which is still practiced in many communities, should be abolished and marriage should be postponed at least beyond 20 years.
3. Youth should be well prepared about things to be prepared before marriage. They should be responsible enough to bear all the consequences of marriage by themselves.
4. Youths should be provided with information about right age for marriage, consequences of early marriage/pregnancy, parental education etc so that they can make informed decision. This could be done by incorporating information relevant to youth in the school or college curriculum and through informal education.
5. Information centers and counseling centers should be made available and accessible to youths. Such services should be youth friendly.
6. A child born through unmarried mother should also be socially and legally recognized (i.e. giving recognition to single parent family).
7. Proper education and health care is an essential factor in developing good individuals and thus good families.
8. Generation gap issues should be dealt with discussion programs, education and other types of awareness raising initiatives for an open and healthy family structure.

# Chapter 5

## TRANSITION TO CITIZENSHIP

### 1. ISSUES

#### 1.1 Defining Citizen/Citizenship

During the discussions, we agreed upon simple and concise working definitions of the terms Citizen and Citizenship -

A Citizen is an individual whom the state has granted the rights that can be exercised within a political territory and who has obligations towards the country.

Citizenship is the continual process of exercise of rights and fulfillment of duties by a citizen, and realization of the aforesaid rights and duties.

#### 1.2 The Transition

When a youth obtains citizenship formally, he/she transforms formally from a 'nobody' to a 'citizen' of the country with subsequent rights and duties. However, this does not mean that before getting the citizenship certificate, an individual should enjoy no rights or have no duty towards the society. Young people look forward to receiving the citizenship certificate also because it is required to enter civil/military service, start a business, open an organization, apply for other jobs, seek scholarships and go abroad for education/employment. The person receiving it also has a sense of pride, belongingness and maturity.

#### 1.3 Rights and Duties

Citizenship is invariably accompanied by a lot of rights and duties. The rights that a citizen can exercise depend on the provisions made in the constitution and other laws and policies of the nation. A few common ones can be listed as below:

- Right to vote (in Nepali context, on reaching the age of 18 years)
- Right to own private property
- Right to justice
- Right to freedom of expression and pursuit of happiness
- Right to start a business or organization
- Right to equality

A common tendency among us youth today is to expect everything from the state while largely turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to our duties towards our country. As citizens, it is among our prime duties to keep abreast of the turn of events taking place in our society. We have also got to raise voice for such moves to be made by the authorities concerned as would ensure well being of our nation and its people, because as youthful and energetic citizens our strong voice counts.

Some of our major duties can be pointed out as:

- Duty to promote national interest
- Duty to pay tax to the government
- Duty to elect right people for right positions
- Duty to refrain from harming collective benefits for the personal
- Duty to respect other's rights while enjoy our own

#### **1.4 Citizenship Sentiments**

The transit mainly entails a nationalistic sentiment, a sense of identity and sometimes a fundamentalist attitude. There is also a feeling of close fraternity among compatriots. These sentiments assume most intense form especially when one is away from the home country and/or has to face discrimination/hostility on grounds of foreign nationality.

However, when a rightful individual is denied citizenship on some pretext, these sentiments are replaced by hatred against the state and the system. Strikingly, there is also a disinterest among many of us youths in regard to our citizenship. For many, obtaining citizenship is just a useless formality.

#### **1.5 Citizenship Certificate/Card**

Obtaining citizenship is much more than just obtaining a yet another certificate or card. However, the certificate/card of citizenship is not without use altogether.

One of the workshop participants shared an experience she had while studying abroad. On one occasion, she was upset about her classmates' refusal to accept her as a Nepali, since she looked so much like her non-Nepalese colleagues. She found the solution when she showed them her citizenship certificate and they were convinced. Interestingly, while obtaining the citizenship, she had had to face a lot of difficulties in her attempt to obtain it on the basis of matrilineal descent.

