Research Paper

Aspirations and Challenges of Youth in Kashmir: Social, Political and EconomicAnalysis

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ABSTRACT

Due to the growing consumerism aggravated by aggressive advertisements there has been a cultural twist among youth of Jammu and Kashmir. They adopted fashionable concepts of life and want to go beyond old social norms and create their own new world of norms and habits. There appears to be some linkages between the revival of religious fundamentalism on the one hand and the growing frustration of general public on the other. Resultantly in this situation a kind of erosion has occurred and the traditions, institutions and cultures that used to keep together individuals in a cohesive society are losing their strength. And before a new form of tradition appears under the new clothes of modernity, people including young people are freed from the ties of the past and left in a no-man's land where norms, hallmarks, signals etc. become blurred and are not able to ensure the relatively better socialization and preparation of the new generation, which in a sense results in emotional tension, a feeling of insecurity and a lack of confidence in ones beliefs and attitudes. Conflict and violence from last 30 years has given birth to new issues especially for youth in Kashmir. The research paper discusses in detail the various socio-economic dimensions of youth in Kashmir with special focus on the impact of conflict on youth. The present study is based on primary source information from the field.

KEY WORDS: *Youth, Conflict, Drugs, Aspirations, Kashmir, Education, Unemployment, Well-being.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sociologically youth is not only an age category, a period in life, but also a context. It is not merely a biological notion, as for instance puberty. It is rather a sociological concept, representing a system of attitudinal and behavioural patterns related to a specific position in society. This is not to deny the relationship between sociological and biological factors, but merely to distinguish them. Any age category - for instance childhood, youth or old age as in Aristotle's categorisation into the three stages of human beings - is predicated upon biological fact, yet is structured by social factors. It is this process of socialisation of a given biological group which is so different from moment to moment, society to society, and culture to culture, that gives rise to a set of partially shared perceptions and problems, which among other things contributes to the creation of a common identity. Youth is the generic notion used to describe this common identity. It seeks more specifically sociological criteria and defines youth as a period of transition from childhood to full adult status of full membership in society. In this period, the individual is no longer a child especially from a physical and sexual point of view but is ready to undertake many attributes of an adult and to fulfil the adult roles. But he is not acknowledged as an adult, a full member of society. Rather he is being 'prepared' or is preparing himself for such adulthood. This definition stresses the place of youth in society as a member, yet not a full member of society. It treats youth as a stage of transition to adulthood, just as infancy gives way to childhood. This view is typically sociological in that it points out that youth should be seen as a product of social reproduction.

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The youth are often perceived as agents of social change. This role in social change/transformation is pursued as a result of the young people differentiating between what they accept and what they wish to change in a given social setup, at times through participation in movements for social change. Throughout the world, there have been several cases of such movements by youth. Example can be what was witnessed in the late 1960's, which was marked by the rise of "hippies", who in the West represented a non-violent protest of the youth against western values. They wanted to be left alone to do what they liked without the constraints of the mores and laws of the civilisation in which they grew up. The 1970s witnessed the movements of the underprivileged seeking redress of their social disabilities. For example, the Black Panthers of America resorted to militant movements to pursue their goal. An illustration of revolutionary agitation was that of the youth in China in 1987. In India since 1970 there have been a number of cases of youth agitation, such as that of the anti-reservation in Gujarat in 1985, the All Assam Student Union agitation in Assam in 1984 and the anti-Mandal agitation in north India in 1990. The youth have played a part in the militant agitation for Khalistan in Punjab and for an independent Kashmir in Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, no less important was the role of youth in the freedom movement in India. Large number of young men and women were actively involved in the freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. However, it is only in post-independence period that, with the recognition of the existence of youth and youth culture as distinct and separate social entity, youth movement became increasingly the subject matter of academic studies and research works.

