

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots. Several dots are highlighted in red, including those representing India, the United States, and parts of Europe and Africa.

# Combating Youth Unemployment in India

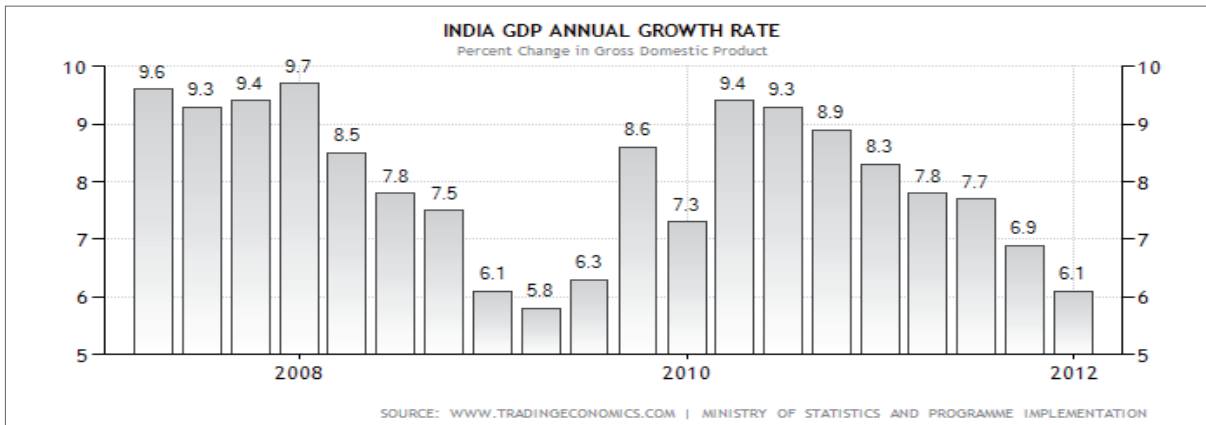
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- Despite its demographic dividend and increased literacy levels, India faces youth unemployment as a major challenge for labour market policy. Young job seekers make up 49 per cent of the total unemployed in India.
- With 93 per cent of the available work provided by the informal sector, a significant number of well-educated youth in India are either unemployed, underemployed, seeking employment or between jobs, or coping with insecure work arrangements.
- India's main challenge regarding youth unemployment is the lack of any form of social security system, as well as proper and adequate avenues for vocational training.
- In an environment of immense opportunities for economic growth, India requires more national as well as international cooperation among different labour market actors (trade unions, vocational training organisations, committees at the national level) to sustain it.



## Content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Indian Labour Market</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Demographic Dividend</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Employment/Unemployment</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Youth and Unemployment</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Reasons for Youth Unemployment</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Challenges with regard to Youth Employment</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Policy Initiatives for Generating Employment for Young People</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Trade Union Initiatives in Combating Youth Unemployment</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>12</b>



## Introduction

India, the world’s largest democracy, attaining independence in 1947, was faced with the twin problems of unemployment and poverty. It adopted the socialist form of development to overcome these problems. Accordingly, it introduced a system of central planning to attain balanced overall growth while fighting poverty and unemployment. However, 3.5 per cent annual growth proved insufficient. In July 1991, by introducing the New Economic/Industrial Policy (NEP) India implemented a fundamental shift in its economic policy, adopting market-led economic development. By dismantling the restrictive policies of the government, the NEP displaced the dominance of the public sector. It released most of industries from the control of the state. The NEP opened up international trade and investment, deregulation, initiation of privatization, tax reforms and inflation-controlling measures. The main objective of the government in adopting NEP was to achieve higher economic growth and to overcome unemployment and poverty.

By 2004, India had become to be known as an information and communication technology (ICT) hub with a huge stock of employable IT professionals. IT qualified Indians can be found in practically all parts of the world. In India, increased activities were also visible in other sectors such as construction, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, garments, trade and tourism. India, within a decade, registered remarkably high GDP growth rates. During the decade following the introduction of the NEP, India’s average quarterly GDP growth was 7.45 per cent, with a historic high of 11.8 per cent in December 2003. Incidentally, the major contributors to the increased GDP were the financial, software and ICT sectors, which employed primarily a young workforce.

