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India

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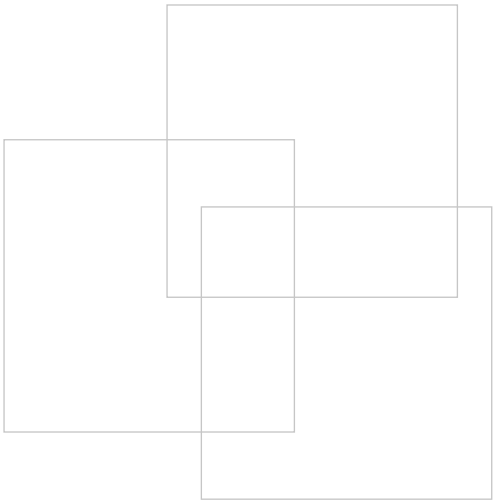

India

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The socio-economic context

India, soon to be the world's most populated country, is entering a demographic window of opportunity.

The population should increase from 1.354 billion in 2018 to 1.513 billion in 2030, overtaking China's in the mid-2020s. Fertility has dropped to 2.3 children per woman, and should reach replacement level during the late 2020s. As a result, the working-age population (15–64 years) will comprise more than two-thirds of the total for the next four decades – the largest workforce in the world (UN DESA, 2017). Reaping this demographic dividend requires educating, training and creating quality jobs for the 12 million young people who join the labour market each year.

India's economy has grown rapidly for two decades.

By 2017, it was the world's seventh largest economy. Annual GDP growth is projected to be an average 7.5 per cent in the coming years (IMF, 2018). The economy has gone through structural transformation, from agriculture towards services and – to a lesser extent – industry. Between 2012 and 2017, services grew by 9.0 per cent per year, driven by transport and communication, and by finance, insurance and real estate. Industry grew by 7.6 per cent per year, driven by construction; manufacturing grew by 7.1 per cent per year. Agricultural production grew by 4.0 per cent per year (GoI, 2019).

Poverty has been dramatically reduced.

In 2004, 40 per cent of Indians were living under the international poverty line of US$1.90 a day; in 2015, the figure was 13 per cent (176 million people). However, poverty remains higher among women, as well as in communities such as the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, rural areas, and poorer states. Inequality has widened – the richest 1 per cent of the distribution own nearly 60 per cent of the country's wealth (World Bank, 2018a, c).

India's labour market suffers from a shortage of good quality jobs.

Agriculture accounted for 43 per cent of total employment in 2017 (down from 60 per cent in 2000), followed by services (33 per cent) and industry (24 per cent). Only 16 per cent of employment was in high-skilled occupations, compared with 58 per cent in medium-skilled and 27 per cent in low-skilled jobs. Vulnerable employment is pervasive. Own-account workers comprised 64 per cent of total employment in 2017, and contributing family members a further 13 per cent, compared with 21 per cent for employees and 1.5 per cent for employers. In 2012, 85 per cent of all non-agricultural employment was informal. In this context, the low unemployment rate (3.5 per cent in 2017) has scant significance (ILO, 2019). Large numbers of Indian workers migrate to foreign countries, notably low- and semi-skilled male workers to the Gulf region and South-East Asia. India has become the top recipient of remittances in the world. Remittances represent 1.3 times foreign direct investment in the country (ILO, 2018a).

Women remain largely excluded from the labour market, and the situation has worsened in recent years.

The employment-to-population ratio for women aged 15 and above declined steadily from 35 per cent in 2005 to 26 in 2017. Survey data show that many women would want to work but are constrained by a scarcity of regular, part-time jobs, and by social norms and violence which restrict their mobility. Women are often confined to agriculture (56 per cent of female employment in 2017), as contributing family members (ILO, 2019; World Bank, 2018c).

India's education system has expanded rapidly since the 1990s.

School attendance is nearly universal at primary level, and demand for secondary and tertiary education has soared. In 2016, the gross enrolment ratio reached 88 per cent at lower secondary level, 66 per cent at upper secondary level, and 17 per cent at tertiary level, with gender parity at all levels. However, learning outcomes remain low among young people who are entering the labour market. Survey data collected in 2017 show that 25 per cent of young people aged 14–18 still cannot read a basic text fluently in their own language; many, including some who completed eight years of schooling, struggle to apply basic skills to everyday tasks, such as counting money, managing a budget, or reading and understanding instructions (ASER Centre, 2018). Moreover, attainment levels remain low in the adult population. In 2011, 60 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men aged 25 and above had not even completed primary education. Only 19 per cent of women and 34 per cent of men had completed at least upper secondary education (UIS, 2018).