Moreover, as in other parts of the country, due to the growing consumerism aggravated by aggressive advertisements there has been a cultural twist also among youth of Jammu and Kashmir. They adopted fashionable concepts of life and want to go beyond old social norms and create their own new world of norms & habits. There appears to be some linkages between the revival of religious fundamentalism on the one hand and the growing frustration of general public on the other. Resultantly in this situation a kind of erosion has occurred and the traditions, institutions and cultures that used to keep together individuals in a cohesive society are losing their strength. And before a new form of tradition appears under the new clothes of modernity, people including young people are freed from the ties of the past and left in a no-man's land where norms, hallmarks, signals etc; become blurred and are not able to ensure the relatively better socialization and preparation of the new generation, which in a sense results in emotional tension, a feeling of insecurity and a lack of confidence in ones beliefs and attitudes.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the Youth Study were to identify key transitions experienced by youth, including those pertaining to education, work force participation, sexual activity, marriage, health and civic participation; decision-making and attitudes; leisure and sports; impact of conflict; and, to identify key factors underlying young people's sexual and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and life choices.

▪ To find out the socio-economic characteristics of the youth and to understand certain attitudes, aspirations and value orientations of the youth in Kashmir.
▪ To know the youths access and equity in education, and valuation for education and their particular implications for youth.
▪ To examine the perceptions and attitudes of the youth regarding the experiences in violent conflict situations in Jammu and Kashmir and the possible role of the youth to improve collective understanding and capacity to work for peace and development in Jammu and Kashmir.
▪ To assess the extent, magnitude and factors of unemployment and under-employment and to know the social and political implications of the prolonged unemployment and economic exclusion.
▪ To know the nature and direction of change among youth in Kashmir under the influence of modernization, mass media, industrialization etc. in the areas of education and occupation, social control, state of individualism verses collectivism, leisure patterns and entertainment orientation.

II. METHODOLOGY

The statistical data and other empirical material generated and utilized is based on both primary and secondary sources. The study specifically concentrated on the valley of Kashmir. A sample of 1000 respondents (comprising of 800 youth, 50 government officials, 50 local scholars/intellectuals, 50 social notables/workers and 50 knowledgeable senior citizens) were selected to give representation to all areas, gender, ethnicity, rural, semi-rural, urban, semi-urban and income-occupational-educational groups and sub-groups while a detailed predetermined and structured interview schedule was used for youth selected through stratified random sampling and conducted by professional staff whose services were hired on the basis of having proficiency in Urdu, English and local Kashmiri language. A pilot survey of 100 respondents was conducted before administering the actual study. The proposed sample was distributed for proportional representation into each stratum. In-depth interviews with social notables, senior citizens, knowledgeable persons, men and Government

officers were carried out within the limits of interview guide. Special focus was made on the conflict ridden sections and marginalized communities. The secondary data is comprised of the information collected from books, journals, reports, newspapers, periodicals, internet, published and unpublished documents/thesis if any. An attempt has also been made to introduce some of the relevant theories like functionalist perspective, socio-political conflict and theories of youth with the ultimate aim to apply them in the empirical data analysis and discussion. The major findings and suggestions generated based on the empirical reality of the phenomenon which we hope to become the guidelines for the government in general and policy planners looking after youth issues and governance in the State in particular.

Amidst the plethora of literature being generated on youth at the global level, the present work on the same subject will be distinguished by its extensiveness and holistic treatment. Not only that a considerable number of youth representing every stratum of the society were interviewed but their parents and colleagues, friends, groups etc. were also taken care off to make the study multidimensional in character. The ethnographic accounts and case studies surely helped to provide a holistic picture of the youth and youth issues. We are sure the work will provide a very valuable addition to the existing literature on youth in general and Kashmiri youth in particular, besides being useful to those directly working for the welfare and development of youth in Kashmir.

