

## ABSTRACT

In today's world the youth is facing the most of hardships and lack of belongingness within the society. The young population across the globe has reached a remarkable 1.8 billion out of 7.3 billion, and most of them live in developing countries like Bangladesh. Some 47.6 million or 30 percent of the total 158.5 million people in Bangladesh are young (10-24 years), and it will be between 10 and 19 percent by 2050, according to it (UNFPA: 2014). Youth in Bangladesh constitute a big chunk of the population, yet it remains the most subjugated and marginalized. 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. Youths are the main victim of poverty that constrains their proper education, training, and development. 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 overpopulation many youths are underemployed in agriculture sector also. However, frustration is another complicated problem of youth of Bangladesh. 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. 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.

According to the National Association of Social Workers' *Code of Ethics*, social workers ensure human dignity of most vulnerable segment of the society through promoting meaningful involvement of target audience. Youth civic engagement is one of the most appropriate tools for empowering youth as a start up triggering point. Youth Civic Engagement is one of the most enabling tool for identifying the deep-rooted causes of the problems, participatory plan of action and overcome procedures. Governments of Bangladesh have already initiated New Youth policy and many youth-led programs have been going on through government & NGOs. Through this paper, try to understand the existing youth situation and some selected youth development programs of Bangladesh through professional social work lens and based on the analysis recommendation for moving towards on sustainable way.

**Key Words:** *Youth in Bangladesh, Civic Engagement, Professional Social Work*

## 1. Introduction

- In today's world the youth is facing the most of hardships and lack of belongingness within the society.
- The young population across the globe has reached a remarkable 1.8 billion out of 7.3 billion, and most of them live in developing countries like Bangladesh. Some 47.6 million or 30 percent of the total 158.5 million people in Bangladesh are young, and it will be between 10 and 19 percent by 2050, according to it (UNFPA: 2014).
- Youth in Bangladesh constitute a big chunk of the population, yet it remains the most subjugated and marginalized.
- 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.
- Youths are the main victim of poverty that constrains their proper education, training, and development.
- 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.
- 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. The problems of youth stated above are barriers to overall development of Bangladesh.

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## 2. The Current situation of Youth in Bangladesh

- Bangladeshi youth have a significant role to play in setting the tone for the future of the country. About one third of the total population of Bangladesh is youth and young people.
- Thus, the overall situation of youth in Bangladesh is actually quite an alarming one for economic misery is leading to social and emotional catastrophe as well and an unfortunate degree of stress.
- Youth labour has exceeded 57% of the total labour force.
- For lack of proper work facilities, a major part of the youth force is out of the mainstream of national development process.
- Female are in far more disadvantage position and status compare to male counterpart in the Bangladesh.
- The deprivation and vulnerability of the women both in private and public sphere is remarkably high for women than men.
- Therefore, the risks of victimizing from injustice are greater for youth women compare to men. The field experience (ESDO: 2018) reveals that patriarchal values, social stigma and gender based norms and values are deeply associated with the less access to service–rights, for the female.
- The scope of the participation of the young girls is limited as different services and rights compare to male.

