

SKILLS FOR FREEDOM

Newsletter from India

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This electronic newsletter from **PEACE TRUST, INDIA** is addressed to NGO's, Social Activists, Media, Opinion makers, Leaders and Bureaucrats for improving their understanding on skilling the youth for gainful employment and addressing social issues like modern slavery, child labour, migrant labour, un-employability of youth. We also send this to people who we believe are involved in improving the migrant worker's conditions. You are welcome to unsubscribe yourself, if you so choose.

-EDITOR

Peace Trust is a Non Government Organization working on Child Labour and Bonded Labour issues since 1984. It has also focused on Migrant workers rights and Anti Trafficking of Person issue since 1999. Facilitating decent employment of youth is taken up.

- o Peace Trust's Skills for Freedom is the only solution to end Modern Slavery in Tamil Nadu. It is on decent and skill based effort for enhancing the employment opportunities of rural youth in Dindigul, Karur, Tiruppur Districts.
- o Reduce the risk for Young Workers - Peace Trust is actively involved in Initiative to "Support School Education, Health Protection, Livelihood Development and Skill Training for Gainful Employment among Vulnerable Young Population in Dindigul District".
- o SPSC Vocational Education & Employment Facilitation Centre provides access to vocational education and employment facilitation for rural poor youth in Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur District Tamil Nadu and Karaikal District, Puducherry.
- o Peace Trust also provides training for Quality Teacher Education and gainful employment to young women from resource poor families in Dindigul and Karur District.
- o Peace Trust has also been broadcasting Pasumai FM community radio.
- o Peace Trust is actively engaged in building the capacity of youth aspiring for Government, Public Sector, Bank job
- o Peace Trust is providing guidance for higher studies to 17+ youth.

The views expressed are not of the donors but a compilation of field realities for the purpose of sharing and action. The News Letter is for academic purpose to understand Human Resources and Skill Education.

The Skills for Freedom e-newsletter is published by:



PEACE TRUST

Lifting up the least, the lost and the last...

Peace Trust

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We partner with



MIGRATION

Good and bad immigrants:

You can travel as an Indian tourist across all of Italy — Rome, Venice, Milan, Bologna — knowing to speak only a little bit of one language. Not referring to Italian, but Bengali. The country is full of Bangladeshi immigrants, all of whom are a particular type. They are male, they are young (from their mid-20s to their early-30s), they usually have a similar physical type (they are small, thin and dark).

One other thing they have in common is that they are all very hardworking. The ones who have come recently and have no capital to do anything and little other support sell things on the street. To tourists they sell selfie-sticks, little plastic helicopter like toys, cold water, temporary raincoats and things like that. Others, who have been there for longer and perhaps have some paperwork, are waiters and chefs, and some manage stalls selling food and other items that are owned by Italians.

To be away from your home and from your networks, to be in a foreign land is not easy for any of us, and all humans are essentially the same. It is the very rare Italian-Bangladeshi who does not want at some point to return to his homeland, and who is completely happy in Italy, even though it offers him a little more opportunity to make a living.

They come from towns and villages where there is a lack of local opportunity, and they have to do physical work in the US. This meant cleaning rooms and doing the sort of work that middle class Indians would never do. Ownership of places is something that only the minority of Patidars in America have.

This is usually the case with most immigrants. These days in India and the rest of the world we are dealing with another kind of immigrant, the refugee. Whether the Syrian or the Rohingya, this individual is fleeing violence of the most extreme sort. The war in the Middle East was begun by the United States and Britain and then joined in by other European nations like France. However, they have almost washed their hands of the consequences of their actions. America, which has always seen itself as a distant place protected on both sides by vast oceans, does not have to live with the consequences of its actions. It can wage wars in Korea and Vietnam without having to bring these wars back home.

By often seeing the global photo feed of news services to see what is happening around the world. It will shock most readers to see visuals of the extreme violence that Syrians are being forced to flee. Why do we have such little sympathy for such people? Is it because we view their religion in a particular light?

The coldness with which the Indian government has responded to the brutality against the Rohingya is disappointing. Do we disbelieve the reports of crimes against them by the state of Myanmar? Do we believe that they are all leaving their homes to come to India because they enjoy living in refugee camps? We must be quite delusional to assume that. Do we think, as our government seems to think, that these people are a terror threat only because they are Muslims? It is remarkable that we should have such a crude outlook towards the world and other human beings.

This government has already made a serious mistake because it does not properly think about such things. It announced a policy that it would only accept refugees from the minority communities from Pakistan and Bangladesh. In doing so, it announced more or less that Indians would only welcome non-Muslims. Myanmar is a Buddhist nation that is oppressing its Muslim minority. What happens to our policy now?

As a great democracy, we must be responsible and uphold the rights of those who come to us seeking shelter. Everything in the Hindu faith tells us that this is obligatory on us. We will be total hypocrites if we take pride in the immigrant Indian communities (many of whose individuals are illegal immigrants) but look on immigrants from other nations as being terrorists and those who are out to live off our resources.

There is a Rohingya in all of us

By contemplating deportation of the hapless refugees, India undermines itself. The timing could not have been more immaculately disastrous. At a time when Rohingya are being forced to flee the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state, in the Supreme Court this week the Centre refused to revise its stand on deporting Rohingya immigrants in India. It was in effect adhering to its position taken on August 9, when the Minister of State for Home Affairs informed Parliament that 40,000 Rohingya were to be deported. With that, the idea of India, the India of democracy and hospitality disappeared in a single stroke. A dream of India disappeared in a single moment. The marginal life of the Rohingya became a greater nightmare. The Government of India has returned to an idea of hard state, dropping its dreams of compassion, care and civility. Behind the tragedy of the decision will be a nit-picking bureaucracy and the security think tanks, convinced that an aspirational India does not need a defeated people like the Rohingya.

