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World
Sustainable
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335

WHAT IS THE “YOUTH BULGE” CALLING FOR IN INDIA?

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Abstract

Purpose: The present study was carried out to answer the question: what is the “youth bulge” calling for in India? The youth bulge which India has been experiencing motivated us to raise this important research question.

Design/methodology/approach: The study makes use of secondary sources of data including reports, books and journals, together with the use of simple statistical tools. An attempt has been made to answer the research question by analysing the trends in central and state outlays on services with a children and/or youth component over the 1991–92 to 2010–11 period in India.

Findings/implications: After examining trends in the social sector expenditure of central and state governments, the study concludes that higher investment is required for programmes with a special youth component, keeping in view the poor educational and health status of the vast majority of the population, despite more than two decades of reforms. In addition, the issues of inefficient implementation, inadequate monitoring, low accountability and poor service delivery need serious attention to ensure holistic youth development.

Originality/value: While there is a lot of literature on the social sector of India, not much has been written specifically about public investment targeted to children and youth. This study attempts to fill this gap in the current literature to some extent.

Keywords: Rapid ageing, Dependency ratio, “Youth bulge”, Window of opportunity, Demographic dividend, Central and state outlays, Services having children and/or youth component



World Sustainable
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**What is the
“Youth Bulge”
calling for
in India?**

INTRODUCTION

Westley and Choe (2002, p. 57) pointed out that the “youth bulge... is the result of a transition from high to low fertility about 15 years earlier. The youth bulge consists of large numbers of adolescents and young adults who were born when fertility was high, followed by declining numbers of children born after fertility declined”. The youth bulge has been experienced in most Asian countries, and India is not an exception. In India, fertility decline began in the 1970s, so the youth peak was experienced in 1990 (Hugo, 2005, p.62). In India, 70% of the population is below the age of 35 years. Approximately 242 million of the population is between the age of 10 and 19 years (GOI, 2008). As per the 2001 census, the size of the youth population in India was 422.3 million, with 219 million males and 203 million females comprising 41% of the total population. The population in the 25–59 age group is likely to grow very fast and will constitute half of the country’s population by 2050 (Alam, 2006).

336

Scientific research reveals that investment on child care and development offers an extraordinary opportunity to avoid development problems and can bring lasting benefits for individuals and society as a whole. This investment in the initial years of a child leads to an increase in economic productivity over the child’s lifetime, enhances employment options for caregivers and saves social costs (World Bank, 2000, p. 7-8). Studies also support the fact that the socio-economic status of the child through health (malnutrition, iron and micronutrient deficiency, parasite infection), quality of the home environment including care giving and cognitive stimulation impact cognitive learning. “As a child ages, environmental effects appear to accumulate. Poor cognitive and social abilities are associated with weaker future academic performance and lower adult economic and social outcomes, including poor health, antisocial behaviour, and violence. These underachieving adults influence the cognitive abilities of the next generation of children, creating an intergenerational cycle of poverty and unequal opportunities” (World Bank, 2006, p. 133). Early policy interventions are very important to loosen the grip of poverty, unemployment and inequality. There is growing

interest amongst economists, political scientists, neuroscientists and social scientists in child and youth development in this globalised world. Research proves that programmes promoting the growth and development of young children are the best investment for developing human capital for the promotion of economic growth (Young *et al.*, 2007, p. 2). It has been further emphasized (*ibid*, p. 2) that early child development is the foundation of human capital formation, has the highest rate of return in economic development and is the most cost effective way to reduce poverty and to foster economic growth. Nobel laureate economist James Heckman said, “The complementarity or synergism between investments at early ages and investments at later stages suggests that early investment has to be complemented by later investment to be successful” (Heckman and Masterov, 2004). Friedman (2005) also noted that Heckman (2000) makes “a strong case for a higher return on human capital when dollars are spent on the young rather than the old”. Heckman said, “... the returns to human capital investments are greatest for the young for two reasons: (a) skill begets skills, and (b) younger persons have a longer horizon over which to recoup the fruits of their investments” (Heckman, 2000).

