STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE 2024

STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE 2024

Contents

From CEO's DESK

We are pleased to present this report reflecting on our recent State Youth Conference, organized under the theme "YUvA AAGAZ YUVA AAWAZ." This event marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to youth empowerment, a mission that SYNERGY has passionately pursued for nearly two decades. Over the years, we have made substantial progress in areas such as youth development, gender justice, and skill development. Our experiences have underscored the vital role that youth play in a country's growth. It is imperative that we centre youth in all development planning and processes to effectively harness their insights and solutions.

The conference provided a unique platform for diverse stakeholders—including practitioners, policymakers, academicians, civil society organizations, and, most importantly, the youth themselves—to engage in meaningful discussions on the multifaceted challenges they face in the 21st century. Our objectives were to enhance the collective knowledge of these stakeholders about growth opportunities for youth and to develop intervention strategies for co-creating a youth-centric agenda.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the collaborators and contributors for their unwavering support and guidance. Additionally, we are indebted to our partner organizations, resource persons, and representatives of civil society for their insightful contributions and engaging discussions. We would also like to thank the Bhopal School of Social Sciences for their collaboration and partnership in making this conference a success.

As we embark on a series of annual Youth Conferences, this event represents just the beginning of our journey together. We look forward to continuing this dialogue and working alongside each of you to further empower our youth. Thank you once again for your support and participation. We hope this report serves as a valuable resource for reflection and action.

Warm regards,

Vimal Jat
CEO-SYNERGY SANSTHAN

About Synergy Sansthan

VISION: To create a healthy, educated, free from exploitation, equal, harmonious, just and peaceful society.

MISSION: Creating safe and empowering spaces for rural, tribal, and semi-urban marginalized children, adolescents & youth, where they can realize, explore and develop their full potential and build inclusive leadership for an equal, just, and peaceful society.

Established in 2006, Synergy Sansthan has become a beacon of empowerment for adolescents and youth across Madhya Pradesh, directly working in districts like Harda, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani, Dewas, Dhar, Guna, Bhopal, and Betul. Founded by few passionate individuals, this youth-led nonprofit envisions a future where young people drive positive change in their communities. Synergy believes youth are not just recipients of change but key drivers of transformation, fostering an environment where they can tackle pressing issues and build essential life skills. The organization stands out for its innovative youth development approaches, particularly Inside-Out youth leadership, social action, and community-based initiatives. Young people, including adolescents, take the lead in setting agendas and executing action projects, empowering themselves and their communities. Looking forward, Synergy's 2023–2027 Strategic Plan focuses on expanding its outreach to vulnerable and at-risk youth while scaling proven programs. By fostering social entrepreneurship and using a multifaceted approach, the organization aims to achieve sustainable outcomes in youth development.

Rationale for Conference

Youth are in a critical phase of transition between childhood and adulthood, defined differently across organizations. The United Nations categorizes youth as individuals between 15 to 24 years, while India's National Youth Policy (2014) extends this range to 15 to 29 years. Globally, there are over 1.8 billion youth, with 90% residing in developing countries. In India, youth account for 27.5% of the total population, with a significant portion living in rural areas. This demographic represents a vast potential for driving national development.

However, India's youth are currently facing significant employment challenges, with unemployment rates particularly high among educated young individuals and women. In 2023, youth unemployment (ages 15-24) stood at approximately 15.8%, a slight improvement from previous years but still much higher than global averages. Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh, while the state's overall unemployment rate is relatively low compared to more urbanized states like Kerala and Goa, youth in both urban and rural areas still struggle with limited formal job opportunities. Many young people find themselves in low-skill, informal employment, which typically offers lower wages and fewer benefits. This is reflective of the national trend, where 82% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector. These challenges underline the need for targeted policy interventions focused on skilling, job creation, and closing the gender gap in employment to fully harness the potential of India's demographic dividend. Furthermore, with Madhya Pradesh recently developed its youth policy, it is essential for young people to be at the forefront of these conversations. Recognizing the pressing challenges faced by youth, Synergy Sansthan organized a unique two-day state-level youth conference titled "Yuva Aagaz Yuva Aawaz" on 11th and 12th August 2024 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The event, centered around the theme "Shaping the Future of Youth-Centric Development in Madhya Pradesh," with a objective to provide a *platform for diverse stakeholders—including practitioners, policymakers, academicians, civil society organizations, and young people themselves—to come together and discuss the multifaceted issues affecting youths in 21st Centuries.* Another objective was to *maximize the knowledge base of multi stakeholders on growth and opportunities for youth and to discuss various aspects and issues pertaining to youth development in the state and develop intervention strategies for co-creating youth centric agenda.* The agenda for the two-day conference was structured to encourage a collaborative dialogue on key issues such as youth active citizenship, health and well-being, climate change, and the 4Es (Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Empowerment) for youth. A total six panel discussions during the event allowed for deep dives into critical areas, fostering cross-sectoral partnerships and exploring innovative solutions. By facilitating this exchange of ideas and perspectives, the conference aimed to bridge existing gaps and enhance the impact of youth-centered policies and initiatives in Madhya Pradesh.

Prelude to State Youth Consultation

Regional Youth Consultations

The theme, "Youth in the 21st Century: Shaping the Future of Youth-Centric Development in Madhya Pradesh," emphasizes the essential role of empowering young voices to influence and transform the societal landscape. In a world increasingly characterized by rapid technological advancement and profound social change, today's youth are not merely the leaders of tomorrow; they are also dynamic and proactive change-makers in the present. Their insights, experiences, and perspectives are crucial in formulating effective policies and initiatives that directly affect their lives, aspirations, and futures. To understand the unique challenges faced by youth from various backgrounds—particularly those in rural and tribal areas—we organized four significant youth meets in key regions: Harda, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur. These gatherings served as platforms to collect and amplify the voices of young individuals on a range of critical issues, including Youth Health and Well-being, Youth Active Citizenship, Climate Change, State Youth Policy and Future Directions, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Philanthropy and Youth Development as well as the 4E framework for youth: Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Empowerment. The participation in these events was impressive, with 150 enthusiastic young individuals representing over 35 organizations and institutions from across 27 districts in Madhya Pradesh. This diverse assembly of participants provided a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences, reflecting the complexity and richness of the youth experience in the state. By fostering such a varied representation, we aimed to ensure that no voice went unheard and that the discussions would encapsulate a wide array of viewpoints. The primary objective of these pre-youth meets was to convene a broad spectrum of relevant stakeholders—including government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, and community organizations—to engage in meaningful discussions about various models of youth-centric development. These dialogues were meticulously designed to facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches that have shown promise in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by young people. The insights gleaned from these pre-youth meet proved invaluable in shaping the agenda for our state youth conference. They also contributed to the development of an ecosystem where the youth-centric agenda can be disseminated and shared across all regions of Madhya Pradesh. By identifying and elevating the valuable voices from various organizations and youth groups, we ensured that their contributions would resonate throughout the state youth conference, amplifying their impact.

Snap Poll on Youth Issues

Youth Ki Awaaz, in collaboration with Synergy Sansthan, conducted a snap poll to gather youth opinions on six critical themes for the State Youth Conference 2024: Youth Active Citizenship, Youth and Climate Change, Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy, Corporate CSR and Philanthropy in Youth Development, Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment (4E), and Youth Health and Well-being. The poll was organized via social media and in-person outreach. The results highlighted several key insights: most respondents recognized the importance of voting, with a significant majority holding voter IDs. When asked about identity, participants provided diverse self-descriptions, reflecting the varied nature of youth in the state. Regarding conflict resolution, many expressed greater trust in community members rather than institutions. Awareness of fundamental civic duties was inconsistent, pointing to a gap in civic education. Youth were also found to be active on social media, regularly creating and sharing content, and showed a strong commitment to volunteering in community activities. These poll results helped guide discussions at the conference and ensured youth voices were considered and included in decision-making

Online Survey

Alongside the poll on social media, an online survey from participants of youth conference was conducted to collect more detailed and nuanced feedback from a broader cross-section of youth in Madhya Pradesh. The survey addressed a wide range of issues relevant to young people, with questions designed to gather deeper insights on identity, social participation, and aspirations. The survey results showed that a significant number of respondents were actively engaged in student activities and social causes, indicating strong community involvement. However, some reported barriers to participate in social activities, citing time constraints or personal commitments. Notably, a considerable portion of respondents expressed interest in starting social enterprises or NGOs to drive social change. The survey also revealed gaps in knowledge about fundamental duties, signaling a need for better civic education. The survey results were analyzed and presented to key stakeholders at the conference to foster meaningful dialogue and address the youth's concerns

Inauguration of the Conference

Vimal Jat, CEO of SYNERGY Sansthan, welcomed all attendees and began by sharing the organization's journey, highlighting its work over the past 18 years in Madhya Pradesh. He emphasized that when Synergy began in 2006-07, there was minimal national discourse around youth issues. However, following the 2011-12 census, discussions on India's youth population (with 65% under 35 years of age) gained momentum, but these were largely urban-focused. He pointed out the diversity among youth—rural, tribal, female, LGBTQ+, migrant, and out-of-school populations—underscoring that their challenges and aspirations vary greatly. Despite technological, economic, and social changes over the last decade, conversations around youth development remain narrow, often focusing on harnessing their energy without addressing their needs. He stressed the need for a youth-centric approach that places young people at the center of societal change and development, advocating for their active participation and leadership. He explained the goal of the conference was to bring together diverse stakeholders to collaboratively discuss and shape a youth-centered development perspective for Madhya Pradesh, ensuring that young voices are included in envisioning the way forward. He hoped that to see the event as more than just a discussion—it's the beginning of a sustained partnership aimed at creating actionable pathways for youth development across the state.

Welcome Speeches

Ms. Pramila Chouhan, Co-Founder and Director of Musht Samaj Seva Samiti, spoke passionately about the challenges faced by the youth in Madhya Pradesh, particularly those from rural and tribal communities. She emphasized that the journey of young people is fraught with struggles, often overlooked by society. Ms. Chouhan highlighted the pressing issues of unemployment, migration, and the lack of educational opportunities, which disproportionately affect tribal youth. She stressed the importance of not just providing education but ensuring that it is relevant and accessible, as the medium of learning significantly impacts their lives and aspirations. As a tribal herself, she underscored the unique hardships faced by tribal youth and called for more platforms and opportunities to be created for them. Wrapping up her remarks, Ms. Chouhan noted that despite the lack of preparation, she speaks as one of them —an embodiment of the youth's struggles and hopes for a better future.

