

# 'DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND' IN SOUTH ASIA?

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INDIA

**PMAC**  
PRINCE MAHIDOL  
AWARD CONFERENCE **2026**

**Navigating Global  
Demographic Transition**  
through Innovative Policy: An Equity-Centered Approach



# CONTEXT – ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTH ASIA

- 30% of the world's total number of adolescents - 10-19 years - (340 million) - largest population of young people 10-24 years – (360 million) in the world (UNICEF)
- Over 30% youth not in school, employment, or training, 49% being female youth
- Significant skilling and employment challenges caused by
  - insufficient resources and investments,
  - poor quality, high drop-out rates in education,
  - conflict and recurring disasters,
  - rapid urbanization and
  - new technology that depresses labour markets.





## CONTEXT

- Aspirations of youth not matched by opportunities leading to youth frustration and unrest eg. Uprisings in Bangladesh, Srilanka and Nepal
- Ingrained social norms propagate gender inequality and marginalization of young people, especially of girls.
- Child marriage, early pregnancies, unequal access to learning and skills serious concerns for girls
- Women, children, young people – especially girls – disproportionately affected by climate-related hazards, forced displacement, sexual exploitation, and WASH-related vulnerabilities.
- Health Concerns: Malnutrition, anaemia, obesity, mental health issues (suicide, self-harm), substance abuse, and injuries (road accidents)



# ISSUES WITH SOCIAL POLICIES – CASE STUDY OF INDIA

- Several policies and programmes eg. Youth Policy 2024, Adolescent Health Strategy 2014, RKSK Programme (Health), School Health Programme, National Education Policy, Skilling programmes
- BUT... lack an intersectional approach eg. Young people with disabilities, gender diverse young people require special consideration
- Policies and programmes are not gender transformative
- Programmes fail to address specific needs, e.g., boys' sexuality-related concerns not addressed in RKSK, Adolescent Friendly Clinics
- Laws and programmes at conflict with each other – eg. POCSO Act (2012) and RKSK, MTP Act and RKSK
- Data systems do not capture vulnerabilities





मेरा भी पढ़ाई का

अधिकार है।

*I, TOO, have right  
to EDUCATION*

# OTHER IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Education – poor quality, human resources issues, privatisation of education – adverse gender impacts
- No Comprehensive Sexuality Education – poor body literacy
- Youth employment across major economic sectors and forecast by 2030 indicate that most of the growth in jobs among youth is observed in agriculture and allied activities, which majorly absorb unskilled and low-skilled labour forces. (Wada Na Todo. Governance Report. 2025)





Education is my 'RIGHT' for  
better prospects  
BUT  
Work is my 'NEED' for survival

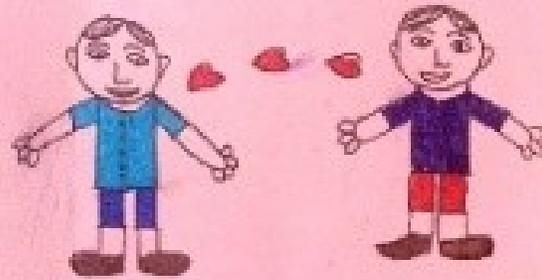


# WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

**To reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, countries must increase investments in adolescents and young people**

