

ISSN: 0048-6434



**QUEST IN EDUCATION**

**VOL. LIV**

**NO. 2**

**April 2021**

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**The Quarterly Refereed Journal**  
**Publishes articles/papers/reviews/reports**  
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**Published by**

Ms. Nupur Mitra

Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan

Indian Council of Basic Education,

Juhu North, Mumbai-400049

**Periodicity of Publication**

January 1, March 1, July 1, October 1

ISSN: 0048-6434

**Annual subscription: Rs. 300/- (India)**

**\$ 50/- (Outside India)**

Papers with author's name and addresses must reach the office 12 weeks before the month in which the publication is due. Papers will be published only after suitable changes are made as per referee's suggestions.

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## Editorial

Dr. Frances Vaidya, in her review article reflects as a teacher educator on two recently published documents edited by Dr. Joseph Xavier, *Development Anchored in Community Intelligence: A Handbook for Community Mobilisation and Development as Community-led Journey: Learnings from Community Mobilisation Processes*.

Ms. Anima Mali's article is based on a qualitative research study in a village in the Sundarbans region of West Bengal with regards to girls' schooling. She succinctly shows the relationship between social and ecological precarity of Sundarbans and withdrawal of girls from school to supplement household income, their early marriage and trafficking. The study specifically examines the case of a residential hostel under the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme.

Dr. Nandita Mondal's article is an attempt to redesign worker's education in the post pandemic era. She emphasises the skill upgradation of the un-organised labour force to get the local as well as the migrant workers engaged in meaningful occupation both at the source and the destination place of migration.

*Dr. Sunayana Kadle has reviewed a recently published book titled, Youth and India's Sustainable Development Goals, edited Saigita Chiturre.*

We request authors to send their original research-based articles and book reviews on issues concerning education. As Quest in Education publishes peer-reviewed articles, the authors should be ready to wait. Due to current coronavirus crisis, the print edition of Quest in Education is interrupted & only an online edition is appearing since April 2020.

**Prof. Vibhuti Patel**  
**Editor**

**DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY THROUGH  
MOBILISATION  
A REVIEW ARTICLE**

**Dr. Frances Vaidya,**  
Associate Professor  
Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan's  
Smt. Surajba College of Education

*This article reflects a teacher educator on two recently published documents edited by Dr. Joseph Xavier, **Development Anchored in Community Intelligence: A Handbook for Community Mobilisation and Development as Community-led Journey: Learnings from Community Mobilisation Processes.** Both the documents can be downloaded freely by clicking on this link: <https://isibangalore.com/publication>*

**Key Words: community development, action, empowerment**

**"There is no power for change greater than  
a community discovering what it cares about. – Margaret J.**

Historically we have observed that communities are built based on the common interest and goals. A group of people living together in a specific geographical area and sharing common interest or similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics is termed as a community. The community spirit generates feeling of solidarity, and the members stand by each other to achieve their common goals and interests. This leads to community development, which is dynamic, inclusive, diverse, evolving, multidimensional yet complementary in nature. Community Development (CD) and Community Mobilisation (CM) or Community Organisation (CO) are interchangeably used. Whether it is CD or CM or CO it shares a common interest and common purpose aimed at improved quality of life of all in the community.

This article views two books written by Joseph Xavier SJ. The author of the books very beautifully depicts the importance of Community Development and gives guidelines to Community Mobilization which is the need of the hour.

**Community-led Development** is a process of working together to achieve and create the community owned common goals and vision. It takes into consideration the planning and developmental approach that is based on the goals and vision set for the people living within that geographical boundaries. The members of the community put forward the local voices, does not focus on problems rather build up local strengths, collaborate across different sectors intentionally and are adaptable and work to achieve systematic long-term project.

In his books Development as “**Community Led Journey**”, the author, Dr. Joseph Xavier and his research team studies taken presents the initiative taken by the aboriginal pioneers and culminates the experiences, voices, skills, knowledge, and perception which enhances the need for Social development. The author and his team in their study has tried to develop and understand scientifically the process of Community Mobilisation which is necessary for empowerment through animation as suggested by him of the vulnerable communities.

“There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals.”

— **Idowu Koyenikan**

Development of community is a wholistic approach grounded on the principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action. It considers members of the community to be experts as it concerns about the lives, values and of their communities. It encompasses all parameters that can be included within their community, be it deciding on certain issues or selecting and implementation of actions and evaluation. It explicitly focuses on the redistribution of power to address the causes of injustice done to the disadvantage.

The book deals with a study by the author and his team and aims to explore communities ‘partnership building and makes efforts to negotiate with everyone beginning from stakeholders, their network, advocacy partners and the administrative and governance structures. The findings of the book will prepare a mind map to all those who are engaged in the praxis of community building. It will help to bring about changes in the society and will also help in the community-oriented approach by adopting right methodologies and processes.

The book aims at developing an understanding that is scientific in nature of the process of community mobilisation for the empowerment of the vulnerable communities through animation leading to empowerment of these communities. It therefore compiles experiences, process to improve the quality of the life of the communities over a period.

Animation is a concept that runs parallel to community mobilisation. Animation was defined by Caritas India as **“an awakening and action-oriented process, aimed at social transformation; specifically, for the poor and marginalised”**. It involves working very closely with people and help them to manage, participate, facilitating, motivating, inspiring, and making things happens quickly through action. The animator’s role are mere facilitators in this process, and they do not hold a top position in this process. Through community mobilisation there will be a sustainable and engaging community-based organisation which will then lead to sustained knowledge developments among its members which will further develop the analytical skills, personality development, leadership and managerial capacities and creating an awareness of citizenship rights. Thus, it leads to strategic planning and action among its members after thorough reflection. It thereby becomes community led or people led

To improve the quality of life of the communities analysing and compiling of experiences, processes formation of groups, knowledge generation, arrangement of methodologies was recommended over a period. This led to an educative awakening of the conscience of the marginalised through a critical analysis

and motivating them to build confidence, raise their self-esteem, be united and to take collective action for the betterment of their community which will thus lead to transformation in social reality.

Caritas supports relief and rehabilitation during, and Caritas be it in India and Germany strongly believes in the upliftment and mobilisation of the community to bring about change in their lifestyle and social problems like poverty, marginalisation and having their own self-respect which is necessary for a just society. Caritas India revamped the ideological framework and praxis of the Animation concept considering the geopolitical climate and the emerging trends that takes place in the present context. Change can be brought out if and only if due attention is given to the community itself. This will bring out a vital changes and community development will be enhanced.

Community- led development process is indeed important for social transformation. It provides guidelines of how to go about community development by providing a framework of conscientisation and animation. This enhances critical reflection on how the societal changes have taken place with regards to the development of the community keeping the important features of the different developmental models namely **Charity Approach, Social Action Approach, Developmental Approach** not forgetting the **Human Rights Approach**. It focuses on the need for development at the grass root as it will build up respect, encourage participatory decision-making. It encourages team building without with there would not be any possibility to build trust and confidence with is a most important requirement for community development leading to community mobilisation.

The book evolves around narratives of how women led the process, how children became ambassadors of changes, how leadership development and how knowledge development took place based on trust, solidarity and social justice and fraternity. The author very vividly showcases that the life of the community can improve if they transcend the barriers of caste and religion, change their mindset and value education. This would result in access to individual and community entitlements, collaboration and networking which includes sharing and giving communities.

The main aim of these narratives is ‘Community Intelligence’ which would not only help to enhance citizenship of individual but also develop awareness and consciousness towards the community to improve the marginalised quality life.

**Some of the major learning and sustainability issues are:**

a. **Mobilisation of the members of the community:** There is a need for members of the community to be aware of Community Mobilisation. This will create an awareness of their rights and use them effectively

b. **Shared mission and participation of the community** helps in bringing about cohesiveness and peace and harmony in the society. The mission should be shared for the benefit of the society so that they can participate in the Community Led development programmes.

c. **Formation, functioning and engagement** of various groups plays an importance role in both communities led development and Community Mobilisation. There is dire need to formulate, make it functional and engage people in this shared mission for the betterment of the society.

d. **Personality, leadership and knowledge development** brings about a drastic change in the personality development of the individual leading to community mobilisation. It fosters creativity, imagination and develops leadership skills along with knowledge enhancement.

e. **Networking and partnership building** is equally important for the community to grow and therefore partnership building is vital. Networking also plays a major role in both the process of development of the community and mobilisation.

f. **Learning and sustainability dimensions** cannot be excluded since this is an ever going, ongoing process. Man learns from womb to tomb along with it the community.



Introducing community led development process sets the tone for the handbook in terms of proving conceptual framework of conscientisation and animation process and perspective for social transformation. In his handbook for community mobilisation, the author has suggested a 12 step model that emerged from interaction which deals with trust and confidence building. This is a way to progress in community mobilization which is democratic and participatory in nature and will help the animators to carry on their work effectively and efficiently. They can thus become facilitators where they can help them to be guided by the vision, mission, and goals so that there could be cohesiveness in the community as soon as possible.

Trust and understanding shows the forward pathway in community mobilisation in a democratic, participatory manner and endorses self-reflexivity for the animators. For a social activist, it is important to be guided by vision, mission, goals, and objective, so that the immediate tactics of community intervention and long-term strategy sync with one another.

Once the trust and confidence are built there will automatically development of **shared understanding of mission**, values and thus leading to Community Mobilisation. They can thus discuss their common interest, aspirations, social togetherness and justice, cooperation, compassion, consideration, and sympathy for their community. If the Community based organisation must be successful then the commonness of shared interest must follow.