By 2008, India had established itself as one of the world’s fastest growing economies, with GDP almost reaching 10 per cent during 2007–2008. However, the 2008 global financial crisis was a major shock that almost left no country untouched, including India. In the following years, large numbers of workers faced unemployment since companies, experiencing falling export orders, could not afford to retain them. India also saw reverse migration of its skilled workforce employed in the developed world. Nevertheless, most of the returnees were qualified young people.

Following the global financial crisis, India experienced declining rates of GDP. Growth slowed significantly to 6.8 per cent in 2008–2009, but subsequently recovered to 7.4 per cent in 2009–2010.<sup>1</sup> The annual GDP growth rate fell to around 6.5 per cent for the 2011–2012 fiscal year and to 5.37 per cent by May 2012. The increasing population of qualified young Indians, on the one hand, and the slowing of the Indian economy, on the other, has caused turmoil among the young as they are unable to find jobs that are decent and matching their qualifications.

## Indian Labour Market

The population of India as of March 2011 was 1.2 billion, 17.5 per cent of the global population. From 2001 to 2011, its population increased by 181 million. About 60 per cent of the population reside in rural areas. The Indian labour market is classified into three segments: (i) rural, which constitutes about 60 per cent of the workforce; (ii) the organised or formal segment, which ac-

1. Economic Survey 2010, pp.1–2.

counts for about 7 per cent of the workforce; and (iii) the urban unorganised or informal sector, which accounts for 32 per cent of the workforce. This means that 93 per cent of workers are in the unorganised or informal sector, self-employed or employed as casual wage labourers, devoid of any effective legal protection. Two-third of the workforce of India is employed in agriculture and rural industries. One-third of rural households are agricultural labour households subsisting on poor wage employment.

India’s labour force makes up about 39 per cent of the total population. According to the World Bank, the Indian labour market in the 1990s was better, despite acceleration in job growth in subsequent years. These conclusions are based on three main facts: (i) a comparison of job growth over two decades – that is, 1983–1994 and 1994–2005 – suggests that job growth was flat at 2 per cent over the long term; (ii) the spurt in employment since 2000 has been accompanied by a marked deceleration in real wage growth and even a decline for many workers, implying that the number of working poor has increased in the past five years; and (iii) low-paying, relatively unproductive, informal sector jobs continue to dominate the labour market (World Bank 2010).

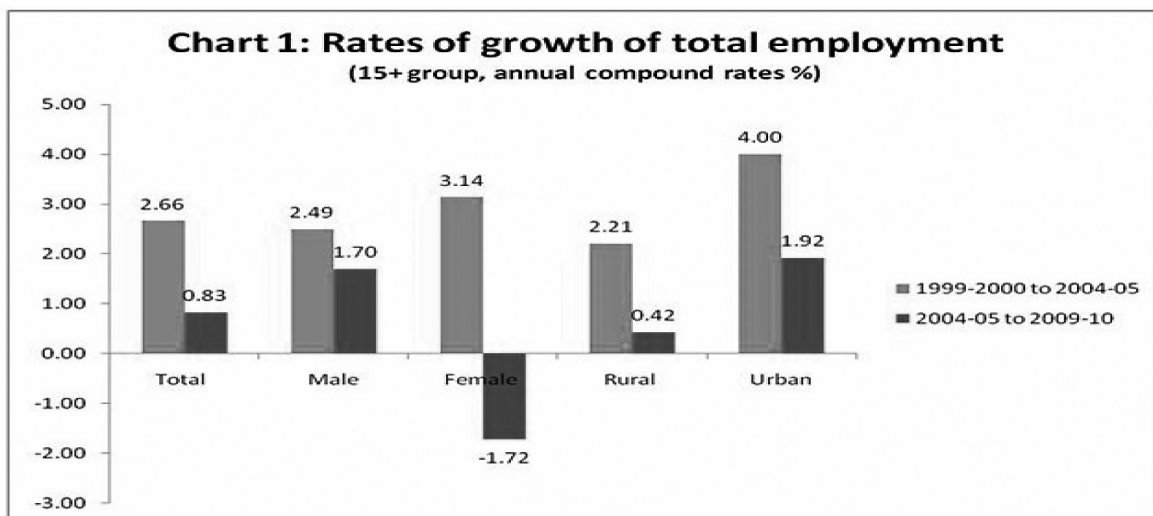
According to National Sample Service Organisation (NSSO) Surveys the average rate of employment