#### **1.6 Citizen/Citizenship Types**

In the context of emergence of a world very much akin to a global village, citizenship is not limited to a national citizenship. We the youths today have experienced that the acts of people from a distant corner of the globe have a direct or indirect impact on our lives and vice-versa. We can easily connect with people oceans apart and look for opportunities beyond the border. This experience has instilled in us a sense of global citizenship. We are no longer citizens of just a single society but of the global society. What the ancient

Greek philosopher Socrates said centuries ago holds relevance of an unprecedented degree even today: "I am a citizen, not of Athens or Greece, but of the world."

### **1.7 Orientation**

"When a youth gets citizenship, they need to realize that they now have transited from a Nobody to somebody.' But, many of us have no idea as to what we may or should do as citizens. However, the exposure to and influence of the media has contributed to our understanding of citizenship. In addition, the inclusion of civic study in school's course-of-study has helped too. Youth should be given orientation on their rights and duties/responsibilities, formally or informally. The citizenship-awarding authority can conduct a formal mass orientation at the time of awarding it. In regard to national education policy, a provision should be incorporated. That is, students at secondary/higher secondary level can have lessons on citizenship in their course of study. Besides, informally, NGO / INGO's and family can also help the youth in this regard.

### **1.8 Participation**

It is considerably rewarding to get the young citizens' involvement in the society- or nation-building activities. We could be involved in the civil service. However, the choice to get involved or not should be left to us.

In the state's decision-making level too there should be equal participation of youth including the marginalized indigenous and so-called dalits (untouchable caste). We youth should get the chance to have our say in the decisions directly affecting us.

Young citizens' participation in the society's activities enhances our personal development as well as our sense of belonging to the society.

### **1.9 Empowerment**

To have a meaningful participation in the activities of the society, we have to be empowered. It is of utmost importance that we get well educated and maintain sound physical and mental health. Something that can't be ignored, of course, is that, alongside formal education, we have to have practical and/or vocational trainings. Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged, too. Being active citizen of the country is however not limited to these. Taking part in state affairs and civic issues is the prime duty of the educated and the empowered group of our country i.e. the youth.

### **1.10 Apolitical Youth Alliance**

'United we stand, divided we fall.' If we, the youths are to have our say in issues that concern us, we have to form alliance of youth both on national and international levels. A national alliance would thread all the youths of a nation in order to act as a watchdog and create pressure towards what can and should be done for our common good. Understandably, our well-being is not different from our nation's. On an international level, the national alliances could form a network in order to share ideas, experiences, and cultures and raise united voice on issues of international concerns.

### **1.11 Donors**

So far, whatever donations or aids we have received have not been invested in the name of the youths. Youth focused programs should be prioritized by the donor agencies, so that the main workforce of any nation gets the opportunity to develop themselves and their country.

### **1.12 Voluntary Service**

In the context of Nepal, many youths are not very enthusiastic about entering the civil service. They opt firstly for positions at private organizations. In this light, youth can be encouraged for voluntary social service by promising and providing good incentives to those who excel in it. Excellent voluntary service performance could be used as a qualification criterion for entering the bureaucracy. It could well replace the Civil Service Commission's tedious and irrelevant written test.

### **1.13 Youth and Conflict**

Youths are a major segment of the society that has been worst affected by the conflict. Not only those youths actively involved as soldiers or cadres but also those who are not directly involved in it have been affected badly. This situation has resulted in mass migration of the productive Nepalese youth for foreign employment. In many cases it is impossible for the youth to stay at their homes in villages, far away from district headquarters. They have been recruited forcefully by the rebels and also been harassed by the Royal Nepal Army who suspect them to be the rebels' cadres or informers.

### **1.14 Employment**

An empty mind is the devil's workshop. Conversely, when creative mind and young, energetic body are put to work, most of youth related problems are solved. When we work, we generate income and pay tax to the government. It leads to the realization of our stake in the state's activities and we head towards civic and political consciousness. We become independent and take pride on ourselves as humans and as citizens. There remains no time or energy for depression, juvenile delinquency, aggression and the like.

