“THE JOBS INITIATIVE”
A New Partnership between the JustJobs Network and the Centre for Policy Research

Ours is a complex nation strengthened by geographic, linguistic and resource diversity, but still challenged by social divisions on the basis of caste, gender and religion. It is smart cities and technological hubs alongside sprawling city slums and urban labour markets that span basic manual labour to high-end finance and technology. It is high levels of economic growth juxtaposed to equally high numbers struggling to secure basic livelihoods.

The availability of good jobs on the scale that India requires is one of our biggest challenges. The well-being of our growing population, today and in the long-term, depends on the creation of a job-rich economy. While diagnoses of the malady abound, few prescriptions on how to create enough good jobs exist, and fewer still have worked.

To understand why this is the case, and to help address the challenge, the JustJobs Network (JJN) and the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) are launching a new partnership to generate new, innovative and fresh ideas to help tackle the nation's jobs crisis.

This Jobs Initiative will include cutting-edge, applied research to find solutions to specific employment challenges in areas such as technology, migration and informality and differentiated impacts based on gender and age. As rapid transformations in these areas, coupled with urbanisation and climate change alter the way Indians live and work, this initiative will provide insights on how government policies can adapt to create jobs and support workers. This initiative will engage the government, the private sector, academia, and grassroots organisations to harvest good ideas and promote collaboration.

The JustJobs Network (JJN) is the only single-issue, applied research institution of its kind in India focusing solely on jobs, education/skills and labour market matching, while urbanisation and economic policy are among CPR’s major focus areas. We hope that JJN’s specialised focus coupled with the policy awareness, expertise, credibility, and platform of an established institution like CPR will enable us to effectively engage in shaping the narrative and action on jobs in the country.
WHERE ARE OUR WOMEN WORKERS?
A small share of women, especially in urban India, are counted as being in the labour force. But, where do they work? Using four major data sources, a common dataset across covering 454 of 640 districts was built, aggregated into 367 geographical units. Surprisingly, while they agree on broad parameters – the median participation varies from 13% to 23% – they differ on where urban women are working. Fig. 1 shows the correlation between datasets across geographical units. Even the NSS is poorly correlated with the Census and it has almost no correlation with IHDS. Even in areas with high female participation, only 13 units are common among the top one fourth (91) of units across four datasets.

This ongoing research is supported by Oxfam India

WHAT IS INFORMAL WORK?
In India, informal work has been defined either by enterprise form – partnerships and proprietorships are informal – or workers’ access to social protection.

With universal social protection, e.g., National Pension Scheme, Ayushman Bharat, etc., the tech-fuelled growth of the gig economy, and government’s support for self-employment, this definition may need revision. Figure 2 shows that in urban areas, only 37% of workers may be in unregistered ‘informal’ enterprises. Indeed, after GST, this share (estimated, based on registration data from the Economics Census 2005) could have fallen further. As the veil of informality lifts from urban workers, do we have a plan for their protection and development?

BENEFIT SCHEME FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS
India has a strong social welfare framework for informal construction workers – the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996 with a companion Act – permitting levy of a cess on construction to fund welfare schemes for workers, administered by an independent board.

But, as of December 2015, while Rs 254.96 billion had been collected as cess revenue, only Rs 53.71 billion was spent, in part because not enough workers were registered. Figure 3 shows some states showing both relatively high (above average) registration and high expenditure, while others are failing on both dimensions. This project was supported by Tata Trusts.
A STATE-LEVEL JUST JOBS INDEX FOR INDIA

The JustJobs Index (JJI) is a comprehensive, data-driven approach to measuring the quantity and quality of jobs at the state-level for India. Despite the importance of jobs, employment has yet to enjoy the same treatment as other indicators of economic health. Metrics such as Gross Domestic Product, or indices measuring competitiveness and the Ease of Doing Business do not serve as adequate proxies for economic opportunity. There is no specific tool for analysing performance on the economic indicator that matters most to ordinary people: jobs. JJI fills this gap by measuring how states fare on a series of indicators measuring the quantity and quality of employment.

This project is supported by Azim Premji University.

FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYABILITY

Almost 32 million, 14 million in India alone, South Asian children do not go to school. Among youth, 30.1 percent in South Asia and 30.8 percent in India, are not in employment, education or training. Along with the demographic bulge, both these facts point to the need for a robust skills system that can build the capacities of young people to help them succeed in a dynamic 21st century labour market. But skills training systems must build on a strong foundation of good quality education, otherwise they are unlikely to deliver better employment outcomes. Making youth (15-24) employable requires a sustained effort from school onwards and it requires alignment with labour market demand.

This project is supported by UNICEF, ROSA.

GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS & INCLUSIVE INDUSTRIALIZATION

World trade in intermediate goods is now greater than all other non-oil traded goods together and 80 percent of gross exports are now linked to the production of multinational firms. Research suggests that one in seven jobs is related to global supply chains. Countries from Ethiopia to Vietnam are competing to stake their claim to value chains, to leverage integration into the global economy and propel economic growth. Arms-length trade in finished products is no longer the norm. Instead trade is conducted through complex supply chains governed through the private law of contracts between companies. How does one ensure quality of employment in supply chains given this structure?

This project is supported by IDRC.
JJN and CPR have a history of collaborative work

THE ROLE OF SMALL CITIES IN SHAPING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES IN INDIA AND INDONESIA

In recent years, CPR and JJN have independently worked on issues related to migration in the context of urbanisation processes. In March 2016, Mukta Naik of CPR and Gregory F Randolph of JJN began a collaborative research project that brought together CPR’s body of work on understanding urban transformations and JJN’s expertise on jobs to study the role of smaller cities in shaping the employment outcomes of youth in India and Indonesia, both large, diverse Asian economies on the verge of reaching their demographic dividend. The project, funded by the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), seeks to understand how young people negotiate labour markets and mobility networks in four cities: Kishangarh, Rajasthan and Mangalore, Karnataka in India and Semarang Regency, Central Java and Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia. It investigates the complexity of migration and mobility, hypothesising that small cities act as ‘junctions’ for youth pursuing new opportunities, with a focus on how these pathways differ for young men and women.

JustJobs Network is a private, nonpartisan organization finding evidence-based solutions to one of the most pressing challenges of our time: How to create more and better jobs worldwide. We produce empirical research on good job creation, focusing our work on the critical knowledge gaps in the global employment landscape. JustJobs convenes a global network of diverse stakeholders—including policy shapers, academics, and grassroots leaders — to deepen the practical implications of our research endeavors and amplify their impact. Through the combination of cutting-edge research and global knowledge sharing, we aim to forge a fresh, dynamic channel for policy dialogue on employment at national, regional and international levels. Our team members are based in New Delhi and Washington, D.C. www.justjobsnetwork.org

The Centre for Policy Research (CPR) has been one of India’s leading public policy think tanks since 1973. The Centre is a non-profit, independent institution dedicated to conducting research that contributes to a more robust public discourse about the structures and processes that shape life in India. CPR’s community of distinguished academics and practitioners represents views from many disciplines and across the political spectrum. It is among the national social science research institutes recognised by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Government of India. CPR works across five focus areas: economic policy; environment, law and governance; international relations and security; law, regulation and the state; and urbanisation. www.cprindia.org

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