Dr. Smriti Gargava, Deputy Director of IGNOU, Bhopal, shared insightful thoughts on the evolving aspirations of youth. She began by reflecting on the common question posed to children: "What will you become when you grow up?"—a question that shapes their ambitions from a young age. Dr.Gargava suggested that rather than focusing on societal expectations, youth should be encouraged to pursue their passions and engage in new, meaningful activities every day. She emphasized that the development of young people—both physically and mentally—should be nurtured with positive social thinking and behavior. Drawing on her experience at IGNOU, which serves students from diverse backgrounds—rural, tribal, and even elderly learners— Dr.Gargava remarked that youthfulness is not defined by age but by passion and enthusiasm. To her, a true youth is someone who is determined, self-aware, and driven by their inner zeal to achieve their goals. She expressed hope that the ideas and discussions emerging from the conference would embody the genuine voice of youth and serve as a guiding force for future generations. She concluded by offering her heartfelt wishes for the success of the conference.

Welcome Speeches

During his address at the youth conference, Mr. Rajesh Kumar Gupta, Director of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, offered an inspiring message to the attendees, highlighting the significance of youth as the strength and future of India. He emphasized that youth are not a challenge but an opportunity, urging them to transform challenges into avenues of growth. Drawing on poetry to encourage the young audience, Mr. Gupta metaphorically referred to youth as "air," stressing their indispensable role in society. He reminded the participants of the importance of teamwork, noting that success is not achieved by individuals alone, but by collective effort. He also reflected on Synergy Sansthan's role in organizing the conference, framing it as a platform to address the challenges, struggles, and aspirations of the youth. Gupta concluded with a call for the youth to recognize their strength, work together, and focus on achieving greater goals, including bringing more recognition to the country on the global stage, such as in the Olympics.

In his address at the youth conference, Anil Gulati, Office in Charge of UNICEF in Madhya Pradesh, expressed gratitude for the invitation and shared his belief in the vital role of youth in shaping the future of the country. He emphasized that the voices of young people must be heard and included in decision-making processes, as their perspectives are crucial for progress. Gulati acknowledged the challenges youth face, including pressures from parents and societal expectations, and underscored the importance of providing platforms for open dialogue. He highlighted pressing issues such as mental health, climate change, and digital sustainability, stressing the need for education systems to incorporate discussions on these topics, especially the consequences of technology and cybercrime. He concluded by encouraging collaboration between youth and decision-makers, assuring attendees that UNICEF is committed to supporting their initiatives and recommendations moving forward.

Panel Discussion 1:

Youth Active Citizenship

The "Youth Active Citizenship" session (first session of the conference) brought together an insightful panel of experts and practitioners who shed light on the transformative role of young people in society. Moderated by Vishnu Jaiswal from Synergy Sansthan, the discussion featured diverse perspectives from Abhishek Das of Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, R N Syag of Civic Act, Gauri Singhi from Dasra, Rajkumar Verma from NSS India, Aman Madan of Azim Premji University and youth representative Preeti Uikey.

Click here to see the video of
[Panel 1 -Youth Active Citizenship Video]

Panellists' Perspective

Ms. Preeti Uikey (Youth Representative)

Preeti Uikey, a tribal youth, shared her journey of overcoming societal barriers to becoming an active citizen. Growing up in a marginalized tribal community, she highlighted the significant challenges young people from similar backgrounds face in participating in civic life. Preeti spoke about her involvement in programs that provided mentorship and guidance on how to be an active and responsible citizen, which enabled her to advocate for gender justice and drive community development in her village.

She stressed that youth, particularly in rural and tribal areas, are often seen as inexperienced and untrustworthy by community leaders, limiting their civic engagement. However, through her participation in these youth programs, Preeti realized the importance of building trust in young people and offering them consistent support. She firmly believes that with sustained involvement, youth can play a pivotal role in shaping their communities, turning active citizenship into a transformative experience for both individuals and society.

Key Points:
- Early intervention and ongoing support are essential for engaging marginalized youth in active citizenship.
- Building trust and providing platforms for young people in tribal and rural areas can empower them to become agents of change.

Ms. Gauri Singhi (Dasra)

Ms. Singhi, emphasized the crucial role of equipping young people with the tools and resources needed to understand their roles as citizens and the broader impact of their actions on society. She pointed out that active citizenship begins with self-awareness—when youth recognize their civic responsibilities and realize how even small contributions can positively influence their communities. Ms. Singhi stressed the importance of youth leadership programs that nurture decision-making, critical thinking, and open dialogue.

 She argued that providing platforms for young people to express their opinions and take ownership of local initiatives not only builds their confidence but also deepens their understanding of what it means to be an active citizen. According to Gauri, the journey toward active citizenship begins with access to the right information and is shaped by meaningful opportunities for young people to engage with societal issues.

Key Points:
- Active citizenship is rooted in self-awareness and informed decision-making.
- Youth leadership programs are vital in cultivating decision-making skills and fostering civic responsibility among young people.

Mr. Rajkumar Verma (National Service Scheme, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports)

Mr. Verma highlighted the pivotal role of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in fostering active citizenship among youth through structured, practical engagement with their communities. He explained that the NSS enables young people to participate in activities that promote public welfare, environmental sustainability, and disaster relief. Rajkumar emphasized that active citizenship starts with small, everyday actions, but through organized programs like the NSS, it evolves into a broader commitment to civic responsibilities.

He underscored the importance of integrating education with service, ensuring that youth understand the delicate balance between their rights and duties. Rajkumar expressed that initiatives like the NSS provide young people with hands-on experience in leadership and community service, equipping them to take on active roles in society. Through these initiatives, youth not only recognize their contributions to societal development but also acquire the skills needed to become responsible, engaged citizens.

Key Points:

- Structured programs like the NSS offer youth practical opportunities to engage in community service and fulfill civic responsibilities.
- Active citizenship is cultivated through a blend of education and service, helping young people grasp the full scope of their civic duties

Mr. Aman Madan (Azim Premji University, Bhopal)

Mr. Madan offered an academic perspective on youth active citizenship, emphasizing that meaningful civic engagement is built upon a solid foundation of knowledge and skills. He identified a significant gap between young people's aspirations to contribute to society and their understanding of institutional processes, which often leads to frustration and disengagement.

Aman argued that educational institutions must prioritize teaching students how to effectively navigate these systems and engage in productive, informed dialogue. He further highlighted the unique challenges faced by youth from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, including limited access to resources and decision-makers, which complicates their participation in civic life.

By promoting critical thinking, communication skills, and a deeper understanding of institutional dynamics, Aman believes educational programs can empower young people to become more effective and thoughtful citizens.

Key Points:

- Educational institutions play a pivotal role in equipping youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for meaningful civic engagement.
- Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter distinct challenges in becoming active citizens and require specialized support to overcome these barriers.

Mr. Abhishek Das (Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies)

Mr. Das emphasized the critical importance of supporting youth active citizenship through holistic approaches that encompass mental health, gender equity, and environmental sustainability. He noted that active citizenship can manifest in various forms, whether through volunteering, advocacy, or participation in political processes. Drawing from his philanthropic experience, Mr. Das underscored the need for long-term support systems that enable young people to explore diverse paths to civic engagement.

He further highlighted the significance of mentorship and educational opportunities, particularly for youth from rural and tribal communities, as essential tools for overcoming barriers to participation. He argued that fostering sustainable civic engagement demands a comprehensive approach—one that not only addresses immediate societal concerns but also tackles the deeper issues that restrict youth involvement, such as poverty and lack of access to education.

Key Points:
- Active citizenship requires a holistic approach that integrates mental health, gender equity, and environmental sustainability.
- Long-term support systems, including mentorship and education, are essential for empowering youth, especially those from marginalized communities, to become active citizens.

Ram Narayan Syag (Civic Act)

Syag bhai provided a philosophical perspective on youth active citizenship, focusing on the importance of reflective and value-based engagement. He argued that active citizenship must go beyond participation in civic activities and should involve a deeper understanding of societal impacts.

Dr. Syag emphasized the importance of instilling values such as empathy, justice, and equity in youth as part of their civic education. He advocated for creating environments where youth can reflect on the consequences of their actions and engage in citizenship that is not only active but also effective and sustainable. For Dr. Syag, reflective citizenship involves thinking critically about how one's actions influence family, society, and future generations, making it a lifelong commitment.

Key Points:
- Reflective citizenship is a deeper form of engagement that considers the long-term societal impacts of civic actions.
- Value-based education, focusing on empathy and justice, is essential for developing responsible citizens.

Q&A Session:

In response to a question about the low youth representation in politics, Aman Madan explained that while the rhetoric of valuing youth exists, real power is rarely handed over to young people. He stressed that youth must develop the skills and understanding to navigate political systems to meaningfully participate in decision-making. He urged young people to work on proving their capacity and understanding of institutional processes. Similarly, Abhishek Das highlighted NGOs like Avantika Foundation and MEERA, which help youth engage in governance and civic spaces. He encouraged youth to learn from these organizations to increase their involvement in political processes.

A participant raised concerns about the discontinuation of the CM internship, which demoralized former NSS volunteers. Rajkumar Verma responded by emphasizing that internships, including those in journalism, are meant to build skills and character, not just provide employment. He stressed the importance of skill development through social service and noted that the stoppage of the internship program should not be seen as a reflection of the program's value. Rajkumar further explained that NSS focuses on personality development through social service rather than offering direct employment, arguing that individuals equipped with the right skills would eventually find opportunities. When asked about youth participation in policy-making, Aman Madan acknowledged that youth protests are often viewed negatively in India. He advocated for more constructive dialogue between youth and policymakers, emphasizing that disagreements can be resolved through discussion rather than conflict. Aman pointed out that youth need to understand the institutional norms and be patient in engaging with the government, as fostering change through dialogue is more effective than confrontation.

The Q&A session highlighted key challenges and opportunities for youth active citizenship, particularly regarding political participation, skill development, and engagement with governance. Speakers emphasized the importance of youth understanding institutional systems, developing necessary skills, and seeking mentorship through existing organizations to meaningfully contribute to societal change. Constructive dialogue and patience were underscored as crucial approaches for fostering youth participation in decision-making and policy-making processes.

SUMMARY:

Youth active citizenship is crucial for building engaged and responsible communities, as it empowers young people to contribute to societal development through activities like volunteering, local governance, and advocacy. Programs like the National Service Scheme (NSS) provide platforms for youth to engage in civic duties, fostering leadership, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of democratic values. Success stories, such as Preeti from Harda district, illustrate the transformative impact of such initiatives, particularly in marginalized communities, where youth can advocate for gender justice and social change. However, societal and cultural barriers, especially in rural and tribal areas, along with limited resources, hinder widespread youth participation. Early marriage, traditional gender roles, and lack of long-term support are significant challenges that require tailored solutions and institutional backing.

