



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Path to Progress

## Enabling a Smooth Education-to-Employment Transition for India's Youth

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India is home to the world's largest youth population—approximately 370 million young people aged 15–29—a demographic advantage that should be driving economic growth and competitiveness. Yet this potential remains largely unrealised. Many of India's youth remain disengaged from productive activity, with one in four not in education, employment, or training.<sup>1</sup> Of those looking for work, many struggle to find good quality jobs. This is at the same time that employers report persistent difficulty in finding skilled workers. These facts point to a significant loss of human and economic potential at a time when India could be leveraging its large and growing youth population to fuel transformative growth.

## Why This Matters

This is not merely a youth issue but a broader economic challenge with far-reaching consequences. India faces a projected skill deficit of 47-49 million workers by 2027, risking US\$2 trillion in GDP losses over the next decade.<sup>2</sup> Only 54 percent of youth in higher education are deemed employable by industry standards.<sup>3</sup>

The education-to-employment pathway breaks down at multiple points, creating a cumulative disadvantage. An **information gap** leaves young people making consequential education and training decisions without reliable guidance. This leads them down tracks that are misaligned with their aptitudes or labour market demand. A **skills gap** emerges as vocational training institutions struggle with obsolete equipment, outdated curricula, and inadequately prepared trainers, while students arrive with weak foundational literacy and numeracy, and lack critical workplace skills like communication and teamwork. An **experience gap** results from broken linkages between educational institutions and employers. Most training institutes lack systematic employer partnerships and their input into the curriculum, leaving students without practical experience or realistic workplace expectations.

## What This Report Offers

This report combines extensive knowledge of India's education and training systems with a deep understanding of the country's labour market to identify actionable solutions grounded in field evidence. It is based on research with several stakeholders across India. Drawing from the ground-level interventions of seven non-profit partners working with JPMorganChase, this report distils replicable, system-level insights on ways to advance youth employment in India.

### Integrated, systems-level impact:

Addressing certain key gaps simultaneously produces transformative results; in essence, the sum is greater than its parts. Isolated reforms deliver limited gains, while coordinated action across career guidance, demand mapping, employability skills, industry partnerships, trainer development, and community engagement creates systemic change that fundamentally improves education-to-employment outcomes. Beyond this report, the next step in this programme is to engage with multiple state governments to enable the adoption of what works to create a bridge between civil society innovation and public sector scale.

**370M+**

Youth aged 15–29  
in India

**25.2%**

Youth NEET rate  
(42.4% for women)

**54%**

Higher education  
graduates deemed  
employable

**\$2T**

Estimated GDP  
loss from skills gap

## Local-level implementation:

Effective demand mapping and career guidance must operate at the local level to succeed. Generic national or state-level insights about "growing sectors" have consistently failed to improve training outcomes. Based on the projects studied, we find that granular, local labour market intelligence—identifying specific employers, roles, and skill needs within defined geographic areas—enables training institutions to align programmes with actual opportunities, which improves placement quality and retention.

## Transferable skills for dynamic labour markets:

The emphasis on employability skills reflects a fundamental shift in how skills development must respond to rapidly changing work environments. Today's youth will change occupations multiple times in their lifetimes. Technical competencies alone are insufficient. Transferable skills—communication, adaptability, problem-solving, and collaboration—enable workers to navigate transitions, learn new roles, and maintain employment security in evolving labour markets. This forward-looking approach moves beyond static skills training to build adaptive capacity for long-term resilience.

## Key Levers for Change

The report identifies six interdependent levers to strengthen India's education-to-employment pathway. The examples that follow show how these reforms are being implemented by local organisations supported by JPMorganChase.

### 1. Align skills training to local demand:

Institutionalise regular, systematic tracking of available work, emerging sectors, and needed skills at the local level, feeding this intelligence directly to training institutions and career counsellors. Skill provision should be guided by local hiring realities by identifying key employers, roles, and skill needs at the regional level, then aggregating this data into state and national assessments. This intelligence should directly inform the trades and courses offered, seat capacities, geographic distribution of programmes, and subsequent curriculum design.

**Medha** implements a model demonstrating this approach on the ground through district-level demand mapping, using this intelligence to facilitate structured programmes between Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), polytechnics, and industry partners. This approach institutionalises collaboration for the



Photo by Avantika Fellows

Dual System of Training (DST),<sup>4</sup> enabling on-the-job training (OJT), industry exposure, and placement pathways aligned with local hiring demand.

Similarly, **Generation India Foundation** (GIF) designs short-term training programmes explicitly around employer demand. They map demand and use it to determine the trades offered and the seat capacity for each trade, while working with employers to shape the curriculum.

