

NHDR 2015 – Report on Consultation with Youth Group

A. Basic Data

Location	Serena Hotel, Swat
Date & Time	22 Dec. 2014, 16:00 pm - 17:30 pm
Topic	National Human Development Report 2015
Participant Profiles	Youth volunteers from Swat, 21 males, 1 female, aged 17-29
UNDP Team	Dr. Adil Najam (Lead Author), Gemma Stevenson (Lead Coordinator), Muntazir Ali (Research Analyst)

B. Overview

This consultation with youth volunteers was facilitated by Swat Youth Front, itself a youth-run NGO working in the areas of poverty reduction, women empowerment and disaster management. Initially, there were some concerns that the large size of the group would not allow everyone to contribute to the discussion. However, with some encouragement, everyone took part in what turned out to be a very lively session. The only female participant in the group added a very articulate and considered voice to the discussion.

C. Key issues & themes

- The participants thought that the education they received was not oriented to development of skills needed for a growing market. They were of the view that more time needed to be invested in practical application of ideas along with theoretical understanding.
- They were of the view that teachers should be properly trained, and syllabi for various courses should be regularly updated to accommodate new research and to cater to changing needs of the market.
- All of them thought that there should be more academic courses to choose from, and that the choice of field of study should be left to students.
- Several of the participants were doing Development Studies from the University of Swat. They cited a number of reasons for choosing the field: one can study a number of different courses; money in the development sector is better than other sectors; prospects for frequent travel; can work in private as well as government institutions
- Almost all of them said that they had cheated at some point in their academic career. Some of them said that it was the outdated examination system which encouraged cheating; others blamed low quality of teaching, lengthy courses, and medium of instruction.
- Almost all the participants were more educated than their parents. They thought that their quality of life was better than their parents.
- Almost all of them agreed that there were not many job opportunities in their area. At the same time, most of them said they would prefer to stay in Swat if provided the same job in Islamabad/Karachi/Dubai.

- Most of them said that the ideal job was to own one's own business. There were very few who said they preferred government jobs.
- Some of them thought that there are opportunities for entrepreneurship in the agriculture/horticulture sector in Swat. They thought that there were opportunities in the embroidery and jewelry sectors for female entrepreneurs. Two of the participants ran an event management company. They said they were doing really good.
- Most of them said that it was the lack of capital that was the main hurdle in any entrepreneurial activity; others thought it was the absence of peace.
- Most of them said that they voted in the last elections and were satisfied with their decision to vote for a particular political party. They thought that teachers' attendance in primary schools has improved, police has become more efficient, and corruption has been reined in to some extent. The female participant said that she would not vote in the next elections because she did not see any improvement in the system. She, however, aspired to run for elected office one day.
- Almost all of them thought they were politically active, had been to political rallies and followed what happens in the political sphere. Terrorism, politics, and Islam were some of the main topics they said featured in their discussions.
- Most of them thought that being engaged in voluntary activities was a need of the times.
- Most of them agreed that it was a good time to be youth in Pakistan. They said that there are challenges but it was exciting too.
- Almost all of them said that they used internet on their cellphones. The three main reasons for using internet were networking, entertainment and information.
- Almost all the participants were optimistic about things getting better in Pakistan and Swat.

D. Interesting quotes

- "We can talk about peace and development on forum like these, but it is useless unless we get across our message to those who cannot read and write. Youth have to take responsibility for changing their lives for better." *Male*
- "If we want to clean the mess, we would have to get our hands dirtied." *Male*
- "People know us in Swat, it is part of our identity. We may earn more money in Dubai but we won't have respect. We will be used and forced to do the work that no one likes to do." *Male*
- "Our society can only move forward if we have the right man on the right job." *Female*