Governments and institutions play an essential role in creating environments that promote youth engagement by investing in programs, providing resources, and establishing platforms for decision-making. Continuous support through mentorship, education, and financial backing can address the barriers young people face, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Case studies of youth success, such as Deepak Chaurasia's journey into journalism, underscore the importance of sustained opportunities, internships, and mentorship programs that can shape youth into active and effective citizens.

मध्य के युवाओ की आवाज- विकास के मध्य में हो युवा

Panel Discussion 2:

Youth Health & Well Being

The session moderated by Raghu Maharishi of Synergy Sansthan, brought together a diverse panel of experts and youth representatives to address critical issues affecting the mental and emotional well-being of young people. The panellists included Kanika Sinha from CommutinyThe Youth Collective (Delhi), Payal Pandit, a Youth Representative, Muskan Pradhan from Sangath (Bhopal), Asim Siddiqui of Azim Premji University (Bangalore), and Dr.Rutwik J Gandhe, Head of Social Work at BSSS. Together, they explored systemic pressures that significantly impact youth mental health, such as academic stress, family conflicts, and social discrimination. The discussion also focused on the vital role that community and institutional support play in fostering youth well-being. Key themes included youth engagement, institutional collaboration, and the creation of supportive spaces that promote mental and emotional health. The panellists concluded by offering recommendations for improvement, emphasizing the need to address systemic issues, enhance community involvement, and promote inclusive practices to better support the holistic development of young people.

[Click here to watch the video of Panel 2- Youth Health and Well Being](#)

Panellists' Perspective

Payal Pandit (Youth Representative)

Payal reflects on the alarming rates of youth suicide in India, attributing much of this to academic pressure, family conflicts, and unemployment. She believes that the lack of opportunities and support systems for youth leads many to feelings of hopelessness.

She emphasizes that programs like Youth Resource Centres and workshops on identity development are helping youth navigate these challenges and feel more connected to society. Key Points:

- Payal shares statistics showing that 40% of youth suicides are due to academic pressure and family conflicts.
- She notes that peer support and community engagement have been beneficial for youth, helping them develop their identities and share their experiences openly.
- Her organization focuses on creating safe spaces for youth to express themselves and gain the skills necessary to overcome challenges.

Dr. Asim Siddiqui (Azim Premji University)

Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the structural barriers faced by youth, particularly from marginalized communities. He discussed how mental health issues in youth are often addressed in isolation without considering the societal structures that contribute to them. For instance, students from rural and marginalized backgrounds feel alienated in educational institutions because of language barriers and cultural disconnects.

He also underscored the importance of recognizing educational spaces as youth-centric institutions and ensuring they cater to both academic and emotional needs. He believes that youth need institutional support, such as forums like Ambedkar Student Associations or Gender Forums, to express their concerns and develop resilience.

Key Points:

- Asim notes that youth, particularly from marginalized groups, experience isolation and depression in higher education settings due to cultural and linguistic alienation.
- He emphasizes the need for inclusive education spaces where youth from different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds feel represented and supported.
- Asim advocates for the establishment of anti-discrimination cells and inclusive pedagogies to promote mental well-being and combat exclusion.

Ms. Kanika Sinha (CommutinyThe Youth Collective)

Ms. Sinha emphasized the importance of youth understanding their multiple identities and societal roles through self-awareness. She explained that youth often view education only through the lens of economic gain, but education should also help them reach their full potential in terms of social and ecological needs.

She stressed the need for volunteering opportunities for youth, which she believes is the starting point of active citizenship. According to her, when young people participate in volunteering, they begin to understand their role in society and the impact they can make.

Key Points:
- Kanika introduced the idea of self-reflection tools and community interaction as means for youth to understand their identities and societal roles.
- She advocated for spaces where youth can engage in non-judgmental dialogues to explore and express their identity in relation to societal expectations.
- Her organization promotes resilience-building by encouraging youth to step into roles that allow them to challenge norms and engage with broader societal issues.

Dr. Rutwik J Gandhe (Bhopal School of Social Work)

Dr. Gandhe talks about the role of youth in social inclusion and community building. He points out that while many universities promote diversity and inclusivity, societal barriers often prevent this from being fully realized.

Dr. Gandhe said he believes that for youth to fully engage in nation-building, they need platforms where their voices are recognized, and their efforts are directed toward societal goals.

Key Points:
- He mentioned that youth face enormous academic pressure, particularly in competitive exams like those for IIT, which leads to stress and, in extreme cases, mental health issues.
- He emphasized the need for meaningful engagement through extracurricular activities like music, arts, and cultural activities to relieve stress and promote a sense of purpose among youth.
- According to him, the youth's mental health can only be supported through engagement in activities that give them a sense of life purpose beyond academics.

Ms. Muskan Pradhan (Sangath)

Ms. Pradhan spoke about her experiences with mental health support for youth. She shares that most of the youth she works with are looking for help with their mental health, but societal conditions often limit their options.

She also noted that civil society is beginning to recognize the importance of mental health and is making efforts to include youth in conversations about their well-being through research and advisory boards.

Key Points:
- She shares that family conflicts and academic pressure are major contributors to the mental health issues faced by youth.
- She mentions that communication gaps between youth and their families often lead to misunderstandings and emotional isolation, contributing to mental health crises.
- Her organization runs a helpline and provides mental health resources to youth, offering them a platform where they can seek help without judgment.

Suicide by youths: Experts explore reasons & remedies

International Youth Day today

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

Academic pressure, family conflicts, communication gaps, addiction and unemployment are major factors contributing to the alarming rates of suicide among young people, said Payal Pandit from Youth Representative.

Payal was speaking in a panel discussion on, 'Youth Mental Health, on the inaugural day of two-day State Youth Conference 2024 Yuva Aagaz, Yuva Aawaz: Shaping the future of youth centric development in Madhya Pradesh in the city on Sunday.

Asim Siddique from Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, pointed out that while there was much discussion about the mental pressure on youths, its root causes need to be addressed.

Kanika Sinha from Community The Youth Collective, Delhi, spoke on how Covid deaths affected young people and said there was need to address the issues affecting youths' well-being.

Muskan Pradhan from Sangath Representative, Bhopal, said civil society organisations began creating safe spaces where youth could openly discuss issues they might not feel comfortable sharing in public settings and said more such spaces were needed.

A panel discussion on, Youth Active Citizenship, brought together leaders and experts to explore youths' role in society whereas panel discussion on CSR, Philanthropies and Youth Development, saw experts speaking on corporate social responsibility and philanthropic efforts.

The event was organised by SYNERGY Sansthan in collaboration with Bhopal School of Social Sciences to mark International Youth Day (August 12).

Q&A Session:

In response to a question from audience regarding the community's role in addressing the youth mental health crisis. Asim Siddiqui emphasized the need for both individual and community-level action. He advocated for community mental health initiatives, highlighting the importance of inclusion and accountability from the government. Siddiqui pointed out that societal issues such as alienation, sexual exploitation, and casteism exacerbate mental health challenges. To combat these, communities must remove barriers and provide realistic guidance for youth.

Kanika Sinha from The Youth Collective (Delhi) added that mental health is closely linked to community dynamics and stressed the importance of intergenerational solidarity. She highlighted the necessity of creating open dialogues about mental health within families and communities to prevent isolation and frustration among youth.

Another conference participant emphasised Eliminating Gender Inequality and Its Impact on Mental Health and asked on how to address gender inequality from a constitutional perspective. Asim Siddiqui explained the deep-rooted nature of gender inequality and its detrimental effects on mental health, particularly for marginalized groups. He emphasized the need for education on constitutional rights and organizing for change to empower youth.

Muskan Pradhan from Sangath (Bhopal) echoed this sentiment, stating that addressing gender inequality from childhood is crucial. She suggested integrating gender training into the educational system to challenge stereotypes and promote equality, which can help mitigate mental health issues stemming from discrimination.

Lastly one participantraised a question about strategies to enhance youth's role in social development and the status of Madhya Pradesh's youth policy. Asim Siddiqui reiterated the importance of educating youth about their rights and organizing them around common issues to drive change. He noted that while the state youth policy has seen changes, it still needs to prioritize youth empowerment in education, work, and life choices.

Overall, the session highlighted the interconnectedness of community action, gender equality, and policy frameworks in promoting youth health and well-being, emphasizing the collective responsibility of society to foster a supportive environment for young individuals.

Summary:

The conference on "Youth Health & Well-Being" highlighted the growing concerns surrounding the mental health challenges faced by today's youth. Systemic pressures such as academic stress, family conflicts, and social discrimination were identified as significant contributors to the emotional and psychological struggles young people experience. These factors often lead to issues like anxiety, depression, and burnout, as youth grapple with expectations from various sources, including family, educational institutions, and society at large. The panel emphasized the need for holistic approaches to address these pressures, ensuring that young people receive the support they need to navigate these challenges.

The session also underscored the vital role of community and institutional support in promoting youth well-being. Youth engagement through meaningful activities, collaboration between institutions, and the creation of supportive spaces were highlighted as effective strategies to foster resilience and positive mental health. Key recommendations included addressing systemic issues by reforming educational, family, and social systems, enhancing community involvement through awareness programs and advocacy, and promoting inclusivity to ensure that all young people, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, feel valued and supported. These measures are essential in creating an environment where youth can thrive both mentally and emotionally.