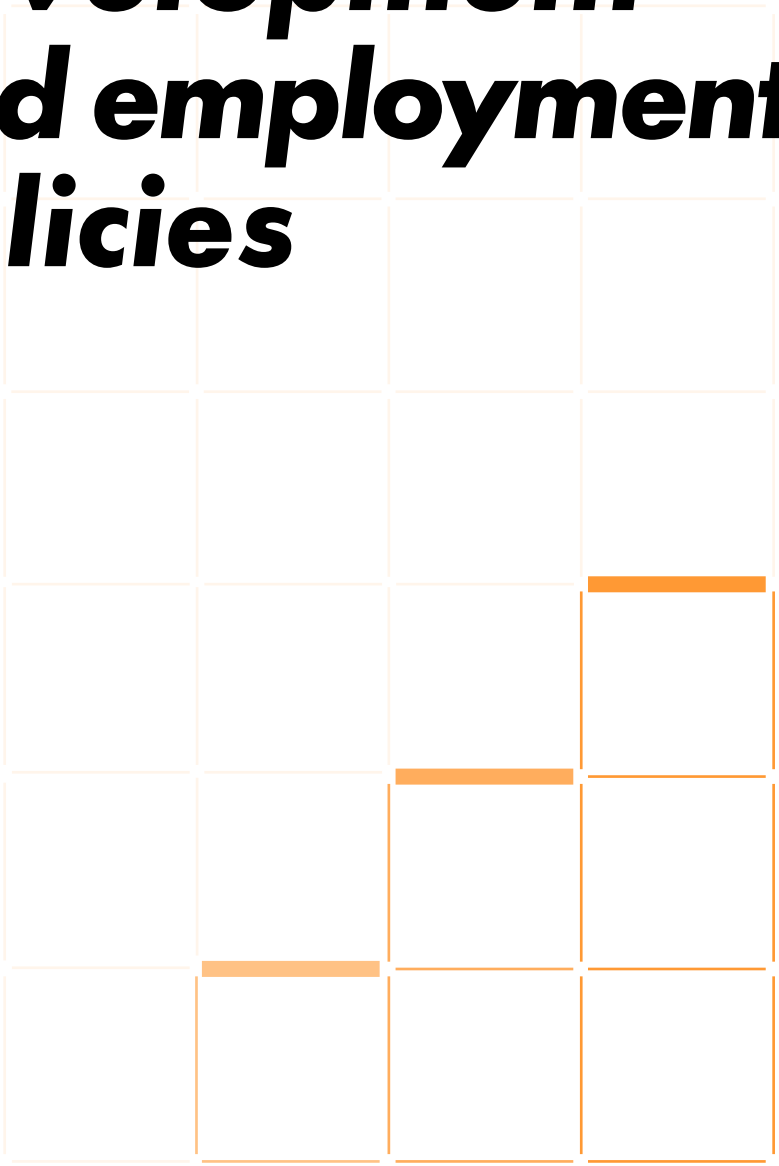
Structural transformation has shifted labour market demand towards medium- and high-skilled workers in industry and services.

Wages have increased rapidly, but become more unequal, between states, rural and urban areas, casual and regular workers, women and men; female casual labourers in rural areas earn the lowest wages in the country. In 2011–12, the Gini coefficient for wages reached 0.49. Between 1993 and 1994, and 2011 and 2012, wage increases were highest for workers with post-secondary or tertiary degrees. Vocational degrees can offer a substantial wage premium over general degrees at the same level (ILO, 2018b).

India faces a formidable challenge of providing skills to millions of young people each year.

Many young people have poor learning outcomes from school education. VET policies and systems need to expand and improve in a context of structural transformation shifting the demand for labour towards medium- and high-skilled jobs in industry and services, especially in urban areas. Whether or not recent reforms succeed is likely to prove decisive in sustaining poverty reduction and containing income inequality.

