

Strategies for Reducing Employment Vulnerability of Rural Youth in the Hills of Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Employment vulnerability among the youth, is one of the major challenge faced by developing countries. Most of the youth work in informal sector, which are typified by low levels of income and productivity, poor working conditions, absence of social protection and limited opportunities for their development. Existing youth policies often do not cater for poor rural youth. The capacities of youth to contribute to rural development and transformation remain largely untapped and their potential unrecognized. International Labour Organization (2014) is taking action to tackle the youth employment crisis through a multi-pronged approach for employment growth and decent job creation. Hence, it is important to design the strategies for employment vulnerabilities among rural youth. The present study was conducted 10 villages of Almora and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand state. Data was collected from 210 rural youth (15-24 years) through interview schedule. Vocational education, skills and training, roles and responsibilities of government, role of local leader and local institutions, resources and physical facilities, small scale enterprises, social protection and gender equality were the major strategies which will help to reduce employment vulnerability among rural youth. The study will help to the extension policy makers to frame training programmes for rural youth regarding employment opportunities in hills of Uttarakhand and other areas.

Key words: Employment, Rural Youth, Strategy, Vulnerability, Uttarakhand

INTRODUCTION

Rural youth are the key players in driving rural transformation and combating poverty. However, rural communities are not benefiting fully from this resource. The absence of decent work opportunities in rural areas is one of the reasons of migration among them. Employment vulnerability among the youth, is one of the major challenge faced by developing countries. International Labour Organization report on Global Employment Trends for Youth states: today's youth

represent a group with serious vulnerabilities in the world of work. Most of the youth work in informal sector, which are typified by low levels of income and productivity, poor working conditions, absence of social protection and limited opportunities for their development. Existing youth policies often do not cater for poor rural youth. The capacities of youth to contribute to rural development and transformation remain largely untapped and their potential unrecognized.

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Today, India has a large youth population which reflects national potential in front of the world. There are over one billion youth (aged 15-24) in the world, eighty five per cent of them live in developing countries and about 50 per cent of youth population in developing countries live in rural areas. Unemployment and poverty remain pervasive among rural youth who face numerous challenges in order to achieve and maintain their livelihood. In the developing world, high youth unemployment represents lost potential for national economic transformation and high numbers of economically frustrated youth may contribute to social instability. Youth unemployment rate is generally observed to be higher than adult unemployment in developing nation. If youth unemployment is not addressed, the youth will remain a risk factor in terms of economic and political stability in countries around the world. As a consequence of economic crisis, youth unemployment has risen dramatically and become a particular cause for concern. International Labour Organization is also trying to resolve these crises by taking action to tackle the youth employment problems through a multipronged approach that geared towards employment growth and decent job creation.

The concept of employment strategies towards gaining initial employment, maintaining employment and moving to new employment by choice solely depends on the knowledge, skills and attitude possessed by the individual and also the labour market information. It is important to promote education and training to facilitate a match between the skills possessed by the youth and market demands. National youth policies are designed to address the issues of unemployment among young people by creating youth employment network. Young women require special consideration through programmes that enable them to earn their income in their local communities as well as to improve education, livelihood opportunities and living conditions. The rapid growth of information and communication technologies provides considerable opportunities for young people to access and exchange knowledge and ideas.

Developing and strengthening programmes targeted to the youth in order to enhance their economic, educational, social and cultural opportunities, to promote constructive social relation among them and to

provide linkages outside their communities to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty is required. It seems imperative to give special priority to design the policies to the problems of structural, long-term unemployment and underemployment of youth. Such policies aimed to enhance employment opportunities, increasing ways and means of helping youth to develop the skills they need and to enable them to find employment.

