



THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr.P.EASWARA RAO

PDF (UGC) Scholar,
Department of Education
Andhra University, VSP.

Mr.G.JAGANMOHANA RAO

(NET in Education)
Research Scholar
Department of Education
Andhra University, VSP.

Introduction:

Youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development. They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country.

The contribution of the youth is essentially important in the development of rural areas. The youth are essential human beings in the development of rural areas. The development of rural areas in developing countries is the root of economic upliftment for these nations.

In the present scenario of the society, youth has to play a prominent role to provide leadership for the future and also in implementation of the developmental programmes. In order to create awareness among the youth about their roles to be played in the society, they should be enhanced their capabilities in leading society towards development.

The youth also constitute the major resource base for any country that want to embark on any meaningful rural development projects. *Lagun (2002)*, observes that investment in the youth is the only way to ensure the future growth and development of any country. He further asserts that increasing number of young people must be trained and as quickly as possible, to provide leadership in agriculture, industry, government and rural development projects. These youth must be developed intellectually, morally, socially and with relevant skills to face a rapidly advancing technological world.

Youth in Community Development

Motivations for involving youth in community development projects stem from a belief that communities often suffer from a lack of committed, involved, and knowledgeable leadership. Rural communities are particularly



challenged to identify local leadership. Although a community's young people may be the most obvious group from which to recruit future leaders, few communities create an environment for youth to develop into leaders (*Israel & Coleman, 1994*). "The youth of a community are both potential actors and a resource, and to omit members of this group from making contributions to community affairs on the basis of their age unnecessarily limits a community's capacity to solve local problems".

Citizen participation, leadership skills, a substantial information base, and the capacity of local people to solve local problems are characteristics of successful communities (*Garkovich, 1989; Wilkinson, 1991*). School-based community development projects can meet the educational objectives of the school, the information needs of the community, and lay the foundation for developing involved and affective citizens (*Higbee, 1990; Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991; Whisman, 1989*).

Importance of Training for Youth

Students can be trained as survey researchers to provide valuable, low cost information to needy rural communities (*Ilvento & Mauer, 1991*). Reasons for involving youth in community projects include:

- (a) increasing young people's understanding of their community,
- (b) developing their sense of empowerment,
- (c) encouraging their future participation in community affairs,
- (d) enhancing school-community relations, and
- (e) helping community leaders and citizens address local needs by recognizing and guiding youthful enthusiasm and energy.

Student participant benefits to community development projects are enhanced when opportunities for their meaningful contribution are provided at all stages of the project. By increasing student participation in decision-making, the traditional relationships between adults and youth shift from youth being recipients of directions to adults and youth working together as active members of a team (*Kurth-Schai 1988*). Adults must view youth as a resource for this process to be carried out affectivity.



The characteristics of successfully involving youth in Community development projects should include:

Commitment of a project coordinator, active community partnership, support from school administrators and teachers including the use of school facilities, the enthusiastic involvement of students, activities to learn about community development, exercises so that students understand the implications of their efforts, adequate material resources, technical support, celebration of accomplishments, use of the information gathered (for example, presentation of results, future community initiatives), and student involvement in actions taken as a result of the project (Israel & Ilvento, 1994).

It has been observed that if we meet up with the challenge of the rural sector, the youth that constitute part of the population that makes up the rural areas, have certain roles to play in the process of rural development. These include social, economic, political and civil roles, which will aid the development of rural areas and the nation in general. However, these young people do not know how they can contribute their best to the development of their areas. Those that know the need for them to play significant roles in the socio-economic development of their localities do not know how to go about it.

FAO: Education & Training for strengthening Youth

A wealth of practical experience has accumulated over the past 100 years related to working with rural young people through education and training. FAO itself has been a part of this effort for at least the past four decades. Today, youth development, with its strong research/knowledge base, and adequate policy and resource support, can become a powerful force in empowering large numbers of rural young people in developing countries to take an active role in sustainable agriculture and rural development as a major contributor to the overall progress in their respective countries.

The mission of FAO's rural youth development work is to strengthen and expand young people's capacities, knowledge and skills through education and training to enable them to become productive and contributing citizens of their local communities.

Milestones of FAO's work over recent years include two expert consultations; one in 1985 as part of the UN System's International Youth Year and the other in 1995. This last expert consultation laid the foundation for the current rural youth programme. In the national rural youth seminars in



Asia, Africa and the Latin America/Caribbean Regions focusing attention on the important role that young people can and do play in food security and sustainable development.

The rural youth work of FAO over the years has made significant contributions to making the lives of young people from rural areas more productive and meaningful by strengthening the organizations which serve them. The needs and challenges of rural young people today are greater than they have ever been in the past. In most developing countries, youth make up well over one-half of the total rural population.

Because of their numbers and potential impact, rural youth must be a major part of any equation dealing with immediate and long-term solutions to solving problems of food security and sustainable development. It is true that young people need education and training to prepare them to become the farmers and community leaders of the future, but even more importantly, they must receive maximum support and access to resources to enable them to become active partners in food security today!

The ERP initiative provides the leadership to facilitate this expanded collaboration within FAO and to promote effective partnering with other UN agencies, international development organizations, donor groups, member governments and civil society; sharing a common interest in empowering young people in rural areas to become active partners in food security and sustainable development.

Suggestions for Development of Youth and Rural Area

- Provide constructive and encouraging relationships among youth and adults and youth and peers;
- Provide an array of youth development opportunities for youth to build competencies in areas such as mastery, independence, generosity, and sense of belonging;
- Provide access to multiple opportunities for youth to develop assets in the physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and/or social domains;
- Engage youth as partners in their own development and the development of their communities;
- Promote positive development so youth will be engaged in their communities and more likely to promote the well-being of other young people;



- Are effectively child and youth focused;
- Build human capital to reverse the “brain drain” caused by capable young people leaving rural communities;
- Build community institutions such as comprehensive community centers;
- Connect the formal classroom to real-life experience and use the community as context for learning; and
- Have sufficient scope, breadth, duration, frequency and intensity of engagement of young people to reach long-term positive outcomes.
- Rural children and youth have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to live productive, contributing, and fulfilling lives; and
- Rural communities have increased economic opportunities and improved quality of life.

Conclusion

Youths are seen as “vital sources of manpower for development”. The contribution of the youth is essentially important in the development of rural areas. Youth should facilitate community forums or conduct needs assessments to identify community needs; develop and implement action plans to address community needs and evaluate how community needs can be fulfilled. The nation’s progress and growth in a developing economy like India depend to some extent, on the growth, modernization and development of their rural areas. This is so, because in many developing countries, a large proportion of the population lives in the rural areas, such that no national development can succeed without rural development. FAO is also playing a major role in sharing a common interest in empowering young people in rural areas to become active partners in food security and sustainable development.

References

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