

Youth Problems, Their Development and Empowerment in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Youth in a country is the most viable and potential human resource not only in population structure but also in social structure. Without proper and integrated bio-social development of the youth a nation cannot achieve her human goals intended. Based on literatures reviewed this paper describes youth's problems in their proper development and empowerment in Bangladesh. Although the Government of Bangladesh has formulated policy, plans and programs for youth welfare and implementing these programs through GOs and NGOs relevant literatures suggest that youths in this country, irrespective of all age-grades and regions, face a lot of socio-cultural problems in which they cannot develop and empower themselves properly. As a result, they cannot play their significant roles in country's socio-economic development and change. To overcome the youth's problems in relation to their development and empowerment, some suggestions are formulated.

Key Words: Youth, development, empowerment, self-employment and Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Youths are the backbone of any country because her proper development mostly depends upon the integrated development of them. Development in Bangladesh also depends upon proper utilization of her youths because they constitute about one-third (in the age group of 15-35 years) of total population (Department of Youth Development, DYD 2009, 30) and 37.7 percent of the total civilian labor force (Huq 2003, 9). But the youths of this country are suffering from various socioeconomic problems, such as unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy, lack of technical education, skill and training, and financial crisis for self-employment resulting from mass poverty and lack of informative plan implemented (Akhter and Sultana 1993 and Sarker 2008). Though ultimate success of economic and social development programs depends on active participation of educated, trained, persevered, organized, disciplined and skilled youth force in development process it is the matter of regret that the youths of Bangladesh could not acquire such qualities due to existing socioeconomic conditions. Hence, they are not able to participate in decision making process of development work as well as their self-employment.

Furthermore, the technology-based education system, institutions for technology based education and training were not developed adequately in the recent past. Therefore, the youths of Bangladesh did not have much opportunity to get technology-based professional education and training that can help them to get jobs, create self-employment, and develop their leadership qualities. The needed harmony between the economic development and manpower development programs had not been adequately developed through our educational systems. As a result, large numbers of educated young were unemployed in Bangladesh (Sarker 2008). Such type of unemployment situation is still existed in our country (24.5 percent on the basis of number of hours worked per week (GOB 2008, 67). They are not only detached from mainstream of development process but also some of them are involved in various anti-social activities (Hossain 2002).

In order to save the future generation from the ruin and to accelerate development process they must be included in mainstream of development activities. Keeping this view, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has adopted youth policy emphasizing on youth participation in all stages of development activities; and the government organizations (GOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) are operating different types of activities such as imparting training, providing microcredit, and other support services (monitoring, supervision etc.). The ultimate goal of these activities is to empower the youth economically as well as socially. The present paper is an attempt to evaluate the efficacy and to locate the limitations of these programs in bringing welfare of the youths as well as experiencing sustainable development of the country. It also suggests some measures as policy prescriptions to enhance effectiveness of these programs in the development of youths.

METHODOLOGY

A person, in general, is considered as youth who has attained puberty. It is concerned with timeframe and physical as well as psychological development. Youth refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood, but rather somewhere in-between (Webster's Dictionary 2004). It is transitional period between childhood and adulthood that starts from onset of puberty. Along with qualitative definition different organizations emphasize on quantitative definition. United Nations defines a person as youth who belongs to the age limit of 15-25 years. But the Government of Bangladesh defines the population as youth in the age group of 18-35 in its National Youth Policy-2003 (DYD 2009, 30). So, the concept of youth is rooted in bio-physiological and legal factors as well as in socio-political structure of a particular society in which he/she lives (Mia 1983). On the other hand, problem of youth refers to a situation which constrains the normal bio-physiological, emotional and socioeconomic development of youth (Sarker 2008, 25). But before explaining the problems of youth and their development process it is necessary to explain the concept of development for better understanding. Usually, development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, income, skill development and employment. An eminent economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz (1999, 1), views development as a transformation of society from traditional relation and thinking to more modern ways. So, the concept of youth development is concerned with progressive improvement of the psychological and socioeconomic conditions of youth where their active participation is necessary in decision making process. Therefore, at first they have to be empowered so that they could make their strategic life choices.

