

CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOLUTION PROVIDERS ON EDUCATION, SKILLS, CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS SIX STATES AND DELHI (NATIONAL)

MAIN FINDINGS

September – October 2018



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, UNICEF's work to support the unique needs of young people has gained momentum, as the challenges facing them have come more sharply into view. UNICEF is committed to deliver for all children and adolescents through its overall impact goal of 'realizing the rights of **every child**, especially the most disadvantaged'. Building on the current work with, and for, adolescents, in line with the United Nations Youth Strategy, UNICEF is developing a new global partnership **Generation Unlimited (GenU)** which is dedicated to expanding opportunity for young people from ages 10 to 24 years. Maximising the potential of the United Nations system, Governments, Civil Society Organizations and the private sector, and of young people themselves, GenU is focused on finding new ways to ensure that every young person is in school, undergoing formal or informal learning or training, or is employed by 2030.

YUWAAH!

OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE, FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE, BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE

GenU has been localized as YuWaah! In India. It signifies catalytic partnerships to unleash the potential of adolescents and young people. YuWaah! has been designed to allow co-creation of solutions that are relevant and scalable for ensuring that young people in India have opportunity and choices for learning; have avenues and spaces for functional and vocational training and can choose between employment and entrepreneurship which are accessible and supported locally. Through Yuwaah, young people will play a pivotal role in the development and governance of this partnership involving leaders in public, private and civic sectors, they will inform, advise and help shape and monitor the change.

YuWaah! intends to bring together a wide range of partners, including governments, UN agencies, the private sector, academia, international and national NGOs/civil society organizations, and young people with specific objectives to:

- Co-create solutions with, and for, young people for promising ideas to address the gaps.
- Fund and scale-up existing innovative solutions to expand opportunities for young people.
- Engage young people to help lead this new partnership; inform, advise and help implement change.

4 Pillars of YuWaah! Partnership

Learning - flexible & vocational	Life and employability skills	Career Guidance	Income Generation Pathways
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The platform is to be built on 5 building blocks that help us meet the aspirations of our young people:

- 01 Listening to the voices of adolescents & young people:** YuWaah is committed to ensure that young people's voices are consistently listened to and integrated.
- 02 Collating trends and insights:** Research and knowledge on the key issues are available to all stakeholders to better understand changes in behaviors and perceptions of young people, adapt existing solutions.
- 03 Co-creating solutions:** Solutions based on most urgent needs and existing best practices in mentioned areas are to be co-created with relevant actors including young people themselves.
- 04 Catalysing scale and sustainability through partnerships:** Identified solutions to be curated, and their implementation and scale up supported by leveraging broad-based partnerships. A dynamic technical support system connecting field work to regional and global levels and allowing a constant flow of knowledge and learning among members. Country implementation of solutions will be promoted with strong involvement of partners including national and local governments.
- 05 Flywheel of learning, collaboration and action:** A dedicated team constantly disseminating learnings to all stakeholders, brokering and mobilizing financial, political and technical support, and delivering a responsive system to collaboratively curate action plans that drive the objectives of YuWaah.

In this backdrop, on September 17- 25, 2018, UNICEF in collaboration with partners organized two-day long state level consultations in Karnataka, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Gujarat. This was followed by a two-day national conclave from 30th September - 1st October, 2018 in Delhi where selected young people and solution providers from the six states were invited to reflect on the process of co-creation, share perspectives and challenges with representatives from National Government, private sector and civil society organizations.

THE STATE LEVEL CONSULTATIONS

Objectives

The specific objectives of the six state consultations were to:

- Listen to the voices of the young people with respect to their challenges, needs, dreams and aspirations related to education, skilling and employment.
- Understand and deep-dive into the solutions from each state with a special focus on solutions catering to adolescents and young people, especially from marginalized communities (gender, tribal, disadvantaged) both in and out of school and in institutions for children in need of care and protection.
- Stimulate a dialogue between young people and solution providers (CSOs, private sector, government, educators) for improved solutions to provide the enabling environment to bring about change.

Process and Participation at the State Level

A framework was designed to facilitate a participative process in the six states to listen to challenges, needs, dreams and aspirations of young people on their education, skilling and career choices, and to enable the process of co-creating solutions with young people themselves. This intensive two-day process set the ground for a dialogue encouraging free expression in a non-judgmental space for young girls and boys coming from diverse backgrounds and further engage with peers, solution providers and state government representatives in the ideation for potential solutions.