'कोरोना काल के बाद बिगड़ा है युवाओं का मानसिक स्वास्थ्य'

परिचर्चा ● राज्य स्तरीय सम्मेलन युवा आगाज में विभिन्न मुद्दों पर दिए समाधान

युवाओं के साथ सीधा जुड़ाव ही उनके मानसिक स्वास्थ्य का समर्थन करने का सबसे प्रभावी तरीका है। शैक्षणिक दबाव, पारिवारिक संघर्ष, संवाद की कमी, नशे की लत और बेरोजगारी जैसी समस्याएं युवाओं में आत्महत्या की बढ़ती दरों के प्रमुख कारण हैं। युवाओं पर मानसिक दबाव की चर्चा तो की जाती है, लेकिन इस दबाव के मूल कारणों पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता। कोरोना काल में कई युवाओं ने अपने माता-पिता को खोया है, जिससे उनके मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर गहरा असर पड़ा है। युवाओं से जुड़े ये कुछ जरूरी मुद्दे थे, जिन पर रविवार को भोपाल स्कूल ऑफ सोशल साइंस (बीएसएसएस) के सभागार में विशेषज्ञों ने चर्चा की और इस दौरान उन्होंने समाधान भी बताए।

पैनल चर्चा को संबोधित करते डा. रुत्विक जे गांधी और अन्य वक्ता । ● सौ : आयोजक

युवाओं के विकास के विभिन्न पहलुओं पर चर्चा करने और उन्हें विकास में सक्रिय भागीदार बनाने के उद्देश्य से अंतरराष्ट्रीय युवा दिवस के उपलक्ष्य में राज्य स्तरीय युवा सम्मेलन युवा आगाज, युवा आवाज के उद्घाटन सत्र में सिनर्जी संस्थान के सीईओ विमल जाट ने युवा केंद्रित विकास की चुनौतियों और अवसरों पर प्रकाश डाला। उन्होंने कहा कि युवाओं के सर्वांगीण विकास के लिए समाज, सरकार और बाजार का संतुलित साथ जरूरी है। यूनिसेफ के अनिल गुलाटी ने युवाओं की भूमिका और उनकी सक्रिय भागीदारी के महत्व पर जोर दिया। अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ गुड गवर्नेंस एंड पॉलिसी एनालिसिस के निदेशक राजेश कुमार गुप्ता ने नीति निर्माण में युवाओं की भूमिका की चर्चा की।

दीर्घकालिक निवेश और व्यापक दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता बताई

पहली पैनल चर्चा युवा सक्रिय नागरिकता पर केंद्रित थी, जिसमें उद्यमी अभिषेक दास, गौरी सिंघी, राजकुमार वर्मा, एनएसएस के युवा अधिकारी अमन मदान ने सक्रिय नागरिकता की परिभाषाएं, युवाओं की जिम्मेदारियां और उनके सामाजिक योगदान पर विचार- विमर्श किया गया। गोंड जनजातीय समुदाय की युवा नेता प्रीति उइके ने वी द सिटिजनशिप कार्यक्रम की सराहना की, जिसने उनके व्यक्तिगत विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। अमन मदान ने युवाओं की भूमिकाओं की गहरी समझ और संवाद को बढ़ावा देने की आवश्यकता पर चर्चा की।

Panel Discussion 3:

CSR, Development Philanthropies & Youth

The session on "CSR, Philanthropies, and Youth Development" brought together a diverse group of experts and practitioners to explore the critical intersection of corporate social responsibility and philanthropic efforts in supporting young people. Moderated by Anant Vijay from DASRA, the session featured insights from panellists including Sharvi Dublish from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Ajay Pandit of Synergy Sansthan, Sanjay Sharma from Bal Raksha Bharat, Vardhana Puri of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and Harsh Gupta from the Azim Premji Foundation. The discussions delved into various crucial topics, including the current funding landscape for youth development, the vital role of CSR and philanthropic organizations in filling gaps in resources, and the persistent challenges related to measuring the impact of youth initiatives. Panellists highlighted the significant funding disparities across regions and the urgent need for targeted strategies to address these gaps. Additionally, they examined emerging funding instruments and innovative approaches that can enhance the effectiveness of youth programs. Gender dynamics and societal pressures were also underscored as critical factors influencing youth development, necessitating inclusive strategies that cater to the diverse experiences of young people. Overall, the conference provided a platform for rich dialogue and collaboration, aiming to enhance support systems for youth development in a rapidly changing world.

Click here to watch the video of
Panel 3: CSR, Development Philanthropies and Youth Video

Panellists' Perspective

Mr. Harsh Gupta (Azim Premji Foundation)

Mr. Gupta emphasized how CSR initiatives are crucial in scaling youth development programs across India. The foundation initially focused on education but expanded into youth-centric development in 2018, addressing not only employment and education but also civic engagement and constitutional values.

Key Points:

- CSR's Role in Youth Development:
  - CSR supports the foundation's initiatives in integrating constitutional values into youth programs.
  - The foundation has partnered with 45 organizations to extend its reach and ensure a holistic approach to youth development.
- Challenges:
  - CSR funding often focuses on short-term, measurable outcomes like job placements but misses broader developmental goals such as identity formation, civic responsibility, and social justice.
  - There is a need for long-term funding that supports sustainable development rather than only immediate outcomes.
- Program Impact:
  - The foundation's "Strengthening Constitutional Values" project works with NGOs across India, focusing on instilling core values among youth and helping them engage more actively in society

Ms. Vardhana Puri (Paul Hamlyn Foundation)

Ms. Puri described how philanthropy plays a transformative role in empowering marginalized youth. The foundation adopts a holistic approach to community development, focusing on youth from disadvantaged groups, including tribal and de-notified tribes, ensuring that they are not just recipients of aid but active participants in creating solutions.

Key Points:

- Philanthropy's Approach:
  - Youth empowerment is central to the foundation's work, with a focus on community-driven development and problem-solving.
  - Youth from marginalized groups are encouraged to participate in developing solutions for their communities, ensuring inclusive development.
- Identity and Social Justice:
  - The foundation places significant emphasis on the identity and social justice components of youth development.
  - Programs encourage youth to challenge systemic issues and bring about long-term social change within their communities.
- Key Programs:
  - Programs address gender equality, leadership, and systemic change, focusing on developing young leaders who can address local and global challenges

Ms. Sharvi Dublish (Michael and Susan Dell Foundation)

She shared insights into how CSR and philanthropy support youth development indirectly through initiatives focused on education, employment, and financial inclusion. While not exclusively youth-focused, these programs play a critical role in preparing young people for future employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Key Points:

- Education and Employment:
  - The foundation works primarily in urban areas, supporting youth through programs that enhance life skills and prepare them for employment.
  - Their focus includes education reform, ensuring students not only complete schooling but are equipped with the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce.
- Challenges of Scaling:
  - Scaling programs to reach larger numbers of youth without compromising quality is a significant challenge.
  - The foundation uses pilot projects to fine-tune its programs before scaling, ensuring that feedback from youth is incorporated into larger initiatives.
- Key Example:
  - A pilot project with Magic Bus provided insights into effective ways to integrate life skills into youth education. The project began small but scaled based on the lessons learned through direct feedback from participants.

Mr. Sanjay Sharma (Bal Raksha Bharat- Save The Children India)

Sanjay Sharma from Bal Raksha Bharat highlighted the organization's focus on the holistic development of youth, stressing that CSR and philanthropy often concentrate too narrowly on employment. He argued that areas like health, nutrition, and mental well-being are just as important as employment in fostering youth development.

Key Points:

- Employment-Focused Funding:
  - While CSR initiatives tend to prioritize employment and education, they often overlook critical areas such as health, nutrition, and mental health.
  - Bal Raksha Bharat emphasizes a more well-rounded approach to youth development, ensuring that young people's well-being is addressed alongside their career aspirations.
- Geographic Imbalance:
  - CSR funding is disproportionately focused in urban centres like Mumbai and Delhi, with underserved regions like Northeast India receiving far less attention.
  - Sanjay emphasized the need to distribute funding more evenly, reaching rural and tribal areas where youth development programs are scarce.
- Youth Participation:
  - Encouraging youth participation in decision-making processes is vital to ensuring that programs meet their real needs and aspirations

Mr. Ajay Pandit (Synergy Sansthan)

Mr. Pandit from Synergy Sansthan discussed the challenges faced by grassroots organizations in accessing CSR and philanthropic funds for youth programs. He stressed that youth development must go beyond skills training and employment, focusing instead on leadership, agency, and community development.

Key Points:

- Challenges in Funding:
  - Many CSR funders hesitate to invest in long-term youth development projects, preferring initiatives that offer quick, measurable outcomes.
  - Organizations like Synergy Sansthan, which focus on empowerment and agency, struggle to secure consistent funding despite the critical role they play in fostering youth leadership.
- Youth Leadership and Community Impact:
  - Youth must be seen as leaders within their communities, and programs should focus on building their capacity to lead and engage in solving local issues.
  - Social enterprise and community-driven research were highlighted as key areas where youth could contribute significantly if given the necessary support

Yuva Aawaz: Shaping the future of youth centric development

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The first day of the State Youth Conference 2024, Yuva Aagaz, Yuva Aawaz, concluded successfully today at the Bhopal School of Social Sciences, Hoshangabad Road, Bhopal. Organized by SYNERGY Sansthan in collaboration with Bhopal School of Social Sciences, this conference aims to discuss various aspects of youth development and to actively engage them as participants in societal growth.

The conference commenced at 10:00 AM with the honoring of the guests. The inaugural speech was delivered by Vimal Jat, CEO, SYNERGY Sansthan, who highlighted the challenges and opportunities in youth-centric development and provided insights into SYNERGY Sansthan's initiatives.

Anil Gulati, UNICEF, Madhya Pradesh emphasized the importance of youth engagement and their active participation. Rajesh Kumar Gupta, Director, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis discussed the role of youth in policy-making. Dr. Smriti Gargava, Deputy Director, IGNOU, Bhopal shared her thoughts on empowering youth through education. Pramila Chouhan, Co-Founder and Director, Musht Samaj Seva Samiti, highlighted the necessary aspects for youth involvement in societal development.

The first panel discussion focused on 'Youth Active Citizenship' and featured: Abhishek Das, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, Dr. R.N. Syag, Civic Act Foundation, Delhi, Gauri Singhi, Dasra, Mumbai, Rajkumar Verma, Youth Officer NSS India, Bhopal, Aman Madan, Azim Premji University, Bhopal, Preeti Uikey, Youth Representative. The discussion explored the definition of active citizenship, the responsibilities of youth, and their contributions to society.

The panel discussion on "Youth Active Citizenship," bringing together leaders and experts to explore the role of youth in society. Preeti, a leader within the Gond tribal community, praised the "We The Citizenship" program for her personal growth and stressed the need for sustained investment in youth. Gauri highlighted the importance of self-awareness and holistic youth leadership development, while Rajkumar called for redefining active citizenship as both words and action. Aman Madan of Azim Premji University discussed the need for a deeper understanding of youth roles and fostering dialogue. Abhishek Das emphasized the balance between market, government, and society in youth engagement, and Dr. Rn Syag underscored the importance of practicing citizenship in alignment with constitutional principles. The discussion underscored the necessity for long-term investment and comprehensive approaches to youth development.

The second panel discussion centered on 'Youth Mental Health' and included: Kanika Sinha, Commutiny The Youth Collective, Delhi, Payal Pandit, Youth Representative, Muskan Pradhan, Sangath Representative, Bhopal, Aseem Siddiqui, Azim Premji University, Bangalore, Dr. Rutwik J. Gandhe, HOD, Social Work, BSSS. The discussion highlighted the importance of mental health, suicide prevention, and addressing diversity among youth.