Studies also point out that failure to invest in children and youth can trigger substantial economic, social and political costs and these costs cannot be reversed later in life (Evans *et al.*, 2000). The misaligned strategies can have negative outcomes in the form of truncated human and social capital accumulation (e.g. school dropout rate, poor labour market entry) and negative conduct (e.g. substance abuse, crime and violence and risky sexual behaviours). Such negative behaviours can be transferred to subsequent generations, giving rise to a vicious cycle of social exclusion and negative behaviours. These negative outcomes and consequent underutilization of human resources are costly for the individuals and society and can have cost implications (direct and opportunity cost)². Latin America and the Caribbean are cases in point where risky youth behaviour reduces economic growth by approximately

² Direct expenditure refers to the cost associated with medical treatment, special education progress, the criminal justice system, welfare spending and other public subsidies to prevent or compensate for the effects of poor choices during adolescence and youth. The opportunity cost implies the potential benefits that could have been reaped in the absence or reduction of undesirable behaviours. For instance, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, early school dropout and unemployment can be associated with lower economic production and lower lifetime earnings (see Note-Investing_Countrys_CY_Aug_2010.pdf).

two per cent annually (Cunningham *et al.*, 2008). Heckman pointed out that “The later in life we attempt to repair early deficits, the costlier the remediation becomes” (Heckman, 2007).

**What is the
“Youth Bulge”
calling for
in India?**

338

The developed world is experiencing rapid ageing, rising dependency ratios and shrinking youth populations. However, countries like India are showing a rise in the relative size of the population in the economically active age group. In 2009, 64% of India’s population was in the working age group (15–64) and this share is expected to rise in the near future. This phenomenon of the emergence of a large, youthful population i.e. the “Young Population Bulge” could be a window of opportunity for India to harness the energy of the youth to fuel economic and social development and to bring about a “demographic dividend”. It has been argued in various studies that public investment in children and youth today will ensure greater future returns to society through higher economic growth (via raising human capital formation) and the greater social wellbeing of future generations. It is also believed that it is the development of human capability³ in a nation’s population that makes it prosper, and that this is more important than economic growth. Unarguably, a nation cannot develop properly if people are illiterate, suffer from illness and malnourishment, and have no self respect, no work, and no freedom of choice. The development of these aspects of human capability begins in early childhood and continues in adulthood. Inter alia, a supportive policy framework can play an important role in ensuring the progress of child development and youth development parameters.

Given this background, this study raises the question: what is the youth bulge calling for in India? An attempt will be made in this paper to answer this question by providing a picture of the public investment targeted to children and youth in India. The present paper attempts to analyse the trends in central and state outlays on services with a children and/or youth component over the 1991–92 to 2010–11 period in India, and make an assessment of the policy environment for the development of youth and adolescents. The next section deals with trends in central and state outlay on services with child and youth components, followed by an examination of some of the key emerging and ongoing developments in government policies exclusively for youth development.

³ See Sen, A. (1993), “Capability and Well-being,” in Nussbaum and Sen (eds.), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 30-53.

**TRENDS IN CENTRAL AND STATE OUTLAYS ON SERVICES
WITH CHILD AND/OR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS
(1991-92 TO 2010-11)**

It is important to point out that data on services with a child and/or youth component have been taken from budget documents from the Indian Public Finance Statistics of the Government of India (GOI). Since the social services touch the lives of children and youth in India, they have been termed as services with a child and/or youth component in the present paper. For example, one of the heads of development of social service under developmental expenditure is “education, art and culture”. The allocation/outlay/expenditure for the head of development on education inter alia covers various programmes started by the government of India to target children and youth, including: Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal scheme, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Education and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Saakshar Bharat.