Major Findings

The research study *Youth in Kashmir: Aspirations and Challenges* gave age groups 19-22 and 23-27 deliberately more representation because of being in the fertile period of youth as well as in the peak of their career.With regard to the population of young people, the distribution suggests 11.4% of the population is aged 10–14 years, 9.5% is aged 15–19 years and 8.6% is aged 20–24 years. A total of 18.1% of the population is aged 15–24 years, about the same as that observed in the 2001 Census (18.3%). The sexratio of the Jammu and Kashmirpopulationis 883 females per 1,000 males, lower than the national average (2011 Census).

Education and Opportunity

The educational profile of the population highlights low levels of educational attainment. Reaffirming the low levels of educational attainment in the population covered by thestudy, findings also indicate that less than 50 percent of the total population had received 20 or more years of education, including 35% and 45% of males and females, respectively. Attainment of educational milestones also varied. In total, just two in five young men and two in three young women had completed bachelors' degree. The rates were particularly low among several sub-groups of youth—young women, married youth, downtown youth, those belonging to poor households,and those belonging to lower castes. Among those who had ever enrolled in school/college, substantial declines in school/college completion rates took place earlieramong young women than men, the married than the unmarried, and the downtown compared to the uptown. For the most part, youth attended private, co-educational and government schools and colleges. A gender divide was, however,observed in the type of educational facility they attended. While young men, by and large, attended co-educationalfacilities at all levels of education, percentages of young women attending a co-educational facility declined withlevel of schooling attained. While differences in regularattendance and perceptions about academic load were less consistent, youth who were continuing their educationwere considerably more likely to report private tuition, and to have passed the last examination for which they hadappeared. It would appear that academic failure was an important factor precipitating school discontinuation.

Employment and Unemployment

Work profiles suggest that over two-thirds of young men and one-half of young women had at some time engagedin paid or unpaid work. Economic activity was often initiated at an early age: over one in four young menand women reported initiating work in childhood or early adolescence (by age 20).Data on work participation indicate that the majority of young men(61% of unmarried and 97% of married) and a substantial proportion of young women (37% and 43%, respectively)had engaged in paid or unpaid work at some point in last couple of years. The study also reveals substantial levels of unemployment among youth: 44% among young men and 66% amongyoung women. Unemployment was particularly high among the educated—young men and women who hadcompleted Class 12 and BA reported considerably higher rates of unemployment than those who had completed feweryears of schooling.Youth were clearly interested in acquiring skills that would enable employment generation; over half of young menand two-thirds of young women reported interest in vocational skills training. However, far fewer—just 21% ofyoung men and 25% of young women—had attended at least one vocational training programme.Youth in downtown and other sensitive areas were less likely than their other counterparts to have ever attended vocational trainingprogrammes. While this locality pattern was not as consistently observed with regard to young people's interest inattending vocational training programmes in general.

Media Exposure

The study reveals that large proportions of youth were exposed to the media, typically television (89% of allyoung men and 76% of all young women), and, among youth with ten or more years of education, newspapers,magazines or books (93% of young men and 78% of young women). Exposure to the internet, among those withfive or more years of education, was reported by considerably fewer youth (15% of young men and 9% of youngwomen). Gender differences were apparent, with young men typically more likely to be exposed to each medium than young women. Region-wise differences were narrow with regard to exposure to the print media, but wider inthe case of the remaining two media; youth in civil lines and the posh areas, by and large, more likelythan their counterparts to report exposure to television and the internet. Findings also suggest that about one in three young men (35%) and hardly any (3%) young women watchedpornographic films; 23% of young men and 5% of young women accessed pornographic books and magazines and37% of young men and 5% of young women who had been exposed to the internet had accessed pornographic materials on the internet. Region-level differences were inconsistent but highlight that young men in civil lines and the posh colonies were more likely than those in the downtown to report exposure to pornographicmaterials. Finally, between half and three-fifths of young men and women (54–62%) acknowledged the influence thatmedia have on youth behaviors, in terms of influencing the way youth dress or the extent to which they exhibitaggressive behaviors.

