

Youth Employment for Inclusive Growth in the State of Tripura

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Abstract

In Tripura, youth constitutes the largest segment of the population and being the primary productive human resources, the socio-economic development of youth directly linked to the development process. If excluded this section of population from economic life, it will remain an untapped resource in terms of increasing prosperity for entire states. Therefore, for inclusive growth, it is necessary to accelerate the creation of employment opportunity especially for youth in the state so as to bring them on the right direction and more importantly for attaining higher growth. Hence, this study attempts to address some of the key questions pertaining to youth employment for inclusive growth in the state such as: What are the key obstacles to youth employment in the state? Does lack of demand matter most or is it lack of skills in the labour market or more? What are the opportunities for creation of youth employment in agriculture?

Key words: Youth Employment, Inclusive Growth, Job Creation, Agriculture, Skill Development etc.

I. Introduction

The development and growth of Tripura is greatly depends upon proper utilization of its human resources. Being the primary productive human resources, the socio-economic development of youth directly linked to the development process. In Census 2011, they constitute the largest segment of Tripura population, where 37.08 per cent population belongs to 15-34 years of age group. Thus, involving youth in economic activities means involving almost half of the population and ignoring this section will certainly mean failure of any programme. In other words, the action of young people will decide the level of development of the state as well as the country. But harnessing these resources is a major challenge for policy making in achieving the objectives in the eleventh five year plan of inclusive growth.

Due to weak in industrial and underdeveloped agriculture sectors in Tripura, bulk of the population being dependent on the service sector. But employment opportunities in this sector are limited in relation to its supply, thereby, leading to unemployment. Among the problems faced by the youth, particular reference has been made to unemployment (Deb: 2002). Quite appropriate, the problem of youth unemployment has been recognised as an aspect of the national unemployment problem. Atchly (1977) believes that the greatest tragedy for a woman is widowhood and for a man unemployment (joblessness). The inclusive growth must create adequate livelihood opportunities commensurate with the expectations of a growing labour force particularly the youth. Moreover, the process of economic development could not be much effective as the contemporary pattern of growth in the economy is jobless especially for the Northeastern States and the growth of GSDP do not necessarily imply an equivalent growth of employment. In low income states like Tripura, job creation is the key to shared prosperity and reduction of poverty. The need for jobs is especially acute when large numbers of young people enter the labour force and seek employment. The employment challenge in this state is therefore not just one of creating jobs in the wage sector, but of creating opportunities for productive activity of the workers in agriculture and informal nonfarm enterprises. In the long run, many of these workers will move to the formal wage sector as economies have undergone growth and structural change.

Where will the large cohort of young currently entering the labour force find employment? Agriculture is uniquely positioned to absorb these workers, although farming does not often occur to policy makers as a solution to the challenge of job creation. Tripura is still predominantly rural and most young people are born

into farm families. But to appeal to young people and deliver good job opportunities, agriculture must break through a number of constraints that impede growth and competitiveness.

Therefore, for inclusive growth, it is necessary to accelerate the creation of employment opportunity especially for youth in the state so as to bring them on the right direction and more importantly for attaining higher growth. Hence, this study attempts to address some of the key questions pertaining to youth employment for inclusive growth in the state such as: What are the key obstacles to youth employment in the state? Does lack of demand matter most or is it lack of skills in the labour market or more? What are the opportunities for creation of youth employment in agriculture? Given the constraints of time and resources, the present study is based on the secondary data.

II. Status of Youth in Tripura

The youth of today are citizens of tomorrow. They are treasures of human resources of the nation having a lot of talents dormant in them, and if tapped in the right direction, would bear great fruits. "They are store houses of energy and knowledge" and if given a right direction, can work wonders "They can make or mar the world" repeats she (Nair: 1987). Moreover, youth constitutes the largest segment of the population and being the primary productive human resources, the socio-economic development of youth directly linked to the development process. In Tripura (table-1), the total share of youth population in the state was 37.08 per cent and SC are 38.75 per cent and tribal youth is 36.99 per cent in 2001 Census. However, the proportion of rural population of tribal youth was 95.51 per cent (4,12,239 person) and urban are merely 04.49 per cent (19,401 person) against the total youth population in the state was 10,13,492 person (74.40%) of rural and 3,48,652 person (25.60%) of urban areas respectively.