Social, gender and distributive justice should be based on community centric globally. It is important that the dos and don'ts are chalked down for a larger community which is based on social solidarity with the marginalized groups. Hence the need for instant formation and functioning of coherent and diverse groups and CBO's profiles based on common interest, inclusive and diverse nature of the community. The Community Based Organisation will then provide the pointers for the smooth sailing of the community keeping in mind the common interest, inclusiveness, and diverse nature and for the benefit of a larger community based

on social harmony with the marginalised groups. To form the foundation of community centredness, it

should be based on social justice, distributive justice, and gender justice. This common platform will thus help in enabling and building critical consciousness. It will develop in them leadership skills, personality development, self and community development and including the knowledge development. It all is developed then community mobilisation can be possible.

Need assessment and micro-planning for action are two crucial aspects of effective community mobilisation. Various and innumerable problems exist in society and therefore the members of the community must be able to identify the social problem and must know to prioritise the problems as per their severity and preference. The tree is used as a metaphor which represents all the sections of the society be it women, men, children including youth. It provides guidelines of critical consciousness about various forms of inequalities, vulnerabilities, and discrimination and who to challenge them with community mobilisation. This helps in **Building Critical Consciousness, Leadership and Knowledge Development.**

**SMART – Specific, Measurable Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound** Matrix of Social Problems activity creations shows the need, importance of participatory action research also sets standards and make one cautious of what the practitioners should take up starting with problems seeking immediate attention. This is done keeping in mind the effect and efficient use of the available resources. Drafting and presenting petitions using Right to Information, making online complaints, logical arguments, and peaceful negotiations, consistent follow up; maintaining the cohesion of the group amidst poor response; conflict resolution, exploring innovative approaches to bring the issue to public domain using social media as well as mainstream electronic and print media; expanding livelihood opportunities and social security measures and ensuring social protection.

**Identification of Social Problems and Prioritisation** shows the importance of participatory action research and creation of activity matrix adhering to SMART - Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound principles. In helpful tips, it also cautions the practitioners not to take up too many social problems at a time. Prioritisation of action agenda.

**Interface with Duty Bearers and Expanding Livelihood opportunities** discusses the pros and cons of the entitlements as well as social costs, while dealing with authorities which can be local self-government bodies, criminal justice system or political and governance structures. Exposure programmes and study tours of different projects, programmes, institutions, and movements are very important for the community mobilisers to get the first-hand experience of best practices and limitations of different non-government organisations, civil society organisations, solidarity movements, efforts of regional-national-global networks operating in various socio-cultural and geographical locations.

Action–Reflection Process and Practical Praxis plays an important role in community mobilisation. It is now important to have an interface with Duty Bearers and Expanding Livelihood opportunities, a constant and consistent follow up with peaceful negotiations, conflict resolution, creation of innovative approaches so as to bring the issue to public domain using social media, mainstream electronic and print media; expanding livelihood opportunities and social security measures and ensuring social protection.

**Exposure and Cross Learning** explains the purpose and importance of field visits and gives a detail of the aspects to be reviewed and discussed among the peers. Evaluation and impact assessment of the action are particularly important to understand the nuances of how, why, when and what were the reasons of success or failures and important learnings.

Learning by Doing is focussed for the Action-Reflection Process and Practical Praxis gains vital significance and discusses models

of reflections on action. This proves a deeper insight into the problem, and it could lead to discussion and preparation flow charts of Action, Reflection, Learning and Planning (ARLP) Model, Gibbs Reflective Cycle Model, Systematisation Tool Model, and Ignatian Depth Conversation Model reflect upon the ways of 'learning by doing'. Human Right has been important and development Programmes that promote and protect human rights involve identification of groups, whose human rights have been disrupted; understanding why people are unable to exercise their rights; redressing the denial of rights of the people by addressing the unjust distribution of power, working towards strengthening rights-holders to claim and exercise their rights; compelling duty-bearers to comply with their obligations and collaborate and network for achieving the goal and guiding principles that guide the priorities and course of action.

For Community Mobilisation there is a dire need for **Volunteering, Giving and Sharing** as it elicits indicators and self-assessment tools and examples of voluntary work in rural and urban context for social development and crisis management. Celebrations are extremely important for rejuvenating the community spirit, bonding among the members of the community, fellow travellers, and sympathisers, feeling of oneness. The participants feel joyous and recognised. Inviting a larger circle of well-wishers in the celebrations visualises the activities of community that may contribute towards sustained and trustworthy supporters for the collective effort.

**Community mobilisation** develops capacity, self-confidence, and empowerment of the community to become self-sufficient and they can take their own decision making and be proactive for individual and community development in a systematic manner. Celebration, Visibility and Recognition highlights the contribution of festivities, public recognition of efforts of the members, practical hurdles and challenges faced while organising celebratory functions and the safeguards.

**Changing role of the 'Facilitating' Organisation** defines the key involvements of the facilitating organisations, devices evolved by the community for sustainable development and identification of

individuals and groups, who will continue the developmental efforts.

At the end of the Handbook, Epilogue rightly states that, “**This handbook is envisaged as a ‘companion’ for the development practitioners engaged in community mobilisation processes**”. The handbook aims at community members as ‘central drivers’ of community development and members of NGOs, animators, philanthropists, and trainers as ‘facilitators.

The handbook shifts itself from charity to rights- based approach. It focuses on the community at the centre and strive for the developmental activities. The book picturises a wholistic understanding of human development which includes all sectors such as education, health employment, dignity of labour and individuals, citizenship, and freedom from exploitation, right to education, injustice, and subjugation of the deprived section of the society.

From the Bibliography one can refer to any books based on Community Led Development, and on Community Mobilisation. This can be international referred by all the organisation working for community development, saving people from different problems who are in the clutches of higher authority people and thus contribute to human race.

Both the books are of vital importance for the development of the community and community mobilisation. It is the need of the hour when common community interest is so engrained in the individual which focuses on commitment to the community interest rather than the nation progress. This reflects negativity leading to communalism which is not a healthy sign for the progress of the nation.

Caritas India and the team of researchers along with Dr. Joseph Xavier, the author have done a fantabulous study by comparing both the urban and rural need of community development and community mobilisation.

This book should be a ready reckoner for all those who are involved in educational institutions, policy makers, curriculum constructors as it provides guidelines for the development of the community along with animation wherein the animators are mere facilitators and mentors for the development of the community and thus leading to national progress.

# ENHANCING GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLING: A STUDY OF A VILLAGE IN WEST BENGAL

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## Abstract

*This paper is based on a research study in a village in the Sundarbans region of West Bengal. This qualitative study privileged the contextual factors related to girls' schooling. The area is known for its social and ecological precarity, that has an impact on the education of girls. Withdrawal of girls from school to supplement household income, and due to early marriage and trafficking are factors found to be associated with low participation of girls in schooling. The study specifically examines the case of a residential hostel under the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme. It is seen that despite limitations related to financing and administration, as well as other problems in managing the hostel, it serves as a space of security and encouragement for girls in this fraught context.*

Keywords: Girls' schooling, rural, West Bengal, KGBV

## Introduction

Research has demonstrated that the returns from women's education in all societies are high. While this is empirically true, women's education has tended to be approached in an instrumental fashion, with a focus on its role in reducing fertility and infant and child mortality rates in improving the nutritional status of children and healthcare practices and in improving children's school enrolment and academic performance. Girls' education has generally also been approached through such a policy lens, that does not account for the multiple deprivations girls from marginalised sections face in accessing and

participating in education. This paper attempts to contextualise the challenges girls from disadvantaged communities face in completing the elementary stage of education. The paper is based on my doctoral research that sought to explore girls' participation in schooling in the *Sundarbans* region of West Bengal.

### **Social inequality and education**

In all societies, the impact of the social system on the educational system is highly significant. In the Indian case, education is highly stratified, and this produces uneven results across the population. A small group of children from the privileged section of the society enjoy high even often outstanding educational opportunities and the bulk of a population being confined to educational arrangements that are in many ways poor or deficient (Sen 2012). As pointed out by Dreze and Sen (2013), "The picking is done not through any organised attempt to keep any one out, but through differentiations that are driven by economic and social equality related to class, caste gender... The privileged by and large do very well- to do their credit, they typically don't waste opportunities....Their success comes first, in the educational establishments themselves and then in the world at large impressing Indians and foreigners alike...Meanwhile the last boy and particularly the last girl can't even read or write, not having had the opportunity of any kind of decent education" (Dreze and Sen 2013, 128-129).

Notwithstanding formal guarantees of equality, Indian women's lives continue to be characterised by pervasive discrimination and substantive inequality (Kapur and Cossman 1999 cited in Menon 1999). Societal blocks to female education must be understood as a part of the larger societal fabric which frames the context of gender inequality. Traditionally, a boy's education has been an investment, increasing the earnings and status of the family; however, different standards are applied for girls. The benefits of girls' education are generally seen as going to the family she marries, thus providing little incentive to invest on scarce resource, both human and monetary into such activity. These factors combine to cement attitudes inherently opposed to female education.



### *Caste and class dynamics*

Caste and class are closely interlinked within the Indian social system. In the socially stratified India, the caste system is embedded in the psyche of citizens (Beteille 1991). The foundation of the society is based on caste system (Kosambi 1956, 1965). Historically, it separates communities into thousands of endogamous hereditary groups called *jatis*, which is synonymous with caste in contemporary usage. These communities or *jatis* of India were grouped by the four categories or varnas: *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* (Thorat et al. 2010). Certain groups, now known as “*Dalits*” (*Ati Shudras*), were excluded from the varna system altogether, ostracized by all other castes and treated as untouchables. According to Dr.B.R. Ambedkar (1936), the evils of the caste system are as follows: it isolated people, infused a sense of inferiority into lower-caste individuals, and divided humanity. It traumatized India’s people, its economy, and the discourse between its people (Ambedkar 1936).