## **2. CONCERNS**

### **2.1 Denial of citizenship**

#### **2.1.1 Children/youths from the Badi community**

In the past, children born to women in the *Badi* community (the community in Bardiya district of Nepal in which most women are sex-workers) could not get citizenship for the reason that the identity of their fathers was mainly unknown or not disclosed. At present, however, the scenario has changed and such children/youth have started getting citizenship on the basis of citizenship of the *Badi* mothers. This has also resulted in ease in obtaining citizenship by those seeking it on the basis of matrilineage. This certainly is a welcome change and the government deserves appreciation for the change.

### **2.1.2 Real estate ownership and Indigenous community**

Indigenous people in Nepal have lived inside the country and many have tilled the land from time immemorial. Ironically, they have been denied citizenship on the basis of heredity because their ancestors did not obtain the citizenship. The indigenous people do not get citizenship because they do not have ownership certificate of any land or place of dwelling, either. A solution to this problem can be reached if the indigenous people are granted citizenships in coordination with the Federation of Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal, an NGO that has a record of the indigenous people of Nepal.

### **2.2 Orientation to citizenship**

Generally, when a youth obtains citizenship formally, they are fairly unaware of the rights they are now endowed with or the duties they have towards the society and nation. So an orientation should be given so as to make them aware of their rights and duties as citizens and inculcate a feeling of responsibility towards the nation.

### **2.3 Youth and conflict**

The youth have evidently been very badly affected by the conflict in our country. One of the reasons behind their involvement in the conflict is the fact that there are few opportunities in which to keep them engaged. They can be kept from entering the conflict by getting their involvement in community level activities and programs regardless of by whom the activities/programs are conducted. Something that seems to have worked in engaging the youth in productive activity is the fact that the government has adopted a policy whereby those renouncing the insurgency are given priority in going for foreign employment. In addition, the youth from worst hit districts, who can be prospective soldiers in the conflict, could also be encouraged for employment abroad.

### **2.4 Unemployment**

It is a matter of grave concern that there are too few employment opportunities in our country. Youth energy is going to waste. We are flying abroad for employment in hundreds everyday, rather than contributing to our nations own efforts towards development. Even for whatever opportunities are available at home, there are not enough well qualified people. Those with adequate knowledge, skills and qualification are being sucked away by better incentives elsewhere. On the contrary, those youth for whom it is virtually impossible to stay home peacefully, owing to the aggression meted out to them by the state or the insurgents, foreign employment could be an option.

### **2.5 No representation in the government and/or policy-making level**

There is hardly any representation of the youth at policy-making level in the government and other non-governmental institutions. Qualified youth should get space at such level so that practicable and efficient steps are taken.

## 2.6 Youth Development budget

In the nation's total development budget, a certain portion needs to be allocated for overall development of the youth.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage Participation of Youth from all sections and strata of the society, including the so-called *dalit* and indigenous communities, in the activities ranging from decision-making to implementation.
- Guarantee citizenship to rightful individuals including the marginalized people.
- Simplify citizenship-obtaining process
- Conduct citizenship formal/informal orientation at the time of awarding the citizenship.
- Empower all youth by availing them of education and trainings on practical skills.
- Promote Employment Opportunities in the country and encourage self-employment.
- Make provision in the constitution for Youth commission, youth ministry or youth cells in each ministry to form national and international youth alliances to act as watchdogs and pressure groups.
- Give dual citizenship to the NRN (Non-Resident Nepalese) since doing so will facilitate inflow of foreign capital into the country.
- Youth should be regarded as one of the main element of the upcoming 11<sup>th</sup> plan of Nepal with focused priorities. Youth as the responsible citizens of any country are the agents of positive social transformation. So, enough investment should be made in them.
- Nepalese youths should be consulted in every policy issues before formulating them.