Most persecuted minority:

In many ways, the Rohingya represent "the last man" of international society that Gandhi talked about. They are the world's most persecuted minority. They are Muslims, belonging to the Sunni sect, scattered mainly over the Rakhine state of Myanmar. Harassed by the Myanmar Army and forced to serve as slave labour, they have also been systematically persecuted by the Buddhist majority. The persecution of the Rohingya also highlights the silence of Aung San Suu Kyi, destroying another myth of ethics and human rights. A woman whose campaign for human rights won her the Peace Nobel now stands embarrassingly silent in case her broader political strategies are affected. The dispensability of the Rohingya is clear and so is the callousness of the nation state. India can no longer criticise the West for being hostile to Syrian and Sudanese refugees. The Rohingya situation has been bleak for years. The turning point was the attitude of the Burmese military junta which cracked down on them in 1982, contending that Rohingya as late comers were not part of the original ancestors of Burmese society. Denied an autonomous cultural status, they lost all claims to the entitlements of citizenship. They were denied not only access to health, education but also any claim to the idea of citizenship.

A slow exodus

Persecuted by the army and the Buddhist majority, they began a slow exodus over India, Bangladesh, spreading to States such as Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, moving as far as Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Their exodus has once again a cynical side to it as agents arranged for their travel. These touts of international suffering arranged for their travel at exorbitant rates. The Rohingya became temporary boat people as Bangladesh shut its borders on them piously condemning them as drug peddlers. The Rohingya then attempted to cross into Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia only to realise that fellow Islamic nations had little sympathy for them. The no-welcome sign was clear and categorical. Each state would react piously, claiming to have fulfilled its humanitarian quota. It was also realistically clear that unlike the Syrians, the Rohingya, as a tiny speck of the refugee population would hardly be front page news for a sufficient length of time. At the most their memories would survive in a few PhD theses in international relations. The refugee has always been an enticing topic for PhDs.

The odd thing is that the genocide, the vulnerability of such a people is often lost in bureaucratic issues of legal and political status. It is not clear whether Rohingya are refugees or illegal migrants. As refugees they are entitled to some care; as illegal migrants they become subject to harassment and exploitation. Refugees become a target for an informal economy of bonded labour.

Union Home Minister Kiren Rijiju already sounded the warning signals in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha. He was clear that the Rohingya were illegal migrants. He was cited as claiming in an interview that the Rohingya "have no basis to live here. Anybody who is an illegal migrant will be deported." Yet one wonders whether in terms of humanitarian law and the conventions of the UN, Mr. Rijiju is right. This is a group that is threatened with continuous persecution, whose homes are unsafe, whose livelihoods have been

destroyed. To be forced to return to Myanmar would only subject them to harassment, ethnic persecution and a genocidal future.

Being human

One is grateful that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which often plays the Rip Van Winkle of human rights, responded quickly. On August 18, it issued a notice to the government over its plan to deport Rohingya staying illegally in India, asking the government to report in four weeks.

The Commission added hopefully that the Supreme Court had declared that fundamental rights are applicable to all regardless of whether they are citizens of India. Yet such appeals to rights and humanitarianism cut little ice in today's bureaucracy which is obsessed with security issues and content to raise the bogey of terrorism and law and order when it comes to such a helpless people. The NHRC came up with a memorable line that Rohingya refugees "are no doubt foreign nationals but they are human beings."

It is clear that the everydayness of Rohingya life must be miserable. They face the challenge of survival and the prospect of persecution if they return to Myanmar. One need not hide under legal excuses. What India confronts is a case of ethics, a challenge to its understanding of citizenship and freedom. If we abandon the Rohingya, we abandon the idea of India as a home of refugees and hospitality. A country which offered a home to the Parsis, the Tibetans, the Afghans and the Jews cannot turn a little minority of helpless people back. One hopes civil society protests, challenging the indifference of the state. It is not just a question of saving a beleaguered people, it is question of saving the soul of India. The idea of India is being threatened today. Should civil society remain mute and indifferent? There is a Rohingya in all of us.

Over 180 migrants storm Morocco-Spain border post

More than 180 migrants stormed a border post between Morocco and the Spanish territory of Ceuta on Monday, careering through with agents unable to stop them, authorities said.

"They entered at five in the morning running through," a spokesman for the Central government's representative office in Ceuta told AFP, adding there were 187 people in total.

In a safe haven

Footage of the incident broadcast on local television showed the migrants from sub-Saharan Africa sprinting over the border from the Moroccan side while it was still dark. Once on Spanish soil, they celebrated, raising their hands in joy to the camera, one man kneeling on the floor.

Ceuta and Melilla, another Spanish territory on Morocco's northern border, have the EU's only land borders with Africa. As a result, they are entry points for migrants desperate to get to Europe and who regularly try to climb the high border fences, swim along the coast or hide in vehicles crossing the frontier.

A police spokesman, however, said this type of border-crossing attempt — sprinting through manned posts — was very rare. "It's been a long time since we've had any attempt of this kind here," he said. The migrants who reached Ceuta were eventually rounded up and taken to a reception centre, where they can apply for asylum in Spain.

“Toxic debate in U.K. demonises immigrants”:

Britain has become less tolerant since the Brexit vote,” says a report. | Photo Credit: Getty Images
Anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia make it harder for new-comers to integrate with British society, warns a report

A “toxic” debate on immigration in Britain is hindering integration in Britain, with rising anti-immigrant sentiment and the “demonisation” of new comers, a scathing report by a group of cross-party parliamentarians has warned.

“The poisonous nature of our immigration debate, far from encouraging people to integrate into the life of our country, increases the likelihood that new comers end up leading parallel lives... anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia are making it harder for immigrants to become full members of British society,” warns the

report, “Integration Not Demonisation” by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, chaired by Labour MP Chuka Umunna.

Peddlers of hatred:

“We must act now to safeguard our diverse communities from the peddlers of hatred and division while addressing valid concerns about the impact of immigration on public services, some of which can contribute to local tensions,” he said on Friday. “We must start by valuing the contributions of all ethnic and minority communities to the U.K... rather than being seen as security risks, immigrants should be viewed as Britons-in-waiting keen to participate in their community,” he added.

The report sets out 56 policy recommendations, including compulsory English teaching for all and greater power for local government to promote integration.