As a system of social stratification, caste differs from class in its rigidity and based on legitimacy. Class consciousness had a great impact on caste groups. Sociologists have analysed to a large extent the adverse effects of caste system in India and about the disparity the system has created (Ahuja 1999, Beteille 2011, Damle 2014, Ghurye 1969, Srinivas 1998). Caste, which is ascriptive and inhibits social mobility, has acted to create class divisions in Indian society. Dalits are those who perform the most menial and degrading jobs and who are considered ritually impure. The social meaning of ‘impurity’ describes the social relationship among different caste groups. Personal achievements will not change caste position and each caste is careful to prevent lower castes marrying in (Bruce and Yearly 2006). The entire caste system maintains social hierarchy with class distinction (Ghurye 1972). This hierarchy is maintained through poverty and powerlessness, and through sociocultural practices of stigma and humiliation.

In the Indian education system, a strong correlation exists between the background of children and their experiences. There is a clear-

cut social disparity in education, which impacts enrolment and dropout rates (Desai 2010). Adivasi, Muslim, and other Dalit children are less enrolled in the schools and slightly more likely to dropout. According to the available data source, 94 per cent of students from forward castes and 96 per cent of students from other religious group were enrolled in education system. The enrolled were 77 per cent of Adivasis, 76 per cent of Muslims and 83 per cent of Dalits.

The political economy of social relations and power plays a role in decisions relating to distribution of resources, access to schooling and participation of children in education (Jha and Jhingran 2005). Dalit families in general and the more marginalised among them, reside in segregated localities that are usually the most backward/disadvantaged them in terms of physical access and facilities. Schools, on the other hand, are usually situated in localities inhabited by dominant social groups making it difficult for children from backward section of the society to attend regularly. Tribal areas in the country are basically thinly populated with different habitations within one village remaining completely isolated from each other (Jha and Jhingran 2005).

Girls belonging to the disadvantaged social groups face double disadvantage one due to gender and other due to caste or community. With respect to girls' education, it is important to examine the ways in which gender intersects with caste and class as well with other social identities like religion, ethnicity, and rural/urban location.

### **Policy shifts**

In the last three decades, in India, two phases in ideological and policy changes in education could be observed. The first was inaugurated with the launch of a New National Education Policy (NEP) in 1986 and the second is conditioned by economic

liberalisation of the early nineties, closely linked to systemic intervention, and change in national education under the impact of global intervention and funding. The new policy laid special emphasis on the removal of disparities and equalisation of educational opportunity (GoI, 1986). It has provisions for the three disadvantaged groups of Dalits, tribals and girls (GoI, 1992a). Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes respond directly to poverty situations under nutrition and ill health of children belonging to the above-mentioned groups (Velaskar 2010).

In the 1990s, neoliberal educational reforms, following the structural adjustment programme has seen the emergence of large-scale privatization of schooling and the promotion of Public Private Partnership (PPP) models within the field of education. These decisive shifts have led to new relations between state, market, and the schools (Gangopadhyay and Sarkar 2014). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2000 with the special emphasis on educational needs of girls, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other children in difficult circumstances (Kainth 2006). National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) has been introduced for the improvement of disadvantaged girl children at the elementary level. This scheme suggested the targeted provision of distributing cycles to girls living more than two km away from upper primary schools, can facilitate girls' schooling beyond the primary level and can also improve attendance and learning (Ramachandran 2009). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or "Education for All" places special emphasis on female education and the achievement of gender parity (SSA 2010). Another scheme, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) was implemented in 2004-2005 as residential elementary school scheme for girls belonging SCs/STs, OBCs and minority sections to prevent dropout rates and make a link between students and schools.

SSA places special emphasis on girls' education. Government initiatives in this regard can be divided into two categories: a programme to create "pull factors" to enhance access and retention of girls in schools; and another to create "push factors" to foster in society the conditions necessary to guarantee girls' education. Today, free textbooks are provided to all girls in school up to

eighth grade, and back-to-school camps and bridge courses are organised for older girls.

The Indian Parliament enacted the historic ‘Right to Education’ (RTE) Act, 2009 to make education a fundamental right of every child aged between 6-14 years. The aim of RTE Act is to encourage the children to enrol themselves in the schools. Parental initiatives are also encouraged by RTE Act. The goal of this Act is to attain the universal enrolment, retention, and the completion of elementary as well as secondary education and to improve the quality of education for the school children.

The combined effects of multiple programmes, strategies, prevention methods by the state, private sectors and NGOs have had a quantitative impact which is visible. Enrolment has increased through better availability of schooling and greater participation of marginalised communities. Despite quantitative improvements, various studies reveal that regular attendance, retention and satisfactory completion of primary schooling are still visible problems. A common feature in India is that statutory welfare rights suffer from weak implementation, monitoring, and reinforcement. Data on region, caste, economic status, religion, and gender show that disparities are still very prominent (Majumdar 2013).

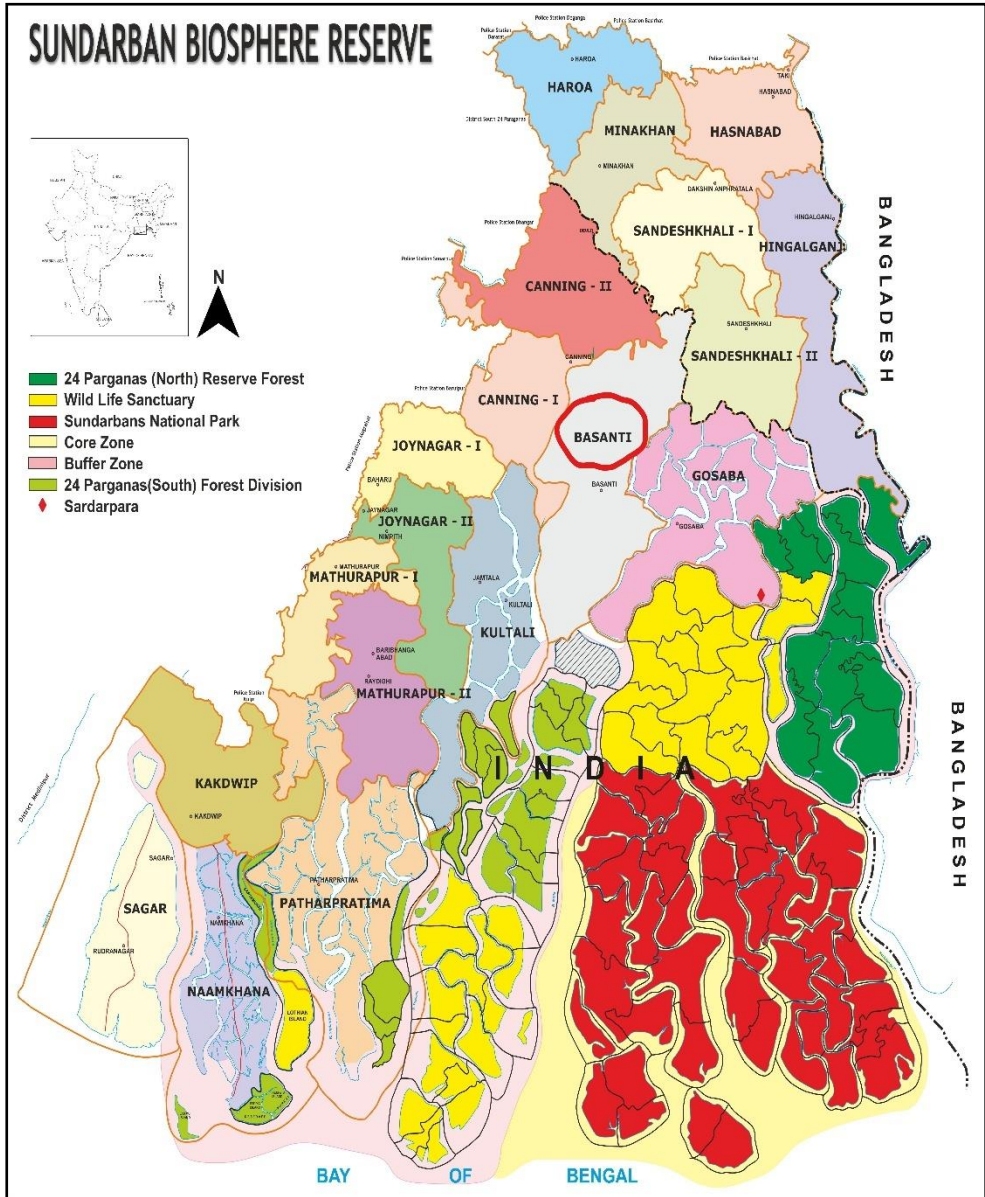
In West Bengal, dropout rates of children from SC and ST communities in primary education have been registering an increase (sss.nic.in 2016). Among girls from these communities a grave problem is early marriage. The West Bengal District Level Health Survey (DLHS-3) of 2007-08 revealed that 54.7 per cent women are married before the age of 18, the legal age for marriage. West Bengal is identified as the fifth highest state in India known for child marriage. In this context, mention must be made of Kanyasree Prakalpa, 2013, an initiative on the part of the government of West Bengal to address and resist high dropout rate, educational disparities among girl students and prevention of child marriage. Under this scheme of educational cash transfer, girls between 13-18 years would be given Rs.750/- per annum as

scholarship provided if they are unmarried. The first is K-1 and the second benefit is K-2, a one-time grant of Rs. 25,000/-, to be paid when the girl turned 18, to pursue higher education and remain unmarried at that time. This project received international recognition.