# Chapter 6

## GLOBAL YOUTH CULTURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth culture generally refers to the way young people (*adolescents and teenagers*) differentiate themselves from the general culture of their community. The difference today is that young people are connected to each other in ways never seen before. Today's youth are not solely dependent on their parents or traditional means for their knowledge and opinions. They are becoming more independent and as adults many of us do a very poor job of understanding them or even making an effort to understand them.

Young people today are defining themselves through hip-hop culture, new breeds of alternative music and a host of other methods. Someone eloquently deemed it "tribalism" and the young followers of today's musical genres, whether they are devotees of Uglyz or 1974 A.D's (popular musical groups of Nepal), The Insane Clown Posse or Justin Timberlake, are the voices of a new school. These new voices today echo what Bill Haley and The Comets, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and others meant in their parents' (or grandparents') day. As a matter of fact, various and readily available means of communication, accessibility to information and the open and global trade system has only made it easy for the youth everywhere to connect, share and be a part of a virtual team.

- Similar language pattern
- Similar music trend/ same music icons/ same charts
- Similar fashion / a TV host of Nepal is no different than one in some international music show
- Similar techno fad / a youth in Nepal carries the same ipod as a youth in the US
- Similar education systems / e-learning

If Nepal is to meet the challenges that now face our young people and our society, we must recognize the voices of our young people; we must understand their challenges and needs. If we are sincere in our endeavors to understand what is taking place with our young people, we must in earnest research youth culture and we must understand their language and their symbols. Just as Elvis Presley was the face of rock 'n' roll and the personification of a generation, young people today have their own faces and those with whom they identify. To denigrate or demonize the symbols and voices of this generation only widens the gap between the old school and the new school, further exacerbating the problems.

## 2. ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Globalization is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided. It is never an exceptional phenomenon changing young lives in almost every part of the globe. It was also considered during the discussion whether or not global youth culture needs to be adopted. However, it was realized that globalization and global youth culture tends to infiltrate within us, whether we like it or not. Factors enabling the global youth culture:

- **Access to information:** Today we learn global culture from these channels staying in one corner of our homes. The media involved are radio, television, Satellite channels, email, Internet, newspapers, etc.
- **Travel and Migration:** People who come back from abroad bring new cultures, fashion, attitudes, etc. Foreign people who visit Nepal as tourists bring their culture to our country.
- **Global curriculum:** We have a global curriculum today that assists in learning and adopting the global youth culture. Cartoons, textbooks, and curriculum assist in the process.
- **Immediate transformation of technology:** Young people adopt new technologies and most of the new technologies that come to our places are results of other culture and innovation.

### *Technology Not Aged*

*Many youth began using email only a few years (3-5) ago. They started using email for communicating with people in the other part of the globe, networking and because it was a cheaper and reliable technology.*

*Today they are using email and internet for chatting, applying to colleges and universities, searching job opportunities, entertainment, fashion, etc. There is also a level wise difference in their use. For example, children use internet for cartoons, undergraduate students for searching universities while adults use it for fashion, entertainment, etc.*

- **Innovation and liberal attitude:** Youths are generally attracted to newer and fresh ideas. The rise in liberal thinking of the people is also a factor that enables global youth culture.
- **Common Global Problems:** Global problems like international terrorism, ozone layer depletion, carbon emission, energy crisis have brought youths from all over the world together to tackle these problems. International forums, conferences or projects of international dimensions with local components are examples in this arena.
- **Advertisements:** Today the same advertisement is viewed by almost all youths around the world.
- **Accessibility to infrastructure:** Infrastructure refers to the agents necessary for any person to live a healthy life, viz., *Social* (Education, Health Post/ Hospital), *Economic* (Market, Market Centre, Financial, Manufacturing, and Trade), and *Physical* (Modes of Transportation- Air, Water and Road).
- **Freedom and Luxury:** Seeking individual freedom, especially youths are guided by the economic liberalization, where they demand for minimal government interventions, less family intervention in decision making. Search for easy lifestyles also enables the process.