growth from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 was 2.66 per cent, while in the following five years (2000–2005 to 2009–2010), it was only 0.83 per cent. Although there was a general decline in job creation, the biggest impact of the global financial crisis and resultant meltdown of the Indian economy was felt by young people, especially females – female employment experienced negative growth of –1.72 per cent. Furthermore, comparatively speaking, urban youth employment registered the highest growth, at 1.92 per cent from 2004–2005 to 2009–2010, as against 4.00 per cent during 1999–2004. Incidentally, the majority of the youth population is located in rural India and working in low productive agriculture and allied sectors.

### Demographic Dividend

India’s population trend shows that people in the age group 15–65 constitute the majority, thereby reducing the size of the dependent population. It is projected that by 2025 the dependency ratio will fall to 48 per cent, from the current 60 per cent. Furthermore, the 2011 Census, which projected 17.6 per cent growth, was the slowest in the past nine decades. As such, India is seen as being in an advantageous position, despite being the second most populous country in the world. Table 1 gives projections of youth populations.

Figure 1: Rates of growth of total employment (15+ age group, annual compound rates %)



Source: Based on various rounds of NSSO Surveys – the last round being the 66th, the results of which were issued in 2011.

Table 1: Average annual increments in the youth population ('000)

Year	UN Population Database			Registrar General of India		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2001–06	4028.8	2022.6	2006.2	5406.2	3025.2	2381.2
2006–11	2680.8	1330.0	1350.4	3532.4	1670.4	1861.8
2011–16	1312.6	0621.2	0691.8	-212.8	-343.6	0131.0
2016–21	0226.4	0076.0	0150.5	-1857.4	-777.2	-1080.2
2021–26	0045.2	-008.8	0054.0	-1112.0	-290.2	-821.6

Source: World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, available at <http://esa.un.org/> and Planning Commission, Government of India.

However, according to the UN Population Division, the youth population in India will begin to decline from the year 2025, while the official projection based on the 2001 Census of India and the Sample Registration Scheme states that the decline may begin as early as 2015. With a declining dependent population, India has an immense opportunity to grow at a faster rate. This, however, would depend on how India equips its youth to transform them into assets.

## Employment/Unemployment

The dominant features of employment and unemployment in India reflect those in developing countries. There are low rates of unemployment but much higher levels of poverty. In the absence of formal social security protection, remaining unemployed is not a choice for the majority. Consequently, nearly 33 per cent of those employed in 1993 were poor, whereas only 18 to 19 per cent of the unemployed were poor. This implies higher rates of underemployment and low levels of productivity and income. Therefore underemployment is a major challenge in India. Unemployment of educated youth is also a serious problem.

The NSSO's 66th Round data showed that 51 per cent of Indian workers were self-employed: 54.2 per cent in rural areas; 41.1 per cent in urban areas. Although the figures reflect a decline since the last survey the industry and service sectors have not been able to absorb half of the potential workers. Among the employed, the share of casual workers was as high as 33.5 per cent, while that of regular wage/salaried employment was only 15.6 per cent. The NSSO report also shows an increase

of 21.9 million in the number of casual workers, while growth in the number of regular workers nearly halved between 2004–2005 and 2009–2010 compared with the previous five-year period.

Table 2: Employment growth rates (percentage change per annum)

	Rural	Urban
1983–1987/1988	1.30	2.77
1987/1988–1993/1994	2.03	3.39
1993/1994–1999/2000	0.66	2.27
1999/2000–2004/2005	1.97	3.22

Source: Based on NSS employment rates (NSS 38th, 43rd, 50th, 55th, and 61st rounds) and Census population figures and projections.

The Planning Commission of the Government of India (GOI), in its 11th Five Year Plan (2007–2012), also concludes that the Indian economy has failed to create sufficient volume of additional high-quality employment to absorb the new entrants into the labour market. It has also failed to facilitate the absorption of existing surplus labour into the agriculture sector, as also into higher wage or non-agriculture employment (Planning Commission 2008).

