

World Bank Youth Consultations
on
The World Development Report, 2007: Development and the Next Generation

The World Bank, New Delhi Office, January 24, 2006

Introductory Remarks

The World Bank Youth Consultation began with a brief introduction discussing the role of the World Bank as the world's largest source of funding to the governments. The context for the consultations was set by explaining the World Development Report which focuses on certain key issues every year. Keeping in mind the booming youth population across the world, the upcoming WDR 2007 looks at development issues around young people. India was described as being a prime example of a country with ever increasing numbers of young people. Sri Lanka was cited as an example where there are a significant number of qualified young people yet no major economic move has been made by the country.

The introductory session also explained the basic structural layout of the Bank and laid out a general overview for the day. It was emphasized that the youth are encouraged and expected to be active members in deciding the outcome of the day's meeting.

Questions at the end of the introduction raised specific concerns ranging from how the World Bank distributes its funds to governments, the choice of Delhi as the site for the consultation, collection of loans by the Bank and who are the ultimate decision making authorities. Participants also wanted reassurance from the panel that the issues and possible solutions brought up by them would make it into their report, especially their distress about the education system in India. This was followed by introductions which allowed everyone to recognize the diversity of participants.

Small Group Discussions

The latter part of the day was spent on small group discussions on 6 pre-determined themes for the WDR, education, staying healthy, finding a job, being a citizen, globalization, and leaving home and starting a family.

I. EDUCATION

Wide variations in quality and access to education are seen across India and this was discussed in depth. There is considerable discrepancy between urban and rural education. The lack of proper infrastructure is certainly a concern as is the lack of staff that need more incentives to work in rural areas.

There is also a significant gender inequality with a bias towards educating male children over females. It is understood that working towards equal rights for girls and boys is still a significant problem that needs to receive more attention. Education was described as being the first stepping stone towards productive citizens and it's time that the Indian government and World Bank look at improving the current situation.

Young people feel immense pressure from their parents when deciding which educational path to choose. There is ongoing emphasis to go into fields like medicine and engineering and there is little encouragement for studies in humanities. This means that careers such as teaching are not encouraged and this feeling of under appreciation might contribute to the lack of staffing in schools.

Participants felt there is a lack of political will to address the poor delivery of education. As mentioned above access to quality education poses a serious problem for many rural youth as they cannot the better urban education systems. Further, they are unaware of the job placement days etc. held in urban colleges. All of the above mentioned issues need to be addressed immediately. Participants also noted that counselling services need to be provided to youth in rural areas to motivate them to seek higher studies. Vocational education was suggested for those individuals who do not wish to take an academic route

**** (For further details please refer to the respective power point presentation) – we can insert a link to PPT here**

II. STAYING HEALTHY

Health is often neglected by young people who are usually under heavy pressure from the school to work transition. Eating unhealthy food, stress and lack of physical activity all add to an unhealthy youth population. Moreover, there is a clear divide between the health of a rural youth versus the health of an urban youth. Health is intimately tied to education and poverty. Participants voiced their concern that the quality of food and amount of caloric intake is important in determining how healthy the body stays.

There is also a strong gender angle in the health of young people in India. Discrimination ranges from unequal distribution of food between the genders to female infanticide and foeticide. India continues to be a male dominated society and hence many concerns particular to women's health are never heard.

Another concern is the increasing use of drugs among youth. Participants said that causes for this increase included a highly competitive education system, increasing unemployment upon graduating from university, peer pressure, high levels of stress, lack of love and affection, and curiosity.

Participants noted that health is not discussed and there is a general lack of awareness about healthy living. This is the result of a combination of factors: communication gap between parent and child, superstitions and socio-cultural practices, lack of sex education in schools and lack of counselling facilities. Some of the potential solutions that the youth brainstormed were to improve access to health facilities, allocating more resources towards health, increasing training and availability of medical personnel, introducing sex education in schools and colleges, monitoring and feedback sessions and using the media more aggressively to disseminate health related information.

**** (For further details please refer to the respective power point presentation)**

III. FINDING A JOB

Discussions among participants in this group closely reflected many of the concerns voiced by people discussing the problems with the education sector. Factors determining the type of job an individual applies for depends on access to information which is greatly determined by the rural-urban divide. There was general agreement about the social pressure they felt in getting a job soon after graduation.

Participants felt that the lack of a standard educational system creates problems when applying for jobs. Other factors like rural to urban migration have changed the demographics of the job market. Additionally youth have opted to work aboard resulting in a national brain drain. The BPO sector was hotly debated. Many argued for globalization as it increases employment in India while others argued against it stating that western nations are taking advantage of the cheap labour in India.

It goes without saying that the needs of youth in the rural sector are different from the needs of the urban youth and participants suggested a needs assessment. This would be useful in the future policy making and implementation in regards to developing a more prosperous nation. It was also recommended that youth be given career counselling so that they may be able to make more informed decisions & choices about their career choices.

**** (For further details please refer to the respective power point presentation)**

IV. BEING A CITIZEN

Participants discussed what it meant to be an Indian Citizen and whether young people can adequately fulfil this role. They also discussed the ways in which they can get bring about positive change. Many felt they could do so by getting involved in politics but felt they had no outlet to do so. Further, most young people have no intentions of entering the political arena due to desensitization towards the

problems of the country. Participants stressed the needs for a safe environment in which they could speak without negative repercussions. Youth should be advocates of change if they see a certain problem in society, which they should acknowledge and work towards solving it.

Participants agreed that being a citizen means feeling a sense of belonging and ownership towards ones country and the world at large. It means giving back to one's country and participating in welfare activities. However, this depends on where the youth are living. The reoccurring theme of the rural and urban divide came up again as participants discussed how this influences their involvement. It was unanimously agreed that volunteerism should be a part of a youth's life at one point, however participating in the armed forces should not be made mandatory.