The term empowerment as theoretical concept refers to a process of "*achieving reasonable control over one's destiny, learning to cope constructively with debilitating forces in society, and acquiring the competence to initiate change at the individual and systems levels*" (Pinderhughes 1995, 136). It is such a process by which people acquire the ability to make choices about their lives (Kabeer 2001, 18 & 2005, 13). Like other segment of population, youths gain authority in means of strengths, competence, creativity, and freedom of action over their lives and society through empowerment process. It prepares youth to meet the challenges of transition to adulthood through a well coordinated progressive series of activities that help them to become socially, morally, economically, physically and cognitively competent. Whitmore (1988, 13) defines empowerment as "*an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live.*" The World Bank has explained the term elaborately. Perhaps the most easily associated ideas to empowerment are self-strength, self-control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capacity to fight for one's rights, independence and own decision making (The World Bank 2002).

In tune with above-mentioned discussion this paper defines youth empowerment as a process of

gaining authority over their lives in means of strengths, competence and creativity and acquiring the ability to make choices about their lives in the context of Bangladesh. The paper highlights on empowerment and youth development process of government organizations (GOs) such as Department of Youth Development (DYD), Department of Social Services (DSS), Ministry of Women Affairs; and non-government organizations (NGOs), such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Proshika, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Grameen Bank, and a number of other NGOs working both in the rural and urban areas. But especial emphasis has been given on the operating procedure of DYD since the core responsibility of youth development has been given on this agency since its inception in 1981. This paper evaluates the effectiveness of these programs in the development of youths in Bangladesh. Data were collected from secondary sources by consulting government document, relevant books, journals and e-journals, research reports, newspaper articles and web materials to assess the efficacy of these programs. Though this paper used both qualitative and quantitative data in analyzing the research issue but emphasis has been given qualitative data.

YOUTH PROBLEMS, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT IN BANGLADESH

YOUTH PROBLEMS

The youths of Bangladesh are stricken with multifarious problems that are rooted in social structure and economic condition of the society in which they live. Poverty is conspicuous, deep-rooted and widespread problem in Bangladesh that generates other problems (Akhter and Sultana 1993 and Sarker 2008) and affect youths' lives. About 40 percent people live under poverty line and per capita income is only 599 US\$ (GOB 2009). Youths are the main victim of poverty that constrains their proper education, training and development. Due to economic hardship many of them are deprived from having balance diet that lead youth to be malnourished. A large number of children suffer from malnutrition (88 percent in 2000, CIRDP 2009) and many of them are not physically, mentally and intellectually sound enough to take the responsibility on their shoulder at their young stage. It should be noted that education is one of the prime means of human development. But poverty is still a barrier to achieve proper education. Many youths leave their school before completing primary education because of financial crisis that increases dropout rate. In 2006, dropout rate was 47 percent in Bangladesh (CIRDP 2009, xvi). There is strong correlation between leaving school at early age and unhealthy behaviors and there is also a high risk of long-term social exclusion of these youths (Cava, Clert and Lytle 2004, 3). They do not get satisfied job due to lack of efficiency and skill. At the same time, due to shortage of job opportunities in formal sector many youths are remained unemployed. On the other hand, because of over population many youths are underemployed in agriculture sector also. Data show that though standard unemployment rate was 4.25 percent in labor market of Bangladesh in 2006, actual rate was high at 24.5 percent on the basis of number of hours worked per week (GOB 2008, 67).

However, frustration is another complicated problem of youth of Bangladesh. The origin of frustration is rooted in lack of proper socialization in childhood as well as unemployment at the stage of youth. Different studies show that frustration is one of the major causes of drug addiction of youths (Sarker 2008, 29) in the one hand, drug addiction leads the addicted youths to commit other offences such as pick-pocketing, stealing, smuggling, shoplifting, snatching, dacoity or terrorism, illicit drug and arms trafficking etc. (Hossain 2002, 51), on the other hand. Drug addiction is very much harmful to health. It also destroys the human resources. In addition, there are other forms of problems faced by youths, particularly young women in Bangladesh such as early marriage, dowry, women trafficking and so forth. As coping strategy with unemployment situation many youths migrate internally or externally. But very often external migration can take

dangerous forms; especially young women are vulnerable to human trafficking. They become innocent victim of sexual harassment, low wages, and uncongenial working environment. Many young male are also cheated by employment agencies (Akhter and Sultana 1993, 50; Cava, Clert and Lytle 2004, 4 and Sarker 2008, 29). The problems of youth stated above are barriers to overall development of Bangladesh. Therefore, problems of youths should be addressed with utmost sincerity through proper plans and programs in order to transform young people to skilled and productive workforce so that they could involve in income-earning activities, lead a satisfactory life and contribute in national development. Realizing the fact, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) adopted National Youth Policy, and government and non-government organizations are operating different types of programs for empowerment and development of youth.

