

Youth in Agriculture: Role of Government Initiatives

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Abstract

Youth are the building blocks of a nation. The role of the youth in nation-building occupies the central position. Development of youth determines the development of the community and the country as a whole. The socio-economic development and prosperity of the rural areas depend upon the potential youth of the country, as the rural youth have abilities to orient themselves to go along with the main stream of the development process. India both before and after independence has witnessed emergence of youth as a potential force and to reckon with it, the involvement of youth in national developmental activities is necessary. It was felt significantly relevant because of their boundless energy and innate idealism, which could give a positive direction in improving the quality of life. To harness the potential of youth and to take the benefit of demographic dividend holistically, Government of India has announced multifarious schemes. These schemes are based on the principles of social inclusion, gender equality and sustainable development of rural areas. The difference in basic amenities, communication, health and education facilities between villages and urban areas attract youth towards the cities.

Keywords: Youth, Agriculture, Government initiatives

Introduction

The more empowered the youth, the more developed the nation is. The countries which channelize the potential of youth in the right direction are more developed. The energy and intellect of youth act as a torch-bearer for a nation. On the contrary, the countries which fail to realize the importance of the youth lag behind in every dimension of development. Of the 121 crore Indians, 83.3 crore live in rural areas while 37.7 crore live in urban areas (Census of India's 2011). The share of youth in total population has been increasing continuously from the level of 30.6 per cent in the year 1971 to 34.8 per cent in the year 2011 (The Hindu, 2017). As per Census of India 2011, youth (15-24 years) in India constitute one-fifth (19.1%) of India's total population. This important section of the rural population can respond to the needs of the country only if they are offered fruitful opportunities for growing

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up as useful citizens. In India, youth constitute a numerically dominant potential, resourceful and also adventurous segment of the population, (Anonymous 2014). Rural youth play an important role in agriculture and other allied activities. Rural youth, either male or female, because of their family background in farming can be active partners in various agricultural activities. Since youth are recognized as effective “agents of change” they can help in the process of dissemination and adoption of modern techniques and methods of agriculture and can take active part in the removal of resistance to innovations among rural people.

Importance of Youth in Society

Development of youth determines the development of the community and the country as a whole. The socio-economic development and prosperity of the rural areas depend upon youth of the country. They are the precious human assets who can play an important role in the nation building activities, if opportunities are provided. If a country can harness a creative and pervasive force like youth, it can substantially and quickly advance towards modernization. Youth have been playing quite a significant role in almost every country of the world as they possess zeal and vigour necessary to create opportunities for national development.

India both before and after independence witnessed emergence of youth as a potential force to reckon with. Involvement of youth in national developmental activities is felt significantly relevant because of their boundless energy and innate idealism, which could give a positive direction in improving the quality of life. The Government of India has been organizing planned and systematic programmes for the development of youth for their participation in national development. India is a country where majority of the population live in rural areas, therefore the role of youth is very important in the future of the country. In society their roles are more important in construction and adoption of new social values. The development and harnessing of the talents and energies of youth towards constructive work is of greater importance than any other effort.

Migration of Rural Youth from Agriculture

With 356 million, India has the world's largest youth population despite having a smaller population than China. The livelihood of a majority of Indian population is dependent on agriculture. The population of the country below 35 years of age is 51.8 per cent. Of this 48.2 per cent are women and 51.8 per cent are men, 30.1 per cent reside in urban areas and 69.9 per cent in rural India. (Rani, 2015).

Agriculture generally involves five stages *viz.*, production, processing, storage, marketing and consumption. In most of these stages rural youth can actively be involved. Rural youth participate in marketing where the trade or enterprise is highly/commercialized. Rural youth play a key role in performing various tasks related to dairy and goatery enterprises in activities like maintenance of cattle/goat shed, feeding of animals/goats, collection of fodder for animals/ goats *etc.*

But unfortunately, there is a continuous increase in the migration of rural youth to urban areas. Large numbers, mostly youth are moving away from rural areas to urban centres because there are fewer employment opportunities back home. The migration of rural people to cities is around 45 per cent in the country, which has several implications for the future of Indian agriculture. Out of total migrants from rural to urban areas youth account for 30 per cent. While the average age of Indian population is only 29 years, the average age of farmers is 55 years which indicates lesser youth participation in agriculture. Given the growing disinterest of youth in this sector, there are risks to agriculture raising the question of ‘who will do farming in the future?’

