

Discussion on Youth-Centric work within BRAC



For decades, BRAC has been working with Youth, the most viable and potential human resource in the country to transform them into an organised and productive power. The programmes have been engaged in empowering them in numerous capacities – improving education, availing marketable skills, developing health services, increasing financial sustainability and their participation in national policy formulation.

For example, a small snapshot of the ways BRAC work with Young People include:

Number	Capacities
120	Advocates in 8 divisions are addressing young people's right to sexuality education, and live without stigma, discrimination and violence
377	Youth became part of a changemakers' network 'Amra Notun Network' to acquire 21st century skills to bring about a change in their community
481	Entrepreneurs across the country availed loans to develop their businesses successfully.
9,432	Youth trained through apprenticeships
121,804	Youth reached through skills training

While individual programmes have been taking initiatives to cater to the Youth group, there is a lack of an organic flow of information within BRAC.

In an attempt to have a cross learning session on the youth centric work taking place within the organisation and brainstorm to develop a plan for the easy exchange of information, BRAC organised the "Youth Adda" on November 14, at BRAC Centre Inn. Representatives from 16 BRAC programmes and BRAC Institutes participated at the event.

Azad Rahman, Programme Head of Advocacy for Social Change said, ' If we are thinking about the future of Bangladesh and the future generation, it is important to look at the overall spectrum of Youth development because only working towards youth education, youth skills or youth health will not be enough - rather a holistic approach is required '

Salmaan Sabbab, Deputy Manager, Social Innovation Lab talked about the journey of Amra Notun Network to create enlightened Youths as well as making them employable through 21st century skills training. He said, 'Like in the 80s and 90s, one of the development paradigms was Women's Empowerment. Maybe for the next 20 years or so, the paradigm will focus on Youth development'. He further says, ' There might be a separate Youth programme within BRAC that will particularly focus on Youth '.

In order to groom young people into competent individuals, capable of driving the potential economic advancement of Bangladesh, it is essential to understand the need for cyclical efforts. To ensure individuals have the capacity for a growth mind-set, providing resources to prepare them from an early age is vital.

Anika Mahzabin, the Communication, Planning and Knowledge Management Lead of BRAC Education Programme, shared the history of how Kishore Kishori clubs were formed in and how education was driven through not only books, but also sports like ludu, chess, carom and bagaduli.

While there is a common notion that Youths are not driven, Tahmina Khanam,

Deputy Manager of Migration Programme, questioned, ' Is it that Youth do not want to work or we have not been able to figure out how we can include them and work together? ' She further said, ' I think it is our responsibility to show many futures to the youth in the country. Guidance is very important'. But she also stated that we have not been able to find out the suitable way to nurture the Youth.

It must be acknowledged that Youth is not a homogenous group and therefore, the definition of a nurturing environment will vary from one youth to the other, based on the social, economic and cultural factors. While the demographic trend in the country can open a myriad of new opportunities for youth, it is essential to support them with the right resources and foster a conducive ecosystem for adolescents and youths of Bangladesh to recognise their potential and guide them to a future of possibilities.



Considering there are so many BRAC programmes working to tackle the problems young people encounter, creating such a mechanism is possible. Youth is a priority for BRAC and the 3 recommendation that came about from the Adda for breaking the programmatic silos are:

- i. Regular dialogues on updated youth issues and BRAC interventions and a central working team to lead the conversation
- ii. Establish a Focal point for Youth in each department
- iii. Develop a knowledge repository system with progress tracker linked to BRAC blog