In a discussion on youth mental health, Dr. Rutwik J. Gandhe emphasized that direct engagement with youth is the most effective approach to support their mental well-being. Payal Pandit highlighted that academic pressure, family conflicts, communication gaps, addiction, and unemployment are major factors contributing to the alarming rates of suicide among young people. Asim Siddique pointed out that while there is much discussion about the mental pressure on youth, the root causes of this pressure are often overlooked and need to be addressed. Muskan Pradhan shared that civil society organizations have begun creating safe spaces where youth can openly discuss issues they may not feel comfortable sharing in more public settings, and stressed the importance of expanding these spaces. Kanika Sinha noted that the COVID-19 pandemic, which left many young people bereaved, has underscored the impact of such traumatic events on youth mental health, emphasizing the need to recognize and address the diverse issues affecting youth well-being.

Q&A Session:

Harsh Gupta from the Azim Premji Foundation emphasized the complexity of evaluating skill development programs. He noted that evaluation methods vary by organization, focusing on factors like participation and societal impact. While some outcomes are difficult to quantify, baseline-endline studies are conducted to measure knowledge and behavior improvements among youth.

In response to 'Geographic Distribution of CSR Funding', Sanjay Sharma of Bal Raksha Bharat highlighted that region like Bihar, Jharkhand, and the North East struggle to attract CSR funding. Corporate preferences often drive investment towards areas near their operations, neglecting communities that require support. He emphasized the importance of youth organizations in ensuring communities actively participate in their own development rather than being passive recipients of aid.

In response to question on how to connect youth with possible employment opportunities, Harsh Gupta reiterated the need for a structured approach to connect youth with job opportunities, suggesting that institutions should assess youth knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to enhance program effectiveness. Sanjay Sharma added that CSR funding is disproportionately concentrated in major urban areas, underscoring the government's responsibility in providing youth access to essential services. He suggested creating partnerships between government bodies and youth organizations to bridge employment gaps. In response to concerns raised by one participant name Ajay Mandali on Education for Migrant Children in Tribal Communities, Harsh Gupta proposed flexible educational programs for migrant tribal children, such as mobile schools or digital learning solutions. He emphasized aligning skill development programs with local job markets and providing mentorship to help youth become self-reliant. Sanjay Sharma echoed these sentiments, advocating for continuous educational support tailored to migration patterns and collaborative efforts with local organizations to enhance teacher training and resource availability.

Overall, the session highlighted the need for innovative solutions, partnerships, and a more equitable distribution of resources to effectively support youth development across diverse regions in India.

Summary:

The session highlighted the increasing importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and philanthropic initiatives in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by youth globally. As governments and institutions strive to meet the evolving needs of young people, CSR and philanthropy serve as critical avenues for providing targeted support and filling existing gaps in youth development. The discussion explored key themes, including funding trends, regional disparities, challenges in measuring impact, and innovative approaches to enhancing youth programs.

Funding trends revealed a substantial investment in youth-related initiatives, with approximately ₹540 crores allocated between 2015 and 2018. However, the uneven distribution of resources across regions exacerbates inequalities, necessitating targeted strategies to ensure that underfunded areas receive adequate support. The conversation also underscored the challenges of measuring program effectiveness, advocating for a nuanced approach that captures both tangible and intangible impacts. Furthermore, emerging funding instruments, such as the National Social Stock Exchange, offer new opportunities for innovative funding models that can scale impactful youth programs. Finally, addressing gender dynamics and societal pressures is essential for creating inclusive programs that cater to the diverse needs of all young people.

In conclusion, the conference underscored the critical intersection of CSR and philanthropy in promoting youth development. While significant strides have been made, challenges remain in resource allocation, program evaluation, and addressing societal dynamics. Collaborative efforts among government, organizations, and funders are essential to ensure that youth programs are not only adequately funded but also effectively designed to meet the diverse needs of young people. By leveraging innovative funding approaches and fostering inclusive strategies, we can enhance the overall impact of youth development initiatives and empower the next generation to thrive.

'युवा आगाज युवा आवाज' चर्चा में युवाओं ने रखी अपनी बात

Panel Discussion 4:

Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy; Implementation Status & Way Forward

The session titled "Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy; Implementation Status and Way Forward" served as a pivotal platform for discussing the progress and challenges associated with the youth policy in Madhya Pradesh. Moderated by Rita Mishra from Patang, the session brought together a distinguished panel of experts, including Anurag Sonwalker from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, Poornima Kumar of Samvada, Vimal Jat from Synergy Sansthan, Dr. Swati Singh Chauhan from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Vikas Kharadkar from the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, and journalist Anurag Dwary from NDTV. The discussions revolved around key topics such as the genesis of the Madhya Pradesh Youth Policy, its associated programs and initiatives, and the critical issues of budget allocation and implementation guidelines. Panellists addressed the challenges in budget allocation and emphasized the need for developing effective implementation strategies. Insights were shared on pressing issues such as mental health and skill development, underscoring the importance of stakeholder collaboration in achieving the policy's objectives. Overall, the conference highlighted the importance of collective efforts in addressing the key concerns of youth in Madhya Pradesh, paving the way for a more effective and inclusive approach to youth development in the state.

Click here to watch the video of Panel 4: Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy; Implementation Status and Way Forward Video

Panellists' Perspective

Dr. Swati Singh Chauhan (Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis)

Dr. Chauhan, advisor at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, highlighted that the Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy was conceived following the extensive consultative process. A significant youth Maha Panchayat was organized, involving over 10,000 participants, which laid the groundwork for the policy structure. Despite the state's 8 crore population, outdated census data from 2011 posed challenges in precise policy formulation, especially for the youth population, estimated at 2 crores.

Dr. Chauhan emphasized the need for the policy to act as a guiding document rather than a solution in itself. She underscored that the success of any policy is contingent on implementation guidelines, budget allocations, and collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and civil society. She also stressed the importance of youth involvement in decision-making processes and the creation of youth resource centres at district and block levels. These centres are expected to provide youth with opportunities for career guidance, mental health support, and access to educational resources. However, the centres have yet to be operationalized, largely due to elections and administrative delays.

Key Points:
- Although the youth policy was launched in 2023, elections and the resulting model code of conduct delayed the establishment of the promised Youth Resource Centres.
- There is an urgent need for adequate funding to ensure the creation of the youth resource centres, which are crucial for policy implementation at the grassroots level.
- Administrative Processes: Administrative delays, especially those caused by political events, should be anticipated and addressed with flexible timelines.
- Ensuring a separate youth budget in the state's fiscal planning would guarantee sustained efforts toward policy implementation.

Mr. Vimal Jat (Synergy Sansthan)

As a representative of Synergy Sansthan (Harda), Mr. Jat provided insights into the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in supporting the policy's objectives. He stressed that youth issues have historically not been central to civil society's agenda, leading to fragmented efforts.

The youth resource centre model, operational in Harda for over a decade, was highlighted as a positive initiative that should be replicated across the state. He emphasized that block-level youth resource centres are crucial for expanding the reach of youth programs, especially in tribal and rural areas. His organization's experience demonstrates that youth centres serve as spaces where young people can engage in self-development, career planning, and peer-to-peer learning.

Key Points:
Youth mobilization remains a key issue. Establishing youth federations at the grassroots level could reduce the burden on organizations to mobilize youth.
The infrastructure of existing centres is often weak, limiting their ability to cater to a larger audience.
Adequate infrastructure at block and district levels is necessary to facilitate effective outreach.
Greater collaboration between the government and civil society organizations can bolster implementation efforts and ensure that community needs are met.

Ms. Poornima Kumar (Samvada)

Ms. Kumar provided valuable insights on the mental health aspect of youth development, particularly citing the Yuva Vandana program in Karnataka, which could serve as a model for Madhya Pradesh. The program focused on the mental health needs of the youth by engaging stakeholders such as health professionals, educators, and NGOs, creating safe spaces for youth to discuss their concerns and seek help.

In Madhya Pradesh, Ms. Kumar pointed out that despite having sound policies, the lack of collaboration between government bodies, youth, and civil society often stifles implementation. She emphasized the need for decentralized youth engagement, with youth groups at district, block, and panchayat levels, to ensure a more effective policy rollout.

Key Points
- There is a lack of adequate mental health resources and counselling services for youth, particularly in rural areas.
- Youth involvement in policy implementation is limited, leading to a gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes.
- Implementing decentralized mental health services at the panchayat level will ensure broader access and engagement.
- Involving youth in decision-making at the policy formulation stage and during implementation can foster ownership and better outcomes.

Mr. Anurag Sonwalker (United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Sonwalker shared his insights on the Madhya Pradesh State Youth Policy, focusing on the need to address the career aspirations and broader social roles of the youth. He emphasized that while employment is a key concern, many young people lack exposure to diverse career paths beyond traditional roles, such as doctors or engineers. Mr. Sonwalker pointed out that the youth often do not consider trades like carpentry or cobbling as viable careers, highlighting a societal bias towards certain professions. He also discussed UNFPA's work in Madhya Pradesh, particularly through life skills programs like "Umang," which have helped integrate issues like mental health and positive masculinity into school curriculums.

The importance of providing comprehensive career guidance and addressing gaps in the youth's knowledge and aspirations was a central theme in his observations. He argued for a more inclusive approach, where all career paths are valued and supported, and for continued efforts to bridge the skills gap through both governmental and civil society collaboration. Mr. Sonwalker also touched upon the need for gender-sensitive programming, particularly in the area of life skills education. He highlighted that state has made efforts through the Umang Adolescent Helpline and other initiatives, but these remain under-publicized and not fully integrated into the youth policy.

Key Points
- Many youths remain unaware of the resources available to them under various government schemes.
- Poor coordination between different government departments and civil society organizations slows down implementation efforts.
- Many young people in Madhya Pradesh are not exposed to a wide range of career opportunities beyond traditional professions, leading to a narrow focus on government jobs or mainstream careers.
- There is a societal bias against non-traditional jobs such as carpentry, cobbling, and other trades, which results in these fields being undervalued by both the youth and their families.
- A significant gap exists between the skills that young people possess and what is required by the job market, particularly in non-traditional sectors.
- Young people are often unaware of various career development programs and opportunities, such as those provided through government initiatives and UNFPA-supported life skills programs.

Mr. Anurag Dwary (NDTV)

Mr. Dwary provided valuable insights into how youth issues are viewed by traditional media outlets. He emphasized that while youth form a significant portion of media consumers, their concerns are often showcased for the sake of increasing viewership and TRP (Television Rating Points). The media, according to Mr. Dwary, tends to highlight issues like employment, exam paper leaks, and corruption because they resonate deeply with young audiences. Employment, in particular, dominates the narrative since youth are heavily concerned with securing jobs after completing their education.