Youth and Mobile Phones

The study came out with findings that most respondents used Samsung and MI (Redmi) phones because of their quality. The most widely used service providers were BSNL, Airtel, Jio, and Idea. Most respondents also bought their phones between Rs. 3000-7000 and most of the phones were bought by youth themselves. A good percentage of youth in Srinagar use mobile phones for internet purposes especially to use *Facebook*and other social networking sites and some other entertaining and informative websites. The most common billing system used by study participants was the prepaid system with participants recharging monthly and spending less than Rs. 300 per month. The most important reason for purchasing a mobile phone was for the students to remain in easy contact with family and friends. Regarding attitudes most students considered information on their phones to be private. Most of the time the respondents put their phones on silent when they were at lectures (if student) and most could not do without a mobile phone for a day. It is advisable among other things to cut down on the number of times one recharges units to save money and also cut down on the length of time talking on phone in order to have more time for studies as students.

Peer Group Networks and Interaction

Growing-up is associated with close peer group networks. Almost 55 percent of the sampled youth reported having somesame-sex friends. Young men typically reported a somewhat larger network of friends than did young women.Opposite-sex peer networks were less common but nonetheless reported by 27% of young men and 16% of youngwomen. Indeed, findings suggest that youth derived an important measure of support from their peer group networkson personal matters: friends were by far the leading confidante on boy-girl relationships for both young men andwomen, and on nocturnal emission for young men.

Sex, Gender and Youth

The present study clearly highlight young women's limited agency. For example, just one in four young women (27%)reported independent decision-making on all three issues explored in the study, namely, decisions on choice offriends, spending money and purchase of clothes for oneself. Likewise, freedom of movement even within the locality or neighbourhood was not universal among young women; only three-quarters of young women (73%) had thefreedom to visit locations within their own locality or neighbourhood unescorted. Moreover, just one-quarter ofyoung women reported freedom to visit at least one place outside the village or neighbourhood unescorted, and 15%could visit a health facility unescorted. Access to and control over financial resources tended to be limited amongyoung women; fewer than two in five reported some savings and 6 in 10 owned a bank savings account. Over 70 percent young men had opened an account in bank and were having some saving in comparison to the girls. Of those young women who owned an account, just 54% operated it themselves. While in each area, women's agency was limited, a clear area-wise pattern was not discernible. For example, young women from civil lines displayedconsiderably higher levels of decision-making than did those from the other areas. Also notable from the findings is the striking gender divide in all the dimensions of young people's agency explored in the study. Young women were far more disadvantaged than young men, and this was apparent everywhere.For example, even the least educated young men and young men belonging to the poorest (first) wealth quintilewere more likely than the most educated women and those in the wealthiest (fifth) quintile to report independentdecision-making on all three issues explored in the study.

Knowledge of Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters

The present study underscores young people's limited awareness of most sexual and reproductive matters, ranging from howpregnancy occurs to contraception, HIV and safe sex practices. Although knowledge of the legal minimum age at marriagewas reported by large proportions of youth, there is actually a section which either lake information about legal age of marriage and simply doesn't care about it since economic and other social conditions weigh heavily for their survival.Youth had few sources of information on sex and reproduction. Indeed, almost half of young women and one-sixthof young men reported that they had never received any formal information on sexual matters (prior to marriage amongthe married).Leading sources of information on sexual matters were friends and the electronic media for both young men and women.

