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**YOUTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

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Abstract:

In today's context, the world needs more persons to join hand to conserve the mother earth. To address the environment, political and economic issues that are existing in the current context will need more human resources and goals to achieve. In this initiative, the world calls the younger generation to conserve the earth and make the place as better to live. The role of youth is very much needed for the better construction of society. Because the younger generation will lead the country to the next level and gives ways for the future generation, the target cannot be achieved without any goals. To construct a better society, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development has given 17 Goals in the name of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030 agenda) applicable to 170 countries and territories. The Sustainable Development Goals consist of both opportunities and challenges for the youth.

The problems are more when compared to opportunities in the Sustainable Development Goals. Youth need more recognition in the social and political status to attain a sustainable developed country with the support of Sustainable Development Goals. This paper explains the opportunities and challenges for the youth in the Sustainable Development Goals. This paper also gives suggestive measures to the Government and Non-Government Organizations to utilise the youth resources to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, 2030.

Key Words: *Youth, Sustainable Development Goals, Opportunities, Challenges*

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INTRODUCTION

Young people are a vital part of society; they are the basis for future development. Young people are social actors of change and can serve as a pressure group to lobby governments in defining their priorities. It has stressed that "youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow but the partners of today". Youth are an integral segment of society. Youths contribute to its uniqueness and identity. As a society, the capacity of young people can be as transformational catalysts. They have demonstrated their abilities by shouldering leadership responsibilities from the beginning of the group and work to transform contemporary realities. There is a desperate need to continuously adaptive structures and mechanisms that is open, supportive and inclusive of young people. The youth found nearly 40 per cent of India's population. The most active and dynamic part of our country and our most appreciated human resource is youth. Their constructive and creative energies should be tapped optimally for positive development and nation-building activities. The size of the youth population determines the country's ability and potential growth. In ancient days youth had a special status. The ancient writers treated the youthhood as a stage of life with their duties and obligations" (Simhadri, 1988:248). The significance of youth in all ages has been felt in society in one way or the other. About 87 per cent of young people living in the developing countries faces challenges due to unequal and limited access to resources, education,

healthcare, training, and employment as well as economic, social and political opportunities.

YOUTH IN INDIA

"According to the report of the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) State of the World's Population India has World's most significant population with 356 million 10-24 year-olds. India is second in having a smaller population than China. China is with 269 million population of young people, followed by Indonesia (67 million), the United States (65 million) and Pakistan (59 million). Africa is more youthful and northern Europe is substantially older. The United Kingdom's youth population is ten percentage point lower than that of India's. India is ageing faster than the global average, and by 2050, the world will have a more substantial proportion of youth population than India". (Economic Times, 2014).

India is one of the countries that have more young generations in the world. India, with about 65 per cent of the population under the age of 35 years and 27.5% of the population under the age group of 15-29 years (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2017-18). In India, there are three types of youth according to their habitat-rural, urban and tribal whose needs and problems are not uniform. According to economic development, again there are two types of youth, one belonging to economically advanced sections with higher education and the other living in urban slums, rural and tribal areas without sufficient means. According to sex, there are two types,

namely, male and female youth (Chowdhry, 1988). Usually, the word youth termed as the period from adolescence to middle age. In the 21st century, the perspectives and life experience of youth differ greatly. In India, youth play a vital role in decision making and the determination of any resolution. The need and importance of young people are increased rapidly in family, society. Participation in political affairs is one of the major roles which the youth plays in India. Though the participation and responsibilities are more for the youth, on the other side, the problems and the crisis are also increased. These issues could be addressed when the youth concerns are heard and considered them as equally important as others and included them in decision-making processes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed in the United Nations Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. This Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect from January 2016. Around 170 countries and territories are implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the help of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target year is until 2030. The key areas, including poverty alleviation, democratic governance and peacebuilding, climate change and disaster risk, and economic inequality are the strategic plan focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the support of the UNDP, the

governments are integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their national development plans and policies. Under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there are 17 goals put forth as a target for the development and betterment of the world. All the 17 goals are interconnected. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are,

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Remove hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being all at all ages
- Make sure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Make sure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Make sure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Enhance sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Construct resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
- Reduce inequality within and among countries

- Form cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Take serious action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Protect and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Conserve, restore and enhance sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Enhance peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Empower the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are unique, and they cover issues that affect all of us. SDGs reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are specific in making sure that no one is left behind. Most significantly, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involve all of us to build a more sustainable, safer and more prosperous planet for all.

YOUTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: OPPORTUNITIES

The scope and range of human impacts on Earth are unparalleled. So much so, are the possibilities to build a secure basis for a sustainable and sustaining future? Participation is the key element of any charter or development process. Inclusion gives people an essential sense of self and a commitment to the world they live in. How do we truly include young people as participants in addressing contemporary life skill and future global challenges? Never has so much depended on our wisdom, foresight, and the quality of our thinking. The answer is in education, both formal and non-formal, and informed the learning process. This clearly establishes that higher education has a strategic contribution to make in, helping to rediscover ancient truths, create new ideas, equip, empower, and inspire the rising generation towards sustainable life skills.