## Youth and Unemployment

The National Youth Policy of India defines a »youth« as a person in the age group 15 to 35 years of age. The UN, on the other hand, defines a youth as somebody between 15 to 24 years of age. According to the 2011 Census, youth account for 20 per cent of the total population. However, 84.5 million young people in India live below the poverty line, which is the highest rate worldwide, at 44.2 per cent of the total youth population. There are 44 million Indian youth who are undernourished, which constitutes 23 per cent of the youth population of India.

The work participation rate (WPR) among young people (15–24 years of age) is higher than the overall WPR (all ages) but it has been lower than the WPR of all adults (15+ age) and senior adults (25+ age). This pattern has been observed in the past two decades across locations (rural-urban) and gender (male-female). The WPR

among young people during the past two decades indicates that it has been declining. It declined 9 percentage points, from 55.5 per cent in 1983 to 46.0 per cent in 2004–2005. The decline in WPR during this period was sharper among male youth (11.4 percentage points) in general and rural male youth (12.4 percentage points) in particular, whereas the decline in the WPR of female youth was very minimal. The WPR of urban female youth remained almost constant between 1983 and 2004–2005. The decline in WPR was higher among rural youth compared to their urban counterparts.

The unemployment of young people in the labour market is high, due to their lack of marketable education and skills. The unemployment rate for the youth labour force in India was as high as 8 per cent, according to usual status, in 2004–2005 and it shows an increasing trend. According to the literacy status of the youth labour force, the distinction in terms of unemployment rate between literates and illiterates was significant where the unemployment rate was higher among the literates than that of the illiterates. In terms of the level of education, the unemployment rate was highest among young graduates at 35.5 per cent according to the usual status in 2004–2005. Although the unemployment rate varies with the concepts of unemployment and the level of education of the youth labour force, the difference in the unemployment rate between three alternative concepts seems to be declining from the lower to the higher level of education.

The 93rd Session of the Indian Labour Conference – which discussed, among other topics, youth employment – also concluded that there were many young people who did not have access to decent work. A significant number of young people are unemployed, underemployed, seeking employment, or are between jobs, or working unacceptably long hours under informal, intermittent and insecure work arrangements. They are without the possibility of personal and/or professional development; working below their potential in low-paid, low-skilled jobs without prospects of career advancement; trapped in involuntary part-time, temporary, casual, or seasonal employment; and frequently working under poor and precarious conditions in the informal economy, both in rural and urban areas.

Table 3: Youth unemployment rate (15–29 years of age)

Year	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
1993–1994	9.0	7.6	13.7	21.2
1999–2000	11.1	10.6	14.7	19.1
2004–2005	12.0	12.7	13.7	21.5

Source: Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, NSSO 61st Round Report No. 515 (16/10/1), July 2004–June 2005.

More than 50 per cent of youth reside in villages. Information on the proportion of unemployed youth – as a proportion of total employed – indicates that they suffer from much higher unemployment. According to the GOI, for every non-youth who remains unemployed, there are nearly six young people who suffer this fate in rural areas and seven in urban areas. Furthermore, over the years, young people have increased their share in the group of unemployed. For example, their share increased from 61.3 per cent in 1987–1988 to 65.4 per cent in 1997, while employment for non-youth expanded at a much faster pace (24.7 per cent) than for youth (11.8 per cent). Unemployment declined much less (14.6 per cent) in the case of youth compared with non-youth (65.5 per cent) (Government of India 1998). The unemployment problem in India is primarily one of youth unemployment.

The trends in the youth labour market during the period 1980–2010 were as follows:

- The size of the youth population (15 to 24 age group) increased threefold.
- The literacy rate of the youth population went up from 56.4 per cent in 1983 to 80.3 per cent in 2007–2008; the percentage of young people attending educational institutions increased from 17.4 per cent to 32.8 per cent during the same period; and regarding employability, only 4.9 per cent of young workers had a post-secondary level of education in 2007–2008.
- The self-employed form the majority of youth workers (50 per cent). Casual labourers form the next biggest category (35 per cent). The share of youth in regular salaried/wage employment has increased over time.
- However, the proportion of youth employment in agriculture has declined faster than among adults. It was

54.4 per cent for youth and 57 per cent for adults in 2007–2008. It is interesting to note that the share in the industrial sector increased more quickly for young people compared to services in 2004–2005, unlike for adults.

