

## Proceedings of the STARS Forum Confluence of Leaders event held on Saturday, 09-Dec-2017 at Pune.

STARS Forum organised a Confluence of Leaders session attended by leaders and senior executives from various NGOs working on livelihoods, skills training, and vocation education and entrepreneurship promotion. The event was held at the J.P.Naik Center for Education and Development, Kothrud, Pune. The Confluence was designed to address two key points viz. (1) what does the future for Skills training look like and (2) how do we build social enterprises for the future. The sessions were organised in the form of presentations by a panel of experts, followed by group discussion and Q&A. The event ended with a Open Space session, where topics offered by delegates were discussed in small groups.



The Confluence of Leaders event was attended by 57 leaders and senior executives representing 49 organisations. The event was held at the JP Naik Centre for Education and Development, Kothrud, Pune. The inauguration of the event was done by the trustees of STARS Forum lighting a lamp. Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni,

Chairperson STARS Forum gave the welcome address. Dr. Sudhir Prabhu – Founding member and Secretary of the STARS Forum, gave a short introduction of STARS Forum to the delegates. He spoke about the rationale behind setting up of this Forum – viz. to act as a collaborative platform, that enables organisations to provide mutual support, to further innovation and best practice in skills based rural development. He also shared the history and details of STARS Forum annual events that have been taking place from 2010 onwards.



The morning session consisted of a panel discussion on “Future of Livelihoods Skills development”. The panel comprised of Shri Ganesh Neelam (Tata Trusts Leadership team member), Shri Mahesh Ranade – CEO, Yuvaparivartan, Smt. Pradnya Godbole – CEO, deAsra Foundation, and Shri BR Venkatesh – Founder & CEO, MBTLA Udyojakta Kaushal Vikas. The Panel was chaired by Shri Ashok Kalbag, Trustee of STARS Forum.

Shri Ganesh Neelam gave an overview of the various livelihood promotion activities of the Tata Trust. In specific he also highlighted some technology based pilots, which are now being scaled up significantly. For example the “Internet Saathi” program in conjunction with Google, that brings access to Internet to rural women, enabling them to access various sources of information, to see how access to Internet can bring value to their livelihoods. He spoke about the introduction of technology in agriculture and the role that is playing in getting



youth interested in agriculture. He noted that use of technology and innovations helps attract youth into traditional professions, and hence this is an important perspective while planning interventions.

Shri Mahesh Ranade spoke about Yuvaparivartan's experiences in reaching out to large numbers of youth to provide skills training and their experiences in employment, employability of such youth. Since nearly 85% of their work is in rural areas, Yuvaparivartan has had to experiment with different models to effectively reach and serve youth in the Indian hinterland – e.g. mobile livelihood



delivery vans and camps. Setting up of skills training centres based on the NSDC specs in rural areas can be quite expensive, while breaking even is a huge challenge. At the same time, jobs require migration which brings its own set of problems for the youth. He predicted that the future will see a lot of jobs and skilled people required in areas

such as Healthcare (with a rising population, especially as life expectancy grows). India has nearly 2 crore two wheelers on the road. Hence the auto sector will require large numbers of skilled technicians and mechanics to service and repair these vehicles. He noted that “two wheeler plus mobile phone” are now the basic needs of the rural youth. He concluded by saying that skills training will require to focus on Attitude and developing the work ethic amongst youth. If this does not get attention, youth with jobs will drop out, or will stagnate and loose interest.

Smt. Pradyna Godbole of deAsra Foundation (Pune) discussed challenges and opportunities in creating entrepreneurs. The Foundation is focussed on creating job creators. While their work was piloted in Pune, it is now expanding to various parts of the country to achieve scale and an ambitious target. This scaling required digitization and digital enablement of entrepreneurs. In their experience, there is a lot of hesitation to entrepreneurship amongst people. Overcoming this hesitation, removing the myths behind entrepreneurship, helping overcome fear of failure and negative mindset are critical to any effort. At the same time, access to mentors is essential to help budding entrepreneurs stay focussed and not give up. A critical piece of experience shared is that the effort to mobilise potential/budding entrepreneurs is much greater than the effort needed to setup the ecosystem for their development. This is a valuable piece of information for all those in the entrepreneurship development sector.



Finally Shri BR Venkatesh shared his experience in training, developing and mentoring potential as well as budding entrepreneurs – those ranging from graduating students in engineering and diploma, retiring army jawans etc. He asked the delegates to look at entrepreneurship not as a risk, but as a “calculated risk”. This perspective changes how entrepreneurship is viewed and encourages those who want to start their own ventures. Successful entrepreneurship

training needs to focus on finding the “inner spirit” in the individual and to kindle it. Spoon-feeding approaches do not work, hence a hands-on approach is needed. He lamented that entrepreneurship is not acknowledged and recognised as a skill in itself, especially by the NGO community. As a result, many NGOs neither have acquired this skill nor are they able to develop this skill in their community effectively.