Development and employment policies



Education and skills development features prominently in India's current development framework: the Three-Year Action Agenda 2017–18 to 2019–20 (Niti Aayog, 2017). The Agenda covers a broad spectrum of issues and sectors, including economic transformation, regional development, the social sectors, and sustainability. It recognizes that India's current education and training system is not equipped to skill the 12 million young people who enter the labour market each year. Improving school education, VET and higher education is highlighted as critical to reaping the demographic dividend associated with India's youthful workforce. The starting point is to raise basic learning outcomes through reforms in school education, so as to provide a better foundation for VET and higher education.

Priorities for VET include:

I. Enhancing the quality of apprenticeships with increased transparency and robustness of training, along with better assessment and certification procedures;

II. Creating an independent skill assessment board;

III. Developing skills indicators and skill assessment tools; and

IV. Amending the institutional structure at central level.[1]

The priority for higher education is to enhance quality. Among other fields, the agenda promotes vocational and profession-led higher education, with measures such as including vocational subjects in mainstream universities, certifying skills and trades closely tied to employment, and training more public health workers.

The Three-Year Action Agenda will be succeeded by another three-year development framework, "New India@2022", which is being developed around six 'freedoms': from poverty, dirt and squalor, corruption, terrorism, casteism, and communalism. Education and skills development are key to poverty elimination, with objectives including participation in PISA[2] from 2021, and having 20 world-class higher education institutions by 2020 (Niti Aayog, 2018).

Finally, the Government has indicated its intention to develop a national employment policy, but the policy has not been published as yet.

[1] India is a federal country, and education and training belong to 'concurrent subjects' for which both the central and state governments are responsible.

[2] PISA is an international assessment of learning outcomes at age 15 initiated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

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The skills system in India

TVET reform policy

The key policy is the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship adopted in July 2015 (MSDE, 2015). The policy starts with an analysis of skills demand and supply in India, which highlights the quantitative challenge – less than 5 per cent of the current workforce received formal training, but the expansion of 24 key activity sectors will require an additional 110 million skilled workers by 2022. The vision is 'to create an ecosystem of empowerment by skilling on a large scale and speed with high standards and to promote a culture of innovation-based entrepreneurship which can generate wealth and employment to ensure sustainable livelihoods for all citizens in the country' (MSDE, 2015, p. 11).

Objectives for skills development include making VET attractive to young people and employers, integrating skills training with formal education, adopting an outcome-based approach to training, increasing the capacity and quality of training institutions, aligning skills offered by the training system with those demanded by industry, establishing an information system, promoting national standards, setting up a quality assurance framework, recognizing on-the-job training, ensuring access of marginalized groups to VET, and promoting women's labour force participation.

These are complemented by a set of objectives that aim to promote entrepreneurship, facilitate enterprise creation, and open entrepreneurship to marginalized groups and women. The objectives translate into two comprehensive policy frameworks detailing measures to be taken, with an outline of the governance and financing institutional structure, and provisions for monitoring and evaluation.

The policy is implemented through the "Skill India" initiative, with the aim of training more than 400 million people by 2022 (MSDE, 2018a). Skill India has translated into the creation of new training institutions, such as the India International Skill Centres and the *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra*. Several programmes have been launched, including the flagship *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana*, a skill certification scheme that aims to train 10 million people between 2016 and 2020, and to facilitate recognition of prior learning, and the *Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana*, which aims to provide entrepreneurship training. Skill India complements the Make in India initiative, launched in 2014 to make the country a global design and manufacturing hub by attracting and facilitating foreign direct investment in 25 activity sectors.


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Governance

Recent years have seen a deep transformation of the institutional structure for VET and skills development at central and state levels. The resulting governance structure is complex, with the coexistence of central and state institutions created either during the first decade after independence, or in the mid-2010s (MSDE, 2018a, b).

At central level, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is responsible for the provision of formal, initial VET at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. Under the MHRD, the National Council for Education Research and Training develops pedagogical resources, together with the specialized Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education. The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) is responsible for the planning and coordinated development of technical education, the promotion of quality, regulations, and maintenance of norms and standards.