- Most young people are in the unorganised/informal sector.
- The number of unemployed youth in India increased from 6.5 million in 1993–1994 to 9.5 million in 2004–2005. Out of this, 61 per cent are based in rural areas, of which 70 per cent are males. Unemployed youth make up almost half (49 per cent) of the total unemployed despite the fact that the youth share of total adult workers was only 21 per cent. The rate of unemployed youth to unemployed adults declined from 52.2 per cent in 1993–1994 to 49.0 per cent in 2004–2005.
- Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian youth. However, about 89 per cent of young people do not have any kind of vocational training and among the rest about half have received it through hereditary practices. This indicates a negligible level of formal vocational training among young people.
- Wage levels of the youth employed are lower than those of adults.
- 26 per cent of employed young people suffer from poverty (around 22 million).
- Around 40 per cent of the youth population live in a vulnerable situation. 11 per cent are working poor, 4 per cent are unemployed and 25 per cent are not actively seeking work.
- Youth unemployment is only one of the problems of the youth labour market. Since many young people are in the informal/unorganised sector, the income and productivity of workers, conditions of work and social security have to be improved (S. Mahendra Dev and M. Venkatanarayana).

## Reasons for Youth Unemployment

The economic survey in 2012 stresses that in order to achieve inclusive growth, India must create adequate

employment opportunities: the number of unemployed is large and there are more youth entering the job market. In the absence of detailed data on youth and employment, it is very difficult to pinpoint factors that impede the availability of employment opportunities for them. However, as in other countries, unemployment among young people in India is the highest compared to other age groups.

The reasons include:

### *Shortage of Jobs*

Agriculture has been the dominant sector of labour concentration. Since 1991, the shares of the manufacturing and service sectors have grown faster with regard to GDP and much slower with regard to employment, as working methods became more capital-intensive. According to various estimates, productivity during the period from 2004 to 2010 grew 34 per cent. India's economic growth was thus more due to productivity than employment. In the wake of the limited creation of additional jobs, workers – especially youth – found themselves without jobs. The prevailing situation forced them either to opt for unskilled or casual work in the informal sector or to enrol for further studies. Many who could not afford to go for further education opted for self-employment with extremely low returns. The large number of self-employed or, for that matter, casual workers is an instance of self-exploitation since such workers are without any effective protection.

### *Employability*

In order to take full advantage of the »demographic dividend«, it is imperative for India to transform its labour force into an asset. As of now, only 5 per cent of the workforce have undergone any kind of vocational training, but even many of those are not employable, since the skills acquired have limited market application (Chandrasekhar et al. 2006). Furthermore, India's education system is primarily of a generalist nature and is not connected to the labour market. According to NASSCOM,<sup>2</sup> almost 40 per cent of the skilled workforce is not employable because the acquired education and training are of substandard quality. The GOI recently initiated major work in skills up-grading.

2. NASSCOM is the industry association for the IT-BPO sector in India. A not-for-profit organisation funded by the industry, its objective is to build a growth-led and sustainable technology and business services sector in the country.

### *Skills Mismatch*

India is generally seen as a labour surplus economy with a majority of workers having limited or negligible marketable skills. Furthermore, on examining the situation more closely one finds that India has a lopsided skills stock. On the one hand, a large section of the workforce are not able to get even minimum wages, as made mandatory by the government; on the other hand, there are a few people with marketable skills who are able to demand higher rewards. Recently, there has been increased activity in the acquiring of skills. Young people are attending various technical institutes in large numbers. This can be seen in the information and communication technology sector, which has experienced a huge inflow of IT-skilled workers. In addition, it has caused problems due to the unregulated growth of technical institutions in the private sector and a lack of guidance for youth in choosing areas of training. As a result, an imbalance in the Indian labour market has created a surplus in some skills and shortages in others.

### *Women – Security and Social Restrictions*

The opening up of the Indian economy has created increased employment opportunities for female workers, particularly in IT, retail, travel and tourism. Their full engagement, however, remains restricted due to problems of personal security, biased attitudes of co-workers and social customs. Faced with ineffective protection, young female workers either select jobs for security considerations or prolong their education. Various studies have indicated marriage as a major cause of women workers withdrawing from the labour market.