### **The context: *Sundarbans*, its ecology, and people**

For my doctoral study, the sites chosen to examine girls' education were in the *Sundarbans* region of South 24 Parganas. Canning Port on the river Matla is the major entry point in the region of *Sundarbans*. The Sub-Divisional office for the administration is situated in this town. This is the end point of railway connection with the capital city Kolkata. The map of Sundarban region is presented below (Map1). The block selected for fieldwork (Basanti) is highlighted with circle.

Map 1: Map of Sundarban region

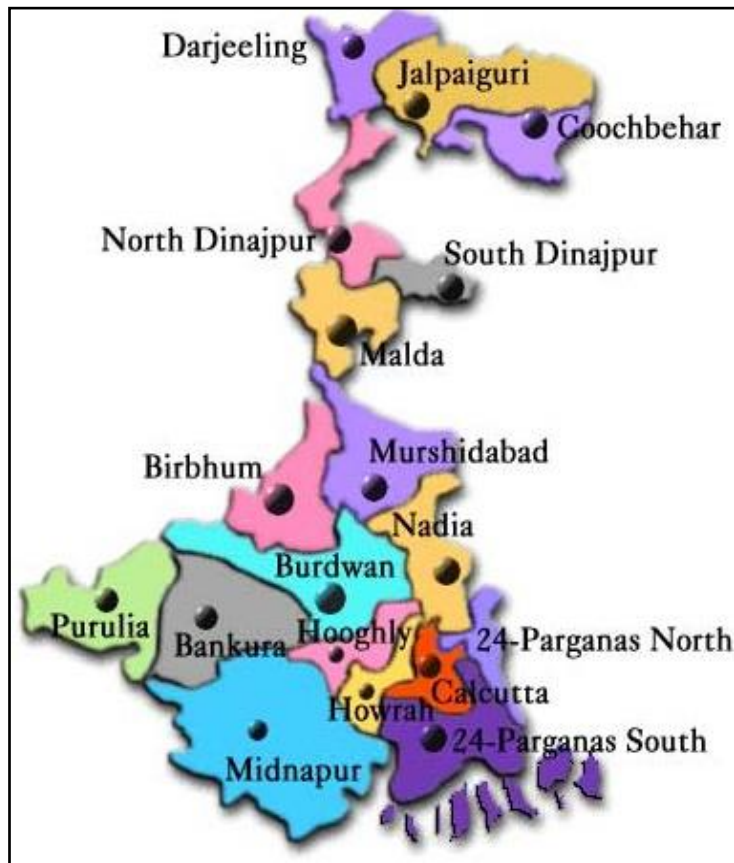


Source: <https://www.wwfindia.org>

The district South 24 Parganas in which the *Sundarbans* is located is at the southern part of the state of West Bengal. It is one of the

state's largest districts and is densely populated with over 4.5 million people living here. Geographically, it shares its border with North 24 Parganas, Haora, and Purba Medinipur and with Bangladesh (Map 2).

Map 2: District map of West Bengal



Source: Maps of India

The district is close to the highly urbanized and modernised metropolis of Kolkata on the eastern side. Some of the places are adjacent to Kolkata that has a location advantage for

industrialisation such as services, availability of labour and other various types of jobs for livelihood of people from the district. The lower part of South 24 Parganas is surrounded by water bodies such as rivers, creeks, connected to the mainland with small deltas.

The existing body of research on education in the *Sundarbans*

region does not give adequate focus to the social and economic contexts of the region. To assess the educational participation of girls', it is necessary to understand the unique social, economic, and cultural aspects of this region. Although school records show increased enrolment, discontinuation is high among girls above 14 years, and factors responsible include political disturbances in the area. In recent times, communal polarisation is also evident in the area. Some parts of the districts are facing communal turmoil (South Bengal Herald, April 26, 2011). Parents are not ready to send their daughters to go to the school due to communal unrest (interaction with parents during field survey). Trafficking of girl children via the Bangladesh border is another burning problem of the study area. As a result, early marriage of girl children is a part of social life (Save the Children Annual

Report 2010-11, Sanlaap Annual Report 2013-14).

There is a long history of settlement of *Sundarbans* with a particular ecology and demography. The cultural history of the lagoon of *Sundarbans* delta is based on various factors. People, habitation pattern, beliefs on religious norms, folk deities and folklore, myths, etc. are a major part of the cultural space (Bera 2010). To survive in the forest area, people came together under a common canopy of syncretism, which are borrowed from the myths the religious beliefs of Hinduism and Islam. With the unique climatic, geographical, and socio-economic conditions there flourished a distinct culture in the region. People are using and maintaining every part of the land, every plant and even grasses are utilized .People know the nature of every river, its timings of tides and waves, they know the nature of forest, the man-eater of *Sundarbans* , etc. (Bera 2010). All these factors have



effects on the school participation of the children, especially of girls.

The people of *Sundarbans* region are of multi-ethnic background with different occupational positions as well as having different religious faith. They are living in a common ecological atmosphere which has created their own dialects. They are

practicing and maintaining their linguistic identity. The people of this region speak a dialect of Bangla.

Nearly 95 per cent of the population is dependent on rain-fed mono-cropping agricultural production and others on rivers as well as forests for their livelihood. Honey collection and collecting woods such as *Sundari (Heritiera Fomes)*, *Hental (Phoenix Spp.)*, *Goran (Ceriops Spp.)*, *Geowa (Excoecaria Agallocha)*, *Baen (Avicennia Marina)*, *Dhundul (Xylocarpus Granatum)*, *Garjan (Rhizophora Spp.)*, *Golpata (Nipa Fruiticans)*, are the main source of income for a large section in the area. Fishing and collection of prawn seeds and crabs in the rivers and creeks is another lucrative source of money for the people living in the coastal part of the region. (Ray Chakraborty, Bhattacharya 2002). This prawn seeds are known as Tiger Prawn Seeds (TPS). This type of cultivation is easier than normal fishing activities in this saline water zone. Women particularly girl children are involved in this activity in the area (Dutta 2010). Another source of income is *zari* work (embroidery). Here again mainly the girl children who are engaged in this type of work, which is expanding in popularity in the villages as a source of income for the poor (Ray, Chakraborty, Bhattacharya 2002).

The lives of people of *Sundarbans* are closely associated with rivers.

One famous rhyme locally popular to the people of *Sundarbans* “*Ainu Heta tin dine/Bhatisvarabada bone/Nadikhalkatoshatopani*” (came here after three days journey/In this tidal forest area/River, canal, and lots of water) (Sur 2010). Matla, Bidyadhari, Raymangal, Ichamati are the major rivers of *Sundarbans*. River disconnected them from the mainland geographically and connected with their livelihood economically.

Fishing, collecting small prawns from the river is almost a daily work for the river side residents. The soil in the *Sundarbans* delta area has highly salinity and is not always suitable for agriculture. In such circumstances collection and cultivation of prawn seeds is an alternative means for subsistence. Prawn cultivation not only provided them with ready cash, but it appears to be more lucrative than agriculture. The agricultural land is flooded with brackish water and is used for raising prawn after the harvest of paddy in winter season (Ray, Chakraborty, and Bhattacharya 2002). Since

the last two decades, prawn cultivation has emerged as an important source of income in this area. Government of India also took an initiative to export prawn in the large scale to the foreign markets, due to heavy demand and large amount of money was invested for this purpose. Thus, the economy of many people living in this part of the coastal *Sundarbans* is changing their priority from agriculture to prawn seed collection as well as aquaculture. After the Oceanic cyclone ‘Aila’ in 2009, a huge area was under saline water which is now being used as a hub for prawn and other salt water-based fishery (Mukhopadhyay 2017).

In 2013 Kanyashree Prakalpa, a scheme for girls’ education, was introduced in the state, an initiative of the ruling party, the Trinamool Congress. Under the Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, direct transfer of cash in the form of annual scholarship and one time grant is being made to all unmarried girl children in the age group 13 to 18 years from families with annual income less than one lakh and twenty thousand rupees. This is to support the girl children to continue their studies. The scheme has an explicit focus on retention of girls in schools to prevent child marriage, which is high in the state of West Bengal.

### **The study**

The present study was conducted in a village called Dhiru in the *Sundarbans* that comes under Basanti Block, South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The researcher tried to explore, through qualitative research, how far the state’s development initiatives have contributed to improve the situation in the context of poverty

and how social class, caste, and religion influence girls' school participation. The researcher stayed in this village for almost a year, over the seasons of spring, summer, and monsoon (March to September 2015 and again from March to May 2016). Because the population is engaged in land and water-based

cultivation in which children are also involved, each season has its impacts on the status of education and school participation of girls.

The school selected for the study was Janapriya Nagar Janapriya

Vidyalaya at Dhuri village under Amjhara Gram Panchayat. The school has a Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) with hostel attached. An attempt was made to compare the status of girls who are day scholars to those who are hostelites.