Overstaying students:

The report comes a day after the government faced criticism for vastly overestimating the number of international students overstaying their visas. New figures showed that just 3% of international students overstayed, compared to the government’s initial estimate of nearly 100,000, which had been used by the government to justify a tough immigration regime for students, in spite of calls from universities, opposition parties and even Conservative cabinet members to ease the rules.

The debacle has also been seen as an example of how incorrect figures and assumptions were being used to inflame and misinform the already highly emotionally charged debate on immigration in Britain. The report points to increasing concerns from immigrant communities in Britain about the shift in the political debate.

Less tolerant:

“Sixty-two per cent of second generation migrants feel that Britain has become less tolerant since the Brexit vote,” says the report. “We must act radically now at this crucial juncture in our nation’s history to craft a new immigration and integration policy settlement to bring our brilliantly diverse country together.”

Trafficking

Free children from chains:

India and the world need a multi-dimensional strategy to stop human trafficking. Ideas have legs. So do human beings. When ideas are chained, we desecrate the very fundamentals of freedom. When human beings are chained, we desecrate the fundamentals of humanity.

One of the monumental milestones for mankind is the abolition of slavery. But while we have won many decisive wars against slavery and bondage, we haven’t succeeded in completely vanquishing this degrading and dehumanising practice. What is ironic is that the world today has the largest number of slaves at any point of time in history, even medieval or colonial.

Let us remind ourselves of some sobering and deeply disturbing facts. More than 21 million people across the world are victims of trafficking. They are de facto 21st century slaves. While sexual slavery and forced labour remain the major drivers behind trafficking, shocking new trends have emerged. At least 10 nations have reported that trafficking has been related directly with organ harvesting. This is now a \$32 billion a year business according to the UN.

But humanitarian agencies reckon that it has surpassed drugs and arms as the largest criminal business in the world with an annual revenue of \$150 billion. Women and children constitute 71% of the victims. How can any civilisation allow this atrocity to continue and flourish?

Another alarming trend is that the line between migration, refugee crisis and trafficking is becoming very thin. It has been consistently noticed that the geographical paths and routes of trafficking bear striking resemblance with those of migration. The increasing scale of both natural and man-made disasters, particularly

armed conflicts and civil wars, is creating a whole new generation of refugees who are becoming victims of trafficking gangs. Syria is a stark reminder of this trend.

Clearly, law enforcement agencies in developed countries as well as global bodies tasked to check trafficking need much more coordination and cooperation. Moreover, the international community – by incorporating abolition of trafficking and all other forms of modern slavery in a time bound manner in UN Sustainable Development Goals – has agreed this crime has wider negative implications on economic growth and development. Realisation of these goals requires will, resources and action at national and international levels.

India has not been immune to this global scourge. Official data indicates that close to 20,000 women and children were trafficked in India in 2016 but the real numbers could be far higher. More than 1,00,000 children go missing every year. Almost half of them are never traced. Most of the untraced children become victims of human trafficking, slavery, begging and prostitution rackets.

Since most victims of trafficking belong to poor and marginalised families, hardly anyone, including police personnel, paid much attention to these family tragedies. But a historic Supreme Court judgment of 2013 based on a petition by our movement Bachpan Bachao Andolan has directed the state to act promptly and effectively. Yet, trafficking and slavery continue to flourish in India.

And the stories are tragic. We had rescued 13-year-old Malvika (name changed) from Gurgaon. She was trafficked from a village in West Bengal with promises of good wages. Her life was hell after that. In two consecutive homes where she worked as a domestic help, Malvika was treated like a slave with the employers routinely beating her. In both houses, she was raped repeatedly by drivers. Malvika is lucky that she was rescued and is back with her family. Hundreds of thousands of victims like her have not been as lucky. What can we do in India to stop the barbarity against young girls like Malvika?

For starters, we need a strong law against trafficking. Despite endless debates and repeated pleas by civil society groups, stringent anti-trafficking laws have not been passed by Parliament. Nor have state governments taken meaningful measures to stop this atrocity. It took almost 19 years for India to ratify the ILO conventions that prohibit the worst forms of child labour. Let us not drive hundreds of thousands of innocent children into cruel and miserable lives of slavery by indulging in such unforgivable delays.

We as citizens too need to play a more proactive role by refusing to keep our eyes and ears closed. We must protest and report cases of suspected trafficking victims in our neighbourhoods. That is a moral imperative. Equally important is the need to target the economic roots behind trafficking. It is states like Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam and Odisha that still witness extreme poverty that report the most cases of trafficking.

Apart from vastly improved awareness and law enforcement, what India needs to deal with trafficking and slavery is economic opportunities. When poor families earn enough to feed themselves, they become less vulnerable to criminal gangs. When incomes of poor families improve, their children go to school instead of seeking work. When children go to school, their chances of being trafficked and sold into slavery diminish dramatically.

For 70 years or so, India has not ensured economic security to a large number of its citizens. Of what help is India becoming an economic superpower if hundreds of millions remain in poverty with their children vulnerable to predatory traffickers?

TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN

Charge listed in parliamentary report

Immigration officials at Nepal's international airport are colluding with traffickers to illegally send Nepali women to the Gulf, where they are often exploited and abused, said a parliamentary report released on Tuesday.

The parliamentary committee tasked with international relations and labour rights said the government had failed to protect Nepalis working overseas and turned a blind eye to allegations of trafficking.

More than 60% of Nepali domestic workers who end up illegally in the Gulf travelled through the main airport in Kathmandu, the report said. “[They] travel on tourist visas via Tribhuvan International Airport in direct collusion with immigration officials, airline company staff, security officials and the traffickers.”

False promises

“The rest travel via different cities in India, Sri Lanka, China and various African countries,” the report said. The women are lured to Gulf countries on promises of well-paid jobs. Instead, they are sent to work in private homes where their passports are usually confiscated.

Peace Trust took part in Interim of Working Group meeting on 20th and 21st September at Calcutta organized by Change Mantra.

Bonded labour

Freed bonded labourers plead for power connection

JAIPUR: A cluster of about 70 families in the Sunda Chainpura village of Kishanganj block of Baran district have sought the intervention of engineers of the electricity supply department in getting themselves electricity connections. Recently, a group of them met assistant engineer Dinesh Kumar Meena and handed him a petition, seeking that the state government expedite their electricity connections.