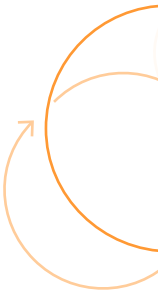
The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), created in 2014, coordinates skills development efforts by all ministries and agencies at central and state level. Under the ministry, the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) provides strategic directions for states to meet their training targets, based on the objective of training 400 million people by 2022. The NSDM is supported by agencies, including the ministry's Directorate General of Training, the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT), the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), the National Skill Development Fund (NSDF), the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), and the National Skills Development Agency (NSDA).

Other ministries run their own, sector-specific training programmes. At state level, ministries, which often combine education and skills development, are responsible for the provision of public VET, through secondary schools, polytechnics, technical colleges or industrial training institutes. Some of the national autonomous bodies are duplicated at state level, among them the State Councils for Vocational Training, and the State Skills Development Missions.

Social dialogue

Recent reforms have sought to engage social partners in skills development, especially the three main employers' organizations: The Confederation of Indian Industries, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India.

The key mechanism has been the establishment of Sector Skills Councils by the NSDC. Led by industry leaders, SSCs create national occupational standards and qualification bodies, develop competency frameworks, conduct training of trainers, produce skills gap studies, and assess and certify trainees against the standards they have developed. Thirty-nine SSCs had been approved by the NSDC by 2017–2018, across agricultural, industrial and service activities, ranging from handicrafts to heavy industries, and from farming to high-tech industries (MSDE, 2018b).



Financing

Funding for VET appears to be severely constrained. Due to the multiple institutions involved, it is difficult to obtain comprehensive figures for skills development funding. The MHRD and state ministries allocate a share of their budgets to technical education. In 2016–2017, technical education received 219.1 billion Indian rupees (INR), or 4.7 per cent of the total budget, compared with INR31.3 billion for secondary education, and INR12.7 billion for tertiary (elementary education received half the total education budget) (MHRD, 2018). Technical education thus receives a minor share of an education budget that is itself constrained. Education received only 10.0 per cent of total government expenditure, or 2.7 per cent of GDP, in 2017–2018, down from 11.6 per cent and 3.1 per cent, respectively, in 2012–2013 (MoF, 2018). Both figures are way below the international benchmarks of 20 per cent of total government expenditure, and 6 per cent of GDP. The MSDE is now the key source of funding for skills development programmes. In 2017–2018, it spent INR12.9 billion. The budget estimate for 2018–2019 was INR23.6 billion (MSDE, 2018b).

The MHRD and MSDE are supported by the World Bank, with interventions including the Technical Education Quality Improvement Project, state-specific projects, and funding for two key operations of the MSDE over 2017-2022: The Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement Operation (STRIVE) and Skill India Mission Operation (SIMO). STRIVE supports long-term training (such as apprenticeships or Indian Technical Institutes), while SIMO aims to support short skills development programmes (3 to 12 months). STRIVE is a US$539 million operation, funded equally by the Government of India and the World Bank. SIMO is a $3,188 million operation, with 90 per cent funded by the MSDE and 7.8 per cent by the World Bank, and the remainder sourced from state governments and corporate social responsibility contributions to the NSDF (World Bank, 2016, 2017).

Skills anticipation

The starting point of VET and skills development reforms in the past decade has been a series of studies of the supply and demand of skills on the Indian labour market. For instance, the National Skill Development and Employment Policy of 2015 is based on an assessment of skills needs by 2022, conducted by the NSDC between 2012 and 2014 (MSDE, 2015). Sector Skills Councils are also responsible for anticipating skills needs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has provided technical assistance to the SSCs, conducted assessments of skills needs in several activity sectors and states, and is working on forecasting skills needs.

Private companies have cooperated with the AICTE and the United Nations Development Programme to produce the India Skills Report 2018, based on a survey of students, training providers and firms to assess the employability of training graduates and the hiring intentions of employers (UNDP et al., 2018).

The NSDA launched a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) that aims to systematize data collection, bringing together statistical and qualitative information, which can be used by government and private sector stakeholders. The ILO has supported the process. However, the LMIS is not yet fully operational.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Skills development

Improving delivery and assessment of training

India's VET system appears to be undersized, and has not expanded rapidly in recent years. Some 1.763 million students enrolled in VET programmes at upper secondary level in 2016. Between 2000 and 2013, formal VET expanded somewhat more rapidly than general upper secondary education. Enrolment in VET increased from 618,000 to 1.501,000 and its share of upper secondary enrolment increased from 2.2 to 2.8 per cent. Since 2013, however, despite ongoing reforms promoting skills development, VET has not kept pace with general education, and its share of upper secondary education fell to 2.7 per cent in 2016. Moreover, VET does not respond to the training needs of young women. Only 17 per cent of VET students were girls in 2016, down from 20 per cent in 2000 (UIS, 2018).