Youth, Love Affairs and Romantic Relations

The investigation confirms that despite strict norms prohibiting pre-marital opposite-sex mixing, opportunities do exist forthe formation of pre-marital romantic relationships. Indeed, significant proportion of young men and women in the urban setting of Kashmir hadmade or received a "proposal" for a romantic relationship (45–55%), and noteworthy, if smaller, percentages reportedthat they had been involved in a romantic partnership (35% and 9% of young men and women, respectively).Patterns of pre-marital romantic partnerships suggest that where partnerships occurred, they were initiated atan early age and were usually hidden from parents but not from peers. The majority of youth who engaged in apre-marital romantic partnership had expectations of a longer-term commitment; young women were considerablymore likely than young men to have expected a romantic relationship to lead to marriage (87% and 57%, respectively).The experiences of the married suggest, moreover, a disconnect between intentions and reality: while 64% and92% of married young men and women who reported a pre-marital romantic partner, respectively, had intendedto marry their pre-marital partner, far fewer (23% and 64%, respectively) had done so.There was a clear progression in reported physical intimacy and sexual experience with romantic partners: while88% of young men had held hands with a romantic partner, no one reported to had sex with their partner; among young women,while three-quarters had held hands with a romantic partner.

Health, Substance/Drug Use and Well Being

Findings show that substantial proportions of young men reported the consumption of drugs, tobacco and alcohol; almostone-third of young men reported tobacco consumption and one-sixth reported alcohol consumption. As expected, few youngwomen reported that they had consumed any of these substances. In contrast, hardly any young men and not a singleyoung woman reported drug use.

Youth, Civil Society and Political Engagement

Active citizenship involves an awareness of rights and responsibilities and engagement in the life of the community is currently in vogue in the urban city. Findings highlight the limited participation of youth in civil society. Although a number of programmes are organized by the government or NGOs at the community level in which youth can participate, few youth (22% of youngmen and 17% of young women) reported familiarity with these programmes. Even fewer youth—7% of youngmen and 5% of young women—reported participating in such programmes. Relatively larger proportions of youngmen (45%) and young women (15%) reported that they had participated in community-led activities such as thecelebration of festivals and national days. Finally, just 10–11% of young men and women reported membership inorganized groups.They were also more likely to report participation in community-led programmes and membership in organized groups. A similar pattern was observed with regard to the expression of secular attitudes: Youth in civil lines and posh colonies were consistently more likely to express secular attitudes than their downtown counterparts.

Conflict and Youth

Youth are uniquely affected by conflict and threats to their security. They are vulnerable as both victims and perpetrators of violence. Conflict impacts negatively on all dimensions of their lives. The armed conflict in Kashmir which started in 1989, have a devastating impact upon the well being of the civilian population, particularly women, children and youth. There is hardly any sphere of life which remained unaffected due to this armed conflict. Everyone in Kashmir has been touched by the conflict in some way. The study reveals that majority of the respondents i.e. 89.1 percent felt that the impact of conflict situation proved pervasive and mostly negative on Kashmiri society. It has created enormous upheaval at the personal, family and societal level. The prolonged period of time the Kashmir has been in conflict, combined with the more recent years of consecutive mass uprisings from 2008 to 2016 provides grim reminder of the reality that human life in Kashmir continues to be under threat. While the negative repercussions of conflict are rampant, the small percentage of respondents' i.e. (4.5 percent) was of the opinion that conflict also brought certain significant positive changes. The positive impact of the armed conflict found among young people was increase in

awareness on different social, religious, political, economic, and cultural, issues etc. Youth realized the need to understand and be aware of the politics.An overwhelming majority of respondents' i.e. (91.8 percent) don't find Kashmir a safe place to live in. The reasons mentioned by the respondents were: sense of insecurity, uncertainty of life and harassment.The study further reveals that repercussion of the ongoing conflict situation is displacement of youth. 39.7 percent respondents had had to leave their homes subsequently during the outbreaks of violence. The causes of displacement were many, like harassment; they had been forced involuntary to relocate due to security measures and other threats imposed by conflict. The respondents at greater percentage have also witnessed the incidents like killings in their family, self-detention, mistreatment and injuries during the on-going conflict. Many youth have become orphaned and have taken on the responsibility to care for younger siblings. This experience was shared by both male and female respondents.