On the basis of highly vulnerable factors of employment among rural youth of hilly regions, strategies have been designed with the help of experts and previous researches. These strategies are based on the socio-economic, communication and psychological characteristics of the rural youth and their employment vulnerability and it is deduced that the people in the area need concerted strategies for getting employment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Almora and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand state. From the Almora district, Hawalbagh block and from Pauri Garhwal district Khirsu block were selected by using simple random sampling. Five villages from each block were selected purposively as they have large number of households. Whole youth population (male and female) between the age group of 15-24 years were selected who are permanently residing in the village at the time of data collection. Detailed pre-tested interview schedule was administered to 210 respondents for collection of data and statistical methods such as mean, frequency, percentage, standard deviation; correlation coefficient and t-test were used to treat the data for meaningful interpretation. After going through various researches, age, gender, caste, education, medium of education, family size, family type, marital status, occupation of head of the household, size of the land holding, total family income, mass media exposure, media ownership, extension contact, social participation, cosmopolitaness, change proneness, occupational aspiration, achievement motivation and risk preference were taken as independent variables of the research and employment vulnerability of rural youth was taken as the dependent variable for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample characteristics

Findings of study revealed that 51.43 per cent of the respondents belonged to young age group and majority were female (58.10 per cent). It was found that majority (78 per cent) of youth had educational qualification up to secondary level and majority was studying in Hindi medium. 38.57 per cent of the respondents belonged to small family size and majority from nuclear family (52.86 per cent). In terms of marital status of the respondents, 94.29 per cent youth were unmarried. Further, it was found that most of the youth (41.43 per cent) had agriculture and allied activities as main occupation of the head of the household and owned cultivable land. Data revealed that 54.76 per cent respondents belonged to APL

category. It was also found that majority of respondents had medium level of media ownership (69.52 per cent), mass media exposure (67.62 per cent), cosmopolitanness (65.24 per cent), change proneness (64.29 per cent) and achievement motivation. Further, it was found that majority of the youth had low level of extension agency contact (74.29 per cent), social participation (60 per cent), occupational aspiration (53.33 per cent) and risk preference (45.72 per cent). This indicates that very few youth in the study area were contacted outside environment and developmental issues. However, they are enthusiastic to accept change and new practices. (Table no. 1)

Table 1: Characteristics of the Rural Youth

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age		
	Very young (up to 16 years)	67	31.90
	Young (17-22 years)	108	51.43
	Mature (above 22 years)	35	16.67
2.	Gender		
	Male	88	41.90
	Female	122	58.10
3.	Caste		
	General caste	61	29.05
	Other backward caste	63	30.00
	Schedule caste and Schedule tribes	86	40.05
4.	Education		
	Illiterate	6	2.86
	Can read only	0	0
	Can write only	0	0
	Can read and write	1	0.48
	Primary education	31	14.76
	Secondary education	50	23.81
	Higher secondary education	46	21.90
	Diploma	20	9.52
	Graduate	48	22.86
		Post graduation	8
5.	Medium of education		
	Hindi	168	80.00
	English	42	20.00
6.	Family size		
	Small (up to 4)	81	38.57
	Medium (5-7)	80	38.10
	Large (above 7)	49	23.33
7.	Family type		
	Nuclear	111	52.86
	Joint	78	37.14
	Extended	21	10.00
8.	Marital status		
	Unmarried	198	94.29
	Married	12	05.71
9.	Occupation of head of the household		
	Labour	23	10.95
	Caste occupation	02	00.95
	Business	29	13.81
	Independent profession	04	01.90
	Cultivation/farming	87	41.43
	Service	65	30.95
10.	Size of land holding		
	No land	19	09.05
	Upto 5 nali	61	29.05
	Upto 10 nali	36	17.14
	Upto 20 nali	69	32.86
	Upto 50 nali	25	11.90
	Above 50 nali	0	0
11.	Total family income		
	Above Poverty Line	115	54.76
	Below Poverty Line	95	45.24
12.	Mass media exposure		
	Low (up to 5)	56	26.67
	Medium (6-12)	142	67.62
	High (above 12)	12	5.71
13.	Media ownership		
	Low (up to 1)	19	09.05
	Medium (2-3)	146	69.52
	High (above 3)	45	21.43
14.	Extension contact		
	Low (up to 1)	156	74.29
	Medium (2-3)	46	21.90
	High (above 3)	8	03.81