Non-formal and informal VET programmes do not reach a large proportion of India's young people. Survey data collected in 2017 indicate that only 5 per cent of young people aged 14–18 were taking any type of vocational training, whether formal or not. And 59 per cent of those receiving training were taking courses shorter than six months (ASER Centre, 2018).

Formal VET is mostly centre-based, although India has a formal apprenticeship system. Formal, initial, long-term VET is offered at upper secondary level, either through 2-year vocational programmes, taught in senior secondary schools, or through 3-year basic diploma programmes, which are taught in polytechnics or Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). Both channels lead to National Trade Certificates, which are intended to facilitate entry into the labour market (UNEVOC, 2018).

At post-secondary and tertiary levels, formal VET includes advanced diploma programmes taught in polytechnics, which last for 2 to 3 years; bachelor-of-vocational-education programmes taught in colleges and universities for 3 years; and tertiary level technical education programmes of varying length, taught in polytechnics and other specialized institutions.

In practice, ITIs constitute the bulk of the supply of formal VET, with 14,254 institutes (up from 11,847 in 2014–2015) and a capacity of 3.1 million in 2017–2018 (MSDE, 2018a). They offer training in 126 trades, including 73 engineering trades. Around 80 per cent of the institutes are private (DGT, 2019). ITI students may receive part of their training through formal apprenticeships, following a scheme introduced in 1961.

In recent years, ITI students have represented 80 per cent of all apprentices, of whom 89 per cent were being trained in engineering fields (ILO, n.d.).

A National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme was introduced in 2016, with the aim of training 5 million apprentices by 2020. Regulations were relaxed, and financial incentives for employers were introduced, as the scheme funds part of the cost of training and of the stipend received by apprentices. Short-term apprenticeships in the service sector are integrated into the scheme, which, however, does not build on traditional apprenticeship systems that exist in the country's informal economy (ILO, n.d.; MSDE 2018a).

Non-formal, short-term skills development programmes address the needs of school drop-outs and disadvantaged groups. Under the MSDE's flagship *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana*, training centres deliver free, short-term training to school or college drop-outs and to unemployed people, at Levels 3 or 4 of the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF). Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is also possible under the programme. Some 1.67 million candidates enrolled in short-term training between 2016 and January 2018, and a further 580,000 in RPL. There were 10,963 centres in March 2018. (MSDE, 2018b).

Skills recognition and quality assurance

The National Skill Qualification Framework developed by NSDA was introduced in 2013. The framework aims to guarantee standardized learning and training outcomes from all the country's education and skills development programmes, as well as to facilitate the mobility of students between general and vocational education streams through the alignment of their degrees, and to allow the transition of workers from informal to formal firms via recognition of prior leaning. This latter is based on pre-assessment, skills gap training and a final assessment, leading to a certificate. By May 2018, 940,000 people had enrolled in RPL in 34 activity sectors. The NSQF is also intended to facilitate the international mobility of skilled Indian workers (MSDE, 2018b).

The framework has ten levels, each corresponding to either an academic or a VET qualification, ranging from Class 9 or a National Certificate for Work Preparation 1 (Level 1) to a general or technical PhD (Level 10). Levels 1–2 correspond to lower secondary education, Levels 3–4 to upper secondary education, and Levels 5 and above to higher education.

Most of the current workforce would therefore qualify at Level 4 or below. The NSQF is still at an early stage of implementation, and is currently at the stage of ensuring compliance of public-sector funding, training provision, and recruitment, before all private training provision can follow the framework.

Quality assurance has long been implemented by the older agencies within ministries, the All India Council of Technical Education in the case of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and the National Council for Vocational Training in the case of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The evolution of the VET and skills development system towards training outcomes responding to the labour market has led to agencies that bring together the public and private sectors taking on an increasingly important role. The National Skills Development Agency and the Sector Skills Councils are responsible for aligning the training supply with NSQF.