Though, the state has made a comprehensive progress in the field of education since launching of first five-year-plan in providing adequate education facilities including higher education in the State. But the employment opportunities are limited in relation to supply of labour and thus the youth remain unemployed. As pointed in ILO (2001) 'Youth are twice or three times more likely to be unemployed than older people. According Curran (2009), when you have a bulge population, the positive side is you will have a lot of workers, and "The negative side is that if your economy is not able to generate jobs, then you've really got the potential for instability. It likely means the economy is not being managed particularly well so there are legitimate grounds for being unhappy with the government. There are also probably political or religious issues, so there are many different factors that can become points of conflict". However, the state has a relatively undiversified economy with a low manufacturing base. But high and rising levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth, are a matter of urgent concern. Therefore, need to develop an employment strategy that ensures growth of skilled employment and expansion of sustainable livelihoods. The strategy must aim to reduce youth unemployment, and to equip young men and women with modern skills. The employment growth must be based on growth in production that is, economic growth that involves a growth of agricultural and agriculture related production, rural non-agricultural production, and different types of industrial production (Economic Review: 2010-11). However, the target should not just faster growth but inclusive growth, that is, a growth process which yields broad-based benefits and ensures equality of opportunity for all, particularly the youth which were the main resource of the state.

Youth Employment and Unemployment

The nature of the existing employment pattern in Tripura can also be found from the 5th economic Census (2005) results. As it has been revealed from the report that about 3,85,708 persons were working in 1,89,423 establishments in 2005 against 2,68,257 persons in 1,04,427 establishments in 1998. Out of the total workers of 3,85,708 persons in 2005, 2,59,910 (67.38%) were in rural areas and remaining 1,25,798 (32.61%) were in the urban areas. On the other hand, job seekers have been increasing over the years due to higher literacy rates in the State and the employment situation has now become alarming. In 1990, there were 1,76,742 unemployed job seekers in the state, which rose to 2,50,729 in 1998 and further, raised to 3,66,207 in March 2002, in March 2005 it stood at 4,21,835 and in March 2008 the figure touched at 5,32,775 and further to 5,62,290 in June- 2011. Till recent year, Government sector is only avenues for organized employment in this backward State since the State has almost no industry under organized sector except brickfields and age old tea industry, where-in scope of organized employment for the educated persons are negligible. However, the adoption of modern agricultural techniques, high quality breeds for

animal husbandry and horticultural sectors as well as irrigation facilities will be able to improve the productivity and reduce the rural poverty and unemployment to a large extent in the State.

The problem of unemployment among youth is one of the gravest that the state is facing today. The state is being deprived of the services of the lakhs of educated and professionally trained youth force. The unemployment rates of Tripura and other north east states of India are shown in table-2. The overall rate of Tripura is the highest in north east as well as overall India, that is, 28.75 per cent in 2004-05 and 19.05 per cent in 2009-10, out of the total population of the state. According to National Sample Survey of 61st and 66th Round shows that there is a sign of slowing down the rate during the same period. Among female, the rate of unemployment is higher in both rural and urban in comparison with their counterpart male. In other words, urban female constitute the higher rate of unemployment in the state during 2004-05 and 2009-10. As Bajpai (2010) regarded this section of population as wasting the human resources of the nation. This section of unemployed population mainly belongs to the youth. As NER Vision 2020 shows that the rate of unemployment is high in the age group of 15-29 years in table-3.

