

EMPOWER THE YOUTH FIRST

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives to attend the Independence Day celebrations at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi on August 15, 2020. | Photo Credit: [Reuters](#)

On [Independence Day](#), the Prime Minister belaboured his government's leitmotif of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. In today's India, we can achieve that goal of self-reliance only if we enhance our citizens' capabilities. Given our demographic composition, we must begin by empowering our youth.

The 2014 National Youth Policy (NYP) defined youth as persons between 15 and 29 years. This cohort accounted for 27.5% of the population then. According to the NYP report, the Central government spends about 2,710 per youth on education, skill development, employment, healthcare and food subsidies. The total amount is pegged at more than 90,000 crore. Assuming that States spend an equal amount, the total investment in our youth would be under 1% of the GDP, hardly commensurate with their population and potential.

A World Bank report pegged the projected cost (read: loss) of not investing in children and youth at 4% of the GDP every year. Of this, the costs of unemployment account for 0.6%. As of 2017-18, youth participation in India's labour force was 38.3%. Drawing from the 2018 State of Working India Report, we peg the youth unemployment rate to be at least 18.3% (3.47 crore youths). About 30% of youth fall under the 'neither in employment nor in education' category and 33% of India's skilled youth are unemployed. Further, around 50 lakh youth are expected to be entering the workforce annually. Following the COVID-19 lockdown, the CMIE estimated a loss of 14 crore jobs in April alone of which 2.7 crore concerned youth. These numbers, coupled with impending grim implications of the pandemic, have landed us in uncharted turbulent economic waters.

The aspirational younger generation born after 1991 invariably hold the key to India's economic and political future. India has just a decade's time to seize the opportunity and realise this youth demographic dividend. Therefore, it is an appropriate time to launch an Indian Youth Guarantee (IYG) programme, akin to the European Union Youth Guarantee (EU-YG) but tuned to our country's context. EU-YG emerged in 2010 at a time when youth unemployment rates were soaring above 20%. An IYG initiative, with statutory backing, can function as a facilitatory framework for ensuring gainful and productive engagement of youth.

At a time of fiscal stress, one way to allocate budgetary resources would be to create a Youth Component Plan, earmarking a specific percentage of funds under a separate head on the lines of the Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes and the Tribal Sub-Plan. The Youth Component Plan would be formulated by States/Union Territories/Central Ministries to channelise flow of outlays and benefits proportional to the percentage of youth population based on sub-regional requirements.

IYG should not be just another budgetary scheme. Its strategic goal should be to ensure that within a fixed time frame, young people graduating from college or losing a job either find a good quality job suited to their education and experience or acquire skills required to find a job through an apprenticeship. An important aspect of IYG should be to rope in the district administration and local bodies for effective outcomes. Existing youth schemes and skilling infrastructure need to be dovetailed and streamlined while leveraging industry to enable an in situ empowerment of youth.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been very effective in providing rural livelihood security and social protection. Yet only about 4% of youth in the labour force have been impacted by it. While an urban youth employment programme will be a new intervention, we believe that rural youth employment should be instituted alongside MGNREGA. IYG needs to be implemented across the country to address youth unemployment particularly given the rapid structural changes in the economy.

How would such a guarantee identify the needs of the youth? The Youth Development Index (YDI) in India serves as an advisory and monitory tool for youth development. It helps recognise priority areas, gaps and alternative approaches specific to each State. The index also packs a new dimension of social inclusion to assess the inclusiveness of societal progress due to prevalence of systemic inequalities. In short, YDI can be revisited and deployed to play a vital role in crafting a region-specific IYG. A focus on our youth is the first step towards self-reliance. It is time we summon the political will to guarantee our youth a viable future.

C.R. Kesavan is a former Vice President of the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development. K.R. Vignesh Karthik is a doctoral researcher at King's College, London

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

To get full access, please subscribe.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep apace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days free trial [Sign Up](#)

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com