Similarly, sports and youth services cover the provisions for the National Service Scheme, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Youth corps and the scheme for development and Empowerment of adolescents. Under “Women and Child Development”, head of development, the allocations are made for the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) This scheme seeks to provide an integrated package of health, supplementary nutrition and educational services to children up to six years of age, pregnant women and nursing mothers. The package includes supplementary nutrition, immunization, health checks, referral services, nutrition and health education and non-formal pre-school education (see Expenditure Budget Vol. I, 2012–2013, p. 37–39). This Ministry also launched a centrally sponsored scheme, the “Integrated Child Protection scheme” from 2009–10 and a scheme named the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent (11–18years) Girls (SABLA). These schemes are therefore also included.

It is obvious from the above examples that social and community services are one of the components of developmental expenditure incurred by the centre and states of India. It covers many services/programmes with a child and/or youth component, and it is for this reason that we have included various social services in our analysis. Research reviewed across the globe also confirms that there is lateral “inter dependence” of health, nutrition and education outcomes. Empirical research indicates that malnutrition in children can

significantly impact their ability to attend to and comprehend instruction, their activity level, concentration and overall ability to learn. Field studies in India show that short term illness such as malaria and diarrhea impact regularity on children in schools, which in turn influences their learning outcomes. The studies also point towards linkages with outcomes in other sectors, such as availability of water and sanitation, the absence of which causes malaria, epidemics and diarrhea (World Bank, 2004, p. xvii-xviii). It is obvious that the outcomes are interdependent and we have therefore included central and state outlays on social services in our study. Investment in these services will play an important role in child and youth development at present and also in the future.

Before taking up the central and state government outlays on services with a child and/or youth component in India, it is useful to examine the trends in aggregate central government expenditure in the post-1988 period. We have chosen the year 1988 as there was no youth policy in India prior to 1987, though the National Policy on Children was announced in 1974. The First National Youth Policy was introduced by the GOI in 1988. This policy was prepared by the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, which was created in 1985. The year 1985 was declared the International Year of Youth. A separate Ministry (headed by a cabinet minister) to look after state affairs was created in the year 2000 (Kingra, 2005). Therefore, it will be highly relevant and useful if we try to examine the trends in central government revenue and capital expenditure in the post-1990 period for the two decades of 1991–1992 to 1999–2000 and 2000–01 to 2010–11, and also the developmental expenditures of central and state governments. It is evident from Table 1 that the revenue expenditure of the central government increased from

Period	Central government	
	Revenue expenditure	Capital expenditure
1990–91 to 1999–2000	77.75	22.24
2000–01 to 2009–2010	85.08	14.91

Source: Based on Reserve Bank of India (2011), Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy, 2010–11, Mumbai.

Table 1. Revenue and capital expenditure of the central government post-1990 (as percentages of average aggregate expenditure)

**World
Sustainable
Development
Outlook 2013**

341

77.75% in the decade of 1990s to 85.08% in the decade of the 2000s. However, capital expenditure came down drastically from 22.24% to 14.91% during the period under consideration. This overall trend of reduction in capital expenditure does not auger well for both raising the production capacity of the economy and for the maintenance of existing schemes (Joshi, 2006).

Further, the figures in Table 2 bring out the declining trends in developmental expenditures of both the centre and the states during the last two decades. The share of social services in total expenditure increased in the case of central government (although marginally during the last two decades), whereas it registered a decline in the case of the state governments.

Coming now to Central and State outlays on the social sector as a whole and its sub-sectors comprising services with a child and/or youth component in the last two decades (i.e. decade of 1990s and 2000), Table 3 gives an overview of shares of social sector components in aggregate expenditure. It can be observed from the table that the central and state governments spent an average of 24.27% of their aggregate expenditure on services with a child/youth component in the decade of the 1990s. However, this share increased marginally to 27.33% in the post-2000 period.