***Who's happier?***

*Definitely not us... Because we have seen more and we have more needs and desires.*

It's obvious that we have gained a lot more than our elders did. However, because of the global youth culture, we have lesser time for leisure. Five years ago, we had more free time than we have today.

### **3. MAJOR CONCERNS FOR YOUTH**

#### **Mobility**

Mobility of youths in search of opportunities has significantly risen up in search of opportunities- employment and education. Youth want to study abroad today. Abroad degree from abroad fetches more credibility than a degree from home. Global recognition has started getting more value. One who studies abroad gets a wider and different perspective as well, in terms of environment, education and experience. It has posed a greater threat- a constant challenge of competition. Though competition can't be neglected for perfection, the threat of being lost in global phenomena is the prime concern for us youth.

***Do you have a passport?***

*Out of the 20 youth in the group discussing global youth culture,*

- *19 expressed interest to go abroad.*
- *18 already had received their passports.*

#### **Changing communication trends and techniques**

Today, we use telephones, mobiles, email and internet for communication. There are global methods. We exchange as much information in a day as our grandparents must have done in their lifetime. The purpose of writing a letter today is either compulsion or break in thought. We write a letter today if we want a break from email or SMS, for a change, or if we want to display our handwriting.

Today's youth are closer to those on their messenger list and they communicate with those whose email addresses or mobile/telephone numbers they have. Today you send a New Year wish to all in a list without actually knowing who is in the list. In this sense, people are being more head-driven than heart driven. Furthermore, our role models are also changing. *Prithvi Narayan Shah (The Great Leader of Nepal)* must have been our elders' role model, but it could be *Rajesh Hamal (a film actor)* now.

#### **Unfavorable economic opportunities**

Nepalese economy has plummeted after 2053/54. There is lack of incentives to venture or seek newer employment opportunities. It has curtailed youth's innovative role.

In some cases young people who are facing extremely difficult circumstances -- abject poverty, war, forced prostitution, serious (terminal) illness, homelessness, etc. lack even the most basic developmental foundations -- a stable family life, schooling, proper nutrition and health care. There are no quick solutions to such desperate situations. The needs of these young people are often greater and more complex than those of their peers.

### ***Increase in competition***

*When my father joined the army, there were army cadets at our home to ask him to join the army. But today when I like to join the army, there are 7000 applicants for 170 seats. My friends running miles each day have not been able to join the army. (A participant response)*

We definitely have more opportunities but there is a tougher competition. It results in frustration in a number of young people that results in a decline in productivity and quality of life of young people.

### **Urban Centric Opportunities**

There is very little opportunities in rural areas. Kathmandu youths are more advantaged than those of Jhapa who are also more advantaged than those of Taplejung and Jumla (Remote districts of Nepal).

### ***Haves and Have-nots***

*Many youths may think we can access more opportunities if we have more money. But many rich youths who have more access to education and everything are also not happy. Youth today need to do what they can with their effort. Richness is not*

### **Decision-making**

Youths are in a dilemma today. Their decisions involve compromises with the family. Parents have the final say until youth are strictly under their guidance for education and other needs. Decisions are dependent on youth's financial power as well—"if you have your own income, you can decide more on your own". Many agree that it also depends on personal decision power—"if you are more confident, you can decide and create finance and other resources".

The western culture demonstrates that youths above 18 rarely stay on with their parents. They move out of family and try to be self-dependent. This trend is also increasing in India. It's merely a fashion in Nepal. Nepal doesn't adopt "18: Leave Home" but a different trend can be obviously seen. Rural youths come to urban cities for university education. There they find job opportunities and slowly become self-dependent. Now they are away from home and also self-dependent. Here, it's not a culture but a trend, as a consequence of urban-centric opportunities.