Socio-Economic Impact of Conflict on Youth

While assessing the impact on education of youth, it has come to fore that this aspect has been tremendously affected due to conflict. The study reveals high percentage of respondents (83 percent) have missed out classes in their colleges due to frequent strikes and curfews and 68 percent respondents conveyed that quality and effectiveness of education also deteriorated severely over the last years. The respondents reported that most of their peers left education in a midway because of the interrupted education or lack of income, while many others migrated to other parts of India and abroad. Further the activities like student union and discussion forums were found non available in colleges, the respondents also conveyed that their educational institutions don't promote any student participation and decision making at any level. The greater percentage of respondents (76.8 percent) did not have any regular interactions and exchanges with students from other local and non-local colleges.

On assessing the impact of conflict on social life of youth, it was perceived that conflict has influenced their social life to great extent. The presence of a large number of security forces has created serious obstacles in their social life. Their families also hardly allow them to visit their friends or participate in extracurricular activities due to the persistent security threat. There are always restrictions and impositions on their life conveyed the respondents. The female respondents explicitly were more of concern than boys regarding the frequent college closures due to curfews and strikes as they consider college a place for socialization. It was also found that due to strikes and curfews for months the students have been deprived of the simple yet joyful experiences of college life and this loss has had its impact on their lives.

Leisure, Conflict and Youth

The study reveals that conflict has hindered the ability of the young to enjoy and play activities in the company of peers. The respondents reported that there are no recreation centres or community halls in their respective colleges, while these privileges are available to most institutions in other parts of India. Young people feel caged at their homes and felt that over the years they have become habituated to remain at home. Majority of the respondents (71 percent) spent their free time in watching T.V. 68 percent respondents surf internet in their leisure time. It was observed that the internet has become a window to the world for Kashmiri youth, whose lives are already over-ridden by restrictions on movement and social interaction. It brought in a range of opportunities and helped to explore alternative and lives. The youth spent their most of the leisure time on social networking sites like facebook, twitter, YouTube and many such web platforms to interact with their friends and relatives.

Critique, Conclusion and Policy Implications

The study underscores the fact that youth face numerous challenges while making thetransition to adulthood. These challenges call for programme interventions at the youth, family and service deliverylevels. Key programme recommendations emerging from this study are highlighted below.The following suggestions and recommendations could help in overcoming the youth issues in Kashmir in general and urban youth in particular:

• Activities must address school-level barriers, notably, poor infrastructure, quality of education and academicfailure. There is a needto incorporate livelihood skills building models within the school setting that will not only raise young people'saspirations regarding their education and careers but also provide them opportunities to gain market-driven job skills.There is also a need to focus on providing better training and ensuring accountability for teachers—investments thatare likely to improve the quality of schooling experiences for youth. Efforts need to bemade to adjust school timings, including the establishment of evening schools to enable children and youth to accommodate work or business without sacrificing their education especially higher studies. The study further reveals that several sub-groups of youth—young women, the married, the rural, those belonging to poor households and those belonging to lower castes and groups—remain considerably disadvantaged call for effortsthat specifically target these vulnerable groups. Interventions are needed that give

youth who missed the opportunityto obtain adequate formal education a second chance to acquire equivalency to formal education.

- The Problem of health and education are the key areas of attention. Youth and especially students yearn for greater exposure, facilities, counselling, accountability and promotion of creativity. The reconstruction of the social infrastructure (education, health) must be recovered for future perspectives of youth. The government as well as non-governmental agencies and organisation can provide valuable help in this regard.

- This research points to the effective un-employability of significant proportions of youth. It is notable that whileconsiderable proportions of urban youth reported exposure to computer skills, English language skills and so on,rural youth tended to opt for relatively traditional vocational skills and may not have had the opportunity to learnabout market needs or develop appropriate skills for which a demand exists. It is also notable that those who wereengaged in economic activity were working largely as semiskilled, unskilled or sometimes as skilled non-agricultural labourers. Moreover,considerable proportions of youth, particularly, the educated were unemployed, suggesting a possible disconnectbetween youth skills and market needs.