“Allocating sufficient public resources to child and youth development, [...] is a sine qua non for a country’s development and competitiveness” (Heckman, 2007). Among various social services, the shares of education, art and culture, medical, public health, Water Supply & Sanitation registered a decline during the period under consideration. This is definitely not a healthy trend, keeping in view

Table 2. Average developmental expenditures of central and state governments as percentages of their average total expenditures

Period	Central government	State governments
1990–91 to 1999–2000	47.52 (4.38)	64.05 (31.97)
2000–01 to 2009–2010	46.28 (7.60)	59.44 (30.69)

Source: Computed from figures in Reserve Bank of India (2011), *Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy, 2010–11*, Mumbai.

Note: The figures in the parentheses show the development expenditure on social services as a percentage of total expenditure.

Sectors with a child and/or youth component	Period I (1991–92 to 1999–2000)	Period II (2000–01 to 2010–11)	What is the “Youth Bulge” calling for in India?
Education, art and culture	11.32	10.78	
Medical, public health, water supply & sanitation	4.35	4.109	
Family welfare	0.77	0.64	
Housing	0.69	0.874	
Urban development	0.597	1.295	
Labour & employment	0.423	0.324	
Social security and welfare	1.118	1.936	
Others	1.407	1.338	
Rural development	3.523	3.922	
Relief on account of natural calamities	0.0486	0.008	
Social sector	24.27	27.33	

342

Table 3. Combined (revenue and capital) expenditure of the centre and states on services with a child and/or youth component as percentages of aggregate expenditure

Note: i) Since the above referred social services touch the lives of children and youth in India, they have been termed services with a child and/or youth component.

ii) Others include scientific services and research, broadcasting and other services.

Source: Computed from the data available in Indian Public Finance Statistics, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, various Issues.

the objective of child and youth development. Further, the figures in Table 4 show that the overall planned outlay of the centre, states and Union Territories’ on social services has increased from the Seventh plan to the Eleventh Five Year Plan period. However, there is another trend which has been observed (but not shown) in the case of social sector outlays: a shortfall in actual plan expenditures from budgeted outlays (see Joshi, 2003).

It is important to point out that “In India, sports and games as a vital component of social and cultural life are embedded in the heritage right from Vedic as well as in Buddhists and Jain literature” (GOI, 2008, p. 44). Swami Vivekananda has been the principal exponent of sports culture in the country. He advised, “Be strong my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita” (GOI, 2008, p. 44). The National Sports Policy, 1984 was the first attempt to develop sports culture in the country. Later, in 2001, the National

Various five year plans	Plan outlay on social services (amount in Rs. Crore)
Seventh Plan Outlay (1985–90)	34959.7 (16)
Eighth Plan Outlay (1992–97)	79011.9 (18.2)
Ninth Plan Outlay (1997–2002)	183273.0 (21.3)
Tenth Plan Outlay (2002–07)	347391 (22.8)
Eleventh Plan Outlay (2007–12)*	1102327 (30.2)

Table 4. Plan wise outlay of the centre, states and union territories on social services

Note: * stands for projected outlay at 2006–07 prices
 ii) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the total plan outlay.
 iii) Social services comprise services like education, medical and public health, family welfare, housing, urban development and other social services.
Source: GOI, Economic survey 2011–12 pp. A 42 to A 46.

Table 5. Plan expenditure on youth affairs and sports

Government	Eighth plan	Ninth plan	Tenth plan
Centre	434 (38)	895(44)	1832(41)
States/UTs	712(62)	1143(56)	2649(59)
Total	1146(100)	2038(100)	4481(100)

Source: Reproduced from GOI, Eleventh Plan Vol. II, p. 45.
Note: The figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

Sports Policy also stressed making sports an integral part of the curriculum. However, if we look at the figures given in Table 5, we find that plan expenditure on youth affairs and sports is inadequate considering the magnitude of the youth population in India. The per capita plan expenditure at the central and state level stood at Rs 8.94 and Rs. 12.92 per youth per annum, respectively. During the Tenth Plan, the national per capita expenditure was Rs. 21.86 per youth per year. The structure of plan expenditure given in the table also shows that the centre share of plan expenditure declined from 44% in the Ninth Plan to 41% in the Tenth Plan. The state share of plan expenditure declined from 62% in the Eighth Plan to 59% in the Tenth Plan (GOI, 2008, p.45).