The researcher tried to explore everyday activities of local people of the village, and conducted unstructured interviews with them, particularly parents of girls attending the Dhuri School. Along with this, classroom observations and interviews with school going girls, teachers and others were done using observation and unstructured interview schedules and checklists. The researcher also stayed in the KGBV hostel, allowing for free interaction with the girls residing there. With constant interaction and observations, the rhythm of daily activities and the underlying social and economic conditions of people were better understood. As mentioned earlier that a 'politicised communal tension, women and girl child trafficking is another problem as it is adjacent to Bangladesh border. Within six months of staying in the village, the researcher has experienced in Dhuri, four cases of girl child and women trafficking. Only one trafficked girl has been rescued by the police.

### **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Dhuri**

The KGBV hostel scheme was sanctioned during 2005-2006 along with the other three centres in the block and it started functioning from 2006-2007 academic sessions. Between 2006 to

2015, its popularity increased and parents from remote villages of the *Sundarbans* region came to secure admission of their wards in the KGBV hostel at Dhuri. The number of girls in the Dhuri KGBV hostel was 103. The hostel was attached to the Dhuri School. Along with the students of class-V to VII, students of class-X and their experience was also observed for the study.

The hostel had eight female cooks were appointed for cooking meals. The researcher frequently interacted with the staff of the hostel during her long stay of nineteen months . There was scarcity of running water in the hostel due to irregular supply of electricity. The researcher had to carry water from the tube-well located on the ground to the third floor of the hostel for regular use of bathing

and washroom purpose. Apart from everyday informal interaction, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the inmates involved discussions around issues about their families, their aspirations and future, their views about the hostel, super/warden, caretakers, cooks, private tutors, night guards and apart from studies various interests of them (tailoring and stitching, dance, music, painting/drawing). The hostel inmates also shared their views on the surveillance being imposed by the school as well as hostel authorities.

Despite the problems faced by inmates, the hostel provides security against withdrawal from school and early marriage. To

illustrate this, I discuss here one case study, that of Sharaboni. a student of Class VII. Shraboni migrated from Bangladesh to India in 2009, during the cyclonic storm '*Aila*', which affected Bangladesh and some parts of West Bengal. Nearly one million people were rendered homeless because of the tropical cyclone. Due to the natural disaster a large population migrated from Bangladesh to India in search of shelter and livelihood. While interacting with Shraboni, she said that she was sent to India along with her elder sister. She was sent to her maternal uncle's house in Dhuri village by her parents. Her parents were unable to come to India during that period. They were to migrate in 2017.

Meanwhile, she was admitted to the school in Dhuri and at the time of the study was continuing her elementary level of education. She was admitted to the school with the declaration that her grandparents were her parents, and she was found to be regular in class. Teachers informed me that Shraboni was a talented dancer, and the talent was being nurtured by the school. She regularly participated in various programmes and took part in competitions at the block level. Teachers also gave a positive

feedback about her academic performance. Her elder sister was admitted in the same school, but she could not complete her study as she was forced to get married by her guardian. It was due to a sense of social insecurity about the girl among them. It was an early marriage, and she was only fourteen.

Shraboni said that her sister had tried to resist early marriage but failed. Therefore, she was a dropout student. Now Shraboni was also being told by her grandparents that they were soon getting her married as they could no longer take on her responsibility. Her maternal family was waiting for her parents to come to India. Such cases are common among disaster victims migration. Shraboni, who was staying in KGBV hostel, because she pleaded with her grandparents, she could continue her study. She intended to complete school level education which would save her from an early marriage. If the school authorities had disagreed to provide accommodation to her, she had to leave the school.

As her grandmother shared:

*“Jodi amar meyeke hostele na thakte dey Headmaster moshai, tahole amar oi meyeke biye deoa chara ar upay thakbe na. Amar bari theke ishkul (school) anekta dur. Or pakkherojroj aka jaoaasa kora jabe na. Amadero boyes hoye gache tai amarao keu roj oke ishkule dite jete parbo na.seyana hoye gache aka aka jaoa asa korle anek bipad hoy grameganje. Oke biye diye debo. O to akdam raji noy akhon biye korte. Amara ki korbo bolun? Bangladesh-e or ma-baba thake ora epare asar apekkhay achi, nahole amrai akhane or biye debo. Biye hoye gele amader ar*

*vabna thakbe na.*” (If the headmaster refuses to admit her in the hostel, then I must arrange her marriage. We are helpless. The school is far away from our house. She cannot travel every day and it is not possible for her. Besides, we are old, we cannot accompany her daily. Villages are not safe for a young girl. We will arrange her marriage soon. She is not willing to get married. What can we do? Her parents stay in Bangladesh and we are waiting for them, otherwise we will

arrange her marriage here. Then we will be free.).

Bindu Devi, grandmother of Shraboni, Dhuri village, 28  
November 2016.

Eight parents who were interviewed have positive attitude

towards their daughter’s school level education, especially the mothers. They expect that at least their children would learn something in the school under the guidance of the teachers. They expressed the view that as most of them are illiterate and have consequently faced various types of problem and they do not want their girl child to remain uneducated anymore. At least their daughters would be able to read and write something by attending schools which they had missed. They think, their educated daughters would be better motivated for the next generation. These parents aspire on their girls’ education.

In both the villages, apart from the eight selected parents, researcher interacted with other villagers and observed that though majority of parents are either illiterate or having low level of education have sent their children to school, girls. In Dhuri, Anushree ’smother expressed her view while interacting that her husband, a seasonal migrant works in Tamil Nadu and wanted his daughters to pursue their higher education. She stated:

*“Amader Meyers jotota parbe porbe. Oder bazar tai ichha. Tamil Nadu-te kaj korte gache meyeder porashona korabe bole. Amader grame kaj nei tai ato dur khaat-te gache. Amar daayittwo oder jate porashona thik moto hoy seta dekha.*

*Amader gram ta bhalo na. Boro meyeder niye baire jaoa bipad. Anushree- ke hostel e na rakhle oke porano muskil. Pore ki hob eke jaane! Nijera to Class IV obdhi porechi. Sei samay amader barir abasthao bhalo chhilo na*” (“We want our daughters to pursue their education if possible. This is also the desire of their father. He went to Tamil Nadu in search of job so that our daughters could continue their education. There is no job opportunity in our village that is why he went so far. It is my responsibility to full fill his wish. The atmosphere of our village is not conducive for the young girls to continue their study in the village. Unless and until Anushree is not admitted to the hostel, she cannot be in school. Future is uncertain and we could study up to class IV level. At that time, our family’s economic condition was not favourable for us to further our education. (Translation by researcher)

Anushree’s mother, Dhuri, 13 March 2016

The researcher observed a sense of satisfaction among girls when expressing their views about the hostel. The hostel helped them a lot to carry out their studies in upper primary grades of schooling. These girls came from different geographical and economic locations where getting facilities of upper grades of schooling is very difficult. Girls from class VIII-IX while interacting with the researcher expressed that as a residential centre, KGBV hostel ensures security which they lacked as day scholars residing at home.

## **Discussion**

The rate of dropouts among the students of the *Sundarbans* region remained high. Because of security issues, the alternative options of the parents were to arrange marriage of their daughters as soon as they reach their age of puberty. This is one of the reasons for early marriage of girls and hence higher dropouts in the region. Children are forced into early marriage due to poverty. For girls, early marriage is child labour in its worse form. Early marriage leads to early pregnancy which increases the chances of infant and

maternal mortality. It is a continuous cycle of injustice in which a girl is trapped. The KGBV hostel, to some extent now is in position to prevent early marriage by providing security and other facilities to the girls. Parents are also less worried about their girls in the KGBV residential school.

Through the constant observation while staying with these girls, the researcher found that there is an attempt on the part of KGBV authority to identify the talents, merits and other specialties of girl children and training to them are arranging accordingly. Apart from their own local cultural orientation, they are getting in contact with mainstream cultural exposers. Tailoring, gardening, cooking, painting, singing, dancing, and computer courses-these are also a major part of their schedule of study at the hostel. They are coming forward and taking part in different competition at the various levels. Apart from studying in the school, they are now able to think of a bright future. The girls who stayed at the KGBV hostel are at least to some extent, in a better position than day scholars of Janapriya Nagar Janapriya Vidyalaya.

According to the residential students, teachers at the school encourage them to pursue their studies. As these girls are mostly first-generation learner, they need extra care. For this purpose, private tutors have been appointed. The researcher met eight of them during her stay. She interacted regularly with two wardens, four cooks, one sanitation worker (lady) and two-night guards of the hostel.

The researcher found that the girls staying in the KGBV hostel and girls coming from their home are in different position in terms of their performances in classrooms. The KGBV students are more regular than the day scholars. The researcher undertook several visits to the home of day students and found that the distance of school from the home is key issue of low attendance. As the girls of KGBV hostel are getting regular, nutritious food in time, they are healthier than the day scholars. Records of the school register indicate that the rate of absenteeism among the hosteller is low. Due to good health and regularity in classes, these girls do well in



their studies, and it reflected in their annual examinations result. The rate of dropout is also decreasing.

An interesting incident directly related to the wellbeing of girls was observed by the researcher. On a day reserved for deworming the school children, many of them took very ill and had to be hospitalised. Rumours went around the village about poisonous substances being added to the tablets. It was discovered that the children who reacted to the medicine were those who had come to school on an empty stomach. It was observed by the researcher that day, that, none of the girls from the KGBV hostel reported sick. This was due to the fact that the

daily routine of the hostel that lunch would be served to them before going to classes. It was observed that every day, these girls are having plate full of rice and dal or rice and vegetable/fish curry. This was the difference between day scholars and students from KGBV hostel of the school. All those who had to be hospitalized were local students. These students have less nutritious meals and sparse breakfasts before coming to school,

usually a small portion of '*pantabhaat*', which makes them more susceptible to stomach ailments.