In his summary remarks, the Chair of the Panel - Shri Ashok Kalbag – mentioned that jobs will not be scare, however the nature of jobs will keep changing. As long as we focus on learnability and “learning to learn”, skill development will become an inherent capability in people. Therefore strong emphasis is needed on development of soft skills.

The Second part of the STARS Forum event was a panel to discuss developing entrepreneurs and social enterprises for the future. The panel was chaired by Shri Shekhar Potnis, Trustee of STARS Forum. The panelists were – Dr. V Premnath (Director, NCL Venture Center, Pune), Shri Laxmikant Malvadkar (MD, Sakhi Social Enterprise Network), Shri Vivek Sinare (consultant and expert on Entrepreneurship & Skill development) and Shri Mangesh Mithey (Regional Manager, Western Region, Electronics Sector Skill Council).

Dr. V Premnath spoke about Social Enterprises and incubating such entrepreneurs looking to start social enterprises. He emphasised on the environment needed to support entrepreneurs – who typically are faced with many difficulties, challenges and especially nay-sayers. Hence the environment needs to be supportive. He brought out the difference between entrepreneurial businesses and livelihood related businesses. The entrepreneur not just needs capital, but people who believe in the entrepreneur and his/her idea strongly. He brought out the aspect of entrepreneurship viz. it is typically a lonely journey



and hence any organisation/ecosystem helping create successful entrepreneurs needs to account for this – create a home for the “lonely entrepreneur” and provide a variety of services accordingly. Dr. Premnath also covered the types of funding support that are available for entrepreneurs at different stages as well as for different types of

enterprises. More information is available at <http://funding.venturecenter.co.in/>. Addressing the subject of skill development, he warned us about the commoditisation of skills and the ill-effects of the same. We need to provide them with a foundation for retraining so that they can continually train/learn new skills as they evolve and value their trade and knowledge. This becomes even more important when sufficient jobs are not being created to absorb the trained manpower and provide them meaningful occupations.

Laxmikant Malvadkar spoke about his experiences with creating grassroot enterprises and entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs in rural India. He exhorted social enterprises to look at how they are funded, since most organisations are heavily dependent on grants and when grants stop, their



operations are severely impacted. This also becomes extremely important when creating enterprises for communities – it is critical to make them as independent of the creating entity, to make the community members the owners of the enterprise. This requires us to look at them as “stakeholders” and no “beneficiaries”. They need to be given appropriate roles and responsibilities in the enterprise creation, sustenance and governance. In the context of increasing urbanisation and rural-to-urban migration, the need is to focus on creating job creators in rural India, much more than on job seekers from rural India, post skills training.



Shri Vivek Sinare spoke about the paradigm shift taking place in skill development approaches, emerging sectors where opportunities for skills as well as entrepreneurship will come up, and finally on entrepreneurship in context of current economic scenario and future possibilities. Standardisation in skill development by central government authorities, has made an important difference in the experience for students as well as for potential employers. Skills development activities will have to comply with the National Skill



Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards, and students will require to be certified by the appropriate Sector Skill Council. Infrastructure, Construction will require highly skilled technicians to operate sophisticated construction equipment. Logistics, Food Processing, Travel & Tourism, Healthcare

will continue to expand in India and will require appropriately skilled individuals as well as enterprises that will operate in these sectors. He also emphasised that exposure to entrepreneurship needs to be given at early stage to students. Even teaching staff is not adequately aware about entrepreneurship and hence this also needs to be addressed. Lastly he asked all delegates to think about entrepreneurship to help India address the export market.



The final panelist for the session was Shri Mangesh Mithey who briefed the delegates on the various skill development initiatives by the NSDC and Sector Skill Councils, the support that is being provided for setting up skill development centres as well as on existing institutions such as ITIs.

The concluding session of the event was an Open Spaces, where delegates were invited to suggest a topic that they would like to have a discussion upon. The Open Space format enables several small common-interest groups to convene and discuss/deliberate on a subject offered by one of them. It also provides delegates the flexibility to move between different groups and participate in several ones. During the Open Space at this event, the following topics were proposed and discussions in smaller groups were conducted for over 1.5 hours.

Name of Proposer	Topic Proposed
Manish Nair (Rural Caravan)	Developing "Rural Economic Zones"
Manish Puranik	What is appropriate for a Social Audit - HDI or GDP?
Subhash Deshpande (Jnana Prabodhini, Pune)	Psychological Assessment for entrepreneurship aptitude - introducing a tool developed by Jnana Prabodhini
Dr. Sudhir Prabhu	Citizens as change agents - How do we get governments to work better?
Ashok Mathur	We live in a super-abundant society - lets discuss
Ravindra Katre (Syngenta Foundation)	Agri-Entrepreneurship
Nikesh Ingle (Rural Caravan)	Using ICT to document the strengths of a village/community
Pankaj Kanchankar (Satvix Informatics Pvt. Ltd)	How can technology be leveraged in the development sector? E.g Odoo, Bahmni, ODK, Quick Survey, MIFOS etc.
Deepali Akolkar	Developing skills and entrepreneurship awareness/attitude amongst children (Class 8-10)
Sanjay Deodhar	How can we make rural youth employable in technology sector?