According to survey results, rural youth who currently live or have lived in urban communities relocated to large centres to pursue post-secondary education, find employment, or accompany family (Malatest, 2002). Rural youth have fewer opportunities after formal education than their urban counterparts. It is also acknowledged that youth get into trouble more often if they have nowhere to go and no meaningful activities to keep them occupied after school hours. Although youth migration has been a popular subject in recent years, little research has focused on the migration between rural and urban areas. One of the main factors affecting young people’s success in employment in agricultural practices was their limited connection with local informal networks. Informal networks provided young people with information about forthcoming employment opportunities or personal recommendations for jobs (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000). It is felt that extension educators can extend the opportunities in youth development issues (Ommani and Chizari 2006). They have the ability to help youth develop in different ways. In addition, efforts should be made to help youth to develop the capacity to voice their needs within the cultural, social, and political framework. Lucus (2007) explained, currently 472 million young people are living in rural communities in developing countries. Unfortunately, many rural young people are choosing to migrate to the city in order to make a better life for themselves or send money home to help their families-“an exodus that constitutes a severe threat to global food security”.

It is disturbing to note that our youth are losing interest and confidence in agriculture and allied activities; hence they are not willingly involved in agricultural operations. In spite of excellent and tremendous development in the field of agriculture, science and technology, only a few have been adopted. Youth are more receptive to new innovations or techniques in any field of development. The youth, if provided proper training in modern agricultural technologies, would not only come forward to accept changes but can also influence and educate the members of the farming community about modern agricultural technologies. The urban youth are mostly educated, organized in many forms and have access to facilities and institutions meant for youth services. On the other hand, rural youth are mostly having less opportunity for higher education, burdened with the needs of their own families, lack of opportunities for organizing themselves to engage in constructive work and also lack guidance for participation in development activities. Though rural youth have different fields of activities, they have not been involved and motivated to contribute to the development process. This is due to several reasons, such as, lack of nationwide youth programmes, lack of an appropriate network for youth organizations, lack of training and guidance, lack of inter-departmental or sectorial coordination.

All these factors largely contribute to rather unplanned and forced migration of youth from rural areas to urban centers. So, to stop this trend of migration and to make them participate in the general prosperity of the rural community, it is inevitable to develop different income generating activities to ensure their participation. Therefore, the development and harnessing of the talents and energies of youth towards constructive channels has always engaged the attention of a country's planners and policy makers. One of the most effective ways of development and channeling the potential of youth towards creative purpose is through the youth clubs. They help young people to develop themselves physically, mentally, socially and economically and prepare them to meet the future challenges of life effectively. The socio-economic development and prosperity of the rural areas depend upon the type of youth the country own, as the rural youth have the abilities to orient themselves to go along the main stream of the development process. The youth form the bulk of total population of the country. They are the national cream and the future crown with full possession of physical built and mental tenacity and power.

In our country, youth constitute a numerically dominant potential, resourceful and also adventurous segment of the population. According to 1991 census, youth

population in India with the age group of 15 to 35 years was around 31 per cent (246 million) of the total population. Out of this total youth population, 20 per cent (53 million) were urban youth, while the remaining 80 per cent (211 million) were rural (Shivalingaiah, 1995). India both before and after independence witnessed emergence of youth as a potential force, to reckon with. Involvement of youth in national developmental activities is felt significantly relevant because of their boundless energy and innate idealism, which could give a positive direction in improving the quality of life. The Government of India has been organizing planned and systematic programmes for the development of Indian youth for their participation in the national development. As agricultural operations/activities are seasonal in nature, the rural youth will be engaged in these activities during the seasonal period while during off/ lean period they will not have any work or they will be free. So rural youth will have to be given proper training and orientation about self-employment programmes like ACABC and WYTEP (Women and Youth Training Extension Project) *etc.* and encouraging them to take up self-employment, thereby contributing additional income to their family and improving their standard of living.

At present, the youth are having different needs, aspirations, attitudes, habits and values of life. The development of personal, social, economic and spiritual aspects of rural youth are possible, only when their needs, aspirations, attitudes, habits and values of life are recognized early and guided properly. Therefore, some of these aspects were considered which would be useful to the agencies involved in the development of rural youth.

Government Initiative to attract Youth in Agriculture

To harness the potential of youth and to take the benefit of demographic dividend holistically, Government of India has and is announcing multifarious schemes. These schemes are based on the principle of social inclusion, gender equality, and sustainable development of rural areas. Some of the schemes and steps are:

Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA) Scheme

This scheme ARYA has recently been launched by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). This program is planned to be implemented through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK-Agriculture Science Centres) in 25 states of our country. Each KVK would train about 200 to 300 youth in taking up agriculture's allied and supplementary activities such as poultry farming, dairying, fisheries,

goat rearing, mushroom production and other similar activities which keep the rural youth attached to agriculture, either directly or indirectly. Finally, the trained young entrepreneurs would be assisted in preparing project reports for seeking bank loans.