### **In conclusion**

While the KGBV scheme has been critiqued for its minimalistic agenda, lack of attention to curricular and other needs of girls from marginalised communities and their focus on protection, seclusion, and surveillance (Balagopalan 2010, Saxena 2012), the researcher found that the model of having a KGBV hostel attached to a school provides several advantages for girls from these communities. These girls are typically first-generation learners, and come from contexts of acute poverty, so the hostel provides a more conducive environment for studies than homes where their labour is necessary for survival. They also provide environments

for socialisation opportunities beyond family, community, and village, thereby allowing for some expansion of imagination for these girls. It has been argued that for these reasons, greater public investment in the KGBV scheme is warranted (Jha and Jhingran 2002). This research found that this is even more necessary in contexts like that of the *Sundarbans*, with its ecological and socio-economic precarity and their repercussions on education of girls, including early marriage and trafficking.

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## **REDESIGNING WORKER'S EDUCATION DURING POST PANDEMIC SITUATION – A NEED OF THE HOUR**

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*This paper attempts to explore the necessity of re-designing the worker's education considering the recent pandemic and its aftermath in India. The Covid 19 outbreak has pulled out the convenient cover off the Indian economy and revealed a human face of a deeper crisis that had been brewing until now silently. Although the falling employment opportunities in agriculture sector of rural areas resulted in increase in migration of labour into urban based nonfarm sector job opportunities in India, the pandemic has shown the rising trend in huge volume of reverse migration off late. Right now, there is an urgent need to uplift the skill of the un-organised labour force to get them engaged in meaningful occupation both at the source and the destination place of migration. This is a mammoth task indeed!*

*The paper draws upon the emerging literature and tries to present the need and possibility to redesign the path ahead for worker's education urgently.*

**Key words:** Worker, Labour and education, Job growth, agriculture, urban -rural, Covid impact on labour, Job, Skill, Education

### **Introduction**

The neo-liberal economic agenda of 'growth first' under any circumstances has been in vogue for quite some time now while

the GDP of the country would be under the constant focus. A catchall phrase of 'inclusive' growth is being used by the Corporate and financial mandarins to create a so-called atmosphere outside that it is ushering the manpower pool from

diverse social fabric and catering to needy. Now, doing so, are they really be careful about the workers' rights keeping pandemic at sight in current situation? How the workforce should be prepared to adapt with the current health related challenges while continuing the work that are on offer at labour market? Are they well informed, educated and skilled enough to bear the brunt of uncertainty?

Deeper enquiry revealed that most of the jobs that are absorbing people, men, and women, are informal in nature in recent past. Current pandemic opened that until now invisible workforce of thousands of workers thronging at the Railway stations, Bustermenus of Indian Cities in hope of returning to their source villages. Another desperate lot of workforce were trudging along the highways to reach their native places. Reverse migration put the flashlight on precarity of jobs in informal sector in a new way. It showed us that the labouring body is still being neglected grossly.

It is evident that most of this workforce is precariously being there only to survive. And State was quite oblivious about the presence of such precarity while highlighting inclusive growth' and GDP. Now that, all on a sudden, survival is at real jeopardy for rank and file because of the contagious nature of Covid, a concerted effort must be planned and executed in war footing as need of the hour. Even if we think of revival of business as usual of pre-COVID19 situation. It is apparently clear that business requires a fleet of healthy workforce at the bottom rank of value chains.

Let us unpack the layers of the issues here to move ahead.

### **Impact of Lockdown on existence of labouring class**

ILO estimate showed that assuming a situation without any alternative income sources, lost labour income will result in an increase in relative poverty for the workers and their families in

informal sector in more than 21 percentage point in upper middle-income countries, almost 52 points in high income countries and 56 points in lower and low-income countries<sup>1</sup>.

Here, the workers in sectors like food industries, construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, farming and many more are at the receiving end across the world.

The Labour market in India also suffered severe blow. Unemployment rose from 6.7% on 15<sup>th</sup> March to 26% on 19<sup>th</sup> April (2020) and then back down to the pre-COVID19 level by mid-June 2020. An estimated 14 crore people (140 million) were out of jobs during the lockdown . Supply chain had been under the tremendous stress owing to the sudden complete lockdown imposition. Business houses were at puzzle to define essential' service to keep carrying out their operations. This resulted the huge mass of workforce at the bottom rank off job suddenly, left with no food and a desperate movement from destination place to source villages for mere survival.

Pre-COVID19, the Indian economy was already passing through a structural transformation which witnessed a steady decline of agricultural or farm-based jobs and corresponding rise of non-farm jobs since 2004-05 (Mehrotra, 2011). Recent data showed that only service sector is having increasing job opportunities. There was a huge fall of jobs in manufacturing sector during 2011-12 and 2017-18. While the labour market was reflecting a sluggish demand conditions on the supply side, an influx of youth entering the job market who completed their education recently had resulted in a picture of fleet of open unemployed young labour force. However, falling manufacturing sector jobs reflected employment scenario on opposite direction of which was planned as Make in India project goal.

There is an estimated 1.39 million of migrant workers in country according to World Economic Forum. Most migrants originate from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Madhya

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<sup>1</sup> ILO Monitor, op. cit., note 2.

Pradesh. Migrant workers are being employed majorly in manufacturing and construction sector, both of which were hit hard by the pandemic. Thus, large scale reverse migration was seen in India.

Now, during the unlock period Companies are not meeting their set revenue target, are forcing the employers to reduce the workforce.

While only the service sector in urban areas showed a bit of increase in jobs, the rural areas were having very limited job openings to absorb the large numbers of people who reached back to their source villages.

Action Aid Association conducted a massive survey in two rounds, one during the lockdown (May 2020) and the second during the phase wise unlocking period (23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 to September 2020). The second round was conducted in 23 states and five Union territories. It has shown that Half of their Sample (N=16,961) of second round reported unemployed during the second survey. Not only the unemployment, but pandemic also hit hard on the quality of jobs that are on offer in labour market, The study revealed that there has been a steady shift from regular work to casual work paired with drastic change in daily wages. It has resulted in overall impact on livelihood struggle for bottom rank of informal workers, men, and women. The study reported that 34 percent of regular workers received the minimum wages whereas only 24 percent of causal workers received the minimum wages. So, even if Industry tried to limp back into the new normal phase, the journey was shaky for countless foot soldiers.

The study brought forth an alarming information on the disparity in wages for men and women even during unlock period as before. It reported that women are receiving much less as wage than men in all major occupational categories like agriculture, construction, sanitation, hotel and restaurant business and fish work.



The direct impact of low wages, zero wages and irregular wages reflected upon the indebtedness of the workers and the consumption. While 53 percent of the first round of survey (N=11,537) reported that they had to go for additional loan during the lockdown period, the second phase of survey revealed that 39 percent of the respondents borrowed the money during unlock period. Significantly, the report revealed that the women workers in urban areas are more in debt than the men in rural and urban. With barely having survival wages at hand, and in some cases, zero wages, incidence of relying on the moneylenders had

increased manifolds. Unquestionably, it brought lot of stress on everyday lives of labour across the country. Food consumption, accessing healthcare, housing and education received major blow.

The first-round survey of Action Aid revealed that there is a notable drop of frequency of food consumption among the labouring people at the bottom rank. Being asked the number of meals that they could afford to have, 93 percent reported that they could eat two meals a day before lockdown whereas only 63 percent reported that they could eat two meals a day during the lockdown. Three fourth of the respondents from First Survey reported that they could not access healthcare during the period of lockdown

If we look at the State's responses through the welfare schemes for citizenry, the experiences that reflected during the second survey of Action Aid Association (February 2021) is mixed. The Southern and Eastern states were performing way better than the Northern and Central States. The report revealed that in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, and Assam, more than 87 percent people have received free ration whereas less than 55 percent respondents from Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan reported having free ration through Public Distribution system. There is a significant twist in this area where most returnee migrant workers reported having lower access to free ration than the non-migrant population as well as the respondents from rural areas reported better access than urban areas. Probably, the socio-political environment of states does have an impact even during the major crisis like corona pandemic.

However, this made the picture very clear that the labouring body of working class of shining India on whose labour the modern infrastructures are being built are notably obliterated while such large-scale pandemic struck. We cannot ignore the fact that the migration status of labour does not ensure the wellbeing, neither at the source nor at the destination place.

The brief discussion above on emerging literature brings home the point that the labour is at vulnerable condition during the lockdown and unlocking phases of recent pandemic. Now, let me turn towards the prospect and preparedness that the

dispossessed labouring class is having to put up with their livelihood struggle in pandemic situation.

A quick look back again to Action Aid second Survey (May 2020) result showed us that merely, 5.7 percent of the workers (N=16961) between the age of 18 to 30 years were graduates and 13.5 percent had reported to complete their higher secondary education. An alarming majority do not have any technical education and training. Here comes the space where an urgent need is felt to redesign the worker's education to ensure the scale of preparedness among the work force.

A peep into the website of Workers Education Board revealed that under the training programmes verticals there are some special programmes are marked for unorganised sector workers. The duration of these programme are two working days. Earlier institution visits and the personal communication with two trade union mobilizers among unorganised sector workers in and around the state of Maharashtra reflected a mere touch and go approach in mobilizing the unorganised sector workers and deliver some sessions.

Secondary literature search revealed that across India, the international funding organisations, Community Based Organisations, NGOs and off late some of the central trade union organisations are engaging themselves in workshops, training etc to share the knowledge and build the capacities of informal sector workers in bits and pieces. Its indeed a drop in ocean!