YOUTH POLICY AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

The GOB adopted some social policies viz. population policy, health policy, education policy, child policy etc. to combat different type social problems such as poverty, population explosion, ill-health, malnutrition, unemployment and so on. But these policies could not address the problems of youth properly. Therefore, the government approved the youth policy in 1983 (revised in 1999) in order to address the youths' problems properly. The prime target of this policy is to promote the rights of youth, particularly in the areas of education, skill development, empowerment and participation in community development activities. The government is updating the youth policy to make it more relevant to the present and future needs of youth in Bangladesh. Finally, the government has adopted National Youth Policy in 2003. The main features of this policy are as follows:

- ◆ Youth participation in development activities: National Youth Policy emphasizes that the broadest participation of youths will be ensured through extending youth programs to all sub-districts of Bangladesh. This will be done through bottom-up planning and participatory approach at the grass-root level.
- ◆ Youth for development of youth: The Government's strategy is based on "Youth for Development of Youth". It aims to integrate the youth totally in national development.
- ◆ Enhancement of employment opportunities: The government has introduced self-employment program providing with training and microcredit facilities as per guidelines of National Youth Policy.

Although the government has formulated enormous plans and programs as per guidelines of National Youth Policy to promote youth rights and their development some programs were also implemented by GOs for youth welfare before adopting it.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

The Government of Bangladesh is morally entrusted to empower the youth for the overall development of the nation. Since the national development largely depends on proper utilization of youths as they are the vital force, and most of them live in rural areas, the first initiative was launched in 1952 by introducing Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID) program for generating new activities in the rural areas of which ultimate goal was rural development through self-help in which youth was one of the prime target groups. The government took another initiative for the welfare of youth through Youth Welfare Project in 1961-62 under the Department of Social Welfare. 20 Youth Welfare Centers were established in urban areas under this project. These centers used to implement some activities such as vocational training in short-hand and typewriting, such other crafts as watch repairing, radio-mechanism, carpentry, photography; recreational activities inclusive of music, painting, indoor and outdoor games; and literary activities

(Khan 1978°, 62-63) for capacity building, enhancing intellectuality and mental development. Generally, literate urban youths; mostly college students, college dropouts with an admixture of high school and university students took part in different types of activities of these centers as there were situated in urban areas.

After independence in 1971, the GOB launched Rural Social Service (RSS) Program for youth empowerment in rural Bangladesh in 1974. This program is being implemented by the Department of Social Services (DSS) (formerly Department of Social Welfare). The program includes functional education, vocational training in useful vocations in different sectors that can create jobs with local raw materials, training on home-management and childcare, nutrition, family planning etc. The program is implementing till now through Mothers Club and Youth Club. These clubs work as training and production centers helping investment and generation of income among the by-passed population groups such as the rural women, unemployed youth and landless labor. Acting as focal points of fulfilling the felt-need of the relevant village groups, these centers also work on the reduction of illiteracy, population explosion, and development of health, nutrition and education status (Shelley 1978, 86) so that they can develop their self-understanding and participate in decision making, planning and implementation process for their self-development and overall development of the nation. (Urban Social Service {USS} Program also provides such types of services for youths at urban areas.)

Another remarkable step towards organizing and mobilizing the youth was taken through National Youth Convention, 1977, organized by Department of Social Welfare (DSW). DSW developed a Pilot National Youth Services Project as per the decision of the convention. The activities of this project were non-formal education, socio-economic projects for improving the social functioning and economic capabilities of the youth and development of infrastructure facilities through youth civic action programs for integrated development (Khan 1978b, 82) .