### A Case Study on the Youth Situation of Bangladesh

- Kachubari village under Auliapur Union of Thakurgaon Sadar upazilla of Thakurgaon district. Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO) with the support of Palli Karmaya Sahayak Foundation (PKSF- A government owned apex organization) has been implementing a special youth program titled Youth in Development (Unnayan-e-Jubo Somaj) from 2016.
- Through this initiative, try to create enabling environment for the youth through different initiatives. It's a completely youth led and participatory initiative and almost sixty percent activities continuing through local level own initiatives.
- According to their understanding, the major challenges/ problems of the youths are:
  - Drug addiction, Dowry, & early marriage still now one of the major problems for youth.
  - Youth leadership not yet commonly accepted by local civil elites and local representatives.
  - Poverty among youth and to their marginalization as ethnicity, disability, and women.
  - Continuing discrimination against young women and men and insufficient access for them to equal opportunities in employment and education;
  - Digital pornography through smart phone is one of the alarming challenges for the youth.
  - High levels of youth unemployment, including long-term unemployment;
  - Inadequate opportunities for vocational education and training.
  - Lack of opportunity for young people to participate in the life of society and contribute to its development and well-being;
  - Many young people are forced to abandon school at an early stage of their learning process, and therefore become more vulnerable when they want to seek employment in an increasingly demanding labour market, and given the limited number of available jobs.
  - Youth with low educational level has less possibilities of getting a “decent job”.
- At home young people also frequently experience pressures in respect of financial issues and their future careers.
- Education is expensive for the poor and these disadvantages young people in poor communities.
- In some cases, cultural tradition does not allow youth to question authority and this restricts the young people's own view of what their capabilities are.
- A number of institutional barriers like educational system, easy access to information, non-responsive duty bearers and difficulties of access to services also constraints for youth development.
- Bias attitude of local government, political leaders and law enforcement agencies sometimes contributed more frustration for the youths.

### **Some Experience of Youth of Kachubari Village**

- *Some local political leaders try to involve youths for anti-social activities. They are powerful, so that youth group are not yet able to protest them. (Nishikanto Roy, Youth Club Member)*
- *We jointly stop early marriage with the support of social leaders (Runa Akhter, Youth Club Member)*
- *As social responsibility, we are more responsive for the society. Six month ago, a serious road accident happened and we rescued the victims, transfer to hospital and through timely treatment, save the life of more than six people. We are really happy for this (Shakil, Youth Club Member)*
- *Through our own efforts, we have planted herbal medicinal trees surrounding our village. (Prosenzit, Youth Club Member)*
- *Through the involvement of these initiatives, our life skills have remarkably increased and as a result our three friends have already got decent job. ( Swapon Roy, Youth Club Member)*
- *We have stopped drug addiction of five youth through our joint efforts. (Rahim, Youth Club Member)*
- *We have more organized compare to earlier. Any social problem occurs within our area, community people searching us.( Zakir, Youth Club Member)*

### **The Existing Government Initiatives for the Youth**

- The Department of Youth Development was established in 1978 by the government of Bangladesh under the Ministry of Youth Development (which was later renamed to Ministry of Youth and Sports).
- National Youth Policy 2017 of Government of Bangladesh is framed with the spirit of nurturing in youth an exalted kind of mind, heart, and soul and boosting them with the sense of responsibility to the country, society and the environment and developing them eventually into a modern and capable generation on a par with the 21Century.
- Government has expanded the programs of Youth Development in 64 Districts and 470 Sub-Districts in Bangladesh.

### **Government Led Other Youth Development Program**

- Under the Ministry of Finance, the ‘Skills for Employment Investment Program’ (SEIP) has been implemented from 2015. The project has been supporting training providers to meet industry skill requirements; finance skills training for the youth. For ensuring youth employment, mostly ensure marketable long term skill training like, Readymade garments, information technology, construction, light engineering, tenary product, shipbuilding, agro food processing, tourism and hospitality and transportation. Within the last three years (up to September 2018), 249938 youth enrolled under the said training courses and out of them 214319 youth certified by concern authority as skill worker and 153170 youth have already received decent job.
- Under the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs a series of youth women development program also on-going like Advancement & Promoting Women Rights, Vocational Training for Women Workers in RMG Industry in Bangladesh, Generation Break through a Multi Programme Approach to Building Healthy Relationship for Primary Prevention of Gender Based Violence and Meeting SRHR needs of adolescent in Bangladesh.
- Under the Ministry of Labour & Employment, some of the specific youth development program is going on like: Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh, Changing Gender Norms of Garments Employees, Northern Areas Reduction of Poverty Initiatives (NARI), “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment at Work Place.

### **NGO operated Programs**

- Within the last one decade, NGOs have given special attention on youth development.
- Especially youth empowerment, vocational & skills development, Civic Engagement, inclusive development, culture & sports activities, livelihood, life skills, sexual reproductive health and education program etc.
- NGOs have made some remarkable achievements in human development, empowerment, education, and employment for youths.
- But, still now, one of the highest rates of early marriage, gender discrimination prevailed in Bangladesh. Responsive Duty bearers and Local Government Institutions still now a big question.