This cluster of homes belong mostly to people who were rescued from bonded labour about four years ago. Villagers said they have raised the issue with local authorities in the past too, but have found no relief. "What option do we have but to keep trying in the hope that the government will hear our pleas?" asked Ramswaroop Sahariya, one of the people who went in a delegation to meet the engineer.

In 2014, the World Bank reported that India is home to the largest number of households with no electricity connection. It was also the year that BJP leader Narendra Modi held out the promise of reliable electricity supply across the country, while campaigning for the office of PM.

Engineer Meena assured the delegation that he would look into the matter and acquaint seniors with the need for electrifying the village.

Among those with complaints at the office of Meena, social activist Firoz Khan said, were at least 21 people who said that their electricity connections had been cut months ago, but the bills had not stopped coming. One of those waiting, Badri Lal, said, "My electricity connection was cut not months, but about four years ago. I still receive bills."

There were about 10 people from Ganeshpura village who too had continued receiving electricity bills even though they no longer had functional electricity connections.

Engineer Meena said, "A survey is underway in the area, and households with no electricity connection will be granted these expeditiously under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grammen Jyoti Yojna. As for people still receiving bills although connections had been cut, I think the cases of these cannot be very large. We will do a check of the physical bills in all these cases and do what needs to be done."

Woman nose slit off as she refuses to work as bonded labour:

“The matter is serious. The woman was being forcefully taken for bonded labour. A strict action will be taken against the accused,” MPWC member Lata Wankhede said.

In a shocking incident, the nose of a woman was allegedly slit off at the Renvjha village in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district by two people named Narendra Rajput and Sahab Singh as she, along with her husband, refused to work as bonded labourer.

Reportedly, when the woman was taking her husband to the hospital for treatment after the accused allegedly beat him for denying doing household and field work, the attackers cut off the woman's nose. The woman, Janaki Dhanak, was immediately admitted to the Bundelkhand Medical College and was in a critical condition.

The Madhya Pradesh Women Commission (MPWC) has taken cognisance into the matter and has ordered Sagar's SP to begin the investigation into the matter.

"The matter is serious. The woman was being forcefully taken for bonded labour. A strict action will be taken against the accused," MPWC member Lata Wankhede said. The incident came to light yesterday, when the woman went to a camp organised by the MPWC to hear complaints of breaching of women's rights.

SKILLS

NEET: Government assurances, poor standards to blame

CHENNAI: The suicide on Friday of an Ariyalur student after failing to secure a medical college seat based on her [NEET](#) scores has triggered a severe backlash against the state government. While many blame the state education board's 'lack of standards' that left thousands of students struggling at the national level exam, several have slammed the government for raising huge expectations (that ultimately turned hollow) through its almost non-top assurances on securing exemption from NEET. The fact that Ariyalur resident S Anita, a state board student who moved the [Supreme Court](#) against conduct of the national test, managed just 86 of 720 in NEET despite scoring 1,176 marks of 1,200 in the Class XII exams shows the state board syllabus in poor light, say experts.

The multiple curriculum changes effected recently are good but seem to have come a little too late, feel educationists. These steps should have been floated two years ago, when the idea of NEET was floating, they added, pointing to a gap of more than a decade in the change of syllabus for Classes XI and XII.

Instead, all through the last academic year, government chose to provide continuous assurances on getting exemption and was supported by statements from Union ministers like Pon Radhakrishnan and Nirmala Sitharaman.

"The matter of NEET is becoming a political issue and the government cannot play with students' lives by raising false hopes. It must categorically tell students that NEET will happen and should not make the same mistake again," said educationist Jayaprakash Gandhi, adding that had had been acquainted with the suicide victim.

"[Anitha](#) couldn't afford a coaching fee of Rs 8,000 in Trichy due to travel and accommodation issues and instead chose to stay back in her town and attend a local coaching centre. I blame the Centre too as provision of long gaps between the board exams and NEET is only creating differences in accessibility to coaching. Students from rural or economically backward backgrounds cannot afford to pay lakhs and enroll for coaching so they naturally lose out to many others who can afford it," he said, adding that NEET must be conducted immediately after the Class XII board exams.

Until last year, medical admissions in [Tamil Nadu](#) were conducted based on Class XII marks, with state board students scoring very high. Tamil Nadu is also known for churning out toppers, especially in the western belt like Namakkal, Erode and Krishnagiri.

Earlier this year, school education minister K A Sengottaiyan announced that the state would be scrapping the rank system for students that was leading to huge competition, and focus on rote learning rather than conceptual learning.

The education department has now taken up a slew of measures to improve the board's standards recently and is attempting to bring them on a par with those of national boards like the CBSE.

TOP COMMENT

What should those who have better talent than her and do not have the privilege of being an SC, ST or minority do.. this is what reservation has done to society.. admission to medical should be merit

The measures include revision of syllabus across classes, forming committees for syllabus and curriculum framework, conducting teacher training programs, and introduction of board exams at the Class 11 level starting from the current batch of students.

The revised syllabus is set to take place from 2018 to 2021 in phases starting from Classes I, VI and IX in the coming academic year.

Upskilling is the deciding factor:

Business battles are fiercely fought and won not in markets, but training rooms. With the advent of smart phones, cloud computing and social networks, even the everyday and mundane aspects of our lives have changed dramatically. The way we book our tickets for an outstation journey, plan and organise our stay, hail a cab, buy groceries, look for a restaurant, plan a visit to a friend and conduct many other day-to-day activities has changed.

Similarly, almost every business process has been deeply impacted by digital technologies. Various functions carried out across the organisation by employees, right from the CEO to the junior-most executive, have undergone a sea change. For communication, social media, video, online notice boards, chats and webinars are used extensively. Online tools are used to invite vendors, compare proposals and place orders.

All functions in the company, including human resources, finance, sales, manufacturing, supply chain and after-sales services, are performed with almost complete reliance on IT tools. Therefore, employees should be savvy in using IT tools. Asking employees to take advantage of IT tools and deliver more in terms of volume is the order of the day. Upskilling and retraining employees have never been so important as it is now.