Social inclusion

Accessing skills development

Until the mid-2010s, India lacked a skills development strategy for involving the informal sector, which employs the bulk of the workforce. Frequently confined to informality, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups were largely bypassed by the formal VET system, and the scale of short-term programmes was insufficient to reach a significant proportion of them. While some of the recently introduced programmes target disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, access to skills development remains unequal. Most programmes are run in urban areas, where training centres and employers are concentrated, and are therefore inaccessible to rural inhabitants. Women face specific constraints in securing the time and resources needed for accessing training in male-dominated activities.

Supporting transitions to the labour market

Skills development programmes for people with low educational attainment and no formal training are a key component of active labour market policies in India. Low-skilled workers suffer from the scarcity of decent jobs on the labour market The ILO has supported the development of training materials for pilot schemes, such as in the glassware industry, or for domestic workers, and for larger-scale government schemes, including the country's main job creation scheme, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

As well as the MSDE's Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, discussed above, other ministries also run such programmes. The Ministry of Rural Development's *Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana* provides training to young people aged 15–35 from poor communities, resulting in a certificate that facilitates job search or enterprise creation (705,000 people were trained in 2015–2016). The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation's Employment through Skill Training and Placement programme targets the unskilled urban poor, and results in a certificate (UNEVOC, 2018).

Given the shortage of high-skilled workers in the labour market, India needs to invest in workplace-based, continuous training. The scarcity of high-skilled workers has become pervasive, especially as the quality of VET and higher education delivered often falls short of employers' expectations. Nearly two-thirds of Indian firms with more than ten employees surveyed in 2014 reported difficulty in finding qualified personnel. However, firms do not necessarily respond by investing in training. Only 37 per cent of firms in the automobile sector train their own workers in India, compared with 90 per cent in China (World Bank, 2016, 2018c).


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Key challenges

1 Complexity of the governance structure.

The governance structure has been deeply transformed in recent years, with the creation of a new ministry, several agencies, and many programmes and training providers, at central and state levels. Old and new institutions co-exist, sometimes with overlapping mandates (for instance, quality insurance is carried out by several institutions reporting either to the MHRD or the MSDE). Key governance tools such as the NSQF and the LMIS are not yet fully operational.

2 Insufficient engagement of the private sector.

Public-private partnerships such as the National Skills Development Corporation and Sector Skills Councils are still at an early stage, and have limited ability to provide sector-specific, employer-led training on a sufficient scale. India does not yet have an operational mechanism for attracting private funding to skills development programmes, as is the purpose of the National Skill Development Fund. Indian firms tend to underinvest in worker training (World Bank, 2017).

3 Limited data availability.

Due to the complexity of the system, available data do not allow a comprehensive analysis of training provision, participation, completion, labour market outcomes of graduates, and demand for skills.

4 Insufficient scale of VET and skills development programmes.

While the quantitative challenge has been acknowledged by policy-makers, current training provision still falls short of the numbers of skilled workers that India's development will require in the coming decades. Official figures on participation in MSDE programmes fall short of the objective of skilling 400 million people by 2022 (MSDE 2018a, b). At present, only 5 per cent of young people aged 14–18 receive any form of vocational training (ASER Centre, 2018).

5 Poor quality of training and low employability of graduates.

This is a recurrent concern for both formal and non-formal training providers. Due to the poor quality of school education, many trainees enter with low foundation skills. Training providers suffer from a lack of up-to-date equipment, curricula, training methods and trained trainers. As a result, the employability of graduates is low. A 2016 survey of 150,000 engineers who had graduated from engineering colleges in 2015 found that only 18 per cent were employable for the software services sector, and only 41 per cent for non-functional roles, such as business process outsourcing (Aspiring Minds, 2016).

6 Lack of attractiveness of VET and skills development programmes.

Due to their poor quality and limited relevance to labour market demand, training programmes remain unattractive both to students and workers, as well as to employers. Training needs to be tailored to the current and future needs of employers, with a focus on employability and entrepreneurial skills.