- Many of the disadvantaged and marginal group's especially young women and men, ethnic minorities, people with disability, landless and destitute people, need constant support for breaking the shackles of poverty and rising above the poverty line.
- There are many GO and NGO activities to youth issues but unfortunately, there's no coordination and communication in-between them.
- Even though, non-government organizations are constantly working towards youth development; there has been little coherence and coordination in their work thus far.

### • 3. Conceptual Framework

#### 3.1 Youth

- Definitions of youth have changed continuously in response to fluctuating political, economic, and socio-cultural circumstances.
- *Merriam-Webster defined Youth is 'The period between childhood and maturity'*
- The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>)
- For this study, considering the National Youth Policy 2017 of Government of Bangladesh. NYP 2017 defines youth as anyone between 18 and 35.

#### 3.2 Youth Empowerment

- Youth empowerment is the encouragement of youth involvement and youth participation in different areas of society.
- Involvement is a first step towards participation. Nevertheless, being involved does not mean youths have a voice (Cornwall 2008, 278).
- When there is space for young people to speak freely and obtain influence that is when genuine participation starts.
- Hence, involvement and participation stimulate youth development and responsibility towards their community.
- By providing a youth empowerment platform, youths will first go through a personal development, before they develop responsibility towards others and finally they will obtain leadership skills.
- Participation is one of the leading principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right of young people to participate in institutions and decision-making processes that affect their lives are stated in diverse UN agreements (United Nations Youth 2012, 2).
- In 1985 the UN General Assembly introduced the International Youth Year, promoting participation, development and peace. It was meant to point out the important role of the youth all over the world and their potential to contribute to development.
- Ten years later the United Nations started the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). The 58/133 resolution of the Assembly states again the importance of full participation of youths and youth organisations at all levels (United Nations 2010, 42).
- For this study, Considering the Youth Empowerment on perspective of Hall 'empowerment is an essential starting point and a continuing process for realizing the ideals of human liberation and freedom for all.

#### 3.3 Youth Social Work

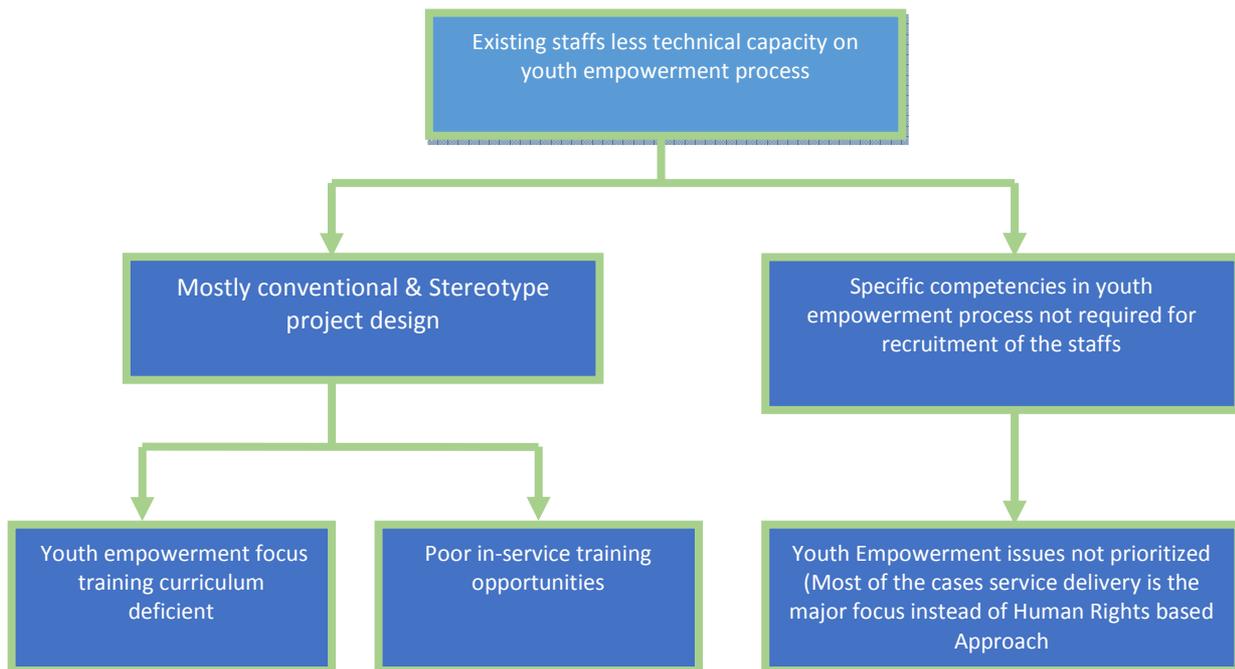
- According to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work, the purpose of youth work is to: "Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social, and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential." (NOS 2008)