## **A way ahead**

Considering the staggering number of people to reach in case of informal sector workers and heterogeneity of the labour as category, it is indeed a mammoth task. But as labour is essentially an action and labour power are important to make a mark in the labour market to negotiate the space to cater to dignity of labour, it is important that we need to understand the narratives from field, engage with the components that facilitate the labour power. Here the question looms forward as to do what and how to educate.

Community outreach programme can be planned to reach the informal workers at their doorstep instead of bringing them in one place to avoid possible wage loss. NGOs and CBOs along with local administration could be of help to create a network starting from source village to the destination to keep the loop intact locally, regionally and across states. However, careful planning and solid funding are the mainstay. State needs to play an important role.

Central Labour Helpline may be another way to reach effectively the invisible informal sector workers, especially women workers to stay connected. Jharkhand as a state had done exemplary work during the pandemic to reach its migrant workers very efficiently. The lessons should be shared and more thoughts to be engaged to improve upon the initiative to utilise such helpline to educate the workers on continuous basis.

## **Acknowledgement:**

I am immensely indebted to my students who enriched my Knowledge with field narratives during covid pandemic. Thankful to Mr. Madhukant Patharia and Mr. Vinod Bhat for sharing their insights. Thanks to Prof. Vibhuti Patel for her valuable suggestions.

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**YOUTH AND INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS,**

**Ed. Saigita Chiturre, Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Pvt Lt, 2021,  
Pages: xiii+289 Price: 750/- . ISBN: 9788194820086**

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*Youth and India's Sustainable Development Goals* Edited by: Saigita Chitturu, Faculty, Centre for Lifelong Learning, TISS is an outcome of a conference held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences on Sustainable Development Goal, 2030 and the Role of Youth and Youth based organizations in achieving Sustainable Development goals. The book is an important contributor to envisaging the role that youth can play in the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India.

The emphasis of the contents of the book is upon realizing youth involvement in SDGs 4 and 5 and the current efforts from government and civil society which have been able to engage youth in advancing the goals for a larger equity and equality in health, mental health, education, skilling and gender inclusion. The forward of the book is written by **Professor Nasreen Rustomfram**, Professor and Chairperson, Centre for Lifelong Learning TISS. She has highly recommended this book. This book is a collection of 9 articles contributed by academicians,

practitioners, and government bureaucrats. The contents and the analysis of each article is as follows:

The first chapter titled, **State and Non-state Sector's Role towards Youth: Challenge to be Met**, has been written by **Dr.**

**Veerendra Mishra** -Ex- Director, National Service Scheme (NSS) and Executive Director, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government of India. Currently he is serving as Director, National Institute of Social Defense, New Delhi. In this article the author attempts to critically analyze some facets of the role of state and Non-state sectors in influencing the Youth. He conveys the message through this article that the intensive effort of state and non-state sectors is important in making possible the fulfilment of the requirement for fruitful participation of Youth, to build a strong support system to help Youth realize their true potential. He believes in the fact that SD Goals can be achieved only if Youth are able to actively participate in achieving them. He says that just saying that India's population is going to be 29 years by 2022 is not enough, this young populations energy and aspirations must be channelized in a very constructive manner. In this chapter he has brought out the challenges that the youth must face related to Information trap, employability, Mental health and so on...The concept of Volunteerism has been explained and relating it to historical times the author says that this concept has lost its true worth and is merely an activity rather than becoming meaningful engagement and half-hearted volunteerism fails to play desired role in shaping the personality of volunteer. Various youth schemes in India have also been mentioned and discussed. The article attempts to critically analyze some aspects of the role of state and Non-state sectors in shaping the Youth. The volunteering role of NSS and NYKS, which are two biggest organizations in the world, with former working in educational institutions and latter in villages, has also been analyzed. Lastly the chapter ends by a suggestion that State Youth Policies should be based on comprehensive knowledge and a well-researched understanding of young people's experiences, needs and expectations. The state should cautiously plan in the field of work for the youth and create better

opportunities to capitalize on the increased knowledge and understanding of youth gained through volunteering work. Youth contribution can be harnessed to provide them with greater involvement in nation building and

to raise social consciousness. This chapter is very professionally written and highly informative.

The second chapter has been written by **Mathew Mattam** Titled, **Fostering 1st Generation Micro-entrepreneurs in India: Opportunities and Challenges**. Mr. Mathew Mattham is the Secretary of Centre for Youth Development and Activities Pune, Chairperson Youth Aid Foundation, Pune; Chairperson, Youth Aid Global Pvt Ltd, Pune; Chairperson, Youth Aid Nidhi Ltd Pune. The article talks about the importance of entrepreneurship. He strongly endorses that youth with economically weaker or economically poor background, who very often do not have the support, skills or knowledge should be encouraged to be a part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. He goes on to justify this by putting across many facts and figures about unemployment will increase in the coming years in addition to the challenges to the economy and job scenario due to the pandemic and he says that entrepreneurship is especially important. He has explained the meaning of entrepreneurship, the importance and the various schemes of the government and the role of organisations in its development. By citing various case studies of successes, he tries to bring about the fact that Youth population needs to be mobilized, motivated, skilled and supported to bring rapid progress in any developing country. He concludes by writing that public and private sector must work towards creating an enabling environment towards entrepreneurship development contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 8, i.e., to generate employment and economic growth and SDG No.10 to reduce inequalities by reaching out to people, who are mostly outside of development initiatives. A genuinely nice and informative article which can motivate youth in developing the mindset to become entrepreneurs.

The third chapter titled, **Teachers and Society in Mumbai and Hongkong Comparative Perspectives for Quality Education of Youth in India** is written by **Dr Shamim Suryavanshi** who is an educationist with 22 years of professional experience. she has lived, taught and studied in different countries which adds to

her understanding of societies and education. In this chapter as the name suggests, she compares the Education in Mumbai and Hongkong. She has compares aspects like Educational Philosophy, School education, Requirement for Secondary School Teachers, Profile of Secondary School Teachers, Role of a Secondary School Teacher and Working Conditions of Teachers through her empirical research. This comparison brings out the subtle differences and helps us to understand the educational scenario in both the countries. It highlights the fact that increasing the supply of qualified teachers and to seek international cooperation for teacher training is not enough. Ensuring the quality in teacher education is important to realize SDG 2030. She goes on to conclude the paper by writing that, as India stimulates its youth towards attainment of SDG 2030, ensuring that the right kind of people are recruited into teaching, managed sensitively, and most importantly, are given the administrative and academic support required to meet the goal of quality education for all will be one of the key discriminators. In a nutshell Quality of the teacher needs to be focused than the Quantity of teachers.

The fourth chapter is on **Gender Equality and Youth Development With regard to SDG 5** by **Dr. Vibhuti Patel**. Dr Vibhuti Patel is a Professor, Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her areas of specialization have been Gender Economics, Women's Studies, Human Rights, Social movements and Gender Budgeting. The paper discusses about women's rights and talks of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. She highlights in her paper all important aspects that needs to be investigated if we need to reduce the gender disparity. The author has discussed about -Child Sex Ratio ,Reduction of Gender Gap in Education, Reproductive and Child Health, Safety for women in Smart cities, Relevance of Skill development for



Crisis Management, Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on labor participation of women, Predicament of Women Farmers Violence against Women and Girls , National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) Road and Rail

Transport for Women, Water, Energy Expenditure of Women, Social Security for Women in Informal Sector, Elderly Women, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), SHGs, Women's Component Plan (WCP), Women's Rights to Education, Women's Representation in Governance and Minority Women. The reader gets so much information while reading this chapter about the status of the women. The chapter is highly informative and makes the reader realize and think about gender disparity. The article concludes with a note to the Indian youth to be aware and pro-active about concerns of girls and women in the context of the fast changing socio-economic and cultural scenario in the country. SDG 5 is calling for an end to disparities between boys and girls at all levels of education.

The fifth chapter, **Violence Against Women and Girls A Barricade to Youth Development and SDG Goals** is authored by **Dr. Trupti Jhaveri Panchal & Nolina Sarah Minj**. Dr Trupti Jhaveri is an Assistant Professor & Chairperson, Centre for Women Centered Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She is also Project Director of two Field Action Projects viz. Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence Against Women & Special Cell for Women & Children (Maharashtra) units located in police systems which give socio-legal services and a multi-agency coordinated response to the issue of violence against women. The author in this chapter brings about the subject of Violence against women and girls and four major categories discussed are i.e., early and child marriage, honour killings, dating violence and domestic violence. violence is a central barrier to the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life. Research studies related to violence against women and girls have been discussed. The author explains that SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This will happen only if all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres are eliminated. This paper also

mentions the contribution of NGOs like Akshara, YUVA, Empower Girls, Quest and Girls Not Brides who are working for the SDG by playing an important role in sensitizing and training the youth on key issues pertaining to gender and

sexuality. The chapter concludes with a suggestion that access to quality services that address violence against women and girls become a crucial right for all women everywhere, thereby ensuring a better future for all. This chapter is well-written by the authors based on in-depth study of facts about the violence and makes one feel empathetic towards the atrocities faced by women.