Though other organizations are working for youths, the first official direct youth development activities were commenced through the establishment of Ministry of Youth Development, now Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Department of Youth Development (DYD) in 1979 and 1981 with the objective of creating a positive environment for youth by ensuring their pro-active involvement through improved education, skill development, microcredit and other means. Relevant non-government organizations (NGOs), like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Proshika, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Grameen Bank and a number of other NGOs both in the rural and urban areas are also working for youth empowerment in Bangladesh.

In fact, in the backdrop of youth unemployment, the government has no option but to empower them. Keeping this view, the Government of Bangladesh has already given enormous importance to youth empowerment; and financial allocation has been made much more than before in this sector. The government organizations (GOs) like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Manpower, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government and Cooperatives have undertaken various programs for the purpose of empowering young people and making them skilled human resource so that they could play pivotal role in national development. Important aspects of these programs are to impart skill development training on various vocational trades; to encourage the youth for self-employment through motivation, to provide microcredit and other necessary input support; to ensure mass participation of youth in decision making process; to ensure at least 50 percent participation of women in youth empowerment programs; to organize youth groups and motivate them to assist community

development through voluntary youth organization; to ensure youth participation in development process at every level of local government organization in all youth related activities in the purpose of good governance; to involve the youth in socio-economic activities like literacy programs, disaster management, primary healthcare, immunization drive and family welfare, tree plantation, resource conservation and awareness raising against anti-social activities, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS/STDs; to ensure youth participation in different healthy recreational activities like games and sports, debates, literacy competition and other cultural activities for improving their physical and mental faculties; to inculcate spirit of self-help, cooperation and cohesion, and qualities of good citizenship; and to encourage the youth to act as change agents of overall socio-economic development. In addition to government programs, NGOs like BRAC, Proshika, ASA, Grameen Bank are also operating some programs such as microcredit for self-employment project, occupational training for skill development, non-formal education for awareness building, and motivational work for ensuring participation in decision making process (especially for young women). These activities are adopted in tune with advocacy of proponents of capability approach (Sen 1984, 1985; Naussbam 2000 cited in Clark 2005) who suggest for improving capacity of community to enhance their performance in every sector of their lives for socio-economic development. Though the paper discusses the youth empowerment program of different GOs and NGOs it particularly highlights on the program of DYD as the government has given core responsibility on it to address youth problem since its inception in 1981.

Training Programs for Youth Empowerment

Skill development training is one of the important programs in Bangladesh in the field youth development. The government has adopted the training program as human resource development strategy to make the youth diligent and skilled manpower through its various agencies. It helps the participants to wide the horizon of their knowledge on a particular aspect; enrich their potentiality to contribute to the development. Participants also learn to mobilize resources around them. Training also brings some positive changes in participants' attitude and behavior (Chowdhury 1997, 19). These changes help the trainees to promote their self-understanding, and turn the human being into human resource. For this reason, training programs in GO and NGO sectors are being implemented as youth empowerment strategy in Bangladesh. The DYD is playing pioneer role in imparting training to youth in Bangladesh. The DYD is developing different types of training programs and nurturing today's youth leaders. The training program of DYD is in operation in 64 districts and 476 *upazila* offices (including 10 metropolitan unit *thanas*). Under this program youths are provided training on various trades like dress-making, block, batik and screen printing, pisciculture, aquaculture, wool knitting, modern office management, computer application, livestock, poultry, computer, radio & TV repairing, electric and house wiring, secretarial science, steno-typing, and so-forth (DYD 2009, 31). The government has started National Service Program from the year of 2009-2010 for training and employment to the unemployed youths whose educational qualifications are from SSC (Grade 10) to above. Presently, as pilot program, two poverty stricken districts namely Kurigram and Barguna have been selected for this program and an amount of Tk. 20 crore has been allocated for the financial year of 2009-2010. Firstly, the unemployed youths of the selected district will have three months' basic training on selected modules and will be attached with different nation building organizations. It is expected that after gathering knowledge, skill and experience they will get their desired job. The program will be expanded to allover the country phase by phase (ibid, 33).

