

# Call for Papers

## International Conference on 'The Elephant in the Room: Generating Jobs and Imparting Skills for the Future: In the Context of India's Labour Market'

On 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024

In Hybrid Mode – Via Zoom and on Campus at GIM, Sanquelim, Goa, India

The [Centre for Public Policy & Governance, Goa Institute of Management \(GIM\)](#), invites scholars to submit and present research papers at the conference. Interested scholars/researchers/academics, faculty members and others may kindly participate and email **an extended 1000-words abstract and brief CV to the Centre, by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

In the subject line kindly write *"CPPG-GIM / Labour Conference 2024 / Your Name / Title of Paper"*.

**Kindly email your extended abstracts and brief CV to [chaircppg@gim.ac.in](mailto:chaircppg@gim.ac.in) or [bernice@gim.ac.in](mailto:bernice@gim.ac.in).**

The Conference will be held in hybrid mode, via Zoom and at our campus at Sanquelim, Goa<sup>^</sup>.

The main theme of the Conference: **The Elephant in the Room: Generating Jobs and Imparting Skills for the Future: In the Context of India's Labour Market**

### Sub-themes:

1. Trends in Employment
2. Quality of the Jobs: Decent Work Deficit
3. Role of Labour Regulation: Are Labour Laws Causing Limiting Employment
4. Gender Disparities in Accessing Work
5. Skill Mismatch and Training Programmes
6. Youth Unemployment

### Concept Note

The declining state of the labour market stands out as one of the most significant economic consequences of the pandemic. The vulnerability of our country's labour market has persisted as a longstanding weakness for decades. Despite robust economic growth, averaging a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.0 percent from 2003-04 to 2017-18, overall employment expansion remained modest, registering a CAGR of 5.0 percent. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges in the labour market even further.

In the years to come, after the health crisis diminishes and the economy experiences a resurgence, the recovery of the labour market is expected to be a gradual process. This delay is because the effects of economic recovery on the job market are typically felt with a time lag. Given the unpredictable nature of the ongoing pandemic, the resurgence of economic growth is anticipated to be uneven, influencing the quantity and types of available jobs.

For example, the recovery in certain sectors, such as those reliant on close physical interaction and employing a significant number of low-to-semi-skilled workers, is expected to be slow. Additionally,

sporadic mobility restrictions are likely to disrupt logistics and supply chains, leading to the reorganization of investments and increased digitization. These factors are poised to bring about structural shifts that redefine the nature of available work and the skills required for those roles.

One key indicator of the labour market's health has been the unemployment rate, which saw a decline to 6.57 percent in January 2022 from its peak of 23.52 percent in April 2020 during the height of the pandemic. Following the unprecedented economic downturn in FY2020-21 and a severe second wave in April-June 2021, high-frequency data indicates a consistent recovery in the economy throughout the October-December quarter of 2021. However, this recovery has not translated into an improvement in the employment situation in India, nor has it prompted increased job-seeking activity among workers.

According to a survey on employment conducted by the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), total employment remains 7.8 million below pre-pandemic levels between January 2020 and January 2022. Furthermore, the labour force participation rate, representing the proportion of the working population aged 16-64 years currently employed or actively seeking employment, has declined by nearly 3.0 percentage points over the past two years.

A more significant concern is the sizable portion of individuals who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and have withdrawn from actively seeking employment. These individuals, known as discouraged or marginally attached workers, exhibit pessimism about job prospects, lack necessary education or training for available jobs, or face rejection by employers due to their inability to accept a job or other forms of discrimination. Importantly, this group is not accounted for in the labour force participation rate, as they are no longer actively participating in the job market.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding, employment-to-population ratio within the 16-64 age group was examined. This ratio has consistently remained below the labour force participation rate and has experienced a continuous decline over the years. Additionally, the ratio exhibited a sharper decline than the participation rate during the pandemic, indicating that the share of discouraged and marginally attached workers in the population was more significant than what was reflected in the participation rate.

A considerable portion of this demographic falls within the age range of 20-35 years. In January 2022, the ratio of unemployed individuals who were not actively seeking employment to the total population ratio increased to 1.4 percent, up from 0.9 percent in January 2020. Specifically within the age group of 20-35 years, this ratio experienced a more significant rise, reaching 2.6 percent compared to 1.7 percent in the same period.

