

Global Young Indian Professionals and Students Conference (GYIPS)

India Empire

‘Exploring Spaces for Young Indians in Government’

July 3rd 2010, India International Center (Annexe), New Delhi, India

Objectives:

- 1) Given the desire of young Indians to actively learn and participate in the policy making process, the event tried to explore different pathways for them to work in the government space, both at the central and state levels.
- 2) The event was also used as a platform as a platform to launch and debate the idea of a fellowship program—Management and Leadership Fellowship (MLF) in Government—that would seek to attract outstanding young men and women to Government service for a period of two years.



Organizing team (from left to right):

Mr. Ankur Singla, Mr. Sayantan Chakravarty, Mr. Anirudh Suri, Ms. Priyanka Sinha, Mr. Farhan Naqvi, Mr. Ankit Wadhwa, Mr. Rajika Seth, Ms. Swati Sahni, Ms. Gazal Kalra,

Volunteers: Sukriti, Kavish, Shiva, Bhasham, Suvidhi, Puneet

Panel 1: Perspectives of Young Indians in Government

Moderator: Mr. Laxman Narasimhan, Director, McKinsey & Company

Panelists: Mr. Mukhmeet Bhatia, IAS, OSD to MoS for Finance, Mr. M.S. Srikar, IAS, PS to Mr. Nandan Nilekani, Chairman, UIDAI, Mr. Varad Pande, OSD to Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Dr. Shah Faesal, IAS, Topper UPSC Examination 2009.



Mr. Narasimhan addressed the panel by articulating the philosophical and practical underpinnings for the conference – the search for meaning among young Indians and the desire to “make a difference differently”, and the need for establishment of a “revolving door” between the private-public-social sectors for young Indian professionals similar to that which exists in the American context. He then proceeded to question the panelists to elucidate spaces for young Indians in governance.

Mr. Bhatia was sought to address possibilities for mobility from the government as a member of the civil services, reasons for his choice of sabbatical to the social sector (The World Bank) and his learning from working outside the government. He noted that the government is quite open to mobility when it concerns study leave (after 9 years of service). He himself acquired an MPA/ID from HKS on a study leave with scholarship from the World Bank that required him to be back to his home country for 3 years. He then worked with the World Bank for 1 year and also with the UK govt.’s Department for International Development. He mentioned that 7 years of service to the social sector were permitted in his government service. His lessons from working outside the government included reaching a “work-life” balance, acknowledgement of intensive, open and consultative judgment of employees in the social sector unlike in the public sector.

Mr. Varad Pande, himself not an IAS officer was asked to share his experience and

perspective as holding a space in governance. He began by listing different avenues for individuals to create an impact: working for ministries, influential think tanks, consulting firms and advocacy. He also indicated that failure to implement policy should be mitigated by efforts to engage activists, citizens and civil society. Speaking on his position as an OSD to Jairam Ramesh, he mentioned that it involved willingness to take a risk and take a financial sacrifice on his part. He was also lucky to be assisting a minister who saw things differently and discuss new ideas. He also acknowledged that there was only an ad-hoc structure to work like him. On being further inquired whether his position required a certain temperament, he highlighted that it involved good communication and interpersonal skills, the ability to work in a hierarchical environment and patience. He specifically mentioned that respect to additional secretaries, joint secretaries and secretaries in the IAS needed to be given for effective coordination and implementation of policy suggestions.

Mr. Srikar was asked to share his experiences from working with a private sector executive coming to government, Mr. Nilekani. He mentioned that the UIDAI was an example of a combination of technocracy and bureaucracy, and that professionalism from corporations and willingness to see new ideas brought from outside the government were being instilled in the government in this specific project. He examined some prejudices that exist against the government – slow inefficient management, ingrained hierarchy and stagnation or unwillingness to see ideas from outside, and he recognized that some of these contained the truth. He then mentioned that introducing the volunteer policy, internship policy and sabbatical policy in the UIDAI were attempts to resolve these problems of the government to eliminate monopoly of government over knowledge through acquiring a mix of external and internal expertise for the project. He drew similarities between these avenues for young Indian professionals in UIDAI and the potential ML fellowship, which would attempt to get professionals into “core of a functioning”, work through hierarchy to disengage hierarchy. He cautioned that such a proposition would require clearly laid out expectations, mechanisms and supervision.

Mr. Faesal was asked why he chose this path (IAS) vs. the others (Doctor at a government/private hospital). He began by citing a personal example where he treated his patients but his patients were too poor to be able to afford treatment and that he would pay them to get X-rays done. He indicated that this led him to be interested in creating an impact on the poorest. He affirmed that his idealism and search for meaning were significant motivations behind his decision to join the IAS. He further justified his decision by elucidating that it was the government that addressed questions of access,

equity, justice and fairness. After all, the corporate sector cannot be an agent of change at par with the government.