However, 18,78,153 youths have received training on various trades from these training centers up to June 2009 (ibid, 35). Most of them are self-employed. Findings of a study (DYD 2009a) show that after receiving training they are now able to make decision regarding their project, family and

community planning. But before receiving training they were idle, vagabond, and burden of family as well as of the nation (GOB 2002, 8). It is the great success of DYD to create realization among the youths that they are not liability for the nation rather they are able to contribute for the development of the nation along with their their self-employment and wellbeing. The DYD also impart training on human relations like: management, personnel management, leadership development, motivation, communication, civic education, problem solving and decision making and national social services for its staff and other youths that expand capacity of the participants.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare is also imparting training on various trades through its major two programs: Rural Social Service (RSS) and Urban Social Service (USS). RSS is being implemented through Mothers Club, Youth Club and Community Center. To empower the youth and accelerate the development process of the country RSS introduced training program for the rural unemployed, illiterate or half-educated youth for skill development and self-employment. RSS is imparting training on various trades like crafts as jute works, mat-making, pottery, doll-making, garment-making, choir-mates, wood and cane furniture, various fancy item as well as items of daily use, electric wiring, rickshaw and cycle repair etc. (Hossain 2004).

The objectives of this training program are to create skilled manpower, to make people aware about society and their rights, to change the people's attitude positively, to improve latent knowledge, and to create consciousness about their surroundings. This kind of training helps the trainees to solve problems by themselves, to become conscientious and free from superstition, so that their self-confidence, self-respect and the inner potentials are developed as resource. In women empowerment, RSS tries to make women conscious about the Muslim family law, dowry law, marriage and divorce law, law of inheritance, law of prevention of violence against women, law relating to equality and rights of men and women, health, nutrition and reproductive rights, rights relating to sanitation and use of safe drinking water in its training session (Islam, 2003, 207). RSS has imparted training to 1,076,250 persons since its inception in 1974, and disbursed Tk. 508.14 million as microcredit for self-employment of target people (Rahman 1999, 12). Like DYD and DSS, Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) is also playing vital role to impart training for empowering the youth male and female in socially and economically through skill development, leadership development, development of latent creativity and awareness about society.

NGOs such as BRAC and Proshika provide training for developing analytical skill and positive attitudes towards social change (BRAC 2007 and Proshika 2004). Both of the organizations provide training on professional management and consultancy service as well as on different issues for their beneficiaries such as rural development, women's health and development, income generation for the vulnerable group, development and other support activities (Ahmed 1993, 85). All training programs are aimed to empower youth male and female through human development and creating social awareness.

Microcredit Program

Only by imparting training, it is not possible to reduce unemployment because employment opportunity in formal sector does not increase as fast as the number of unemployed youth increase at the same time. So, to reduce the number of unemployment, it is very much necessary to create self-employment opportunities. However, due to hard-core poverty, the youths of Bangladesh are not able to adopt self-employment project. For this reason, after receiving training on different trades many youths could not manage job. On the other hand, in the absence of collateral resources, the poor youths have limited access to loan of formal sector. The poor thus normally depend on informal sectors where the cost of finance is traditionally high. In this situation, considering the

reality in order to proper utilization of human resource and expedite the youth empowerment process GOs such as DYD, DSS, BRDB and NGOs such as BRAC, Proshika, Grameen Bank and other voluntary associations have focused on collateral free credit program. The main aim of these organizations is to direct their programs towards integrating the youth into empowerment process through self-employment and income generating activities.

The credit program of DYD encourages the trained youths to conduct self-employment project in many ways. The program has a provision to reward and grant the youths and youth organizations (in cash and material) for exceptional performance in self-employment, income generation, skill development training, mobilization of resources etc. Data show that the beneficiaries are operating different types of self-employed project. Most of them (58 percent) have made profit from these projects and rest of them could not make profit because of natural calamities, paying off previous loan from present credit, using the money in unproductive sector and non-cooperation of family members (DYD 2009a) that comply with the findings of Hossain (2004). One of the success beneficiaries of DYD expressed his opinion regarding contribution of microcredit in his life in the following way:

“Microcredit of DYD has changed my means of living. I was suffering from financial crisis. After receiving training on aquaculture I received loan of Tk (1). 45,000/- form DYD. I invested that money in fish rearing. After one year I made profit of Tk. 52,000/- in two phases. At present, the amount of my investment is 1,10,000/-. My annual profit is more or less Tk. 1,00,000. My children go to school; I could bear their expenses. I could also provide them with good food and better medical services that was out of my imagination before starting my fish project. I am happy now”. (Akkas)

However, youth empowerment program of RSS has been launched in 1974. It assists the rural poor in establishing Village Based Institutions (VBIs). The establishment of VBI is a new initiative towards empowering the target people, specially the youth male and female, through a formal organization for promoting self-managed program. The program promotes income-generating activities through VBIs. To speed up the income generating activities RSS provides vocational training on various trades for skill development and credit for implementing income earning project. Hossain (2004) shows in a study, out of total beneficiaries of a project area 96.67 percent have been benefited socially and economically from this program.

Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) is one of the largest government organizations that are working for developing socio-economic condition and standard of living of rural people. To empower the rural youths, reduce poverty of rural poor and bring a total development, it organizes the youths through formal and informal organizations, encourages them to accumulate their own capital through small deposits. It imparts training on human development, education, health, sanitation, family planning, environment pollution, and income generating activities. It provides microcredit for small projects. After receiving training and loan from BRDB, the beneficiaries have been engaged in different types of income generating activities on the basis of their ability and interest. As a result their income has been increased and got recognition in their societies. It is found that about 45 percent of assetless have been engaged in self-income generating activities and earn Tk. 15,000 to Tk. 20,000 in addition to their annual income (BRDB 2002, 9). Their food consumption and educational status have also been improved (Ibid, 30).

BRAC, Proshika, ASA, and other leading NGOs as well as Grameen Bank also operate microcredit program through target group approach. The target population consists of the poorest of the poor of which most of them are young generation. The credit program has generated new employment in rural Bangladesh among the poor men and women that increased the labor force participation rate

in the area of its operation and improved their socioeconomic condition (Kamal and Mia 2003 and Bhuiyan 2007). The women beneficiaries are found to be devoted about 28 hours per week for income-earning activities (Hossain 1984, 2) where they had no involvement in income-earning activities before joining microcredit program. The credit program, therefore, has been particularly successful in enhancing the skills, economic capabilities, and productive employment of rural poor women. As loans are given to women after intensive training on capacity building, the procedures itself gives the borrowers a feelings of 'I can' that has important psychological significance. Being able to develop an identity outside the family circle and to learn to interact with outsiders and with figures in authority is highly valued by the women as boost to confidence and self-esteem (Hossain 1998, 20). In addition, there have been major social gains in terms of rising consciousness, changes in attitude on the role of women and upliftment of status of poor working women within the household and in the community (Ghai 1994, 56) of whom most of them are in young stage that also create social capital of group members.

Family-based Employment Program

DYD operates Family-based Employment Program (FBEP) for upliftment of socioeconomic conditions of youth. In this program, the landless and asset-less rural poor families are tied in family groups, trained in human resource development and skill development provided with microcredit in three successive years and supported by social development activities like primary health care and nutrition, sanitation, family planning, women development, functional literacy, tree plantation etc. in order to empower the youth. The characteristics of this program are to identify the family as a unit of development activities. It provides microcredit to the qualified trained beneficiaries, accompanied by support services (Haq 2004, 10 and DYD 2009, 34). The total number of beneficiaries of this program is 4,79,696 persons until June 2009 (DYD 2009, 34).

Public Private Partnership Program

At present, the government of Bangladesh has given enormous emphasis on public private partnership approach like other countries. It is believed in contemporary development discourses that due to scarcity of resources it is very difficult for a government alone to run all the development programs. Keeping this view, DYD is operating some training and capacity building programs on different trades through joint collaboration of public private partnership (PPP) with different government and non-government organizations through signing of memorandum of understanding to implement the national policy of self-employment. The partner organizations are Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), Western Marine Service Ltd, Day-Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangho (TMSS), Save the Children-USA etc. (ibid, 32). Training and capacity building activities of PPP program is playing pivotal role in skill development and employment sector.