- It has been seen that Youth living in conflict situation are highly prone to psychosocial troubles. Therefore a strong community based psycho-social support mechanism is highly required to address the needs of youth especially who have been directly affected. In addition to it, the existing institutions or establishments in this regard needs further strengthening.

- There is a need to initiate schemes to assist victims of armed conflict especially the youth-headed households. There is need to improve the situation of youth by strengthening their capacities and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.

- The state and government must significantly strengthen investments in programmes that enable youth to make a successfultransition to work roles. Enhancing employability would depend to a considerable extent on the improvementsin educational attainment discussed above; it would also require greater investment in enabling youth to acquirevocational skills. Formal mechanisms must be developed that provide opportunities to youth to acquire skills forwhich there is an established demand, and that link eligible youth to market opportunities. At the same time, efforts are needed to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship throughvarious livelihood schemes, for example, providing soft loans to youth to enable them to set up their own businessenterprises like the scheme introduced under Sheri Kashmir Employment Guarantee Scheme.. Also required are efforts to evaluate existing programmes aimed at job creation to assess their reachand impact in enabling young people to make a successful transition to work roles, upscale successful models, raiseawareness among youth about their availability and ensure that these programmes do indeed reach young people.

- There is need of avenues for youth to participate in social and cultural events like festivals, dramas, traditions, music, which shall be helpful for distressed youth.

- It has been seen that conflict has changed the socialization patterns of youth. The family structure which is based on love and affection has been broken. Family reunification is an urgent need. For the proper growth and development, Youth must live in safe environment, provided by family. Parents have a big role to play for providing proper socialization to youth so that the impact is visible at the family level to community level and to society as a whole.

- Youth participation should be encouraged at all levels of social interaction, from the neighbourhood, school, and local community to the national and international levels in a multi-track diplomacy approach. They should be given responsibilities according to their capacities and be taken seriously.

- The study highlights the limited agency of young women and the persistence of gender double standards among youth.Young women were particularly disadvantaged in terms of school enrolment, participationin wage earning activities, and exposure to mass media. While young women were as likely as young men to haveparticipated in vocational training programmes, most young women had undergone training in traditional skills,such as tailoring and handicrafts. Socialization was gendered and parental control over their adolescent children'smobility and interactions with peers was stricter for young women than men. Additionally, compared to young men,young women reported less mobility, opportunities to build peer networks, decision-making authority in mattersrelating to their own lives and control over resources. And although young women were more likely than youngmen to express equitable gender role attitudes. These findings call for attention to promote life skills education programmes foryoung women, both unmarried and married, that will not only raise their awareness of new ideas and the worldaround them but also enable them to put new information into practice, encourage them to question genderstereotypes, develop self-esteem and strengthen their skills in problem-solving, decision-making, communication andinter-personal relations and negotiation. Equally important is to identify safe spaces in which young women canbuild social networks and find social support among peers.Promoting gender equitable norms and practices requires active engagement with the community. It is essential thatprogrammes for youth work with key community members, such as parents and political and religious leaders inthe community, to critically examine prevailing gender norms and forces that perpetuate such

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norms.Findings suggest that while young women were more likely than young men to report savings, they were somewhatless likely to own a savings account, and, among those who did own an account, considerably less likely to operatethe account independently. At the same time, few youth owned a bank or post office account. Programmes areneeded that inculcate a savings orientation among young people, that offer savings products that are attractive andappropriate to the small and erratic savings patterns of young people and that enable young women in particularto overcome obstacles related to owning and controlling savings products.