Mr. Dwary also noted that youth-related topics are often reactive, receiving significant attention during crises or major achievements, but not as part of a consistent, proactive effort to engage with youth concerns. This creates a scenario where media coverage is more focused on the youth's immediate frustrations, rather than long-term developmental issues such as personality building, respect, and awareness

Key Challenges:
- Media often treats youth primarily as consumers rather than citizens with critical social issues, focusing more on gaining viewership than addressing their developmental concerns.
- Media tends to focus on popular issues like unemployment and paper leaks, while topics such as personal development, mental health, and civic awareness are overlooked.
- Youth issues get significant coverage during crises, such as exam leaks or corruption scandals, but sustained, in-depth exploration of their challenges is lacking.

Youth are often depicted through specific lenses like employment or academic success, while other aspects of their identity and social challenges receive less attention

Q&A Session:

Manoj (Shivpuri) inquired about the operational status of Youth Resource Centers and the measures to ensure transparency in government exams amidst issues like paper leaks. Dr. Swati Singh Chauhan stated that the Youth Policy was launched in March 2023, followed by the establishment of a youth portal. While the creation of Youth Resource Centers (Yuva Samsadhan Kendra) is ongoing, delays occurred due to the election period. Budget provisions are expected in future budgets. Regarding exam transparency, she suggested a centralized system for handling exam papers and highlighted the role of civil society in advocating for accountability.

An audience member asked about current gaps in the youth policy and its support for arts and culture. Dr. Chauhan acknowledged that while the policy is comprehensive, it will be updated every one to two years to adapt to new challenges. She mentioned initiatives to promote arts and connect young artists, providing financial assistance for those aiming to showcase their talents at larger platforms.

An audience member questioned why experienced youth activists were not included in the policy's formulation. Dr. Chauhan explained the logistical challenge of including all accomplished youths but assured that various youth from diverse fields contributed. She emphasized the importance of Youth Resource Centers as platforms for youth to voice their concerns and participate in future policy discussions.

In addition to above, Anurag Dwary emphasized civil society's crucial role in raising awareness about the youth policy. He stated that public discussions should originate from community engagement rather than being media-imposed, with civil society organizations fostering these discussions. Also, Poornima Kumar pointed out that exam paper leaks stem from systemic issues in youth employment, citing intense competition for limited government jobs. She argued that addressing the root causes, such as creating more equitable employment opportunities, could reduce the pressure and subsequent corruption. Lastly, Rita Mishra discussed the importance of raising community awareness about the youth policy, especially in marginalized areas. She highlighted the challenges faced by specific groups, like transgender adolescents, and the need for community education. She advocated for ongoing engagement with communities, teacher training, and parental discussions to ensure effective implementation of the policy.

SUMMARY:

The session provided a comprehensive examination of the youth policy framework and its effectiveness in addressing the needs of the state's youth population. The discussion highlighted the genesis of the policy, which stemmed from a 2008 Panchayat meeting, emphasizing the need for dedicated initiatives given that approximately 25% of Madhya Pradesh's population is aged between 15-29. The participatory development process involved gathering feedback from over 10,000 youths and drew upon both state and national policy evaluations, particularly the National Youth Policy of 2021.

Key programs associated with the policy, such as life skills integration in education, Positive Immunity Programs for adolescents, and health services through Friendly Health Clinics, were highlighted. However, challenges in effective budget allocation and implementation guidelines were significant concerns, particularly as political transitions can disrupt funding continuity.

The session also identified critical challenges such as addressing mental health and enhancing skill development among youth, emphasizing the need for a collaborative approach involving educational institutions, industry partners, and civil society organizations. The importance of establishing youth resource centers and creating a centralized youth portal was discussed as a means to improve transparency and facilitate engagement.

Concerns raised included the status of district-level resource centers and the need for experienced individuals in policy-making processes. The session concluded with actionable recommendations for moving forward, including enhancing budget allocations, developing detailed implementation guidelines, addressing mental health and skill development, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration. By focusing on these areas, Madhya Pradesh can foster a more inclusive and effective youth policy framework that equips young individuals with the necessary skills and support to contribute positively to society.

Youth & Climate Change

The session provided an essential platform for engaging discussions on the critical role of young people in addressing climate change and its impacts. Moderated by Kuldeep from Reap Benefit, the session featured an insightful panel comprising Rajesh Kalam, a youth representative; Deep Jyoti Sonu Bramha from Farm to Food in Assam; Lokendra Thakkar from the Environmental Planning & Coordination Organisation in Bhopal; Pooja Iyengar from Green Hub; and Shashank from WWF India. The panellists explored various facets of youth engagement in climate action, emphasizing the need for shifting mindsets and reconnecting with communities to foster a more sustainable future. Key discussions included the environmental effects of climate change on agriculture and the importance of promoting sustainable practices within farming communities. Innovative approaches and youth-led initiatives were highlighted through transformative case studies, showcasing the power of communication and advocacy in driving change. Moreover, the panel addressed the challenges and opportunities faced by youth in climate engagement, particularly in overcoming traditional barriers and securing necessary policy and resource support. The integration of traditional knowledge with modern scientific practices was identified as a vital strategy for adapting to contemporary climate challenges, underscoring the significance of collaborative efforts in creating a resilient and sustainable environment for future generations.

Click here to watch the video of
Panel 5- Youth and Climate Change Video

Panellists' Perspective

Mr. Rajesh Kalam (Youth Representative)

Rajesh, a youth representative from a tribal community, highlights the growing challenges that young people face due to climate change. He speaks about how irregular rainfall patterns and the increased use of chemical fertilizers have significantly affected agriculture, which is a primary source of livelihood in his community.

The land is slipping away from us," he remarks, pointing out that as families grow, land ownership is becoming more fragmented, making it harder for the youth to rely on farming as their parents once did. This lack of land and opportunities forces many young people to migrate to cities in search of work. He also shares that social pressures in the village further push youth to leave. "If you're educated and stay in the village, there's no respect for you," Rajesh notes, adding that this disconnection from their communities not only results in the loss of local knowledge but also reduces the youth's ability to engage in climate action at a grassroots level. He advocates for creating spaces in the village where youth can engage in climate solutions, utilizing traditional knowledge and resources that could offer more sustainable livelihoods.

Key Points:

- Impact of Climate Change on Livelihoods: Agriculture is no longer a viable career due to changing weather patterns and reduced access to land.
- Social Pressures: Educated youth face pressure to migrate, leading to a loss of local knowledge and reduced engagement in rural climate initiatives.
- Call for Local Engagement: There is a need to create spaces for youth to reconnect with traditional practices and lead climate action in their own communities.

Mr. Shashank Dubey (WWF)

There will be various impacts, including financial and health-related effects. However, there is an indirect impact that we might not often think about, yet we feel it—especially among the youth. This impact relates to our psychology. In simpler terms, if we don't understand something, we might not make an effort to protect it. Even if we want to, we may struggle to save it.

In this case, it concerns biodiversity and the environment. If our understanding of these matters is limited, we won't be able to effectively safeguard them. This is a significant indirect impact. In my opinion, the role of today's youth should be to proactively understand issues like the environment, climate change, and biodiversity—specifically, the causes of climate change and the actions we can take in response. Young people should stand as role models and take the initiative in this endeavor.

Key Points:

- We need to understand both the direct and indirect impacts of our actions on climate change, and our responses should be developed accordingly.
- It is essential to urgently address concerns related to biodiversity and ecology; otherwise, we risk losing these vital resources for future generations.
- Youth should be actively involved in planning and taking action to protect the climate from adverse changes.

Ms. Pooja Iyengar (Green Hub)

Ms. Iyengar at Green Hub runs a fellowship program that works with tribal youth across India. She emphasizes that one of the key challenges is the mindset of young people who do not initially realize the wealth of traditional knowledge they hold about their local environment. Through the Green Hub Fellowship, youth are encouraged to explore their surroundings, learn about local biodiversity, and engage in hands-on projects like water conservation and agroforestry

Ms. Iyengar explains that film-making is a central tool used in the fellowship to empower young people. By documenting climate change impacts in their communities, the fellows not only gain technical skills but also develop a sense of ownership over their local environment. "They start to see themselves as custodians of their land," she explains, noting that many fellows go on to lead climate and conservation projects in their villages after the fellowship. This empowerment, combined with a shift in mindset, allows the youth to visualize a future where sustainable livelihoods can be pursued through organic farming, conservation, and other environmentally focused initiatives.

Key Points:
- Mindset Shift: The fellowship helps youth realize the importance of their traditional knowledge and its role in combating climate change.
- Empowerment through Film-Making: By documenting local environmental challenges, youth gain skills and become advocates for climate action.
- Sustainable Livelihoods: The fellowship helps young people explore sustainable careers in conservation and organic farming, promoting long-term community resilience.

Mr. Ram Ratan (The Environmental Planning & Coordination Organization)

Mr. Ratan offered a governmental perspective, stressing that youth and technology are essential to mitigating climate change. He highlights how climate change is affecting agriculture in Madhya Pradesh, where shifts in cropping patterns and water scarcity are becoming more common. "The youth must understand the environmental costs of farming practices," he says, adding that awareness about the resources required for crops like rice is critical to making more sustainable choices.

Mr. Ratan also discussed the role of government schemes in creating opportunities for youth in agriculture and animal husbandry, which remain resilient sectors even during crises like COVID-19. He advocated for the youth to lead these initiatives, noting that they have the potential to influence entire communities by promoting sustainable practices, whether through organic farming, water conservation, or agroforestry.

Key Points:
- Youth and Technology: The combination of youth and technology is essential for addressing climate change.
- Government Schemes: Programs like organic farming and animal husbandry provide employment while promoting sustainability.
- Educational Awareness: Young people need to be educated about the environmental costs of traditional farming practices.

Mr. Deep Jyoti Sonu Bramha (Farm to Food)

Mr. Deep Jyoti shares his experience working with youth in Assam, focusing on reconnecting them with traditional agricultural practices. His organization, Farm to Food, runs school programs like Nutrition Gardens, where students learn about organic farming and vermicomposting. These initiatives encourage youth to engage with their communities and learn about local biodiversity.

Mr. Deep Jyoti underscored the issue of market-driven food systems, which have led to the disappearance of local, uncultivated foods. "Our local food systems are being replaced by fast food and exotic crops," he laments, explaining how this disconnect from traditional agriculture is harming both the environment and community resilience. His work focuses on reintroducing traditional foods into schools and communities, helping to revive local knowledge and promote more sustainable agricultural practices.

Key Points:
- Reviving Traditional Agriculture: Youth are encouraged to reconnect with local agricultural practices through school programs.
- Sustainable Food Systems: Reintroducing traditional, uncultivated foods into the local food system is essential for environmental and community health.
- Engaging Youth in Community Action: Through projects like Nutrition Gardens, youth become active participants in climate action and conservation efforts.

