

# Advocacy Brief — Youth Unemployment, Social Justice, and Inclusive Growth in India

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## Executive Summary

Youth unemployment in India is not just an economic challenge—it is a profound social justice issue. Millions of young people, including educated graduates, face systemic barriers to employment, leading to wasted potential, widening inequality, and long-term social costs. This brief argues that addressing youth unemployment requires reframing it as a social justice imperative and mobilizing coordinated action across government, industry, and civil society.

## Background

India has the world's largest youth population, with over 65% of its people below the age of 35. Yet, between 2011 and 2023, graduate unemployment rates rose sharply from 12% to 23.5%, even as the economy expanded and higher education enrollment grew. This paradox illustrates that the challenge is not merely economic but also about dignity, opportunity, and fairness.

Persistent youth unemployment threatens inclusive growth, undermines trust in institutions, and risks eroding social cohesion.

## Key Challenges

- **Skills Mismatch:** Graduates often lack the practical and digital skills needed in the labor market, creating a gap between education and industry needs.
- **Precarious Employment:** A large proportion of young workers enter informal or low-quality jobs with little stability or security.
- **Regional and Social Inequality:** Youth from rural, low-income, or marginalized backgrounds face significantly higher unemployment rates.
- **Psychological and Social Strain:** Long spells of unemployment reduce self-confidence, delay life transitions, and can increase vulnerability to unrest.

## **Advocacy Position**

Youth unemployment in India must be treated as more than a macroeconomic statistic—it is a question of social justice. Every young person without access to decent work reflects a failure of opportunity and equity. Advocacy should focus on:

- Reframing unemployment as a dignity and justice issue, not only an economic one.
- Creating youth platforms to ensure their participation in designing solutions.
- Building multi-stakeholder coalitions—government, private sector, and civil society—to prioritize inclusive labor market reforms.

## **Policy Recommendations**

1. **Expand Vocational and Digital Skills Training:** Strengthen partnerships between universities, training institutes, and industry to provide demand-driven education.
2. **Support Youth Entrepreneurship:** Provide accessible financing, mentorship, and incubation programs for young innovators and startups.
3. **Promote Quality Job Creation:** Incentivize industries to generate secure, high-value jobs, particularly in manufacturing and services.
4. **Address Regional Inequalities:** Target investments and job programs in rural and semi-urban areas where youth unemployment is highest.

## **Conclusion**

India's young graduates are not statistics—they are future leaders and drivers of progress. Failing to provide them with opportunities risks creating a social time bomb that undermines stability and prosperity. With the right reforms, collaborative action, and an unwavering commitment to youth empowerment, India can turn this challenge into an opportunity. Investing in young people is not only good economics— it is the strongest guarantee of social justice and national resilience.

## **References**

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