15.	Social participation		
	Low (up to 17)	126	60.00
	Medium (18- 22)	69	32.86
	High (above 22)	15	07.14
16.	Cosmopolitaness		
	Low (up to 1)	56	26.67
	Medium (2-3)	137	65.24
	High (above 3)	17	8.09
17.	Change proneness		
	Low (up to 1)	23	10.95
	Medium (2-3)	135	64.29
	High (above 3)	52	24.76
18.	Occupational aspiration		
	Low (up to 12)	112	53.33
	Medium (13-19)	82	39.05
	High (above 19)	16	7.62
19.	Achievement motivation		
	Low (up to 21)	52	24.76
	Medium (22-25)	153	72.86
	High (above 25)	05	2.38
20.	Risk preference		
	Low (up to 20)	96	45.72
	Medium (21-27)	60	28.57
	High (above 27)	54	25.71

Strategies for reducing employment vulnerability of rural youth

In the context of human capital, financial capital, social capital, physical capital and natural capital, it was found that physical and mental health, education level, parent's education, skill oriented education, availability of vocational training, knowledge about employment opportunities, awareness about programmes and policies, decision making ability, level of self confidence, risk taking capacity, access to credit facilities, financial support from self help group, incentives provided by government, policy-relevant information about employment, availability of small scale enterprise, technical capacity, awareness about market information, access to commercial bank, poverty, wage rates, linkages with village level institutions, level of social participation, linkages with non-governmental organization, peer group networks, gender disparities in education and employment, job security in self employment, mass media exposure, media ownership, availability to communication facilities, access to communication facilities, connectivity of area through road, availability of agricultural inputs, availability of hospitals, access to transport facilities, availability of electricity, availability of schools, access to current employment services, access to natural resources, availability of natural resources, drinking water facility, availability of irrigation facility, ownership of agricultural land, adopted farming practices, prevalent adaptation strategies of climate change, availability of biodiversity in the locale and status of environmental degradation were

responsible to generate employment vulnerability among rural youth.

Looking into the situation, inputs of experts were sought regarding different factors and how to alleviate employment vulnerability in light of the factors responsible for creating it. There are some strategies given below:

Vocational education, skills and training

Employment vulnerability can be reduced by strengthening the education system, the role and effectiveness of vocational education and training. Vocational education in India has traditionally been looked down upon and treated as inferior to formal education. This makes it a less attractive option for youth. The speed of a nation's development is directly depends on quantity and quality of vocational education possessed by its workforce. Educated rural youth has ability to create employment opportunities for himself and for the community. Education can help to strengthen rural youth by improving their skills, helping rural communities to understand change and participate in employment creation. The wide range and higher quality of vocational education leads to the faster growth and more prosperous society.

Training centers can be established to inspire the youth for the quality of education. There is a need to foster measures that link vocational education and training to anticipate skills that will be required in the labour market. The importance of knowledge and skill in creating a better future for rural youth places additional demands in responding to challenges of unemployment. Educational systems which manufacture graduates compound the problem rather than alleviating it. The problem of the educated unemployed is not so much the amount of

education they receive, but the type of knowledge and attitude imparted. Reorient the educational curriculum at all levels, especially higher education, to impart the knowledge and attitude needed to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship rather than salaried employment.

Roles and responsibilities of government

The generation of employment opportunities is as natural for a society as the spontaneous growth of plants in fertile soil. Government sector should focus on the rural youth and rural areas for employment generation, with the goal of developing rural economies that can compete in the more innovative and lucrative sectors. The main emphasis should be on tackling the weak aggregate demand, boost job creation and demand side barriers to the employment of low-skilled youth. Government can also provide adequate income support to unemployed youth until labour market conditions improve. It can also help to reshape labour market policy and institutions to facilitate access to employment and tackle social exclusion. Governments can also take effort to create a conducive environment for significant, sustainable, inclusive economic growth, decent work and development of social enterprises for rural youth. Wage policies formulated by the government ensure young people to receive fair and adequate incomes for productive work, promote freedom of association, safe and secure working conditions, appropriate hours of work and promote creation of jobs for young people on a sustainable basis.