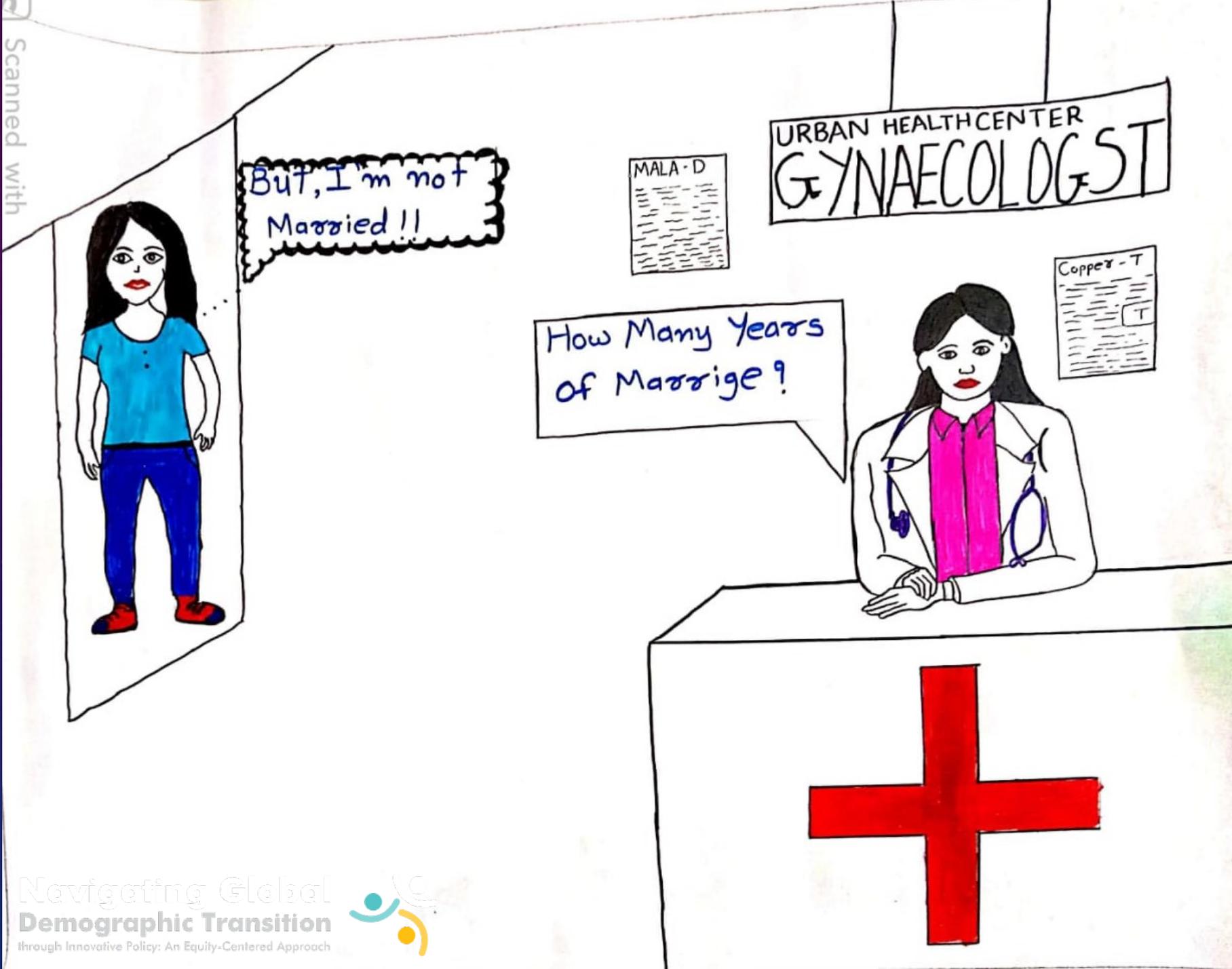
- Meaningful engagement of young people in design, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes to institutionalise regular user-centric feedback
  - Create institutional frameworks and architecture
- Policies and programmes that emphasise inclusion - intersectional and gender transformative
- Harmonisation of various dimensions of social policy - laws, policies, national strategies and programmes
- Body literacy, sexuality education, value-based education – constitutional values, empathy and solidarity, nurturing the planet
- Intergenerational dialogues
- Attention to mental health issues of young people





I SUPPORT  
MY LGBTQI+  
FRIENDS







Help me out of these STRESSORS, for my MENTAL WELLBEING



# RIGHTS FOR ALL- EQUALITY, EDUCATION, RELIGION AND EMPLOYMENT



मेरी पुराण के बनावर एक दिनामे की  
ने चल रही है न जलो कथ से।  
एक बात में कहना चाहती हूँ  
आप अश्व से।

जमाना बदल है, यह कहकर  
नो जाने कितने प्रतिबंध  
असो हैं भ्रष्ट पर।

भारत को उंचेरे में भी  
जब चयन सुकनी में लखीक।  
अभंगता तो लखी दीखी  
अस नही अताफना भुझे कोई दखीक।

सिक जाबुल नही दिना अफता  
असु अमानता का अखिकार।  
असो लिपु असरी है  
असकीर्ण अमानिकता का अखिकार।

धर्म नो अघिअर



शिदाश नो अघिअर



देश नो जघाअ व्यक्तिसे  
शिदाश नो तथा डोअपल  
भलि तथा धर्म नो पाडवागी  
अंधूर्ण अघिअर से.



*“ South Asia has great potential for young people's democratic participation, as in most countries, there is an enabling civic space. Evidence from this region shows that girls' and boys' equal participation in defining the priorities of local governments not only fulfils their right to participation; it can shift the focus to the needs of young people, such as protection, safety, learning, and job opportunities. ”*

UNICEF 2024



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Thanks to

*The wonderful, energetic SAHAJ team*

*The adolescents and young people who give me so much hope*

Thank you

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