### *Decent Work Deficit*

India has some of the most developed labour legislation granting comprehensive protection to its workforce. The enforcement of these laws is, however, lacking, resulting in unabated exploitation, especially of those employed in the informal sector. In addition, most of the new jobs are created in private – small and medium-sized – enterprises. Consequently, young workers are deprived of rights that are guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, national/state laws and international conventions. The worst affected are contract and casual workers, who, despite undertaking identical work, are confronted with inhumane employment conditions, including long hours, lower wages, no social security and no right to organise. The absence of a formal social security system also gets in the way of securing effective

enforcement of labour laws and rights, including trade unions.

## Challenges with regard to Youth Employment

In an environment of ever-increasing costs of living and non-existent social protection, a young worker is condemned to fend for him- or herself and also to provide for dependents. In desperation, they accept any job with any conditions that are offered to them. Most of these jobs are without any rights. They are made to work for longer hours, paid much less and can be terminated without any notice. As a result, India is faced with increasing numbers of working poor.

The other challenge that young people are facing is insecurity at the workplace. Regular and continuous forms of employment have been replaced with non-permanent job contracts that involve a specific project or activity for a defined period of time. In the process, workers not only lack employment-related benefits but also the capacity to plan their own life.

As already mentioned, the majority of young people have either limited or no skills. Furthermore, the existing education system does not equip them for employment as it is far from meeting market needs. The avenues of good education and training are few and extremely expensive. Technical institutions in the private sector have been drawing undue benefits from the imbalance by exploiting young people and their parents.

Finally, the flow of information on the availability of training and/or job opportunities is tardy. There is inefficiency in the working of employment exchange, primarily due to the negligible attention paid to updating and sharing information. The functioning of Industrial Training Institutes has also been repeatedly questioned as they have been imparting training that has no market. As a result, young people in India face an environment that is not rendering the desired support. It provides neither affordable opportunities to acquire and/or upgrade skills nor sufficient information on suitable employment opportunities. In the absence of such support and any form of social security, young people, in desperation, accept exploitative employment conditions.



## Policy Initiatives for Generating Employment for Young People

The concerns of young people have always been at the centre of India's policy formation. The Planning Commission of the GOI has stated that the recognition of youth is vital for the community. However, youth unemployment has not received the necessary attention (Visaria 1998). India's first National Youth Policy, formulated in 1988, recognised that the most important component of a youth programme has to be the elimination of unemployment. Considering the limited achievement of the objective of the 1988 Youth Policy, a new National Youth Policy was announced in 2003 that was aimed at »galvanizing young people to rise up to new challenges«. The 2005 National Council for Skill Development (NCS D) targeted skills development as a major national policy. The GOI, through planned investment in skills development, hopes to realise a demographic dividend.

### *Right to Work*

The Constitution of India, under Article 41, provides that »the State shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want«. Article 38 states that the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people; Article 43 states it shall endeavour to secure a living wage and a decent standard of living to all workers. These promises are part of the Directive Principles of state policy of the Constitution of India.

### *Employment Exchange*

The Employment Exchange organisation, operated by the Federal Ministry of Labour, runs more than 900 individual employment exchanges in order to better match demand and supply with regard to work opportunities. Job seekers register with these employment exchanges and are notified as soon as any vacancy in the government sector matches their profile. According to the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act of 1959, in any State or area thereof, the employer in every establishment in the public sector in that State or area shall – before filling any vacancy in any employment in that establishment – notify that vacancy to such employment exchanges as may be prescribed. Employment exchanges play a significant role in assisting young people in finding employment. They also assist them in

starting self-employment ventures through vocational guidance activities. Registering the applications of job seekers and notifying them about vacancies, collection and dissemination of employment market information, vocational guidance for students and young people are the major functions of employment exchanges.

### *Vocational Training*

India needs to train 70 million people in vocational skills over the next five years. In addition, there is a need to retrain another 360 million workers. The government's target is to train 500 million people by 2022, also by encouraging the participation of entrepreneurs and private organisations. The target is high. The workability of the structure that India has developed would depend on the capacity of the people who are responsible for reaching the objectives. Efforts over the past few years have not yielded satisfactory results with regard to the achievement of the objective in a defined period.