Role of local leader and local institutions

The ability of the rural workforce to participate in the emerging economy is limited. Rural areas often lack institutions to carry out development. Most of the responsibility of job creation should be taken by local leaders and local institutions. There is a tendency of rural youth to migrate to urban areas and drains most capable leaders of the rural communities. While a better educated rural population is the best hope for long-term development and it may be necessary to invest in job-creation at local areas that permit rural people to remain in the rural areas. However, if such concept emerges as strategies, then it will help to promote employment opportunities.

Resources and physical facilities

It is imperative to make proactive interventions in employment generation and

resource utilization pattern. Self employment can be a strategy by involving rural youth in employment generation by using local resources. It will take a long-term perspective on rural development that may offer help in solving immediate problems for jobs and income. The physical barrier of employment generation limits the ability of rural areas to economic development so that improvements in infrastructure, transportation and communications facilities can link rural areas with the rest of the world.

Promote small scale enterprises

A comprehensive youth employment strategy should promote an entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial culture, small size enterprises, enabling policies, regulations and support services. Cooperatives and social enterprises are an important means of promoting job opportunities for young people and should be promoted through local, national and international strategies. Entrepreneurship can act as a base for sustainable self-employment, career options and sources of decent employment for young people. Promotion of small scale enterprises by policies maker can also provide technology, training, credit, marketing and other distribution channels. The creation of micro-enterprise, banks and credit unions specifically designed to cater to the needs of the self-employed and small firms can be especially effective. There are a growing number of institutions targeting youth that lack access to commercial lending institutions to the rural youth which provide unsubsidized loans and achieving very low levels of default.

Social protection and gender equality

The involvement of the public and private sectors in the design and implementation of policies and programmes can promote decent work for young people. Promotion of gender equality at all stages of the life and elimination of discrimination against youth are imperative for employment development. The creation of more and better jobs for youth and abolition of child labour are key to the promotion of quality jobs for young people. Government somehow fail to provide adequate social protections for the most vulnerable sectors of society, including rural youth that would help them adapt to sometimes rapidly changing market conditions that encouraged job loss.

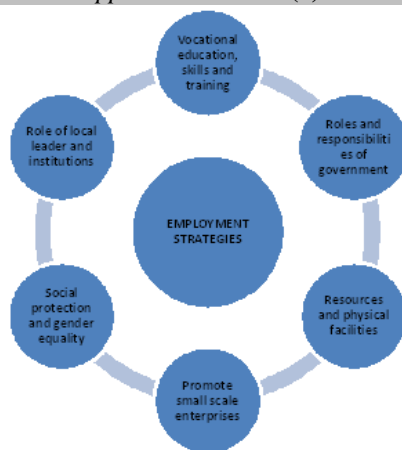


Figure 1: Employment strategies for rural youth

The future of rural youth will be determined by the educational choices they make. Youth must learn better skills, aspire to new occupations and get jobs that offer rising incomes and the chance for career development. Strengthening existing networks of young entrepreneurs and young trade unionists at all the levels (local and national) of job creation that enable close coordination between government institutions and other agencies. Employment services, guidance and career advice such as labour market information and career counselling should be made available to young people and more intensive assistance should be provided for youth who have unemployed. Targeted initiatives and incentive schemes to raise labour demand for young people, especially disadvantaged youth without decreasing the quantity and quality of work for others. Employment intensive approaches in infrastructure, public works programmes, promotion of high employment absorbing sectors and methods of production, work placement and other innovative schemes can increase employment prospects of young people.

CONCLUSION

Employment vulnerability among the youth, is one of the major challenge faced by developing countries. Existing youth policies often do not cater for poor rural youth. The capacities of youth to contribute to rural development and transformation remain largely untapped and their potential unrecognized. Hence, it is important to design the strategies to reduce the employment vulnerabilities among rural youth. Vocational education, skills and training, roles and responsibilities of government, role of local

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