The consultation process as well as the facilitation methodology applied were designed to enhance effective participation of both young girls and boys taking into consideration their specific needs. While sharing common difficulties in the process of their navigation to access quality education and decent jobs, specific set of challenges for each gender could be clearly noticed. These challenges are closely interrelated with prevailing social expectations from a young woman and a young man, these expectations nurtured by social norms often define the pathways for each gender in the country.

The framework of consultations with solution providers allowed listening to their perspectives, deep-diving into the solutions shared, understanding the solution providers' challenges and the support needed. The second day the young people took over and shared their top challenges related to the mentioned areas. Young people and solution providers brainstormed on viable solutions and presented to the larger audience.

The direct consultation and the co-creation process with young people was new to the majority of the solution providers, who found it one of its kind as well as a critical discussion to plan and implement solutions for young people.

KEY FINDINGS

Objectives

Below is the summary of key factors, which were expressed to influence the reality of the education and employment possibilities for adolescents and young people:

- 01 Safe spaces for self-expression** are critical and empowering to adolescents and young people. They look for non-judgmental spaces to evolve and understand how to deal constructively with numerous challenges at individual, immediate and wider social levels. These spaces inspire them to build self-confidence and learn to participate in decision-making processes (courage to share views with parents and teachers, possibility of making choices about education, employment and social life, navigating in a complex environment of social norms and multiple expectations). These spaces become even more crucial, taking into consideration the specific needs each gender faces at this time of life (delaying marriage and building/protecting other aspirations in case of girls; learning to deal with strong social pressure and adopting positive masculine behaviours for boys).
- 02 Education system** continues to be highly competitive and theoretical, offers a very small scope for experiential learning and life skill building for successful and smooth entry to adulthood.

- 03 **Gender and caste-based discrimination** stood out clearly to influence education and employment choices. Adolescent girls are faced with multiple challenges from lack of safe infrastructure to demanding sibling care and forced marriage, which hinders their enrolment and retention in secondary education as well as drastically limits future earning possibilities. Adolescent boys are often pushed to start low-skilled jobs to generate immediate income – this does not provide them with the perspectives they aspire for their future. Issues related to caste discrimination are strongly prevalent in rural areas, young people are faced with many difficulties in pursuing employment options considered inappropriate for the caste or community they come from.
- 04 **Systemic gaps** are preventing the information regarding government schemes and services from reaching the adolescents, especially the most vulnerable. Most young people do not know about the existing government schemes addressing access to education, skills for life & work, employment and entrepreneurship; and need information to be available locally.
- 05 Young people wish to see **more value given to education and professional development by their parents**. Many of them aspire for longer term career goals and meaningful contributions to their communities rather than being pushed into first available low-paid livelihood options to generate immediate income. Adolescents continue emphasizing the need for supporting their parents, who are often less educated and have difficulties in guiding the adolescents in the evolving world.
- 06 **Fear of failure** has been clearly highlighted in all states, adolescents wish to live in a more enabling environment. Examples of depression and nervous break-downs related to this were shared.
- 07 **Adolescents with special needs** continue being isolated and strongly stigmatised, lack of trained teaching personnel in schools as well as lack of inclusive social spaces hinders their full participation. It is important to note that adolescents with such background had exceptional contributions throughout the consultations in all states.
- 08 While **some young people expressed interest in self-employment and entrepreneurship**, the majority inclined towards safe and secure job placement - alluding to issues related to income security that is perhaps most critical for those coming from lower economic conditions. Lack of a supportive ecosystem and resources for guidance contributes to this.
- 09 **The importance given to the existence of unconventional role models** was specifically present in rural geographies where opportunities are few and young people look up to those from their communities and outside who have done things differently. Adolescents have a significant trust in young people and find **mentoring initiatives essential**.

More concretely, below is the top list of challenges and needs as well as aspirations and dreams shared by adolescents and young people.