Agri-Clinic and Agri-business Centre

Agriclinics and Agribusiness Centres (ACABC) scheme is implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India (GoI) to foster entrepreneurship in agriculture. Through this scheme fresh and unemployed agricultural graduates are imparted training (for 2 months) on entrepreneurship avenues in agriculture and transformed as agripreneurs through establishment of need-based agribusiness ventures.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide gainful employment and foster entrepreneurship in agriculture and rural areas and to attract investment in agriculture. The aim is to supplement and complement the extension services of development departments of state governments in extending broad-based services to the farming community.

The scheme has the support from NABARD for extending loan facilities to the agripreneurs through banking sector and that of MANAGE and SFAC in training the fresh and unemployed agricultural graduates through nodal training institutes identified all over the country. The scheme has been in operation from 2002 onwards.

Skill India

Entrepreneurship efforts will not be succeeding until and unless the bridges of gap are fulfilled. So, there is a need for speedy reorganization of the ecosystem of skill development and entrepreneurship promotion in the country to suit the needs of the industry and enable decent quality of life to its population. However, there are gaps in the capacity and quality of training infrastructure as well as outputs, insufficient focus on workforce aspirations, lack of certification and common standards and a pointed lack of focus on the unorganized sector. Recognizing the need and urgency of coordinating the efforts of all concerned stakeholders in the field of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Skill India was launched. The National Skill Development Corporation India (NSDC) governed Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), outcome-based skill training scheme of the new

Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was introduced to enable and mobilize a large number of Indian youth to take up outcome based skill training and become employable and earn their livelihood.

Skill Development in Agriculture

India's population is rising at a geometric rate. To combat with the increase in population, the demand for food and agri produce is increasing, but the supply is constant due to low agricultural productivity. This is predominantly due to improper Farm Management practices and loss in post-harvest handling. There is a requirement for specific set of skills in the field of agriculture. Considering the above factors, Agriculture Skill Council of India was set up in January 2013 as a Section 25 company under Companies act of Ministry of Company Affairs for building capacity in the Agriculture Industry and bridge the gap between laboratories and farms.

Start-up India & Stand-up India

Start-up India, Stand-up India initiative of the Government of India will boost entrepreneurship among the youth, create new job opportunities and help set up a network of start-ups in the country. The scheme will create an entire start-up ecosystem that would be set-up and will work as a friend, mentor and guide for start-ups through their entire journey of entrepreneurship.

Digital India

Digital India is an initiative to ensure that the government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paperwork and a lot of time. This initiative also includes a plan to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. This will give the rural youth more opportunities to interact with people from different walks of life and evolve better as an individual. Digital India will empower youth to know the government and its various departments better and to analyze the loops and strength unguided by political issues. The user friendly interface will connect more people to technology and the platform will act as a thought-pool. This will enable youth to gather more knowledge about the agro-based policies of the government and the benefits. The opportunities that Digital India provides may be in effectively harnessing ICT mediation in agriculture and the skilled youth in digital technologies may play a crucial role as change agents in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in the Agricultural sector (Singh *et al*, 2016).

Government Programmes and Organizations for Youth in India

1. National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP)
2. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
3. National Service Scheme (NSS)
4. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD)
5. National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD)
6. Youth Hostels
7. Assistance to Scouting and Guiding Organisations

Skill Development of Youth

8. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
9. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna (DDU-GKY)
10. Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)
11. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
12. Enterprise and Skill Development
13. Assistance to Training Institutions (ATI) Scheme
14. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
15. UDAAN

International Initiatives for Youth

1. UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
2. UN Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)
3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
4. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
5. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
6. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
7. United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
8. International Labour Organisation (ILO)

9. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
10. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
11. United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
12. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
13. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
14. UN Department of Public Information (DPI)
15. The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

Conclusion

The difference in basic amenities, communication, health and education facilities between villages and urban areas attract youth towards the cities. On the other hand, small land holdings are on the rise which poses a challenge to food security for the increasing population. Thus, it was felt to bring a comprehensive model for the development of rural youth in general and agriculture in particular. Government initiatives can harness the potential of youth. Convergence between various departments and their youth development schemes can lead to effective channelization to productive areas.

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