It is observed that there is not only a decline in the number of jobs but also a decrease in the quality of employment, particularly in terms of stability, savings mechanisms, and a shift toward the formal sector. The survey highlights that salaried employees experienced a significant decrease in employment, with 11.7 million salaried jobs lost since January 2020 yet to be recovered.

Conversely, employment has seen an increase, particularly among small traders, wage labourers, and farmers. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) reports that the scarcity of jobs has led to a surge in self-employment. Individuals unable to secure satisfactory employment opportunities are turning to modest sources of livelihood. This trend is reflected in the notable rise of self-run businesses, including taxi operators, barbers, gymnasiums, beauticians, estate agents, brokers, religious professionals, trainers, and others, as highlighted in a CMIE report.

Since January 2020, agriculture has emerged as the primary employment sector, with the 'wholesale and retail trading' and 'real estate and construction' sectors following closely. Notably, within the agriculture sector, there has been a substantial increase in the employment of farm labourers, particularly among daily wage labourers, due to the phenomenon of reverse migration.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is designed to provide employment opportunities in rural areas. However, there seems to be a mismatch between the work demand under MGNREGA and the data on person-days generated. This disparity suggests stress on rural employment, indicating that the demand for work may be exceeding the available opportunities provided by the program.

While the pandemic undoubtedly exacerbated the challenges in the labour market, it's essential to note that the slowdown in the labour market had already set in before the onset of the pandemic. The most recent Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report for FY2019-20 reveals a multifaceted scenario. Despite a decline in unemployment to 4.8 percent, there was a notable surge in employment within the agriculture sector, rising to 45.6 percent from 42.5 percent in FY2018-19.

Furthermore, the PLFS data highlights a diminishing share of employment in manufacturing, construction, and 'transport, storage, and communication.' These sectors, characterized by a substantial presence of the unorganized sector, experienced a decline in their contribution to total employment. In simpler terms, a significant segment of the population had limited access to job opportunities even before the pandemic, indicating pre-existing challenges in the labour market.

In summary, there is a notable presence of disguised unemployment in specific sectors, where individuals might be working below their full potential. The pandemic has exacerbated this situation, adding to the challenges in the labour market.

### Sub-Themes

1. **Trends in Employment: Structural Shifts and High Levels of Informality:** Discuss the structural shifts observed in the labour market, focusing on changes in the share of manufacturing, construction, and other industries in total employment. Delve deeper into the concept of disguised unemployment, its prevalence in various sectors, and the implications for both individuals and the overall economy.
2. **Quality of the Jobs: Decent Work Deficit:** Explore the dual challenge of not just declining job numbers but also a reduction in the quality of employment, including the shift towards self-employment and its implications.
3. **Role of Labour Regulation: Are Labour Laws Causing Limiting Employment:**
4. **Gender Disparities in Accessing Work: Declining Female Labour Force Participation:** Explore specific gender-related issues in the labour market, including wage gaps, access to formal employment, and the impact of the pandemic on women's employment.
5. **Skill Mismatch and Training Programmes:** Investigate the issue of skill mismatch in the labour market and assess the effectiveness of skill development and training programs in bridging the gap.
6. **Youth Unemployment:** Examine the challenges faced by the youth in the labour market, including issues related to underemployment, skill acquisition, and the transition from education to employment.

### Brief Structure of the Conference

There will be one technical session on each of the six sub-themes. Three papers will be presented at each technical session with one keynote address.

In addition, there will be Inaugural and Valedictory Sessions with Keynote addresses. Altogether, there will be 8 Keynotes and 18 Papers.

For further details, you may kindly write to:

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The Centre for Public Policy and Governance

The Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG) is one of the new initiatives of the Goa Institute of Management (GIM) and has the objective of generating and leading intellectual capital and experience to inform public policy making and governance in India and in emerging economies. The Centre attempts to explore and understand the links between the fields of management, administration, and public policy. Its philosophy is predicated on the belief that effective public policy is always deeply contextualized. The Centre aims to serve as a platform to enable discussion and analysis of public policies and their implementation.

**^Location of the Conference:** Goa Institute of Management  
Near Ravindra Bhavan, Sanquelim, Poriem, Goa 403505, India  
<https://goo.gl/maps/YUuH9kV6GcMaHS9r7>