Q&A Session:

In response to a question on expectations of youth in tribal communities regarding climate change and employment, Rajesh Kalam highlighted that youth expect opportunities for engagement in local initiatives within their communities. He noted that a lack of respect and opportunities often drives young people to migrate to urban areas. He advocated for technical support and funding for sustainable employment, particularly in sectors like medicinal farming, to encourage youth to remain in their communities.

Further in response to query related to Contribution of traditional knowledge in rural areas to climate action, Deep Jyoti Sonu Bramha emphasized the importance of traditional agricultural practices in climate action. He discussed the need to reintroduce traditional foods and farming techniques, which are being overshadowed by modern systems, to enhance resilience. Engaging youth in reviving local knowledge fosters climate adaptation and pride in cultural heritage.

While responding question related to Role of government schemes in helping youth contribute to climate resilience, Ram Ratan pointed out that government schemes, such as those focused on organic farming and livestock management, offer employment while benefiting the environment. He stressed the importance of raising awareness about these programs to ensure youth participation and highlighted that education and leadership roles within these initiatives can empower youth to spearhead environmental change.

Lastly, suggestion on impact of film-making and storytelling on youth engagement with climate issues, Pooja Iyengar discussed how film-making allows youth to document and reflect on local environmental challenges. This process empowers young individuals by giving them a voice, helping them see themselves as stewards of their land. Through storytelling, youth can advocate for change, raise awareness about climate issues, and inspire community action.

Summary:

The session addressed the critical role of youth in tackling one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century—climate change. With the impacts of rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns affecting ecosystems and human societies, the discussion underscored the need for innovative solutions and grassroots initiatives led by young people. The importance of shifting mindsets towards environmental stewardship was emphasized, as youth are encouraged to reconnect with their communities and local ecosystems through programs like the Greenhouse Fellowship, which integrates modern education with traditional practices.

Technology emerged as a vital tool for youth engagement in climate action, allowing for effective monitoring and grassroots activism. The conversation also highlighted the direct impact of climate change on agriculture, stressing the need for youth to understand and promote sustainable agricultural practices amidst shifting environmental conditions. Successful youth-led initiatives, such as the Nutrition Garden program and campaigns leveraging social media to promote traditional food systems, demonstrated the transformative power of combining education with grassroots engagement.

However, challenges remain in empowering youth, particularly in overcoming traditional barriers and ensuring inclusive frameworks that value their contributions. Support from government schemes and civil society is crucial for providing the necessary resources and recognition of local practices that can enhance sustainability. The session concluded with a call to integrate indigenous knowledge with modern scientific approaches, ensuring that youth can effectively contribute to climate solutions while preserving traditional environmental management practices. Through collaboration and innovation, youth can drive meaningful change in addressing climate change and fostering a sustainable future.

Madhya Pradesh youth express concern on societal pressure; climate change, lack of holistic education

Share this story on:

Senior Correspondent
NewsBits.in

BHOPAL: Youth from across Madhya Pradesh have expressed various concerns including societal pressure, impact of climate change, lack of resources and support for leadership development and opportunities of holistic education.

These concerns were raised during the four preparatory meets of youth held in run up to a state level youth conference "Yuva Aagaaz, Yuva Awaaz" (Beginning by Youth, Voice of Youth) to be organised by NGO Synergy Sansthan and the Bhopal School of Social Sciences in Bhopal on 11-12th August, 2024.

The state level conference aims to bring together various stakeholders working on youth issues for the first time in Madhya Pradesh to discuss issues related to youth and with the hope of coming up with useful recommendations towards their development.

Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship & Empowerment (4E) for Youth

The session titled "Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment (4E) for Youth" served as a pivotal forum for addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing young people in today's dynamic landscape. Moderated by Gourav Jaiswal from Agrini, the session brought together a diverse panel of experts, including Niharika Nautiyal from Forbes Marshall in Pune, Sajjan Shekhawat from Pratham Education Foundation in Bhopal, Vasudha Kapoor from Mera Gaon Meri Duniya in Ujjain, Manoj Kumar Jain, Senior Advisor (Economy, Trade and Innovation) at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis in Bhopal, Ms. Chandrika Parmar from the SP Jain Institute of Management & Research in Mumbai, and Archana Gour, a youth representative.

The discussions centered on the critical intersection of education, employability, entrepreneurship, and empowerment, emphasizing how these elements collectively shape the future of youth. The panel explored innovative approaches to enhancing educational frameworks that equip young individuals with the skills necessary for a competitive job market. They also highlighted the importance of fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and providing support systems that empower youth to transform their ideas into viable ventures. Through collaborative insights and shared experiences, the conference aimed to identify actionable strategies to bridge the gap between education and employability, ultimately enabling young people to thrive in their communities and contribute meaningfully to society. The discussions underscored a shared commitment to creating a more inclusive and supportive ecosystem for youth development, ensuring that the next generation is well-equipped to face the challenges of an ever-evolving world.

[Click here to watch the video of Panel 6:Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship & Empowerment (4E) for Youth](#)

Panelists Perspective:

Archana Gaur (Youth Representative)

When discussing the four, I want to begin with education. Many children in rural areas fall behind primarily because there are no schools available beyond the 10th grade. This lack of educational opportunities significantly hampers their ability to pursue further studies. Without a solid educational foundation, they face immense challenges in finding meaningful employment. To illustrate this, I recently completed the Udaan Fellowship program at the Synergy Institute. I was encouraged to reach out to girls in my village about this opportunity. However, the majority of them have only completed the 8th grade. At first, they expressed enthusiasm about applying for the fellowship. But when they encountered the application form and its complex questions, most of them hesitated and ultimately chose not to apply.

This scenario underscores a critical issue: the lack of empowerment and confidence among these young women. They do not feel adequately prepared or capable of seizing opportunities that could potentially change their lives. If we do not address the quality of education and skill development in rural areas, this cycle of hesitance and underachievement will continue. It's crucial that we invest in enhancing educational resources and vocational training in these communities. Only then can we hope to empower individuals, particularly young women, to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

Key Points:

- Quality Education and Skills: We need to ensure that quality education and skills are provided to every young child and adolescent so that they can make informed decisions about their life choices.
- Invest in Youth Empowerment: It is essential to develop programs that empower the young population of the country. Currently, youths are not sufficiently empowered to demand their rights and make decisions on issues that affect them the most.
- Vocational Skills for Youth: In addition to quality education, we must ensure that young people receive effective vocational training so that they can gain meaningful employment upon completing their vocational courses.

Sajjan Shekhawat (Pratham Education)-

First and foremost, there is a significant lack of educational resources in rural areas, which is further exacerbated by logistical challenges. When children migrate to urban centers, we see a concerning rise in the dropout rate among girls, with estimates suggesting that as many as 40% of female students discontinue their education. This situation places them at a considerable disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts. Recognizing these barriers, we have developed targeted courses aimed at addressing their specific needs and enhancing their educational and employment prospects

Our program offers short, intensive courses that include a significant component of on-the-job training. This hands-on experience provides students with practical exposure to their chosen fields before we assist them in securing employment. We provide training in areas such as beauty therapy, tailoring, and hospitality, all of which present valuable job opportunities in sectors like community service and the hotel industry. We have also developed a model that brings training directly to communities. We actively engage with local communities to identify specific demands for skill development. When a group of 20 to 25 young individuals expresses interest in a particular trade, our trainers are dispatched to the community to conduct the training sessions. This approach allows us to offer relevant skills in a familiar environment, reducing the barriers to participation. Upon completion of the training, we facilitate their placement in appropriate job opportunities, ensuring that they can apply their newly acquired skills in the workforce.

Key Points:
- Need for Targeted Courses: We should develop region- and population-specific courses for young people, ensuring they acquire meaningful skills that can lead to gainful employment.
- Exploring Local Solutions: Solutions must be easily accessible and low-cost to avoid placing any financial burden on participants regarding access to resources.
- Placement Opportunities: In addition to skill-based vocational training, we must provide support to ensure placements in relevant skill areas and appropriate job opportunities.

Vasudha Kapoor (Mera Gaon, Meri Duniya)

If we closely examine the concept of entrepreneurship, particularly the mindset that young people bring to it, we can uncover several significant challenges. Many youths aspire to become entrepreneurs, but when it comes to developing a strong entrepreneurial mindset, they often face hurdles. One major issue is that young people frequently struggle to conceptualize their ideas.

We provide them with financial support and mentorship, as well as opportunities for internships, which are crucial for gaining practical experience. We also recognize the importance of vocational skills training, which we begin as early as the ninth grade. This training is designed to empower students by focusing on how they can address and solve local problems within their communities. By integrating vocational training with entrepreneurship education, we can help students build the skills they need to not only conceptualize their ideas but also implement them effectively.

Key Points:

- Exposure for Creative Thinking: We must provide spaces and opportunities for young people to enhance their entrepreneurial mindset and equip them with the tools to translate their ideas into actionable plans that can benefit their communities.
- Early Age Opportunities: Skill-based learning opportunities should be offered as early as the 9th or 10th standard, allowing students adequate time to explore their options and prepare for their entrepreneurial journey during their early youth.

Niharika Nautiyal (Forbes Marshall)

National Educational Policy places significant emphasis on internships as a critical component of the educational experience. Gaining on-site experience is crucial for securing employment. However, this situation creates a circular dilemma: you need work experience to obtain a job, but you also need a job to gain that experience. To address these interconnected issues, it is vital to establish a clear pathway that connects education with practical experience.

Early engagement with students about career aspirations is essential. Many young individuals have not had the opportunity to explore their interests or understand what roles they might thrive in. By encouraging discussions about their career goals, we can help them articulate their ambitions and identify the skills they need to develop. Internships play a crucial role in this process.

Key Points:

- Early Opportunities for Youth: Emphasis should be placed on providing internship opportunities alongside education so that by the time adolescents and youth complete their studies, they have meaningful exposure to prepare them for the job market
- Collaboration among Institutions: To provide meaningful engagement and internship opportunities, businesses and educational institutions should collaborate. CSR initiatives from different business groups can play a significant role in forging these partnerships.
- Structured Engagement: To ensure that youth gain adequate skills design of these programs should encompass various aspects, including skill building, communication skills, mentorship during the courses, and networking with relevant stakeholders

Manoj Kumar Jain (Senior Advisor-AIGGPA)

Madhya Pradesh, with its population of approximately 80 million, urgently requires a comprehensive strategy for human resource planning. The roles of civil society and the private sector are pivotal in this context. When local planning is executed, we begin to see academic institutions, private sector entities, and civil organizations acknowledging their responsibilities and participating actively in the process.

If we can harness the potential of local agriculture, crafts, or small-scale industries, we can create pathways for youth to find meaningful employment without having to leave their communities. This requires collaboration among various stakeholders to assess the skills available within the local population and align them with market demands.