The sixth chapter titled, **From Recipients to Change Agents, Participation in Enhancing Health & Sanitation in Marginalised Urban Geographies** written by four authors- **Rama Shyam, Anuja Jayaraman, Vinita Ajgaonkar & Neeta Karandikar**. Dr Rama Shyam is the Programme Director, Empowerment, Health & Sexuality of Adolescents (EHSAS) at SNEHA, Mumbai. Dr Anuja Jayaraman is Director, Research at SNEHA, Mumbai. Vinita Ajgaonkar is working in a leadership capacity at SNEHA, Mumbai. Neeta Karandikar is Associate Programme Director, Empowerment, Health and Sexuality of Adolescents (EHSAS) at SNEHA, Mumbai. The chapter has a lot of demographic information on youth adolescent girls as well as the adolescent boys. Data related to mortality rate in adolescents is given. Improving the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) framework within the context of improving the health of young people in vulnerable urban geographies and reflecting on their role in contributing to this improvement. The paper speculates that it is vital to strengthen provisions and services that will allow young people to enhance their capacities. Creating a positive environment for promoting the right of young people to participation, Equipping young people with adequate knowledge, self-esteem and life skills; family, service providers and community to build support; Enhancing the concept of gender equality between young men and young women, Providing care and protection for all young people through a safe and supportive environment created and supported by appropriate legislation, clinical procedures and health services and counselling services.

The various youth intervention programmes have been quoted and the effect of these programmes on youth is explained with case studies.

The seventh chapter titled, **Beyond Skilling: An Alternative Praxis of Livelihood for Urban Poor Youth** written by **Alicia Tauro and Sachin Nachnekar**. Alicia Tauro is a Project Coordinator at Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), India that empowers marginalised people and communities to access their rights. Sachin Nachnekar is a Youth Development Coordinator at Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA). He has successfully built many youth networks and collectives across the city of Mumbai. This chapter realizes itself within the targets of SDG 8 which is 'Decent work and economic growth', with a special emphasis on work prospects and safe work conditions, especially for urban poor youth. One is to create adequate work opportunities and smoothen changes from education to work for youth by allowing access to holistic skill development comprising of technical as well as soft skills training through localized centers. The paper explains YUWA's model which presents an alternative praxis of empowerment for the Poor Urban youth development through livelihood.

The eighth chapter titled, **From Recipients to Change Agents: Perspectives on Youth Participation in Enhancing Health and Sanitation in Marginalised Urban Geographies** by **Anita Patil Deshmukh, Sunil Gangawane and Payal Tiwari**. Dr Anita Patil Deshmukh is the executive Director of PUKAR, Mumbai. A trained Neonatologist by profession, Anita received her Master's in Public Health from Harvard University and worked as a faculty Neonatologist at a teaching institution in Chicago for 20 years. She relocated to India in 2005 to contribute to the developmental sector. Mr. Sunil Gangawane Sunil is a trained facilitator at Pukar, and he has facilitated participatory research studies, focusing largely on issues related to gender, sexuality and expression of identities. He has master's in psychology from University of Mumbai and diploma in development education from Mynooth

University, Ireland and South Africa. Payal Tiwari has worked as Research Associate in PUKAR, Mumbai.

Partners for Urban Knowledge Action and Research (Pukar) specifically works with youth intersecting across caste, class, gender and ethnicity. This chapter is a documentation of PUKAR's engagement with youth using community based participatory action research. The youth use their research as a tool for social change and to challenge unequal power relations. PUKAR's programme creates critical thinkers and leaders who are sensitive to issues of their community and of the society. Youth from vulnerable communities, with different gender and sexual orientation, different disabilities seldom get any opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge based on action research. Along with the theoretical understanding of the subjects, hands on- experience of carrying out action research activities in the grassroots communities has proved to be a good source for social cohesion.

The last chapter on **Creating Spaces for Lifelong Learning Skills in Youth-An Intervention to Generate Sustainable Workforce of the Future**, is written by **Saigita Chitturu**. Dr Saigita Chitturu is working as Assistant Professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She has over 20 years of experience in Teaching, Training, Research, Curriculum Development and Liasoning work. She has been bestowed with the 'Bharat Vikas Award' by Institute of Reliance, Bhuvaneshwar for her contribution to the field of Youth Leadership analyses the existing status of youth development and the core skills necessary to involve youth meaningfully in their work life. Drawing from the experience of working with National Youth Volunteers of NYKS and NSS, India's most popular youth-based programmes, the paper discusses the ongoing need of training and academic intervention to facilitate a smooth transition of young people into the world of work. The chapter ends with a thought that a merging of Civil Society Organisations and the government to co-create empowering spaces where local youth take leadership and act on

the issues affecting them and others in their communities is critical. Efforts to build capacities of youth

across India will help India to walk on the path of achieving SDG Goals.

**In the Appendix**, an interview of a youth aged 25 years who is a volunteer is published. The interview gives us an insight into the thought process of the youth into becoming a volunteer.

### **Conclusion:**

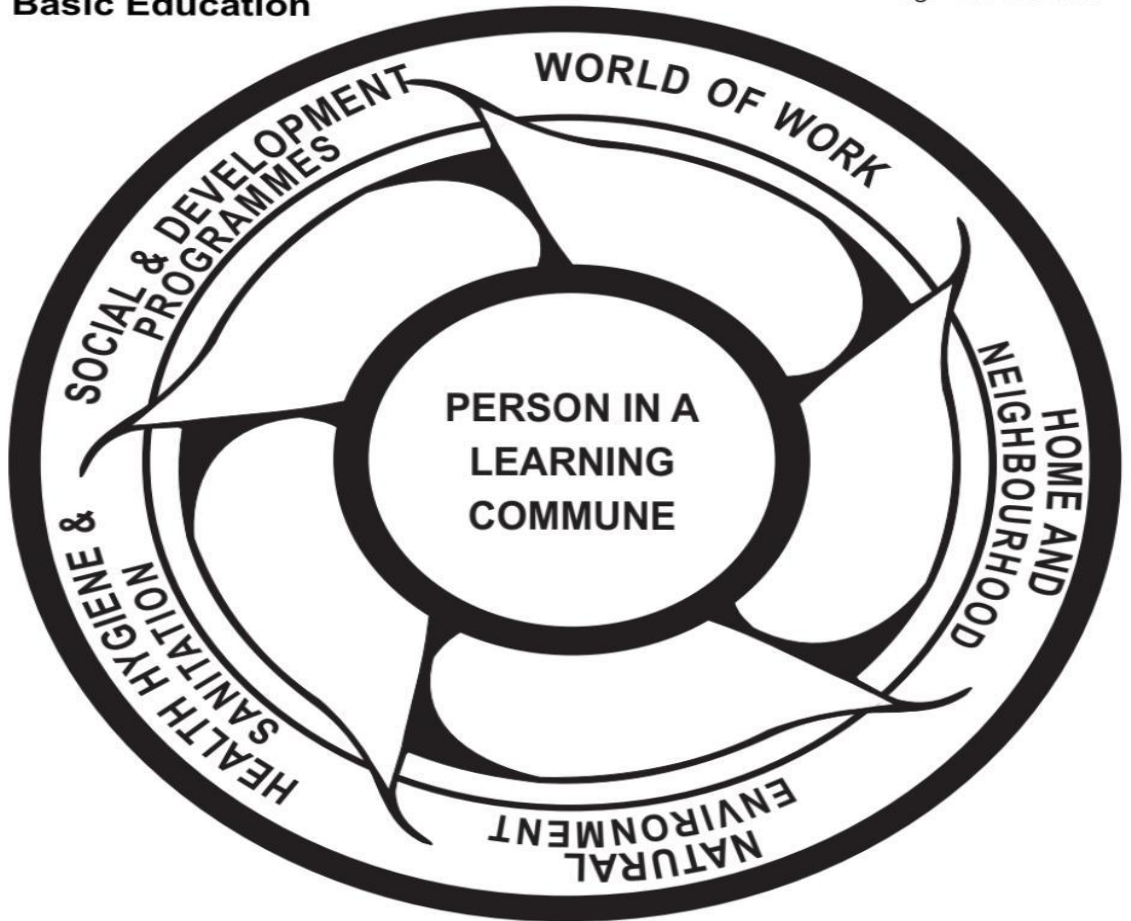
Every chapter of the book is written very well with detailed information and all the views that are expressed by the authors are based on thorough research and citations. Various issues related to the youth have been discussed. There are several case studies, research studies, references to previous policies, the works of the NGOs for youth development, role of the state, government which has been referred whenever required in the different chapters. The book highlights the necessity for the country to bring into line every youth work to the targeted SDG goals by the country. This book is a reminiscent combination of viewpoints on Indian youth through the lens of the Civil Society Organizations, Academia and the state. The role of youth in realizing the goals of SDGs by creating a path for knowledge sharing on current trends and best practices by diverse stakeholders in attaining the larger goal. To summarize, the book provides viewpoints, role and contribution of youth and the civil society organization in the path of realizing the goals of SDGs. This book is highly informative and makes the reader realize that it is indeed very essential to mobilize, and development of the youth is extremely essential for a developing country like India. In terms of achieving the 17 sustainable development goals, a country cannot spread and flourish by excluding its most prolific force. India, a country with a vibrant youth population, can reap expected returns only when they are empowered.

# GANDHI SHIKSHAN BHAVAN

Functional Education

Indian Council of  
Basic Education

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Development of well-integrate personality is possible if :

- a. Educational experiences and work experiences interweave, intersect and reinforce each other.
- b. Students and teachers participate actively in the community services such as adult education, promotion of better health, hygiene and sanitation etc.
- c. Curriculum provides for self-directed learning and
- d. Education concerns itself with the development of the human person.

Printed at : Vijay Copy Centre, Tel. : 23865137 Email : vijayxerox@hotmail.com  
and Published by Smt. Nupur Mitra

for Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan & Indian Council of Basic Education, Juhu (North), Mumbai - 400 049  
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