Strengthening trust in Science & Technology – 3rd May 2023, for online publication (663 words)

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I am honoured to speak on behalf of Global Vision India Foundation.

"अनेकसंशयोच्छेदि, परोक्षार्थस्य दर्शकम् ।
सर्वस्य लोचनं शास्त्रं, यस्य नास्त्यन्ध एव सः ॥" (Sankrit language, Maha-subhashita-samgraha)

Meaning "Science is the only eye, it blasts many doubts, foresees what is not obvious.
Science, unbiased pursuit of truth, is the only path to find facts."

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on every aspect of our lives, from health to education, the economy, and social interaction. It has exposed vulnerabilities and inequalities along with conspiracy theories and misinformation in our societies and highlighted the need for global cooperation to address global challenges. Poor communication of evidence-based science and inaccurate portrayal of scientists has been a major challenge.

Global Vision India Foundation has been on the forefront of Research & Innovation for the aftermath of Covid-19 as it is critical in building a more sustainable future. The support from the government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been massive and initiatives taken during and after the pandemic are an example of ensuring that scientific advancements are used to promote sustainable development. India developed vaccines and distributed them in a transparent and evidence-based manner with necessary data shared publicly to ensure trust in the vaccines as public. A comprehensive science communication strategy was built to promote public understanding and trust in science and technology through various media channels. "Maan Ki Baat", a platform to facilitate a direct connection between the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India which recently completed 100th episode and was broadcasted live in the UN headquarters, was used to communicate to the mass population about the ongoing scientific research during and after the pandemic.

Building trust in S&T calls for a global cooperation. The International Cooperation Division of Department of Science & Technology (DST) in India has the responsibility of negotiating, concluding and implementing Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Agreements between India and other countries. As part of India's initiatives to engage with countries to develop S&T partnerships, India has STI cooperation Agreements with 83 countries.

To rebuild and restore trust in science & technology, certain policy frameworks & guidelines need to be formed and implemented. Participation should be encouraged amongst various stakeholders and information communicated across various platforms in a transparent & secured way to engage with public through outreach campaigns. Government support is required to increase funding & investment in health infrastructure, addressing climate change, international collaboration and prioritizing transparency, security, and privacy to strengthen trust.

Another important way to build trust amongst scientists, researchers and public is Open science. A structured framework is required to promote it so that the scientific evidence is accessible to the public. Regular surveys with public about their view towards aftermath of pandemic can help collect data and build frameworks. The pandemic has helped open up more awareness about science and technology amongst public.

Digitization & technology adoption has seen exponential growth during the pandemic due to lockdown and remote working. Technology played a major role in helping sustain businesses during the crisis, reaching out to public and helped keep people connected.

In conclusion, there are several opportunities and policy support that can be reinforced to enhance communication, international collaboration and cooperation and rebuild trust in science & technology to advance SDGs in a post pandemic world. By leveraging these opportunities, we can create a more equitable and sustainable future for all. The best way to predict the future is to create it.

I would like to share Sankrit language quote given by Acharya Charak, Physician (one of the principal contributors to Ayurveda) in ancient India (1st Century CE)

विद्या वितर्को विज्ञानं स्मृतिः तत्परता क्रिया ।
यस्यैते षड्गुणास्तस्य नासाध्यमतिवर्तते ॥

Meaning "Nothing is impossible for those who have these six virtues Knowledge, Logic, Science, Memory, Readiness and Ability to function".