- Youth work is a distinctly educational process that happens in a non-formal environment. It seeks to go beyond where young people start, to widen horizons, promote participation and invite social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them.
- To develop the youth or to motivate the youth on community development and nation building social worker should use all methods of social work (Social Case Work, Social Group work, Community organization method, social welfare method, social Action method, and social work research).
- The social worker should conduct research and survey to find-out the needs of youth and the necessities of youth for development and then they should formulate programs which are really relevant with youth.
- Social worker should build the self esteem of youth and should provide training on leadership to develop and enhance their leadership.
- Social worker themselves might be the role model for youth to make them think about the nation/community development.
- No any sustainable development is possible if youth are not interested or if youth do not take leadership.
- Youth Development Strategies Inc. (2000) refers “Youth Development is a process of human growth through adolescent move from being taken care of themselves and others, an approach where policy, funding, and programming are directed at providing supporters to young people as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs; and a set of practices that adults use to provide youth with the types of relationship and experiences needed to fuel healthy development.”

#### **4. The gap Analysis**

- There is a growing awareness of gaps between social workers and people in need of social work support. Sometimes the role of a social worker can be more characterized by control, than by an attempt to empower (Dumbrill,2010; Marttila, Whitehead, Canvin, & Burström,2010; Ylvisaker,2013).
- This is in contrast with a model where social workers work in partnerships with different groups in society, and develop a mutual learning process (Beresford,2016) (Cited from Cecilia Heule, Marcus Knutagård & Arne Kristiansen (2017).
- For this study, gap analysis conducted through review different government led and NGO led youth programs by reviewing secondary data.
- Critically reviewed existing youth development program of government & NGOs in Bangladesh (like programs approach, Interventions, and delivering procedures) through specific parameters of professional social work and youth Empowerment process.