Against the background of a huge gap between skills demand and supply, India has taken the initiative to develop a system of vocational training. Under the system, young people are provided with skills-related training. The Directorate General of Employment and Training under the Ministry of Labour of the GOI formulates policies, laying down norms and standards and conducting trade tests and certification of vocational training under the aegis of the training advisory body, the National Council of Vocational Training. The main objective of the scheme is to provide employable skills to school leavers, existing workers and IT graduates.

Youth employability must be increased through skill development and vocational training. The GOI has realised the importance of skills. A Coordinated Action Plan for skill development has been approved by the Cabinet to have a target of 500 million skilled persons by 2022. »A three-tier institutional structure consisting of: (i) the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development, (ii) the National Skill Development Coordination Board and (iii) the National Skill Development Corporation, has been set up to take forward the Skill Development Mission (GOI 2010: 205). This is an important initiative (S. Manhendra Dev 2011).

### *Employment Generation Programmes*

In recent years, Employment Generation Programmes (EGP) have emerged as an important employment policy

tool, particularly in developing countries such as India. This policy package includes a wide range of activities intended to increase labour demand (for example, direct job creation); to increase the quality of labour supply (training and retraining); or to improve the matching of workers and jobs (job search assistance). Significant economic and social benefits are expected to accrue from these measures. More recently, the case for EGPs has also emphasised the potential social benefits in the form of inclusion and participation that comes from productive employment. EGPs can serve equity objectives as well, most obviously when programmes are targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The major programmes that are currently in operation in India are: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).

The MNREGA provides for 100 days of unskilled manual labour per year on public works projects for any rural household member who wants such work at the stipulated minimum wage rate. The aim is to dramatically reduce poverty by providing extra earnings for poor families, as well as empowerment and insurance. If the programme had worked the way it was designed to, then anyone who wanted work would get it. However, an analysis of data from India's National Sample Survey for 2009–2010 reveals considerable unmet demand for work in all States. The extent of the unmet demand is greater in the poorest States – ironically, where the scheme is needed most. Labour-market responses to the scheme are weak. The scheme is attracting poor women into the workforce, although the local-level rationing processes favour men.

## Trade Union Initiatives in Combating Youth Unemployment

Trade unions have been present in India for more than a hundred years. Over the years the Indian trade union movement has grown in size and coverage. Its membership encompasses workers in both the formal and informal sectors. The movement has well-developed structures both industry-wise and geographically. According to the last verification of membership of national trade union organisations, ten of the national trade unions

have been accorded the status of Central Trade Union Organisations (CTUO), with Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) as the most representative body. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) affiliates in India include the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). The politically divided Indian trade union movement has come closer following the global financial crisis. The unions have been jointly working on issues, including those that concern young workers. A United Forum of CTUOs held a convention on 23–24 August 2010 and came up with a ten-point agenda. The Forum met again on 4 September 2012 and re-emphasised its demands, which included ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

Although there are 203.6 million young people in India, the unions still do not adequately appreciate the importance of youth or the need to prepare them for the future. However, some efforts have been made to strengthen the capacities of youth and their committees. Trade unions have, however, constituted youth committees at the national level with separate executive bodies. Their integration in the main decision-making body of the CTUO is still not fully realised. Recently, the functionaries of these youth committees of the CTUO met to develop strategies for securing effective engagement of youth in trade unions.

According to the INTUC Young Workers Council the basic problems among youth workers include widespread fear and insecurity. Insecurity at the workplace is caused by: (a) the contractual nature of employment; (b) denial of statutory employment benefits; (c) the transient nature of employment; (d) social insecurity; and (e) health and safety hazards. It is becoming a challenging job in the present scenario for the working class to keep their employment intact, secure for them and also their dependents. Fear and insecurity have reached the younger generation in the workplace. The INTUC feels that this insecurity extends to the home and the community, creating a loss of confidence among working people.

The HMS Youth Committee has contributed successfully to the growth of HMS and the integration, as well as the participation of young people in union activities. One

3. ILO Convention 87: Convention on Freedom of association and protection of the right to organize; ILO Convention 98: Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention.

project that should be mentioned is the Right to Work campaign. For more than two decades, HMS has been attempting to incorporate the Right to Work clause as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India. The HMS Youth Committee has taken an active role in this campaign and has been organising several educational and agitation programmes, such as rallies, conventions, squatting, postcard campaigns, demonstrations and submissions of memoranda throughout the country.