Factors such as accelerated population growth, lack of training for work, massive expansion of education, lower quality of education leading to lower employability of the educated have all contributed to the high rates of unemployment among young people. The problem has been recognized as part of the overall problem of employment creation or development. Although eradication of unemployment has been one of the primary focuses of our economic policy. As pointed by Visaria (1998) that "The major challenge before the country is to ensure the employability of the youth by training them adequately for productive work, by imparting to them marketable skills and the flexibility to learn new things and to innovate, and by inculcating in them a proper work ethic. All these goals are necessary conditions for survival and growth in the changing economic environment in which even a large country is a small part of a global village". As youth members are growing faster than the rate of job creation, too few decent employment opportunities are available for the numbers of youth seeking them higher education was an important priority for youth. As appropriate and useful education is vital in order for youth to improve their ability to find jobs and lead responsible and productive lives. As pointed (UN: 2012) if young people already have foundation skills, such training can not only improve farm output but also make work in rural areas, and more attractive. Young people bring energy, vitality, and innovation into the work force, and when their willingness to contribute is matched with opportunity; they can have a transformative impact on economic growth and social development. Efforts to accelerate agricultural growth and improve food security have been separated conceptually from efforts to create jobs for young people. Shifts on the demand side create new opportunities for changes in supply. Although on average the agricultural sector is one of low labour productivity and high employment, great heterogeneity exists within the sector. Agriculture is potential for the sector to absorb the large numbers of new job-seekers and to offer meaningful work with public and private benefits becomes clearer; agriculture will gain even more attention from policy makers. As productive employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work are the key drivers of distributional change and more importantly inclusive growth.

Opportunities of Youth in agriculture

Agriculture in Tripura has untapped potential to create jobs, both directly and indirectly. In order to attract young people, agriculture will need to be more dynamic and appealing than it is now, and young people will need to view the sector more positively than they do now. The farms that offer attractive opportunities will have to be quite different from those that most young know. (Brooks et. al: 2013) Worldwide and historically, farming as a profession has rarely carried high prestige. Colloquial terms for farmer in English, such as "hayseed" and "clod-hopper," reflect the low status of the profession even where it yields incomes higher than the national average. The Government of the state has stressed the goal of increasing employment opportunities and eventually eradicating unemployment. Despite of its efforts, the state has witnessed, although a high rate of economic growth for the last one decade, unemployment, particularly among the youth remains one of the biggest challenges.

As agriculture and allied activities has been remained as the backbone of the State's economy and the State's rural economy is entirely driven by this sector. About 52 per cent of total main workers are engaged in

agriculture including 28 percent cultivators and 24 percent agricultural labourers. Small and marginal farmers constitute 96 percent of the total farmers in the state against all India 78 percent. Availability of cultivable land is one of the main constraints in the state. During 11th plan period 2007-2012, the annual average growth rate of agriculture and allied activities has been increased to 6.4% as against 3.9% in 10th plan period. The contribution of agriculture and allied activities to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is about 22 percent in the terminal year of 11th plan. Food security as well as providing the gainful employment to the rural labour force is the main attention of the Government planning and policy making. The State's favourable agro-climatic conditions, fertile soils, sub-tropical climate with pockets of temperate zones, large tilla lands and abundance of rainfall really offers immense scope for development of horticulture sector comprising of fruits, vegetables, spices, plantation crops, floriculture, medicinal and aromatic plants etc. The activities of agriculture and allied sector in the State by and large are in the hands of small and marginal cultivators. Soil of the State is very fertile and receives abundant normal rainfall, which is conducive for agriculture and horticultural crops including rubber and tea plantations (5th Economic Census: 2005).

Though agriculture growth has remained lower than the growth rates witnessed in the industrial and services sectors in the State. But agriculture has still an important potential demand base for both industry and services sectors, in addition to being the supply base for food and raw materials. The better performance of the agriculture will enhance a direct and multiplier effect across the economy. Agriculture sector can also play a key role in absorbing the labour force of youth as well as State's economy. Moreover, involvement of youth in agriculture would be facilitated through entrepreneurship development programme, entrusting more and more integrated farming system to combine agriculture, horticulture, animal resources, fisheries etc. In order to improve employment prospects for youth in the state, there needs to be investment in agricultural extension services which focus on the young. Such extension services should:- (i) target young farmers; (ii) encourage parents to give land to school leavers; (iii) set up agricultural credit schemes to help young people acquire livestock, equipment and other productive assets of their own; (iv) encourage food production in order to increase food-security for communities; (v) transmit effective and appropriate ideas and methods in agriculture; (vi) establish incentives, so that some young workers may eventually become para-professional extension agents; and (vii) provide leadership and organizational skills training.

