

Advancing Future of Work Agenda for Inclusive Economic Growth



January 24, 2025 | Friday | 09:30-13:00 (IST) | New Delhi

Background and Context

India's rapid economic expansion has brought with it challenges in creating sufficient high-quality employment opportunities, with a substantial portion of its workforce engaged in low-quality or informal jobs. As highlighted in the ILO's India Employment Report 2024, approximately 82 percent of the workforce operates in the informal sector, and nearly 90 percent is employed under informal arrangements, leaving a vast majority without job security, benefits, or formal contracts. Structural issues such as rigid labour laws further exacerbate the situation, discouraging formal employment and pushing businesses towards informal arrangements¹.

Recent data from the CMIE sheds light on persistent labour market challenges. While the national unemployment rate declined from 8.5 percent in August 2024 to 7.8 percent in September 2024, key indicators reveal deeper concerns. The labour participation rate dropped from 41.6 percent to 41 percent and the employment rate fell from 38 percent to 37.8 percent over the same period². These trends, combined with the sluggish employment growth—an annual increase of just 0.45 percent between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012—highlight ongoing structural barriers to equitable quality job creation. Additionally, youth face significant difficulties in securing quality employment due to a mismatch between skills and market demands, resulting in widespread underemployment and low-quality work opportunities.

As Dani Rodrik aptly observes, “Economic growth that fails to deliver social benefits and create good jobs risks its own sustainability and fuels social unrest.” This insight underscores the urgency of diversifying economic activities to create high-quality employment opportunities and bolster India's financial resilience.

The GrowJobs Initiative, launched by CUTS International in collaboration with the Ford Foundation seeks to find solutions that address India's pressing need for generating good quality or decent jobs for millions of workers. The initiative goes beyond the mere creation of jobs to focus on developing 'Good and Better Jobs'—positions characterised by higher productivity, safety, security, and incentives for workers. By addressing systemic inequalities, this approach aligns objectives of economic growth with social equity, fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

¹ <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/India%20Employment%20Report%202024.pdf>

² <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1#:~:text=The%20Current%20Unemployment%20Rate%20in%20India%3A&text=The%20same%20statement%20revealed%20that,7.7%20percent%20to%205.1%20percent>

In its first phase (2018-2021), the initiative focused on critical sectors such as textiles, food processing, construction, and the gig economy to identify systemic gaps in job quality. Building on these insights, the second phase (2021-2025) explored concepts of innovative models for economic growth by integrating workers' welfare concerns with inclusive financial strategies. Through evidence-based research, stakeholder engagement, and fieldwork, the project has laid the groundwork for employment solutions tailored to India's socio-economic context.

As the GrowJobs Initiative approaches its conclusion, a Project Closing Meeting will be organised on Friday, January 24, 2025. The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Highlight the outcome and the larger significance of this initiative.
- Provide a platform for reflecting on the lessons learned and charting the future course for inclusive employment strategies.
- Facilitate dialogue among policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, and civil society representatives to ensure the narrative of "Good and Better Jobs" continues to evolve.

The meeting aims to highlight the findings of the GrowJobs Initiative and encourage collective efforts toward a future that balances economic growth with social equity. By exploring actionable strategies, sharing ideas for the future of work, and fostering collaboration, the meeting seeks to contribute to a more resilient and inclusive employment landscape for India.

AGENDA

Time	Session
9:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:30	Welcome Address and Context Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pradeep S Mehta, <i>Secretary General, CUTS International</i> ● <i>Ford Foundation</i>
10:30-11:00	Presentation of Project Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sanchita Chatterjee, <i>Fellow, CUTS International</i>
11:00-12:00	Remarks from distinguished Panellists
12:00-12:45	Open Forum
12:45-13:00	Concluding Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bipul Chattopadhyay, <i>Executive Director, CUTS International</i>
13:00 Onwards	Lunch