THE INDIAN CONTEXT: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS DEVELOPMENT

What is the
“Youth Bulge”
calling for
in India?

344

The Preamble of the Exposure draft of National Youth Policy 2012 of India begins by saying that “...it is evident that the future of India is intimately connected with that of its young people... This national policy aims to put young people at the centre of country’s growth and development”. The first National Youth Policy (NYP) was introduced in 1988, followed by the NYP 2003. Now the exposure draft of NYP for 2012 has been put into the public domain for comments: “It [the NYP 2012] reaffirms commitment of the nation to the rights and holistic development of the young people of the country”. The ultimate goal is to empower the youth of the nation. Table 6 highlights the target groups, priority groups and thrust areas of the NYP 2012.

- i) The NYP 2012 aims to cover the 16–30 age group as against the age bracket of 13–35 years covered under the NYP 2003. Since youth in the 16–30 group is not a homogeneous group, they will be divided into three sub-groups as follows:
- ii) The first sub-group of 16–21 years covers adolescents whose needs and areas of concern are substantially different from youth under the other age groups.
- iii) The second sub-group of 21–25 years comprises youth who are in the process of completing their education and getting into a career.

The third sub-group of 26–30 years comprises young women and men, most of whom have completed their education, including professional aspects, and are more or less settled in their job and in their personal life.

The NYP 2012 also recognizes the need for construction of a youth development index (YDI) which it says can be expected to contribute in three ways. Firstly, it would help to recognize youth as a population category that needs attention. Secondly, it will enable to carry out comparative studies across geographical areas and categories. Thirdly, the proposed index would help in advocacy activities related to youth development in general and specific categories in particular.

World Sustainable Development Outlook 2013

345

Proposals	Target groups (9)	Priority group	Thrust areas
NYP aim to cover the age bracket of 16–30 years	Student youth	Young women	Promotion of national values, social harmony and national unity
Recognizes the need for construction of Youth Development Index	Urban youth in slums Migrant youth	Young belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged communities and groups	Empowering youth through employable skill development and providing entrepreneurship opportunities
	Rural youth	Differently-abled groups	Education: formal, non-formal and continuing learning
	Tribal youth		Health and healthy life style
	Youth at risk*		Sports and recreation facilities
	Youth in violent conflicts: participants or victims		Promoting gender justice and equality
	Out-of-school or dropouts from formal educational mainstream		Participation in community service
	Groups that suffer from social or moral stigma**		Social justice and action against unhealthy social practices
	Youth in institutional care ***		Issues related to environment, its conservation and preservation
			Youth and local governance, including support to state sponsored programmes and schemes

Table 6. Highlights of priorities, key sectors and target groups of the National Youth Policy 2012

Note: i) * denotes that youth at risk are those who are working in hazardous occupations, engaged in the sex trade, sex work, human trafficking and substance abuse.
 ii)** this group includes transgender, gays and lesbians and those infected by HIV/AIDS and TB (tuberculosis).
 iii)*** This group comprises youth in orphanages, correctional homes and institutional care.

It is important to mention that in addition to these policies related to youth and adolescent’s development there are approximately 12 other schemes and programmes being implemented in the country.

These programmes can be categorized into two groups: youth based organizations and youth development activities.

Youth based organizations include the National Cadet Corps (NCC), the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS). The NSS and the NYKS are the two flagship programmes encompassing a major part of its activities in institutional, functional and financial terms (60%). Table 7 provides a glimpse of some schemes and institutes aimed at youth development.

It is important to point out that an educational Train Journey for NSS & NCC female students of different colleges of the University of Delhi, involving a special train, was fully funded and organized by the University of Delhi in the first week of July, 2012 for the first time. This journey was expected to be a great learning experience for the students, as while travelling and visiting, they were expected to function in a spirit of service. They were expected to help their co-students and be a part of the group. During the 12 days, students were to follow an academic schedule so that their knowledge expanded. They were also advised do individual studies and contribute to group discussions in order to share knowledge. In future, we can expect more such programmes given the government’s recognition of the fact that higher public investment in child and youth development is a must for greater future returns.