**Table: 01: GAP Analysis**



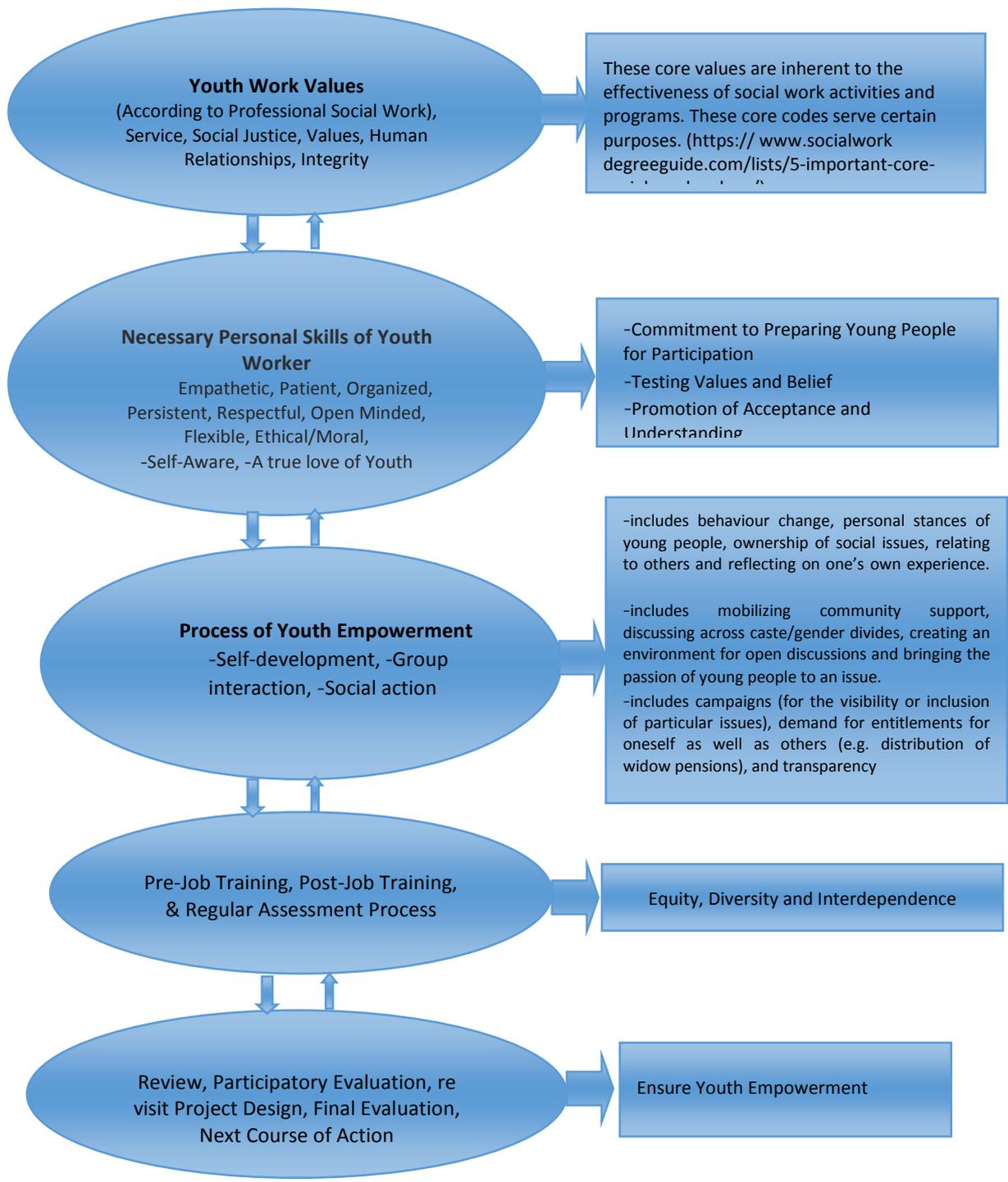
- In Bangladesh, the recruitment of Government/ NGO staffs for any community development program only considering academic qualification from any discipline (sometimes with some relevant experience).
- Nothing preference given for the academic background and professional skills of social work. NGO workers have delivered their services through some conventional approaches and their own policies and procedures.
- Due to the lack of coordination in between the professional social work educational institutions with Government & NGO sector of Bangladesh such types of recruitment process still now continuing.

#### **Proposed Model for Ensuring Youth Empowerment**

- Considering the core values, skills and professional standards of Professional Social Work, the proposed model recommended for future course of action.
- It has mentioned that, the proposed model only the part of the skill Human resources without any interruption with any youth focused projects interventions:

Table: 2: Proposed Model for Ensuring Youth Empowerment

**Proposed Model for Ensuring Youth Empowerment**



## Conclusion

- Bangladesh has made some outstanding positive social development example for the globe.
- For example, Bangladesh is the role model on reduce mother and child mortality & universal primary education.
- But at the same time, in terms of reducing inequality and human poverty still now our achievement is not encouraging.
- In case of youth empowerment, government and NGOs invested a lot but the progress towards youth empowerment is not remarkable.
- Due to lack of coordination in between professional social workers (academicians & practitioners) and different GO-NGO community development project managers and policy makers, social work has treated as academic subject instead of profession.
- For breaking the silence, need to unlock the potentiality through effective professional social work association.