### **Freedom**

Youth tend to enjoy their freedom. Some urban youth have left their homes and are living away from their parents with their boyfriends/ girlfriends. The effect of such practices on the socio-cultural values is yet to be deduced.

Youth leaving their homes and being self-dependent is good. It generates healthy and competent youth for development but it is agreed that youth still have to look after their elders, as they were not prepared to leave their children and live their elderly life alone. Our elders need children's help. Leaving them will result in broken relationships.

### **Youth Involvement**

We've been seeing that youth being mobilized for the vested interests of some groups at various times. It is imperative that youths understand and assess the situation to find out whether they are being simply mobilized for a vested interest. It is ironical to see science students burning vehicle wheels (that pollute environment) and throw bricks in front of their colleges. It is high time we realize whether there are other means of protests. Do all youth agree upon burning vehicle wheels for change and development in the country?

Youth need to sit together and discuss common issues and concerns. Appropriate programmes need to be charted out and implemented that would really bring out issues which can then be taken up with the concerned authorities. Youth need to be **involved** with their head and heart together for those common concerns.

### **Political Instability (Conflict)**

Last but not the least; conflict has been a crosscutting issue in all youth issues and concerns today. Youths have played a pivotal role in order to concretize politics. But it has remained an interlude between two episodes. Political instability has affected the lives of people, particularly the ongoing conflict. It has involved youth as a rebel or enters into government-armed service or remains internally displaced or migrate to India or to other parts of world in search of opportunities.

### **Categorization of youth**

Looking at the changing trends, it is imperative to categorize youth into 3 categories (age wise): 15-19, 20-25 and 26-29.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Segregation of jobs into time slots/pieces to make young people economically independent. Increase internships, international volunteering opportunities for youth, and cultural exchange programs in universities and host communities.
- Create employment opportunities, local or abroad. Politico-Economic stability will have a better impact in the country. For instance, many Indians emigrated from India many years ago when India's economy was not as stable as today and there were fewer opportunities but there is an increasing opposite trend now. Indians are returning back now as India has a better economy and better employment opportunities.
- Devise and implement local curriculum that are relevant to the local youth for practical education, e.g. different curricula for different regions. To cope with international competency, curricula should be upgraded especially at universities.
- Involve youth in development programs/ projects. We've invested a lot of money for rural development, but what's the impact? May be the programs that we implemented in those programs were just imposed that could not cope with the actual demands of the rural youth. Therefore employ techniques that would raise ownership of those projects.
- Enhance travel opportunities and reading culture in youth and bridge the gap between resources and existing opportunities.
- Paradigm shift – Youth mobilized in politics to effective youth involved in politics
- Specific programs for different categories of youth based on urban or rural, ethnicity, caste and gender.
- Setting up youth resource centers (guidance, counseling)

- Facilitating dissemination of information regarding educational and work opportunities available for young people.
- Sense of belongingness to the whole world i.e. being a global citizen and rising above the self-interest for the betterment of the human kind.

## 5. CONCLUSION

We shouldn't think of belonging to one group. We shouldn't fall in that trap. Economic development, and cultural richness is the all that we want. Barriers appear as soon as we start giving t labels. Wearing clothes from other countries doesn't mean that we are ruining our culture and ourself.

All youth are living in a globalized world. We have been eating noodles in the most rural parts of Jumla. However, urban youth is only a small part of the wholesome youth in Nepal. It is mandatory to work in the information dissemination sector pertinent to youth. If youth has enough information about development and opportunities, they can be more involved in development activities for youth and for the country. Appropriate information models need to be developed for packaging and disseminating relevant information for youth. As youth is the strongest power of the nation, the youth themselves, government and civil society and partnering agencies should work together for youth development.

Let's live in a world full of diversity, experience the rich culture of your fellow global citizens and let them enjoy that of yours, making this world joyful and prosperous.