Naturally, this need is felt the most in the IT sector, where engineers have to constantly learn new technologies and apply them in solving business problems. However, in all other sectors too, upskilling is necessary to reduce the cycle time and increase the number of tasks employees do on a typical day.

Upskilling is not easy:

The technological changes around us have been rapid. While trying to keep pace with them, we face many challenges. One, learning ability varies from person to person. All organisations do not have the bandwidth to retrain employees to enable them take on new tasks.

Upskilling is not about getting people to attend a training programme. One of the major impediments to upskilling is making employees accept the fact that the training is for their good and they must use the acquired knowledge to take on more responsibilities. For these programmes to succeed, leaders have to drive this change from the front.

As the pace of conducting business has increased greatly, organisations tend to look for ready-made talent. At times, they look for an instant solution, pretty much like having a noodle in two minutes. They run a few training programmes and hope that their employees would be able to deliver the expected results immediately after the training.

Patience is a virtue, but not found aplenty because of the extraordinarily high demands on the business. Hence, this is the biggest impediment companies will encounter on the path to upskilling. When an organisation lays off employees whose skills are outdated, there are many hidden costs such as the cost of recruiting a new person, inducting and training him or her, besides the severance pay. Apart from these costs, the performance of new hires may pose a risk to the company's reputation.

If the employee is willing to learn and apply the newly-acquired skills, the leadership must create an environment in which the employees know what is coming and get a fair chance to explore the opportunity of acquiring new skills, take on new challenges and get updated with the times they live in. The leadership must be transparent and build an environment of trust between the employees and their managers such that the need of upskilling does not come as a shock. It's highly desirable that the employee sees the need of upskilling and looks for avenues to stay relevant. Organisational culture plays an important role in this area.

Govt to set up vocational training institutes in Punjab, 5 other states

Centres to boost skill development opportunities among women. Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday said his ministry is in the process of setting up six Regional Vocational Training Institutes (RVTI) in various states with an aim to boost skill development opportunities among women.

The minister was in the Hyderabad city for the foundation stone laying ceremony of a RVTI.

"To ensure this (women training and empowerment), we have a target of setting up one RVTI in each state. MSDE is presently running 17 such institutes across India. Apart from Hyderabad, six new RVTIs will be established in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, Patna, Goa and Tamil Nadu," Pradhan said in a statement issued during the inauguration.

Skill training exclusively for women is being provided through the network of 11 central government institutions and 1,408 state women ITIs and women wings in general ITIs and besides this, 30 per cent of the seats in general ITIs in most of the states are also reserved for women, he said.

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, who laid the foundation stone for a RVTI in Hyderabad said, skill development benefits India and also contributes to economies across the world as there is a huge demand for skilled workforce world over and it is a right to reap our demographic dividend and bridge this demand-supply gap. Naidu also e-inaugurated and launched training at Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras at Etah (Uttar Pradesh), Phulpur (Uttar Pradesh), Singrauli (Madhya Pradesh), Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) and Dhar (Madhya Pradesh) from here.

"Through skill development, we will not only empower our own country and its industries but also contribute to economies across the world. There is a huge demand for skilled workforce world over and it is the right that we reap our demographic dividend and bridge this demand-supply gap," said Naidu.

Naini Narasimha Reddy, Minister of Home, Labour and Employment, Telangana and former Minister of State for Labour and MP Bandaru Dattatreya also spoke in the meeting. Once established in its new permanent building here, around 1,000 trainees would be trained here every year. The Hyderabad RVTI is expected to cater to the vocational training needs of 480 women annually in regular courses under Craftsmen Training Scheme and Craft Instructor's Training Scheme. Around the same number of candidates would be trained under various short-term courses in skill areas having a high market demand, the release said.

Environment

U.S. report warns of drastic impact of climate change:

Scientists say they fear Trump administration may change or suppress findings. The average temperature in the United States has risen rapidly and drastically since 1980, and recent decades have been the warmest of the past 1,500 years, according to a sweeping federal climate change report awaiting approval by the Trump administration.

The draft report by scientists from 13 federal agencies, which has not yet been made public, concludes that Americans are feeling the effects of climate change right now. It directly contradicts claims by President Donald Trump and members of his Cabinet who say that the human contribution to climate change is uncertain, and that the ability to predict the effects is limited.

"Evidence for a changing climate abounds, from the top of the atmosphere to the depths of the oceans," a draft of the report states. A copy of it was obtained by The New York Times .

The authors note that thousands of studies, conducted by tens of thousands of scientists, have documented climate changes on land and in the air. "Many lines of evidence demonstrate that human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse (heat-trapping) gases, are primarily responsible for recent observed climate change," they wrote.

The report was completed this year and is a special science section of the National Climate Assessment, which is congressionally mandated every four years. The National Academy of Sciences has signed off on the draft report, and the authors are awaiting permission from the Trump administration to release it.

Effects of climate change:

The report concludes that even if humans immediately stopped emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the world would still feel at least an additional 0.30 degrees Celsius of warming over this century compared with today. The projected actual rise, scientists say, will be as much as 2 degrees Celsius. A small difference in global temperatures can make a big difference in the climate: the difference between a rise in global temperatures of 1.5 degrees Celsius and one of 2 degrees Celsius, for example, could mean longer heat waves, more intense rainstorms and the faster disintegration of coral reefs.

Among the more significant of the study's findings is that it is possible to attribute some extreme weather to climate change. The field known as "attribution science" has advanced rapidly in response to increasing risks from climate change.

Scientists say they fear the Trump administration could change or suppress the report. But those who challenge scientific data on human-caused climate change say they are equally worried that the draft report, as well as the larger National Climate Assessment, will be publicly released. NYT

The scary side of linking our rivers:

The reports in the press indicate that the government is all set to begin the project on interlinking of the Indian rivers, starting with the Ken river, considered as water surplus, linking it with the Betwa river in drought-stricken Bundelkhand. The interlinking, when completed, would end up changing the natural drainage and river morphology of India forever, on a scale the world has never seen.