- There is also need to scale up investments in youth to create verifiable indicators for the priority areas and to ensure vulnerable or disadvantaged young people receive special attention. It is necessary to avoid generating false expectations that the situation of youth is going to be vastly improved by means of development programmes alone. In place of ad hoc and small level interventions with grand ambitions, there is need for holistic and crosscutting programmes that reflects the importance of taking into account the necessity of working at multiple levels of society (individual, households, communities) and links programmes that directly target youth with those that benefit youth indirectly. Furthermore, the new programmes must place more emphasis on the social and economic challenges that youth face, rather than assuming that young people are themselves the problem. The new programmes must take into account the necessity for location specific implementation. In the preparatory stages, needs assessments should be situation-based, age-specific and participatory, and should investigate the resourcefulness of young people.

- There is an urgent need to establish safe, well-publicized and confidential mechanisms for young women and men to report violence, harassment, and exploitation. Ensure prompt investigation, support for and protection of Youth.

- Majority of youth in valley hold secularattitudes with regard to mixing with a person from another caste and religion, and few engage in community-levelviolence. Nevertheless, not all youth expressed secular attitudes. Moreover, considerable proportions of youth weredissatisfied with the political process. Finally, relatively few had taken part in civil society, that is, government- orNGO-sponsored programmes or community-led activities.Programmes are needed at the school, college and community levels—through various service programmes, sportsand other non-formal mechanisms—that encourage civic participation, incorporate value building componentsand reinforce secular attitudes and values that espouse responsible citizenship. It is also emphasizedthat the political system in the state needs to make special efforts to address the concernsof youth and encourage youth participation in the political processes in more meaningful ways.

- There is also need to amend untrue history versions related with Kashmir problem so that negative stereotypes may diminish. Youth need to be listened to – feel like their views are respected. There is need of Youth councils, NGOs, forums and youth networks. There is need to establish well governed political institutions by giving greater representation and power-sharing to youth, reserving seats for disadvantaged groups, ensuring free and fair elections, and strengthening minority/majority rights (freedom of practice in social, cultural and religious spheres).

- Corruption has been almost institutionalised in government departments and the government is unable to curb it. Nepotism is particularly common. There must be complete accountability and transparency in government and other institutions, and corruption must be stamped out completely. However, we must be primarily accountable to ourselves; people at every level must take a strong stand against corruption.

- Forums and institutions, giving more space to youth, must be established. Platforms such as student unions must be encouraged, so that youth can voice their concerns.

- Youth have a wide range of needs as they prepare for adult roles. They need to develop skills for economic self-reliance. They need citizenship skills, such as teamwork, leadership, the emphasis should be on social integration and meeting the needs of all youth, since the effects of conflict spare none.

- There is a need of adults in taking care of the issues and problems youth in Kashmir are engulfed in. Mentoring of youth by responsible adults in the community helps youth widen their horizons and build pathways toward the future.

- The research divulges symptoms or behaviours suggestive of mental healthdisorders suggest that there is a need to establish systems that address young people's mental health. Efforts are needed to screen young peoplefor possible mental health disorders when they avail of otherprimary health services, including, for example, sexual and reproductive health services, and to refer youth withsuch symptoms to appropriate health facilities and providers. Findings indicate that substantial proportions of young men reported the consumption of tobacco and alcohol.Efforts are needed to sensitize young men about the adverse effects of substance abuse.

While a number of interventions have been initiated in the country intended toaddress the needs of youth—for example, changing the norms of masculinityand femininity, encouraging education for girls, developing market-based vocational skills and providing family lifeand sex education—few of these have been rigorously evaluated. Urgently needed, therefore, are carefully designedand rigorously tested intervention models that not only pay attention to the content and delivery of the interventionbut also measure effectiveness

and acceptability—in short, that will enable a shift from the implementation of*promising* to *best* practices in addressing young people's needs. In order to inform the field, multiple inputs arerequired. Ultimately, research is needed that monitors the scaling up of successful interventions in terms of theirimpact on young people's lives and more importantly in the valley of Kashmir.

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