## 2. Embed comprehensive career guidance throughout the education-to-employment continuum:

Structured and continuous career counselling from middle school onwards provides students with timely exposure to industry professionals, successful role models, and current information about emerging opportunities and career paths. Importantly, this guidance must reflect local employment realities rather than broad sector narratives.

**Antarang Foundation** integrates a four-year Comprehensive Career Education curriculum across Grades 9–12 in government schools. Their model is locally contextualised, with career counselling grounded in local labour market realities. Students move from early career awareness to exposure visits, exploring different career options in depth, and receiving structured support for post-school transitions. The programme also includes systematic engagement with parents to strengthen informed decision-making at home.

**Avanti Fellows** embeds structured preparation, mentorship, and exam readiness for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-related occupations within schools and underserved communities. Through guided academic support, problem-solving pedagogy, and alumni mentoring, the programme helps students access competitive

higher education pathways that would otherwise remain out of reach.

## 3. Integrate employability skills in the core curriculum:

Workplace-ready skills such as communication, teamwork, professional conduct, problem-solving, and digital literacy are essential capacities that must be an integral part of training, not optional electives. This requires dedicated employability skills instructors, building the capacity of trainers, and clear assessment frameworks. The foundation for employability skills should begin earlier by integrating life skills at the secondary schooling level, creating a developmental continuum that prepares students for the workplace well before they enter formal employment.

In partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, **Quest Alliance** supports the implementation of an employability skills curriculum across ITIs. They work to embed employability skills in formal training pathways.

## 4. Strengthen partnerships between industry and skills training institutions:

Create systematic, formal collaboration between education and training institutions and employers, through internships, apprenticeships, structured industry engagement, and employer input into curriculum design. **PanIIT Alumni Foundation** (PARFI) operates a demand-linked skills and placement model that integrates employer engagement with candidate preparation. PARFI works directly with employers to define job roles, skills standards, and geographic placement requirements before training begins.

**Lend A Hand India** (LAHI), embeds vocational education within secondary schools and builds

local employer networks to provide structured student internships.

## 5. Strengthen trainer capacity:

Regularise structured, continuous training for all instructors—such as trade trainers, placement officers, and employability skills facilitators—focusing on both pedagogical innovations and industry-aligned technical knowledge.

JPMorganChase has supported partners that focus on strengthening instructor capacity within public systems. **Quest Alliance** does this by training faculty to deliver structured employability skills curricula, while providing ongoing technical support and mentoring. **Medha** builds institutional and trainer capacity to implement a Dual System of Training (DST), including coordination with industry partners.

## 6. Engage with parents and communities to raise awareness and garner support:

Structured parent counselling, community workshops, and awareness campaigns can challenge any stigma around skills-based education. To this end, families and communities should be mobilised as active partners in education and career decisions, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and young women facing restrictive social norms.

**Antarang Foundation** integrates structured parent engagement during key transition years to support informed career planning. **GIF** conducts parent orientations to clarify employment pathways and earning potential. **PARFI** engages with families in the post-placement period, particularly when young women enter formal employment, to strengthen sustained workforce participation.

# The Way Forward

The interventions highlighted in this report reflect that stronger education-to-employment pathways are both possible and achievable. Civil society organisations are working to address significant gaps in the education and training systems and are demonstrating results. The challenge is no longer proving what works; it is scaling working solutions system-wide through coordinated partnerships between government, industry, training institutions, and civil society. Institutional commitment and sustained partnerships can transform these tried-and-tested approaches into systematic practice to unlock the potential of India's youth.

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## Endnotes:

- 1 Periodic Labour Force Participation Survey, 2023-24.
- 2 TeamLease, "30-32 Million Skills Gap in India by FY 2025," September 2025, <https://degreeapprenticeship.teamlease.com/blog-detail/30-32-million-skills-gap-in-india-by-fy-2025-a-teamlease-study>  
  
Fortune India, "Skill Gap Can Cost India \$1.97 Trillion in GDP Growth: Accenture", January 16, 2019, <https://www.fortuneindia.com/macro/skill-gap-can-cost-india-197-trillion-in-gdp-growth-accenture/102841>
- 3 Wheebox, in collaboration with the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Taggd, and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), "India Skills Report 2025," 2025, [https://wheebox.com/assets/pdf/ISR\\_Report\\_2025.pdf](https://wheebox.com/assets/pdf/ISR_Report_2025.pdf).
- 4 Dual System of Training is an amalgamation of theoretical training imparted through ITIs and practical training imparted through the industry.through the industry.

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