The question and answer session began with concerns being raised over what would be a realistic ambition for impact through it. Mr. Bhatia indicated that from the demand side, the government, there is a need for institutional mechanisms, mentors and acceptability for the role to be played by a fellow in order for the fellowship to be worthwhile. Mr. Srikar added that a guiding principle to the supervisor of the fellow would need to be institutionalized to ensure maximum impact and that accountability mechanisms would also need to be devised for the fellows. Impact could happen both at the policy level in Delhi as well as in the field at the district level. There could be direct attachment of fellows to MPs, ministers and civil servants and a resultant improvement in leadership capacity. The field exposure could be rather valuable to a fellow, although later Mr. Pande clarified that other avenues such as NGOs in remote district are preferable avenues to engage in grassroots work and gain such exposure. Mr. Srikar elaborated that bureaucracy was not limited to civil servants and that it extended right down to the village level with panchayats. This creates possibilities for having fellows at different levels in the bureaucracy chain, which would ensure exposure to different paradigms of policy implementation. Mr. Pande also spoke to the question of impact of young Indian professionals as ML fellows by expressing faith in research and analysis capabilities of such professionals and the value addition that would take place in policy framing thanks to their presence.

The concern over “impact” was furthered by concern over political interference in policy making and the resulting obstacles to contribution by private players. While acknowledging that there were no real answers to this question, Mr. Bhatia mentioned that the Right to Information Act was one existing tool to reduce these obstacles. Mr. Pande added that “finding a champion” would be another way to overcome this problem; members of the National Advisory Committee could be approached. Towards the end of the discussion, a reconciliation of the ideals of the fellowship with the realistic framework within which it would operate took place. Mr. Pande said that “best should not be the enemy of the good” when it comes to setting expectations for the impact of the fellowship. Mr. Bhatia added that the fellowship was to be as much about experience as about impact.

Panel 2. Discussion of the Management and Leadership Fellowship Program in Government

Moderator: Mr. Laxman Narasimhan, Director, McKinsey & Company

Panelists: Mr. Karan A. Singh, IAS, Protector General of Emigrants, MoOIA, Mr. Anirudh Suri, MPA-MBA'11, HKS-Wharton, Ankit Wadhwa, Gazal Kalra, Jindal Foundation



The second panel extended the discussion from the previous panel by bringing specifically the MLF into foray. The GYIPS vision and framework of the fellowship were explained. The fellowship has come at a point where there is both demand and supply of fellows. It draws inspiration from the Whitehouse Fellowship Program and the Presidential Management fellows program.

Individuals below 32 years will be considered for the fellowship. Students from all academic disciplines with at least a Bachelor's degree, possessing Indian citizenship, will be eligible to apply for the MLF. Preference however, will be given to individuals with an advanced degree and previous work experience. Commitment and interest in public management will also be required of fellows who will be attached to multiple government agencies, including mission-mode organizations. The employment of fellows at government agencies at district-state-centre level and in the political fraternity of MLAs/MPs will be supplemented with leadership development institutes, workshops, mentorship and a global social network. The fellows will be salaried by the government. A cohort of private sponsors, both individual and institutional donors, will fund supplementary activities. Multiple pathways will be available to former fellows post-fellowship, where they are likely to apply skills and knowledge they acquired during their

fellowship.

During the question and answer session, the fellowship was discussed from the demand perspective and the supply perspective. From the demand perspective, there is a need for individuals with ability, competence and integrity at multiple levels (several parts of the value chain) to generate impact. Ms. Kalra pointed out that critical research and analysis of policies and prioritization would be some potential contributions of fellows leading to transformation at the district level. With institutionalization and legalization of the program, outputs and deliverables generated will be useful irrespective of regime change. Mr. Suri clarified though that providing continuity in policy would not be one of the objectives of the MLF. An institutional capacity including funding will need to be built to ensure sustenance of the MLF. From the supply perspective, it would be better for fellows to be employed in projects they have previous experience, interest and passion in. This is likely to magnify impact. Concerns about opening the MLF to non-English speaking Indian youth were also raised.

The conference was concluded with a vote of thanks by Ms Swati Sahni, where she acknowledged and thanked all participants, speakers, the organizing team as well as India Empire to have come together in making the event a success.

About GYIPS

Global Young Indian Professionals and Students (GYIPS) is a group aimed to develop a stronger community of young Indian professionals and students around the world, with the aim of furthering their professional development and facilitating their contribution to India's political, social and economic development. Founded in 2009, it has over 900 members worldwide and chapters in several cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, London, Washington DC, New York, Boston and San Francisco.

Our members come from a very diverse range of professional and academic disciplines such as law, engineering, IT, management, public policy, banking, media, and urban design. Similarly, the range of organizations and academic institutions represented within our organization spans a broad spectrum.

Our members have studied at universities such as Harvard University, Wharton School, Stanford University, IIT, IIM, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, National University of Singapore, Cambridge University, and London School of Economics. Our members work at organizations across all sectors, including the Government of India, McKinsey & Company, Goldman Sachs, Center for Policy Research, Public Health Foundation of India, Pratham, PRADAN, Basix, and many others.

To advance its mission, GYIPS has launched several initiatives such as regular professional and social events to promote greater interaction amongst its members and the creation of structured professional engagement opportunities between GYIPS members and various organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors in India. Most recently, GYIPS has proposed the launch of a Fellowship – the Management and Leadership Fellowship in Government (MLF-G) – to provide structured avenues for young professionals to work in Government for a period of two years. More information about GYIPS can be found on our website: www.globalyips.weebly.com.