The way forward

The following priorities emerge from the analysis above:

- Strengthen new institutions responsible for VET governance. Reinforce public-private partnerships, such as the NSDC or SSCs. Make key mechanisms such as the LMIS, NSQF and NSDF fully operational. Support state-level VET governance to facilitate programme design, piloting and implementation.

- Scale up formal and non-formal VET. This will allow to reach targets set by the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and the Skill India campaign. Investment in buildings and equipment and trainer recruitment will need to take place on a massive scale.

- Target women and vulnerable groups. Include women, whose labour force participation has been declining, as well as disadvantaged groups, such as rural communities, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and people living with disabilities.

- Quality, relevance and attractiveness of VET. Focus on apprenticeship as the main training modality.

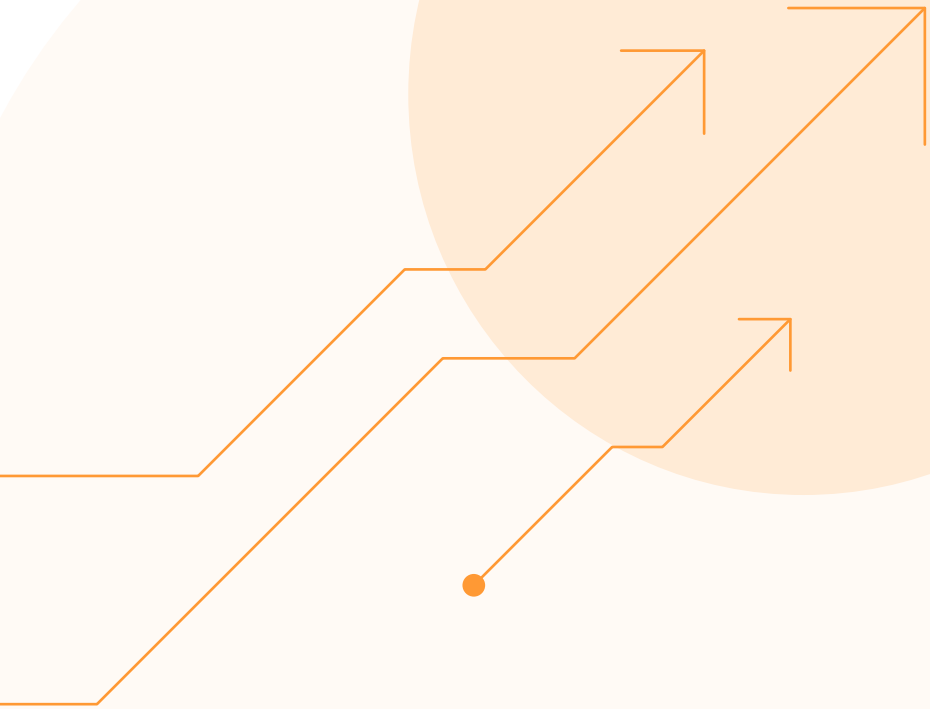
Building on its long tradition of technical cooperation with the Government of India, the ILO recently submitted the following propositions to the MSDE:

1 Establish a functional LMIS.

Including: (i) design a toolkit for district-level skills gap analysis; (ii) strengthen the capacity of State Skill Development Missions and district authorities to collect and analyse data; (iii) design a technical framework for a LMIS in selected districts; and (iv) support local institutions in the development, implementation and maintenance of the LMIS.

2 Provide youth, especially women, with adequate and equitable access to affordable and quality, industry-recognized skills development opportunities and coverage under formal skill certification systems.

This includes: (i) strengthen capacity of district-level institutions and cluster-level industry associations to implement the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS); (ii) upgrade the operational guidelines and framework of NAPS to improve access and market value for youth and employers; (iii) improve recognition and certification of apprenticeship training in informal/traditional trades; (iv) adapt recognition of prior learning to one industry sector, creating large numbers of jobs; (v) identify gaps in presence of TVET institutions in selected districts; and (vi) upgrade training design and curriculum in TVET institutions, in collaboration with industry associations in selected districts.



3 Entrepreneurial skills development.

Including: (i) rapid needs assessment to map skills needs and potential for entrepreneurship development in the value chains of two sectors in selected districts; (ii) make entrepreneurial development mandatory in all TVET courses; (iii) and train trainers using the ILO's global entrepreneurial development tools Start and improve your business and start your business (ILO, 2018c).

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