

## NHDR 2015 - Report on Consultation with Youth Group

### A. BASIC DATA

<b>Location</b>	PC Hotel, Peshawar
<b>Date and Time</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> December, 2014, 3pm
<b>Topic</b>	Entrepreneurship, employment, appropriateness / quality of education, choice in education, science heroes
<b>Participant Profiles</b>	7 participants, young tech entrepreneurs working from Peshawar. All participants (except one) had gained their education in Peshawar. Included representatives from Peshawar 2.0
<b>UNDP Team</b>	Adil Najam (Author of Report), Gemma Stevenson (Lead Coordinator), Muntazir Ali (Research Analyst)

### B. OVERVIEW

Jawan Pakistan ran a focus group with a select group of youth entrepreneurs working in Peshawar. The group consisted of a) older youth who both teach entrepreneurship and other subjects, as well as mentoring young entrepreneurs, and b) younger youth who have been entrepreneurs in the tech field.

### C. KEY ISSUES & THEMES

#### Education

- Great diversity of education you receive in Pakistan – comparison of students coming from rural Urdu- medium schools and private high quality English-medium schools – vast difference.
- Students coming from Urdu-medium schools often:
  - Have difficulty expressing their ideas confidently – this is a large barrier to success.
  - Are only interested in getting a job – sum of money is more important than type of job or pursuing ‘big ideas’

#### Local heroes

- Important to give success stories from Pakistan not Silicon valley – people don’t identify with that e.g. What’s App and other local start-ups such as Fawad Ahmad, Islamabad – set up his own company, Spark Studios which makes games
- One participant founded a social site for those without access to internet – used by 1.4 million so they can have access to internet
- In the West there are lots of real life science heroes and entertainment shows with science heroes – view that Pakistan need more of that
- Other examples included Makhor founder Waqas Ahmed, Dr Ali Khayam from NUST (set up a start up), and Nasrullah Pring.

### **Choice in education**

- At different levels children should be given a choice –if you pick medicine in 10<sup>th</sup> grade – you’re doomed – this should not happen
- Students are discouraged because they look at people in the political sphere and see frequently low levels of education which makes them wonder ‘is education really the tool that can help us be successful in life?’

### **Changing parents’ perceptions**

- Counselling meetings with parents would be useful to show them the opportunities in other fields / new fields – allow the professors to guide parents and show them the opportunities emerging in the job market in the next 15-20 years
- Example – one participant’s father knew he was good at IT software but his father wanted him to do electrical engineering as he perceived a higher value / status to that field.

### **Skills gaps**

- Confidence is critical to success but is often not a focus of schools / universities in Pakistan
- Motivation is important – a teacher that motivates or pushes students into action (e.g. one participant went to a school that strongly encouraged all students to join a club e.g. bio club, physics club etc. This sort of environment helps).
- Knowledge, hard skills are known but creativity, critical thought, problem solving are the major deficits e.g. students very rarely come up with ideas
- Many young students / entrepreneurs do not understand the market (they may understand software, games, etc. well) but not consumers
- Entrepreneurs can *train* people but cannot *teach* them the basics – the art of learning is often missing.
- Need to have environments where people can fail as trying and failing is how you ultimately succeed

### **Political engagement**

- Great variation here – a mix of very engaged in politics (a 10 out of 10) and those who have no interest (0 out of 10) as they don’t believe anything would change

### **Tech industry**

- Young people are drawn to IT as for start-ups you need very little capital to set something up
- Lots of money being invested in the software industry, compared with example of cousins studying mechanical engineering from the best schools but struggling to find jobs.
- “It’s the best time to be a software engineer right now”

### **Conversation topics with friends**

- Politics
- Philosophy and religion
- Talent, skills, education
- Sports (not that big for this group – but probably more so for others)
- Entertainment - music, TV, films

- Girls

### **Social Media**

- Used for signing petitions – nothing usually happens
- An illusion of impact “It gives the illusion that I am actually doing something about a cause but I am not really doing anything”
- Idea that if people did not tweet about it the pressure would build and people would be out on the streets – so it actually has a negative effect by fooling people they are having an impact.

### **Aspirations for Pakistan**

- To be like Singapore (but so different in terms of land and population)
- “We don’t need to compete or compare with others”
- “I would like to see Pakistan better than every other country in 100 years”
- Pakistan - “It’s a bit like owning an old car - we love it but it always breaks down”

### **D. INTERESTING QUOTES AND EXAMPLES**

- ❖ “Most of our education is not geared towards producing enterprising students...that’s my biggest fear”
- ❖ “Instilling of confidence is critical – it was the only thing that ensured that I was able to compete with people from LUMS... and from the UK”
- ❖ “Institutes are not as practically orientated as the field – there is a huge gap”
- ❖ “The curriculum that we have does not invoke critical thinking in students”
- ❖ “I think the institutes should teach the art of learning so that we are always ready to challenge”
- ❖ “I have noticed something in the Western media – they are creating more science heroes and we are really missing that”
- ❖ “Teachers, parents should not impose their choices or their perceptions of job opportunities fifteen years down the line”
- ❖ “I want to hit it big...to say I took a stand for something and I made it”
- ❖ “People would not encouraged failures in our society at this point... but this discourages experimentation”
- ❖ When I go out with friend we make this rule that we won’t talk about politics but we often end up breaking that rule”
- ❖ “I think it’s the perfect time [to be young in Pakistan]”
- ❖ “I think it’s a good time to be young but not in Pakistan”
- ❖ “I think it’s a good time to be young but not to be young in Peshawar”
- ❖ “It (social media) can make a difference... that voice can be heard”
- ❖ “Social media can give youth a voice or a perception of a voice”
- ❖ “We see the same blasts and events again and we again tweet about it and forget about it.”