III. Conclusion

Rather than a lack of employment opportunities, a major issue is lack of decent work opportunities. In other words, finding work for youth is not necessarily the problem, but finding decent work that offers decent pay, good working conditions is difficult. According to ILO (2006), it is important in promoting education and training, to facilitate a match between the skills possessed by the youth and labour market demands. The supply and demand have to be matched appropriately via labour market information. In this regard, youth that has both an education and training, but is unable to find appropriate work may be classified as currently inactive.

Given the present and anticipated future role of agriculture in employment and the sheer number of youth in the state today and anticipated into the future, new models to enhance decent employment and livelihood in the agriculture sector must be developed, including support to employment opportunities. For inclusive growth, put productive employment and decent work at the centre of growth and development strategies.

Table-1: Population of Youth between the Age Group of 15-34 years in Tripura, 2011 census.

Tripura	Areas	Population		
		Person	Male	Female
All State	Total	1362144 (37.08)	689205 (50.60)	672939 (49.40)
	Rural	1013492 (74.40)	514963 (50.81)	498529 (49.19)

	Urban	348652 (25.60)	174242 (49.98)	174410 (50.02)
Scheduled Castes	Total	253788 (38.75)	129705 (51.11)	124083 (48.89)
	Rural	168854 (66.53)	87073 (51.57)	81781 (48.43)
	Urban	84934 (33.47)	42632 (50.19)	42302 (49.81)
Scheduled Tribes	Total	431640 (36.99)	212822 (49.31)	218818 (51.69)
	Rural	412239 (95.51)	203491 (49.36)	208748 (50.64)
	Urban	19401 (04.49)	9331 (48.10)	10070 (51.90)

Source: Census of India-2011-C-Series Tables
Note: Figures in the parentheses denote percentages

Table-2: Unemployment Rates in North East India during 2004-05 & 2009-10

Sl. No.	Name	2004-05				2009-10			
		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1	Arunachal Pradesh	0.6	1.1	2.8	1.1	0.8	1.5	3.2	3.4
2	Assam	3.1	2.4	9.1	6.9	5.6	3.4	12.5	4.0
3	Manipur	0.7	1.4	6.3	5.2	3.7	3.8	4.1	5.0
4	Meghalaya	0.5	0.1	3.5	3.5	0.5	0.3	9.0	3.0
5	Mizoram	0.1	0.5	2.6	1.6	1.5	1.3	3.4	2.5
6	Nagaland	1.4	2.2	7.2	4.6	11.9	9.8	19.0	6.1
7	Sikkim	1.5	2.8	4.3	3.6	3.4	4.7	0.0	0.0
8	Tripura	32.0	9.6	56.8	16.6	19.8	5.3	41.8	9.3
9	India	1.8	1.6	6.9	3.8	1.8	1.6	6.9	3.8

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 61st & 66th Round (July 2004-2005 June & July 2009-June 2010)
Note: The figures represent size of unemployment as percentage of labour force

Table-3: Unemployment rate among the different age group of Youth

States	Unemployment Rate in 2004-05								
	Male			Female			Total		
Age Group	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Mizoram	0.7	2.4	2.2	0	0.4	0.5	1.5	1.4	1.3
Nagaland	8.2	26.9	19.2	8.1	15.0	7.8	20.1	12.4	14.9
Sikkim	10.3	13.0	3.5	0	6.4	7.1	10.7	3.6	7.0
Tripura	33.3	31.2	13.1	65.7	67.1	40.9	39.1	18.5	33.0
India	7.9	6.2	2.3	6.7	9.3	7.5	7.0	3.3	5.7

Source: NER Vision 2020

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