**** (For further details please refer to the respective power point presentation)**

V. GLOBALIZATION

Globalization was discussed as a dynamic process that improves access. It allows exchange of intellectual and cultural information. There were strong views in the gathering on both the positive and negative aspects of globalization. Positive aspects of globalization that were noted included becoming more aware of the world they live in; increased choices and opportunities, a better quality of life, greater tolerance and connectivity. Negative aspects of globalization that were pointed out included political hegemony and inequitable process that can create an even bigger divide between the rich and poor. Misallocation of resources, misuse of information, increase in antisocial behavior, work and family life imbalances were other negative issues associated with globalization. The youth understood and appreciated the fact that they are agents of change. With the growth of globalization youth feel their role is to ensure equitability, to demonstrate leadership, to question changes, to learn, apply and re-learn.

**** (For further details please refer to the respective power point presentation)**

VI. LEAVING HOME AND STARTING A FAMILY

The sixth theme was dropped because no participant showed interest in discussing this issue, which in itself was an interesting thing to note. The probable reason for this can be that the other five were more immediate concerns for the youth than the sixth theme.

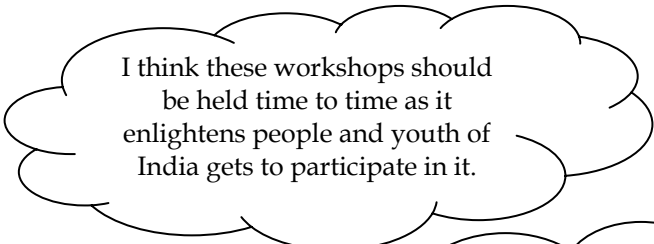
Closing Remarks

This consultation not only provided an opportunity for many enthusiastic youths to learn more about the structure and working of the World Bank but most importantly offered them a platform to get their voices heard.

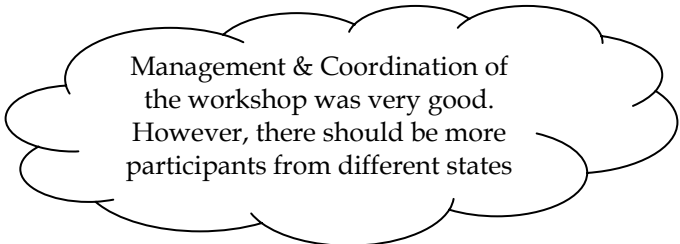
The day concluded with a presentation by each of the five groups followed by our two last keynote speakers. Mr. Hooda, a young Member of Parliament from Haryana, acknowledged the sentiments of the youth and reassured them that their voices will be presented to the Indian Government. As a young member of the government he related his experience in deciding on a career path and emphasized that ultimately the choice lies in the hands of youth about the decisions she/he makes in life.

This was then followed by words of encouragement and empowerment for the youth by Dr. Zeenat, Chairperson, SPYM. She concurred with Mr. Hooda that the choice lies in the hands of youth and that they should recognize and most importantly realize the potential they have as agents of change.

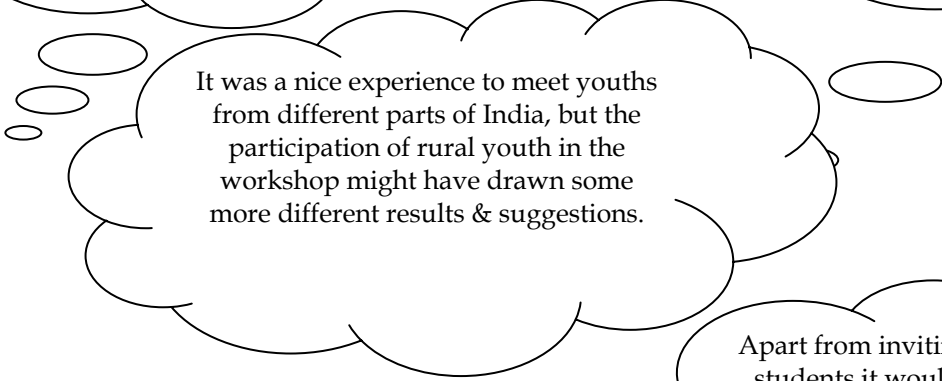
SOME QUOTES FROM THE PARTICIPANTS



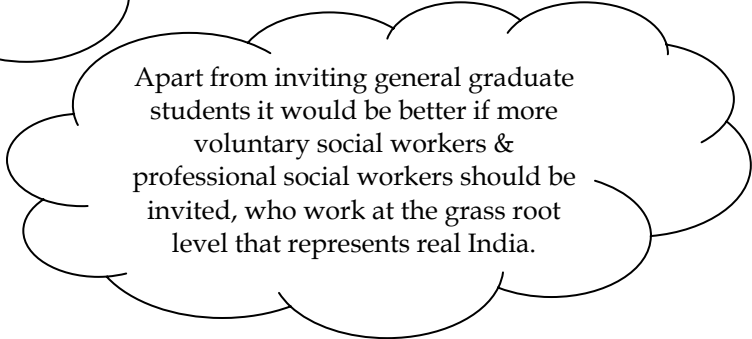
I think these workshops should be held time to time as it enlightens people and youth of India gets to participate in it.



Management & Coordination of the workshop was very good. However, there should be more participants from different states



It was a nice experience to meet youths from different parts of India, but the participation of rural youth in the workshop might have drawn some more different results & suggestions.



Apart from inviting general graduate students it would be better if more voluntary social workers & professional social workers should be invited, who work at the grass root level that represents real India.