Admittedly, the project has emanated from good intentions, as river linking is considered a sure-shot panacea for the perennial water shortages in drought-stricken regions, and hugely beneficial to the farmers, a vulnerable section exposed to the weather's vagaries. The project's Himalayan component envisages channelising Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers through dams and canals facilitating connectivity to the water-starved regions in the west. The peninsular component plans to connect the Godavari, Krishna and Mahanadi rivers to transfer their water to drier areas in the south, besides the intra-state links. It will be the largest man-made scheme for river diversions, obfuscating a geologically-evolved drainage system. Man has indeed become a geological agent.

The idea may have originated from the pre-Independence thoughts of M Visvesvaraya, an icon among Indian engineers, and subsequently expanded by another visionary engineer, later to become the Union Irrigation Minister, K L Rao, who euphemistically called it the 'National Water Grid'. By the start of the 1980s, it re-emerged from the Ministry of Water Resources as 'River Interlinking Project'. An order issued by the Supreme Court on 31 October 2002 to expedite the project work so as to complete it within a mind-boggling deadline of 12 years, in response to a Public Interest Litigation, came as manna from the sky for its votaries.

In response, the government with rarely-seen alacrity appointed a task force to conduct detailed technical studies. It is claimed the land under irrigation will expand from 140 million hectares to 175 million hectares and the project will generate 34,000 megawatt of power, apart from the incidental benefits like flood control, navigation, water supply, salinity and pollution control. It seems an honourable proposition, but is fundamentally flawed primarily because it will generate huge uncontrolled human-induced disequilibrium in the natural hydrographic systems and destroy associated ecological niches forever with incalculable repercussions for the long-term well-being of the society as a whole—an unpardonable disservice to future generations.

The world is becoming water-stressed and India, with its huge population, will witness great suffering. We may also have to factor in the consequences of climate change that will complicate the issue further. Would river linking bring a permanent solution to drought conditions and per capita water availability? The answer is negative, contrary to the assumptions of a section of engineers or the ambitious politicians (or the wily contractors out to make a killing). From the perspective of economics, the available numbers suggest the construction cost alone is `5.5 lakh crore, probably not including the social, environmental and operational costs.

We may have to agree with the critics when they question the efficacy of implementing such a mammoth project without a strict peer-reviewed open assessment of its techno-economic feasibility. There is no

substantial technical data put out to verify the official claims on water surplus in any river. The fact is there is no “free” surplus water in any river; simple arithmetic rationalisations like tapping the ‘water lost to the sea’ do not take the eco-hydrological perspectives into consideration. The proponents fail to see the eco-service dimensions attached to such questions.

Flood water is not to be rationalised as ‘surplus’, but needs to be seen as carriers of minerals for land fertility, recharge for the groundwater and a promoter of biological diversity, thus supporting the livelihood of millions of marginalised people. Other eco-services of ‘surplus water’ include flushing of the silt from the riverbeds to the coastal waters to form deltas (e.g. Sunderbans in Bengal) and hindering the saline incursions. It is not clear how the nation’s declared commitment to the mitigation of human-induced climate change and river manipulation go hand in hand.

Rather than rely on questionable methodologies, alternate cost effective and ecologically sensible ways of water conservation need to be explored. For example, in the Ken-Betwa region we still find vestiges of traditional ponds for water harvest; why not reinvigorate them? Such methods have met with reasonable success in many parts of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Previous projects on river channelisation elsewhere, particularly in the US, are proven failures.

The canalisation of Kissimmee river, authorised by the US Congress to mitigate flooding in Florida in 1954, turned out to be an environmental disaster. It has now been realised that this damaged the river and also resulted in the loss of wetlands. Massive resources are being spent to bring the river back to its original configuration. What happened to the Aral Sea located in Central Asia is a telling example of how the region became a howling desert because of the diversion of the rivers that fed it.

Why repeat projects of river engineering that have proved to be monumental failures even in developed countries? Before initiating such massive water-transfer projects it is imperative to prepare a comprehensive report based on an interdisciplinary study of the river basins, as expressed in a memorandum submitted by a group of eminent citizens to the PM on 22 April 2003. Despite our spiritual reverence for rivers, we do nothing to protect them. The Indian rivers have become open sewers. The river interlinking project will be the final nail in the coffin for the dying rivers.

Child rights

The child’s right to dignity:

Neither is all sexual contact with children rape nor should there be a blind exemption to sexual violence within marriage. Recently, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court heard a petition on the constitutionality of the marital rape exception in the IPC (Exception 2 to Section 375). The petitioners pointed to the contradictions between the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act), which defines “child” as a person below 18 years, and the marital rape exception in the IPC, which states that sexual intercourse between a man and his wife (who is not under 15 years) is not rape. The Bench apparently inquired whether the court must intervene to provide protection to married girls between 15 and 18 years from sexual exploitation by their spouse, given the legislative intention to exempt marital rape from prosecution.

The technicality is easily answered because the POCSO Act does not carve out any exception in favour of marriage. The legislative intention is also evident from Section 42A of the POCSO Act, which provides that in case of inconsistency with the provisions of any other law, the POCSO Act will override.
Disjunction between law and reality

The marital rape exception under the IPC has not prevented the police from registering cases under the POCSO Act when the victim is above 15 years and is married to the accused. Studies by the Centre for Child and the Law at the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru have revealed that the victim was married to the accused before or during trial in 19% of the cases in Delhi, 8% in Assam, and 6% in Maharashtra. The percentage of cases in which the victim was in a “romantic relationship” with the accused, including marriage, stood at 29% in Delhi, 20% in Assam, and 21% in Maharashtra. In almost all the cases, the special courts acquitted the husband or boyfriend because the victim turned hostile, or her age was not proved, or she stated that the marriage was consensual.