Challenges and Needs

Related to Education	Related to Employment
01 Lack of access to quality and affordable education for children with disabilities and special needs	01 Insufficient employment possibilities in rural areas hence forced migration
02 No flexible learning opportunities for out of school children and youth	02 Weak linkages between market demand and placement opportunities
03 Lack of integration of life skills training and career planning in schools.	03 Lack of a supportive ecosystem and resources for guidance, training and work linkages
04 Lack of access to and affordability of secondary education	04 Discriminatory environment at multiple levels - from access to education, skills and employment opportunities
05 Lack of flexible learning and digital education opportunities for remote and hard to reach geographies	05 Lack of access to information and awareness on schemes for education, entrepreneurship and career development
06 Need for after-care opportunities for adolescents in residential care institutions	06 Lack of apprenticeship, internship or fellowship opportunities at the school level.
07 Low participation of students in School	07 Lack of support for start-ups including low access to loans with lower interests and stigma about youth entrepreneurship
08 Management Committees disallowing a feedback system and involvement of children in school governance	
09 Rote learning and conventional teaching methods which reprimand low performance	
10 Low access to education loans with affordable interest rates	
11 Lack of social protection opportunities for children of migrant families	

Aspirations and Dreams

Related to Education	Related to Employment
01 Parental and school support to choose subject and career	01 Access to information and resources to fulfil entrepreneurial dreams
02 A sensitive teacher who is also a mentor and does not discriminate	02 Vocational, life skills training and alternative/flexible learning opportunities for school drop-outs and youth with special needs.
03 Schools with inclusive facilities and opportunities - computer labs, libraries, safe drinking water and gender appropriate toilets	03 Internship opportunities that provide life and employability skills
04 Improved access to higher education for girls including safe hostels and transportation	04 Knowledge and access to social protection schemes
05 Motivational lectures in class room to encourage adolescents to take on challenges, follow aspirations, address issues related to family and self	05 Platforms to engage with young achievers on potential employment and entrepreneurial opportunities
06 Educational knowledge coupled with skill development; focus on both life and work skills.	06 Opportunities to earn within the community, with the community and create sustainable economy models
07 Education, career planning and employment opportunities as a continuum of support starting at the school level.	07 Access to seed funds and credit at reasonable rates
08 Knowledge about higher education opportunities and career pathways	08 Access to information on career guidance, empowerment, entrepreneurship development and gender
09 Time for learning instead of house chores and taking care of siblings	09 Access to labour market without discrimination.

More concretely, below is the top list of challenges and needs as well as aspirations and dreams shared by adolescents and young people.

Aspirations and Dreams

Education	Life skills / employability skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 01 Rigid human resource recruitment policy within education sector, which does not lead to quality teaching personnel 02 Poor infrastructure and resources in Government funded schools 03 Lack of School monitoring and evaluation system for teacher and curriculum performance 04 Absence of a vision and adequate opportunities for flexible learning possibilities 05 Lack of power and functionality of School Management Committees 06 Very restricted budget and transparency for education and literacy programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 01 No common understanding of the notion of “life skills” and no national life skill curriculum implementation 02 Limited access to training and employment opportunities for adolescents due to parental pressure 03 Weak information dissemination strategy at community level to access governmental schemes 04 Lack of quality skilling and employability support measures by government and private sector 05 Absence of structures providing information at the village/block level on education, training, career choices and personal development of adolescents
Career Guidance	Income Generation Pathways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 01 Lack of good models of professional career guidance to scale up, both in school and 02 Most career guidance solutions cater to a niche, affluent class, very few solutions offering services to rural youth. 03 No adequate information about current market demand as well as jobs of future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 01 Lack of adequate jobs, especially in rural areas 02 Socially non-conducive environment for unconventional job creation and attracting young people 03 Mismatch between the demands of labour market and skills of young people 04 Low or no Government support for effective policy implementation and collaboration for creating jobs or providing funding for small enterprises at the rural level 05 Lack of schemes to support entrepreneurship for school dropouts 06 Lack of cooperation and synergy among multiple solution providers

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

For improved enabling environment...

- 01 **Platforms for convergence** - progressive interventions in given areas are present in all states but only their synergy would bring an important impact. Private-public partnerships should be prioritized.
- 02 **Dialogues with young people** - the process of co-creation itself was a real eye-opener to all solution providers; it provoked important discussions about the change they need to bring in their perception of adolescents and young people and skills they need to develop to be able to listen and partner to design and implement solutions for them. Regular platforms for this dialogue to happen are needed.
- 03 **Parental support** - community-based services to support parents in building improved understanding of the needs and perspectives of adolescents including consequences of early marriages, right to education, aspiration for dignifying and decent jobs.
- 04 **Social accountability and ongoing feedback** - online and offline mechanisms to monitor and suggest changes for improvement in the provision of government funded services and schemes.
- 05 **Involvement of adolescents and young people in governance** – support for regular platforms of adolescent and youth participation at panchayat, block and district level (Bal Sabhas, Bal Panchayats)

For improved learning and earning possibilities...