The SEWA Academy, established in 1992, organizes literacy classes for members. Training programmes help to develop women's self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills. Local women leaders understand the power of collective struggle and organise themselves to take the SEWA movement forward. Training helps women build their capacity, both technical and managerial. They also discuss the importance of women workers in society and the struggle for equality. These training programmes help raise women's awareness levels. They also learn to share information and experiences and develop a sense of pride in themselves and their organisation.


Trade unions have been accorded a prominent role in labour policy mechanisms. At the national level, trade unions – as part of the Indian Labour Conference – actively participate in social policy formulations, including youth policies. Trade union representatives are included on State Boards of Workers' Education, the National Council on Vocational Training and Labour Institutes established by national and State governments. Additionally, the trade unions have established their own institutes, such as the Ambedkar Institute of Labour Studies (AILS) and the Maniben Kara Institute (MKI), aimed at enhancing the professional capacities of trade union functionaries. Through their association with the Global Union Federations (GUFs), Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), trade unions bring in best practice inputs to national policies and programme formulations and implementation. The unions also have bilateral discussions on issues impacting the world of work with employer associations. Recently, the adverse impacts of the global financial crisis – such as job losses due to economic meltdowns – foreign direct investment, corporate social responsibility, vocational training, climate change and green jobs have been subjects of discussion and intense debate.

Trade unions have been pressing employers to respect internationally agreed conventions. Frequent dialogues between employers' and workers' organisations on subjects impacting the world of work are creating a positive environment, but they have yet to make significant changes in the conditions of work for those employed in the informal sector. Longer hours of work, low payments and violations of basic labour rights – including the right to form a union – have been sources of conflict at the workplace. In 2011 alone, India experienced a number of industrial conflicts that were led by young trade union leaders demanding trade union rights and parity in payment of wages between contract and regular workers. Workers' representatives have also been unsuccessful in pressing the GOI to ratify the ILO's core Labour Conventions, including Conventions 87 and 98.

However, the position of the government with regard to ratification of the two Conventions has remained unchanged since independence. Addressing the 85th Session of the ILO, India's Labour Minister said that »we are faced with some technical difficulties in ratifying these conventions [Convention 87 and 98] because of the special position accorded to civil servants who nonetheless enjoy constitutional safeguards and have access to special grievance and redressal mechanisms.« A similar position was taken by India almost a decade later when its Labour Minister said »to ensure impartiality and political neutrality, some reasonable restrictions have been imposed on public servants, and it is because of this technical reasons that we are unable to ratify these two core conventions.« Again, during a Parliamentary session in 2011, the Labour Minister expressed the GOI's inability to ratify the two conventions.

## Conclusion

We live in an increasingly interdependent world. There is growing awareness of this following the global financial crisis from 2008 on. The ever-increasing size of the youth workforce, both skilled and unskilled, in an environment of job scarcity means more young people are faced with limited employment opportunities, causing them to be either underemployed or unemployed. Indian youth, in the absence of any formal social security, is thus faced with the challenge of survival and limited growth prospects. To check unemployment among the youth in India, various measures have been initiated. In-



India has introduced a number of employment-generating schemes, including those under MNREGA. Similar policy initiatives have been taken for skilled workers. India has created measures to impart skills as part of a major effort and is receiving assistance from various countries, including Germany, with regard to vocational training. However, these initiatives have had limited impact. There is a need to learn about others' experiences, their employment guarantee programmes and also their so-

cial security programmes. In an increasingly integrated world where the causes of unemployment are of a global nature, national measures may prove insufficient in overcoming the challenges. There is a need for a global understanding of youth unemployment. Global organisations need to put special emphasis on the problem of youth unemployment to enhance employability and employment opportunities.



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Trade unions, works councils and other forms of workplace representation of interests are fundamental as an expression of democratic freedoms in a society. They enable a significant segment of the population to articulate its interests and contribute to the social and equitable development of societies in so doing.

To strengthen the representation of interests of wage and salary earners is therefore an integral part of efforts undertaken by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung towards the promotion of social democracy across the globe.

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