The higher judiciary has largely taken a lenient approach in such cases. The Gujarat High Court in *Yunusbai Shaikh v. State of Gujarat* (2015) quashed the FIR against the accused under the IPC and POCSO holding, “[the victim] is admitting... that she had accompanied the applicant on her own free will and... since she was in love with the applicant and the applicant also loved her, they decided to get married.” It added, however,

that proceedings under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) should be initiated against the person(s) who performed the nikah, since the PCMA being 'special law' would override 'general' personal laws. The Gauhati High Court in *Jahirul Maulanav. State of Assam (2016)* quashed the chargesheet against a man who had allegedly raped a minor. Since the victim was his wife and had borne his child, the court felt that to continue criminal proceedings would defeat the ends of justice. However, the Karnataka High Court faced a case (*Soni Nihal v. Sri. Sandeep Patel, 2017*) with nearly identical facts and observed that the "criminal proceedings initiated for the alleged offence [rape] cannot be quashed."

Acquittals are the norm as Section 42A of the POCSO Act is not aligned with the social reality of normal sexual exploration among teenagers and the belief about the sanctity of marriage held by most judges, prosecutors, and the police. A few Delhi judges held that a strict interpretation would interfere with the autonomy of teenagers. Many special courts felt the parties were married, and it would be unfair to punish the man for what appeared to be a consensual relationship.

The POCSO's approach fails to recognise the autonomy and evolving capacity of children, particularly adolescents. Parliament and the Supreme Court need to consider the South African Constitutional Court's conclusions in *Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children v. Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development (2013)*, in which provisions that criminalised consensual sexual conduct of adolescents between 12 and 16 years were held unconstitutional. At the same time, the government and courts cannot be oblivious to sexual violence within personal relationships. CCL studies show that courts do not consider whether the minor consented freely, or the child was groomed by the accused, or whether the marriage was forced.

Demands for strict construction of all sexual contact with children as rape and the blind exemption accorded to sexual violence within marriage are both incompatible with the constitutional guarantee of a right to life of dignity and protection against violence. An acceptable exception would only be one that is premised on respect for adolescent children's right to physical integrity and freedom of expression with safeguards against grooming, force, coercion, and exploitation.

Swagata Raha is senior legal researcher (consultant) & Shraddha Chaudhary is legal researcher, Centre for Child and the Law, NLSIU, Bengaluru

Satyarthi starts 'war' against child abuse, trafficking

Rally for a cause: The 36-day Bharat Yatra was flagged off at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanniyakumari on Monday. The 36-day Bharat Yatra will cover 11,000 km across 22 States



Declaring that his all-out war against child trafficking and sexual abuse has started, Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi kicked-off his 36-day 'Bharat Yatra' from the southern tip of the country towards New Delhi, the national capital, on Monday.

"This is not just a yatra towards New Delhi... It's a historic and determined attempt to make India safe for our children as 40 children are raped everyday in the country.

"We cannot be silent spectators as our silence is breeding more violence against innocent children.

"So it's a decisive war against child trafficking and sexual abuse, a moral epidemic, to make the country safe for our children," Mr. Satyarthi said minutes before Union Minister of State for Transport, Highways and Shipping Pon. Radhakrishnan flagged off the rally at the imposing Vivekananda Rock Memorial in the presence of District Collector Sajjansingh R. Chavan.

Living in fear He said while the victims and their families were living in fear, the rapists were fearlessly roaming around freely and it should not be allowed to continue. The nation should not allow the rapists to kill the innocence, smile and the freedom of the children and not let the parents of these victims live in pain, helplessness and trauma for the rest of their lives. The word 'freedom' would assume greater significance only if the children's rights, safety and security were guaranteed and all forms of violence against children were eradicated.

"My war to end all forms of abuse against children has started today. Are you with me?" asked Mr. Sathyarathi, an active campaigner for the freedom, safety and security of the children for the past 36 years. Terming child trafficking and sexual abuse of children as the 'largest organised crime', Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his message on 'Bharat Yatra', had said all forms of violence against children should come to an end by creating awareness among the public on this issue. Well attended.

Though it was a hot and humid forenoon, a good number of enthusiastic students from various schools and colleges joined the activists constantly raising slogans against child trafficking and sexual abuse.

The yatra is aimed at increasing awareness and reporting of the cases, strengthening institutional response including medical assistance and compensations, ensuring protection for the victim and the witnesses during the trial of the case and increasing convictions in child sexual abuse cases.

The yatra, after covering 11,000 km across 22 States, will end in New Delhi on October 16.

In Tamil Nadu, the yatra will pass through Madurai, Salem, Vellore and Chennai.

After the yatra was flagged off, the rallyists reached the venue of the inaugural function, where several religious leaders addressed the gathering.

Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman of Peace Trust is the TamilNadu State Coordinator of Bharat Yatra and was actively involved in mobilizing in TamilNadu.

Sathyarathi's Bhrath yathra team in Dindigul to protest against child abuse and trafficking:

On September 4th "Bharath Yatra", a huge mass of children, activist and young people from the team of Nobel Laureate Kailash Sathyarathi, founder of Sathyarathi Foundation arrived Dindigul at the heart of the town near Periar Statue and protested against child abuse and trafficking. This historical marked programme was organized by Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman of Peace Trust is the TamilNadu State Coordinator of Bharat Yatra. An oath was taken to stop this child abuse and trafficking. Many schools and college students participated enthusiastically and the program greatly captivated by the Dindigul people and mostly the youths.

This programme hit its space in various tamil outlets some are;

PEACE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

II year students are sent to Teaching Practice in various school on 1st August 2017.

11th Inauguration day was celebrated on 2nd August. Vice Principal Mrs. M.Prema, honourable chairman cum Principal Dr.J. Paul Baskar, addressed that a good teacher should train and develop his/her skills during the training period. The importance and activities of NACC, NCTE and NCERT knowledge were given.

AGGS Brain Storming Session: Groundwater Concerns

AGGS Brain Storming Session was held on August 5th, 2017 in Peace College of Education, Dindigul on Understanding **the Groundwater flow regime in Hard rock region due to variable climatic and drought conditions**. The programme was organized by Association of Global Groundwater Scientists(AGGS) and Peace Trust with the collaboration of RVS College of Engineering and Technology, SSMIET and ABC Polytechnic. **Dindigul District Revenue Officer P.Velu** was invited as the Chief guest. About 15 experts who were working on the groundwater exploration, assessment and management were Participated and presented their study on above aspect. Around 100 progressive farmers participated and they have a conversation session with the scientists too. Farmers requests and issues were noted and the seminar was much more useful for them.