The future of our planet and humanity lies in the hands of today's generation. More than one-third of Sustainable Development Goals reference young people directly or indirectly with the focus on participation, empowerment, and well-being. Goal 2 (hunger), Goal 4 (education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work), Goal 10 (inequality) and Goal 13 (Climate change) are the six key Sustainable Development Goals which contains the 20 youth-specific targets. The sustainable development goal 4 aims to make sure inclusive and equitable quality

education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is the prominent goal which is much needed at present and provides more opportunity for youth in their future. Education plays a vital role in promoting and well-being of society. An educated society will always target for empowerment and betterment of the community. In particular, education is a valuable asset for the young generation which determines the future society. Countries like India are still failing to provide equal education to everyone due to discrimination, inequality, and not access to resources. This 4th SDG which focuses on the inclusive and quality education will be a huge opportunity for the marginalized and vulnerable people who did not access to study in their lifetime. This would enrich the community to become more knowledgeable and skilled personnel. This will create a way for the youth people to get decent work for their survival. It will remove the concept of unskilled youth.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) value everyone and recognizes the significance of inclusive employment in its Goal 8 which aims to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. This goal should be broad-based and support both wages and self-employment. It focuses on reducing youth unemployment and giving equal access to work for women, minorities and other marginalized communities. Particular prominence has given on enhancing self-employment through financial-sector reform to provide credit swiftly. This will

encourage new entrepreneurs to avail the funds they need to activate their innovative ideas. This initiative will satisfy the Sustainable Development Goal 8 which aims to enhance sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The Sustainable Development Goal 2 which aims to remove hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture also links with employment. If a person gets a satisfying job and decent work for his/her survival he/she could manage to balance his/her life. This initiative will reduce hunger and achieve the goal to remove hunger. This is not only achieved by a single person alone but the programs and policies implemented by the government should ensure the decent work and food security for everyone.

The Sustainable Development Goal 8 which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries also interconnected with aforementioned goals. This would be achieved once the young generation gets equal education and a satisfying job. Removing the inequality in getting things will provide equal opportunity to everyone. This gives more opportunity for the young generation to express their talents and skills wherever they go. The Sustainable Development Goal 13 is aimed to take serious action to combat climate change and its impacts. This would be a massive task for the young generation to combat climate change at this critical time. Seeing the context of today's world, climate change becomes a more critical and crucial task for people

to redevelop the world as it was earlier. This would not be achieved without the participation of young people. Because they are the one who leads the nations towards the next generation. The opportunity for global change has handed over to youths and given more importance to youths to combat climate change. To conserve the world for the present and future generation would be possible for the youths and the changes would not be achieved without them.

YOUTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CHALLENGES

Recent era has witnessed important advances in terms of human development, but deep challenges remain. The development has been uneven, with many young people across the world still undergoing interlocked forms of discrimination, high levels of poverty, limited political inclusion, and limited access to health services, educational opportunities, and decent work. Similar to more opportunities, the challenges are also more for the youth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is necessary to discuss the Sustainable Development Goal 8 in particular, youth unemployment. "The South Asian region has one fifth of its population aged from 15 to 24 years, has the largest number of young people ever to transition into adulthood across the world and has the acute youth unemployment, with young adults accounting for half of the unemployed population and young people six times more likely to be jobless than older workers" (World Bank, 2016). The

education and skills are an essential aspect for employment and the demographic challenges also highlight the same. The fundamental idea in SDG 3 is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages; prolonged unemployment could be a threat to both physical and psychological quality of life. "The critical two reasons for the challenges of youth unemployment are the slow growth in formal jobs in relation to growth in the real sector's value addition and the skills employers demand do not match the skills of graduates from universities and training institutions" (Khan and Ahmed, 2014; Wahab et al., 2013). This indicates that many youngsters, even those with high profile and training, cannot find decent work.

Due to political and social customs, still many youngsters were left behind and could not able to access resources like education, employment, and food. Countries like India are more enriched with cultural and caste customs from the ancient period; this would be a significant threat for the young generation not to become socialized with others and remain closed culture which results in illiterate and unemployment more in the country. Removal of caste from the society it's a critical challenge for the youngsters because of the tradition and culture that followed by everyone. This also results in inequality and gender discrimination in the country. The ideal problem for the young generation in today's context is to combat climate change. The world becomes more vulnerable and unfit for survival due to the massive climate change. To stabilise

the environment and create the world for survival is could be achieved by the youth with the support of the Government agencies, Non-Government agencies, and like-minded people.

CONCLUSION

The youth should be deliberated as a valuable asset to the nation's development. The Government should consider the youth population when making policies and programs. The Government should identify the left behind youths who need timely intervention from a social safety net as well as youth engagement programs. New entrepreneurs should be encouraged and should give tax reduction for their new start-ups. This could minimise the unemployment in the nation and gives ways for new entrepreneurs standing on their own without depending on job providers. Young people should actively involve in political and social issues so that the changes could be immediately achieved. Young people's participation is also a solution, if the call for involvement, inclusion, accountability and strengthen global engagement is achieved. Everyone has to create the globe as hunger-free and give equal opportunities to everyone without any discrimination. But, the duty and responsibilities are more for young people for creating a hunger-free and equal society which makes the globe a better place to live. Participation in societal activities and promote sustainable development for everyone are the key role of youngsters. Making the government should take necessary steps to end poverty, hunger

and minimize climate change through effective policies and programs with the evidence-based report like sustainable development goals and support of young people. Young people should identify and work with the vulnerable and left behind people to make them access the resources like education, employment, food and government schemes with the help of Government agencies and Non-Government agencies for the equality in the society which eradicates gender discrimination and inequality. It is a time to call for every youngster through the sustainable development goals to work with Government agencies, Non-Government Agencies and with like-minded people for creating the earth as a better place to live and give space for future generation to survive.

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