Key Points:

- Need for Resource Planning: To address the needs of a population exceeding 80 million, the state requires comprehensive planning, particularly at the district level, so that feedback and inputs from grassroots can be effectively incorporated.
- Role of Civil Society: Civil society can play a pivotal role in bringing the government and other stakeholders together to ensure that academic institutions and the private sector develop plans that address the needs for skill building and provide job opportunities at the local level.
- Solutions at the Grassroots Level: By developing small-scale industries, implementing agriculture-based solutions, and improving agricultural techniques, we can address many of the problems currently facing the youth of our state and country

Chandrika Parmar (SP Jain Institute of Management & Research)

We are currently witnessing a significant transformation in the entrepreneurial landscape, particularly in our villages. When we talk about entrepreneurship, we often overlook the countless small-scale vendors—those individuals selling vegetables or other local goods—who are, in fact, entrepreneurs in their own right. It is essential for us to expand our understanding of what defines entrepreneurship and recognize the various forms it takes in different contexts.

we should also consider the unique challenges they face in their specific localities and communities. For instance, entrepreneurs in rural areas might struggle with infrastructure, access to markets, or even transportation, which can severely limit their growth potential. Learning from successful urban models can provide valuable insights for small businesses and can inspire similar initiatives in rural settings.

Key Point:

- Supportive Ecosystem: The goal should be to empower local entrepreneurs to drive economic growth and sustainability within their communities. By focusing on micro-entrepreneurs, we can help them unlock their potential and contribute to the overall prosperity of the region.
- Defining Entrepreneurship: We need to define and acknowledge local or micro-entrepreneurs who operate with small capital and involve few people.
- Role of Technology: Technology-based, low-cost solutions to rural areas, ensuring that micro- entrepreneurs do not struggle for funding, marketing their products, and achieving sustainability.

Q/A Session

An audience member inquired about the impact of AI on job opportunities for youth and how Indian youth can remain employable amidst these changes. Niharika Nautiyal explained that while AI has led to job losses in some sectors, it has also created new roles, such as AI Prompters, where individuals guide AI systems like ChatGPT. She emphasized the importance of Indian youth taking personal initiative to learn about AI advancements through free resources like YouTube and Unacademic. Another audience member raised concerns about the quality of education and employability in private institutions. In response to that, Manoj Kumar Jain acknowledged that there are issues in some private institutions, where they may meet government standards temporarily during inspections but lack consistent quality. He stressed that improving education is a collective responsibility and that media, civil society, and institutional leaders must hold educational institutions accountable. Archana Gour highlighted the challenges rural youth face in using technology and mobile devices for education and employment. She explained that many rural youths, including herself, have access to mobile phones but are unaware of their full potential for learning and employability. She shared her own experience of learning about platforms like Canva only after joining Synergy. Kiran (Filmmaker, Sivni, Madhya Pradesh) expressed concerns about the lack of critical thinking and logic skills among engineering graduates in Bhopal, despite it being a hub for engineering education. In response to this, Manoj Kumar Jain acknowledged that many private educational institutions are focused on meeting market demand by enrolling students, but fail to provide the practical skills required for employability. He pointed out that while the government has set educational standards, the lack of rigorous monitoring allows gaps in practical education to persist. He also emphasized that students must take responsibility for their learning and push themselves to acquire practical skills beyond the curriculum. Anand (Ekta Parishad) questioned how the governments policy drafts on education and skill development address youth engagement in agriculture. To this query, it was explained that the policy drafts focus on guiding youth based on their aspirations, rather than pushing specific career paths like agriculture. Raghu Maharshi (Synergy Sansthan) asked Niharika Nautiyal about the role of civil society in fostering employability. To this query, she highlighted the crucial role civil society plays in providing access to information and opportunities for youth. She shared examples of how Forbes Marshall collaborates with educational and training organizations to support youth from underprivileged backgrounds. She emphasized that civil society can bridge the gap by offering mentorship, sharing knowledge about available resources, and exposing youth to new career possibilities. Collaboration between companies and civil society is essential to ensuring that youth have the tools they need to succeed in the workforce.

Summary:

The discussion highlighted the critical challenges facing rural youth, particularly regarding access to education, job opportunities, and entrepreneurial exposure. A major issue is the limited availability of educational facilities beyond the 10th grade, especially for girls, forcing many to abandon their studies and diminishing their employment prospects. The lack of quality education leaves rural youth, particularly women, ill-prepared for the job market. Moreover, there is a significant gap in awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities among rural youth, compounded by a lack of guidance and resources. While several programs aim to empower youth, their reach and effectiveness are limited, and cultural norms often hinder participation, particularly for young women.

Despite India producing many graduates annually, many lack practical skills essential for the workplace. Corporate training programs offering real-world exposure, internships, and soft skills development are crucial. Vocational training is also valuable, but many rural youth are hesitant to leave their villages due to familial and cultural pressures. Bringing training programs directly to rural communities could help overcome this barrier. Empowerment through self-awareness and community engagement is vital. Encouraging youth to lead local projects fosters a sense of ownership and leadership while contributing to their communities. This community-centered approach promotes personal growth and local economic development.

In summary, the 4E framework—Education, Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Empowerment—offers a comprehensive strategy to tackle the challenges faced by rural youth. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts from government, corporations, NGOs, and local communities.

स्कूल आफ सोशल साइंस में राज्य स्तरीय सम्मेलन युवा आगाज, युवा आवाज आयोजित

भोपाल। मध्य प्रदेश भोपाल में आयोजित युवा आगाज, युवा आवाज राज्य स्तरीय सम्मेलन के दूसरे दिन की शुरुआत 12 अगस्त 2024 को भोपाल स्कूल ऑफ सोशल साइंस, भोपाल हुई। इस कार्यक्रम का उद्देश्य युवाओं की सक्रिय भागीदारी को बढ़ावा देना और विकास के विभिन्न पहलुओं पर गहन चर्चा करना है।

पहले सत्र में प्रमुख वक्ताओं ने राज्य की युवा नीति पर चर्चा करते हुए इसके कार्यान्वयन में आने वाली चुनौतियों और अवसरों पर प्रकाश डाला। अनुराग सोनवलकर (यूनाइटेड नेशंस फंड फॉर पॉपुलेशन एक्टिविटीज, भोपाल) ने कहा, युवा नीति का प्रभावी कार्यान्वयन ही युवाओं के उज्ज्वल भविष्य का मार्ग प्रशस्त करेगा। डॉ. स्वाति सिंह चौहान (सलाहकार, अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी संस्थान, भोपाल) ने भी इस दिशा में सरकार के प्रयासों पर जोर दिया और नीति के दीर्घकालिक प्रभावों पर चर्चा की।

कार्यक्रम के दूसरे सत्र में युवाओं की जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रति जागरूकता और उनकी भूमिका पर चर्चा की गई। राजेश कलम (युवा प्रतिनिधि) ने कहा, जलवायु परिवर्तन से निपटने के लिए युवाओं की भागीदारी अनिवार्य है। दीप ज्योति सोनू ब्रह्मा (फार्म टू फूड, असम) ने असम में अपने अनुभव साझा करते हुए कहा कि कैसे युवा स्थायी कृषि की दिशा में काम कर रहे हैं। लोकेन्द्र ठाकुर (पर्यावरण योजना एवं समन्वय संगठन, भोपाल) ने भी पर्यावरण संरक्षण में युवाओं की जिम्मेदारी पर जोर दिया।

Synergy Sansthan is thankful to all the organisation for their support
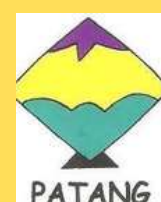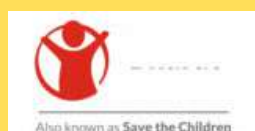
Special Thanks to the Bhopal School of Social Sciences for hosting this conference

We are grateful to IDAR for their support in developing this report

Collaborating Organizations for Regional Consultation

- Sankalp Centre for Integrated
- Centre for Integrated development
- Aim for Awareness Society.
- Mera Gaon Meri Duniya
- Saccha Prayas
- ANSH Happiness Society
- Vikalp Hub & Bharat Calling
- Savitribaifulefatimashekh group
- Ekta Graminjan Sahayog Sanstha Ghodadongri Betul
- SHEDO
- Had-Anhad
- Kala samvad foundation
- CIVICACT FOUNDATION
- Ahimsa Welfare Society
- Manners support in development shivpuri
- Musht Samaj Seva Samiti
- Vikas Samvad

Participating organisation in Regional Youth Consultations

- Pravah
- Plustrust
- Pahal Jan Sahyog Vikas Sansthan
- Oriental University
- Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN)
- Namami Narmade Welfare
- Maharashtra Institute of Higher Education
- ST. ALOYSIUS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
- Hawabagh College
- SHRI GURUNANK MAHILA MAHA VIDHYAKAY JABALPUR
- Govt. Science College Jabalpur
- Seva Sadan Mahavidyalay Burhanpur
- Government College Burhanpur M.P
- NSS Science and Commerce Units
- NSS Jiwaji University Gwalior
- NSS UNIT CHHINDWARA
- NSS UNIT LNCT COLLEGE JABALPUR
- NSS Unit Mehandwani District Dindori
- NSS Jain College Bhind
- NSS Unit Bhind
- Govt PG college Guna
- NYKS Volunteers
- Muskaan
- Youngshala
- Eka The Communicator's Collective Bhopal
- Yuvalaya
- Pahar Foundation
- UDAAN FELLOWSHIP
- Jan Pratham
- PARHIT
- CID Gwalior
- Kadam jan vikas sanstha
- CM jan seva mitra
- Heartbeat Foundation
- Home Science College Jabalpur
- RdVV
- Zenith society
- Manners support in development
- Dharti Sanstha
- Shivpuri Youth Forum
- Nagrik adhikar manch
- HAWABAGH COLLEGE JABALPUR
- Sardar Patel University Balaghat
- Govt. Collage Jhabua
- Seva Sadan Mahavidyalay Burhanpur
- MK Memorial School Burhanpur

Media Clippings

Glimpses from Conference

For more information:

🌐 https://synergysansthan.org/our-story/

in https://www.linkedin.com/company/74218789/admin/dashboard/

▶ https://youtu.be/pHDQ8bTTtbk?si=PtbxVRbtL7WsYh-D

✉ info@synergysansthan.com

📷 https://www.instagram.com/synergysansthan/profilecard/?igsh=bWdwemw0Y3Z6eXgx

📍 Ward. 19, Maharna Pratap Colony, Behind Dr. Kailash Sighal Clinic,Harda
Madhya Pradesh- 461331