This programme was given importance in Tamil outlets:



71st Independence Day Celebration:

Independence day was celebrated in our campus on 15th August with all our students and various competitions were held. Mr.Prabhu, I year history student delivered a power point presentation on the problem faced by the women in the society.

Pasumai 90.4 FM

On the National Library Day, a discussion was held with Dr. Ramasamy, Librarian MVM Girls Arts and Science College. Awareness about the use of utilizing library was given to everyone.

Also 71st Independence day was celebrated in our FM in special.

Pasumai 90.4 took part in the Panel discussion of Community Radio organized at Pondicherry. Dr.J.Paul Baskar shared his experience in establishing and running Community Radio Pasumai CR in Dindigul District.

Community radio in India :A Panel Discussion with Input from Pasumai Radio:

History of Radio

In 1923 the Bombay Presidency Radio club started broadcasting in India, soon to become the India Broadcasting Service in 1930. In 1936 the All India Radio was born. All India Radio became known as Akashvani in 1957 due to its wide reach and its aim to connect India. But did it succeed in doing so? Broadcasting remained government owned and top-down based rather than connecting people from below and giving voice to the people itself. However, in 1995 the Supreme Court of India ruled that '*airwaves are public property*' which changed the radio landscape ever since. It took however many years before the first community radio's were installed and even today the amount of community radio stations is nowhere near the promised 4000 stations. In 2006 policy guidelines for community radio were met with approval. In 2007 the government promised the creation of 4000 community radio stations, but until 1.11.2016 only 200 community radio stations are operative and most of them are run by educational institutions.

Educational Centres

The word 'community radio' suggests a radio created by and for a specific community, and differs hereby from public and commercial radio stations that often overlook certain populations and geographical regions. Community Radio's are non-profit and mean to give voice to specific local communities, sharing relevant news, stories, music and information that contributes to the development of those communities. The first community radio in India, established in 2004, was in fact a campus radio in a well known educational institution. In 2008 out of the 38 established community radio stations, 36 were operated by educational institutions and only 2 were run by NGOs. The transmission range of these educational radio stations had a radius of around 10-15 km and mainly aimed to the the campus population itself. An educational radio station can be a bottom-up empowering tool for students to express their voices and create radio that is of importance for their lives, however it can also be used in a top-down approach and then merely functions as a tool for the educational institution to reach their audience with their own interest and goal in mind. For a community radio to be really of importance for a community participation of the community in creating the radio content is important.

NGOs

The same concern remains with the community radio's run by NGOs, and one has to question whether it is the NGO or the community leading the radio. Good examples however do show NGOs using radio to enable local

communities to speak out and to create awareness on rights and social issues. Radio can be hence of transformative power for local communities. According to the policy guidelines of 2002 at least 50% of content has to be generated with the participation of the local community, for which the station has been set up and programmes should preferably be in the local language and dialect(s). It is however a cumbersome process to attain permission to set up a community radio. NGOs, including community based organisations, civil society, voluntary organisations and charitable trust must have been registered under the Societies Act or any such act relevant for the purpose for at least three years. Transmitters can only be purchased from, at the moment, 3 authorized vendors, leading to high costs (and delay) of equipment. The transmitters cannot reach beyond 12 kilometres, although the current equipment often does not reach further than 7. This limited reach does however not have to be a disadvantage since it might prevent monopoly players and allows for multiple community radios, if the government would make it more easy to set up such radio stations. Community radios have proven to be of paramount importance in connecting people, reaching them in their own local languages, providing information, creating awareness and developing communities. Participation is the key and local people have to be trained in how to make radio in order for the CR to be real participatory. Nepal, a small country with only a fraction of the population of India, has over 260 community radio stations and a much more flexible policy in setting up radio stations. India with only 200 stations still has a long journey to go!

Challenges

Besides the previous mentioned challenges of obtaining (and renewing) a license, a process that has to pass five ministries and can take a very long time, the difficulty to obtain transmitter equipment, funding of community radio's remains problematic. Community Radio's are allowed to use 5 minutes per broadcasting hour for advertisement, but often this is barely sufficient to cover running costs of operating the radio, while it also demands extra work power and skill to draw advertisers. Furthermore, the equipment is often very basic and a professionalization of materials is desirable, making it more easy to for communities to cover live events and include voices of local people through the use of e.g. mobile phone recordings.

Pasumai FM 90.4

Peace Trust has been running Pasumai Community radio since 2007 which was one of the first phase community radio stations in India. Pasumai FM covers 25 km of radius and is primarily focused and owned by the community people. It has been operated in the blocks of Athoor, Rediyarchatram, Sanarpatty, Vedasandur and Dindigul for the people, by the people and about the people. The total population covered is approximately 7,5 lakhs and primary listeners are mainly unorganized labourers and students. Pasumai FM also broadcasts through internet, running a web Radio meant for Tamil Migrant Workers in the Gulf and the South East Asian countries with the same content.

Pasuma Community Radio performs three main significant functions at the grass root level for environmental protection and social development. Firstly, it promotes issues of environmental resources, agriculture, gender equality, education, trade and commerce, disaster, weather, natural calamities, poverty and social problems. Secondly, it enhances the capacities of local people to work together to tackle a range of environmental and

social problems. Lastly, it contributes to the nurturing of the creative talents of the community and provides a forum for a diversity of opinions and information.

Pasumai FM is aired 18 hours a day. Local musical programmes are interwoven with recreational programs and verbal presentations are given on social issues as for example child labour and human rights. Furthermore lessons are presented on e.g. health and hygiene, farming and HIV/AIDS while also featuring children's programs. Telephone conversations rope in 100 listeners a day and special programs, as well as live programs, are conducted to create awareness on a wide range of issues.

Listeners have responded overwhelmingly positive on the programs of their community radio and give constructive feedback to improve the quality of the station and radio Pasumai FM continues to create radio with and for the local community!