Name of institutes and schemes for youth development	Purpose
1. The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, 1993	Education, training and research on youth development
2. The Scheme of Youth Hostels	i) promotion of youth travel ii) Boarding and lodging facilities at subsidized rates
3. The National Service Volunteers Scheme and Rashtriya Sadbhavana Yojana	To provide opportunities to educated youth and engage them in youth and community developmental activities voluntarily
4. Bharat Scouts and Guides	Grant aid is provided to conduct training camps and hold jamborees
5. The scheme of ‘Cultural Youth Programmes with Commonwealth Countries’	Promotes exchange of ideas, values and culture among youth and strengthens better relations

Table 7. List of institutes and schemes for youth development

Note: Based on GOI (2008), The Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007–2012, vol. II, pp. 41-43.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing, it is obvious that youth and adolescents constitute an integral part of the development process of a country. India is a “young” nation as it has a large youth population. That is why youth has been identified as a separate segment, and a separate Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports was created in 2000, which is headed by a cabinet minister. The examination of trends in the social sector expenditure of the centre and state governments on social sectors highlights that higher investment is required for programmes with a special youth component. The seriousness of the government regarding youth development can be judged from the existence of two national youth policies (in 1988 and 2003) and the fact that a third one (NYP 2012) has been put into the public domain. There is a separate chapter dedicated to youth affairs and sports in the Eleventh Five Year Plan document. Several schemes like the NCC, NSS and NYKS were initiated after Independence. The central and state governments spent an average of 24.27% of their aggregate expenditure on services with a child/youth component in the decade of the 1990s. This share increased marginally to 27.33% in the post-2000 period. However, the educational and health status of vast majority of the population continues to remain poor even after more than two decades of reforms. In addition, the rising cases of HIV/AIDS in India⁴ during the past 20 years, plus the increase in the crime rate⁵ pose a serious challenge, which demands an immediate and sustained response from the government. Despite the fact that human development is at the core of planning, the allocations made to this social sector as a whole are inadequate to our requirements as they constitute just a small proportion of GDP. Moreover, the actual

⁴ In 2005, 5.206 million people were living with HIV in India and accounted for nearly 69% of the HIV infections in the South and South-East Asian region (UNDP, 2006).

⁵ The crime rate in respect of Indian Penal code crimes has registered an increase from 181.4 in 2009 to 187.6 in 2012. A total of 22, 24,831 IPC crimes were reported in the country during the year 2012 as against 21, 21,345 in 2009 – an increase of 4.9% in 2010. The IPC crime rate increased by 6.2% during the decade of 2000–2010 (from 176.7 in 2000 to 187.6 in 2010). The IPC crimes are categorized into 6 parts: crimes against the body (e.g. murder, kidnapping and abduction etc.), crime against property (e.g. dacoity, robbery, burglary etc.), crimes against public order (riots, arson etc.), crimes against women (rape, dowry etc), crimes against children (child rape, kidnapping etc) (see Government of India, 2010, p. 23-25).

expenditure on various social services has been less than originally budgeted for (Joshi, 2003 and 2006). This shortfall could be one of the reasons for the limited impact of existing provisions for adolescents and youth. In addition, the issues of inefficient implementation, inadequate monitoring, low accountability and poor service delivery need serious attention and consideration so as to ensure the holistic youth development to which NPY 2012 is aspiring. The need of the hour is to determine the way forward, which will help in ensuring greater future returns for the nation by way of higher investment in child and youth development and will also help in achieving the objectives set out in various youth policies and plan documents. The potential benefits of NYP 2012 could be immense, provided that challenges for its successful implementation and scaling up are met seriously and with commitment.

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What is the
“Youth Bulge”
calling for
in India?

350