Youth Empowerment Programs in Association with International Agencies

The government also believes in developing global partnership in order to achieve MDGs and materialize the benefit of globalization. The government, especially DYD works with international agencies in developing training programs and building networks for international youth exchange so that they could share their experience of youth empowerment. They exchange related information through periodicals, news-letters, and quarterly journals. It should be noted that international agencies viz. UNDP, UNFPA, ESCAP, ILO, UNESCO, JICA and KOICA are extending their cooperation in implementing the program of the DYD. It observes National (8 December) and International Youth Day (12 August) and arrange cultural function for developing their mental faculties. The DYD also organizes youth exchange program with the assistance of

Commonwealth Youth Programs. The DYD is operating a project entitled 'Publication & Dissemination of Information of Youth Activities Project' with the aim of disseminating information. The youths gather cross cultural knowledge and experiences regarding youth empowerment through this program. (DYD 2009, 45-46).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youths are the most potential segment of population of each and every country. Development of a country mostly depends upon proper utilization of youth force and their active participation in development process. But sometimes they could not play desired role in development process due to some socioeconomic constraints such as financial crisis, lack of proper education, skill, motivation, and so-forth. Bangladesh is no different to it. Therefore, the GOB has formulated policy, plans and programs in order to combat this situation as well as for the development of youth community. The programs are being implemented by GOs and NGOs. They are imparting training on different trades for skill development and motivating them to use their merit and labor in constructive way and providing them with financial support for operating income generating activities. Findings of different studies (Ghai 1994, Kamal and Mia 2003, Hossain 2004, Bhuiya 2007 and DYD 2009a) show that that above-mentioned programs are playing vital role in youth empowerment. After receiving training many of the youths have become empowered to make decision regarding their strategic life choices by themselves. Now they could use their loans in proper manner. They make profit from their self-employed project, they could continue their children's education, and enjoy medical services in their illness. But it is the matter of regret that there are some constraints (utilization of credit, marketing their product etc.) still existed in the development process and these programs could not make fruitful result for the welfare of youth community. Therefore, the problems of these programs must be addressed with utmost sincerity and the authority concerned should come forward with proper plan to make the youth development program a success. In addition, there are some social problems that also constrain the development of youth. Hence, in order to overcome the limitations, modification of the programs and to accelerate the youth empowerment process this paper recommends some actions as policy implication:

- It is found that the duration of training period is very short. Training period of most of the trades ranges from seven days to one month, and three months for special trade that is very much insufficient to learn anything properly and adequately. So, to develop the skill of trainee in real sense it is important to increase the duration of training period.
- From institutional point of view, lack of coordinated and consistent efforts by the different agencies causes hindrance to bringing a significant impact on the overall development of the youth. Monitoring and supervision efforts are not sufficient. It creates a gap between beneficiaries and officials. In absence of proper supervision many client spend their money in anti-social activities and they could not repay the installment in scheduled time (Hossain 2004 121-122). So intensive supervision has to be arranged.
- The amount of loan is small in size for large project. The amount of loan is not sufficient to run self-employed project like cattle farm (where the lowest ceiling is Tk. 5,000/- and highest ceiling is Tk. 50,000/-). So, sometimes they compel to depend on monetary help of friends or family members. It is found that even the self-employed youths who have been awarded for self-employment, have received money from their family (Samad and Rahman, 2001 cited in Haq 2004). Therefore, the amount of loan must be increased. In addition, grace period for loan repayment is also insufficient. Before earning money from self-employed project the beneficiaries compel to think about repayment of loan that creates psychological pressure on them. So, the grace period must be increased.
- The critiques point out that some of training programs are not 'need-based' and 'updated' to

the mark. The training programs, in which the trainees receive training, do not reflect the real demand of the competitive job market. As a result, the said training programs are not succeeding to ensure employment extensively for the youths. For this reason, many youths remain unemployed after receiving training. So, it is necessary to search new trades for training program so that it can create attraction in job market. In the present context, information technology should be selected for training instead of traditional trades.

- Lack of coordination between GO-NGO, GO-GO and NGO-NGO is one of the limitations of training and credit program. In the absence of coordination one person is taking the credit from more than one agency that creates misuse of money, time, and opportunity. So, coordination among the agencies should be ensured.
- It is stated earlier that drug addiction is one of the serious social problems in Bangladesh. It is a great threat to social stability. Therefore, enforcement of law should be ensured along with creating social awareness in controlling drug addiction.
- Community center should be established at village level for ensuring constructive recreational facilities and entertainment for youth and combating cultural aggression that will also keep young people from undesirable activities.

NOTE

- (1) Taka is local currency of Bangladesh. 1 USD = 69 Tk.

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