- 01 **Resource centres at district/block/village level** - to disseminate information related to education, life skills and employability skills, career guidance and job opportunities as well as guidance on accessing various governmental schemes and services. The centres should also link interested young people to financial assistance and/or low interest loans to set up enterprises.
- 02 **Career counseling and guidance services** – school-based career counseling and guidance services, digital platforms, school and community fairs and kiosks to accompany adolescents and young people in their choices, mobile career counselling and guidance services for out of school adolescents and hard to reach geographies.
- 03 **Flexible learning possibilities** - specially designed learning programs to reach working adolescents and young people as well as adolescent/young people with disabilities or those who have dropped out of formal education.
- 04 **Spaces for life skills development** – improved experience-based life skills curriculum in school, support for life skills development in other spaces (community adolescent groups, youth clubs, etc.)

- 05 **School Management Committees** – improved functioning of SMCs, more meaningful participation by parents and other community members, more space given to students to learn to participate in decision-making from early age and contribute with their concrete solutions.
- 06 **Learn and earn opportunities** – information and access to apprenticeships and fellowships to encourage young people to earn when they learn, so that also they are not faced with the choice between schooling and supporting their family through mostly low-skilled labour.
- 07 **Enhanced vocational training** – quality vocational training available at the community level (where possible based in schools).
- 08 **Rural youth entrepreneurship** - promote and incentivise rural entrepreneurship for young people.
- 09 **Pitching agriculture and farming as a lucrative career** – innovative ways of doing agriculture are interesting to young people. Many of them expressed the wish to be able to stay in their communities and reduce migration to cities. Advanced support for farming technology, expanded seed funding and market access opportunities could contribute to this.
- 10 **Access to seed funding** – special schemes for providing group loans and technical support for youth entrepreneurship.
- 11 **Mentorship by successful young people** – adolescents are most inspired by young achievers, initiatives linking aspiring adolescents with young entrepreneurs/professionals could generate important change in communities. This is especially important when adolescents choose to go for unconventional professions and usually meet strong social resistance.

YUWAAH NATIONAL CONCLAVE

A two-day conclave jointly hosted by Niti Aayog and UNICEF India at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi brought together 30 young people and 43 solution providers from six states, who shared the outcomes of state consultations with each other and larger audience of about 75 participants from private sector, government and international organisations.

Key Commitments Made

By Government

- 01 Amitabh Kant, CEO Niti Aayog shared that Niti Aayog is committed to:
 - ~ Support 500 incubation centers across the country in the next 3 years to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of the young people
 - ~ A data portal to make data accessible to young people, which they can use for research, innovation and technology
 - ~ Taking women employment to the world average of 48% which is currently only 22% in India by pushing gender parity

- 02 K P Krishnan, Secretary Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship called for cooperation and convergence by Govt, CSOs and private sector for specific focus on aspirational districts to:
- ~ Mobilize the young people
 - ~ For aptitude test of young people to assess their strengths
 - ~ Creating career counselling opportunities at block/district level
 - ~ Providing appropriate skills based on aspirations of the young people and market needs
- 03 Reena Ray, Secretary Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of HRD, shared that GIS mapping of all schools will be done across the country in a few months to ensure basic infrastructure and facilities like toilets are available

By Corporate Sector

- 01 Srikant Sinha, CEO NASSCOM shared that their will continue to create innovation labs for girls/women across the country. These labs have been functional at public libraries to ensure ease of access.
- 02 Foram Nagori, Corporate Director CSR Taj Hotels, shared that the Taj Group is committed to co-create business models keeping emerging markets and skill requirements at the center of its work. This will encourage young people to take on artisanal and skill-based enterprises.
- 03 Arvind textiles has committed to make apprenticeship program available for children and young people living in institutions providing care and protection in the state of Gujarat.

Other recommendations

- 01 Greater commitment of the private sector for expanded resources and innovation in creating job and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.
- 02 Strong social accountability mechanisms to improve implementation of governmental schemes and social protection services and to enhance the enabling environment. Leadership by Niti Aayog to drive partnerships across sectors in the country.
- 03 National Campaign for YuWaah to bring the voices of the young people from the farthest and remotest corners of the country and make sure they are part of solution co-creation process.

