

The Indian Society of Labour Economics

The Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) is a professional association of researchers, scholars and other stakeholders interested in the area of labour, employment and development issues. The Society promotes scientific studies of labour markets, employment, employment relations and related issues and disseminates knowledge. It publishes a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal The Indian Journal of Labour Economics (IJLE), which is now in its 69th year of publication. Promoting and featuring scientific studies on labour and employment issues, the journal is co-published with Springer. More information on the journal is available on <http://www.springer.com/economics/journal/41027>



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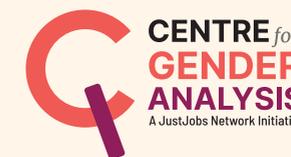
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Panel on

India's Youth Skilling Imperative: Policy Perspectives on Reworking Education-to-Employment Pathways

Organised by



20 January 2026 | Pune



Programme

TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026

- Chair : **Anurag Behar**
Chief Executive Officer, Azim Premji Foundation and
Chancellor of Azim Premji University, Bhopal
- Panelists : **Debashree Mukherjee**
Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and
Entrepreneurship, Government of India
- : **Uma Mahadevan**
Additional Chief Secretary and Development
Commissioner, Government of Karnataka
- : **Sabina Dewan**
President and Executive Director, JustJobs Network



Biographies of the Resource Persons

Mr. Anurag Behar



Anurag has been responsible for the Foundation as its CEO since 2010, leading its development across multiple areas of work, as it has grown to become one of the largest philanthropic institutions in the world.

Deeply valuing genuine grassroots work, he has been closely engaged in the development of the Foundation's own Field work – to help improve equity and quality of the public education system. This grassroots work is across 7 states of India, which have over 350,000 schools, while the overall work in education is across several other states and at the national level. Key to this work has been the establishment of a network of vibrant Field institutions across 60 districts and over 300 locations in the most disadvantaged parts of India. Using this strong grassroots institutional presence, the Foundation's own operations have expanded to helping improve Public Health and Livelihoods of vulnerable communities, as also Child Nutrition and Care.

Anurag led the establishment of the Azim Premji University in Bangalore, as its Founding Vice Chancellor, a role in which he served from 2010 to 2022, alongside his role as the CEO of the Foundation. He is also the founding Chancellor of the Azim Premji University in Bhopal, established in 2023. The Foundation is establishing these not-for-profit Universities with teaching programs from undergraduate to post-graduate level, and a special focus on the fields of Education and Human Development, including extensive research in these fields. The third University is being established in Ranchi, with a fourth on the anvil in the northeast of India.



He has led the Foundation's effort to support civil society in India through multi-year financial grants, and with relevant capacity development initiatives. Currently over 1400 not-for-profit organizations are being supported across the country, working with and for the most vulnerable and marginalized people of our society, including, the homeless, persons with disability, women survivors of violence, farmers with marginal landholding, vulnerable tribal communities, reducing child malnutrition, improving gram panchayats, and more.

Committed deeply to improving education, Anurag has been intensely engaged with the Indian education system for over twenty years, from the grassroots to policymaking. He has been a vocal advocate for the critical importance of public systems. His many years in business have given him an insider's view in to both the possibilities and limits of markets.

Anurag was a member of the drafting Committee of India's National Education Policy 2020, the first comprehensive education policy for the country, since 1986. He is a member of the Group constituted by the Government of India in 2021 to develop the National Curricular Frameworks for Schools and Teacher Education. He serves on several boards and government councils, such as the Advisory Board of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the Board of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, and with the CII's National Climate Change Council and the Skills Council.

Anurag has earlier played leadership roles in business. As the CEO of Wipro Infrastructure Engineering, he led the business from being No. 20 to global leadership in 5 years. He was Wipro's Chief Sustainability Officer for twenty years, leading the social and ecological initiatives of the Wipro Group. He writes widely, including a fortnightly column for the national newspapers Mint & Hindustan, and other publications, and his book 'A matter of the heart', paints a grassroots picture of education in India.

He has an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur and a BE in Electrical & Electronics Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Trichy. Both institutions have honored him with their Distinguished Alumnus award. He was elected as a 'Young Global Leader', by the World Economic Forum in 2008. He enjoys long distance running.



Ms. Debashree Mukherjee



Ms. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. Ms. Debashree Mukherjee is an Indian Civil Servant who has worked in various positions in the Government of India, including the Central and State Governments. She has a Master's Degree in Linguistics and English, and another Master's Degree in Water and Environmental Management.

She has worked in the administrations of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the coastal State of Goa and the hill state of Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast. During her various assignments, she has specialized in Urban Governance and Management of Water and Sanitation Services. She held the position of Joint secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister of India. She worked in the areas of Public Health and Nutrition, Rural and Urban Development, Housing and Poverty Alleviation, Water Resources, Drinking Water and Sanitation, and Social Justice and Inclusion. She has also worked on the design and implementation of transformational programmes, such as the Swachh Bharat initiative to eliminate open defecation in the country and POSHAN Abhiyan, the National Nutrition Mission to reduce malnutrition. She has worked as an Additional Secretary and Mission Director, National Water Mission, & a Special Secretary for the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, where she also held the position of Secretary, after, working on a range of issues related to water management. At present she is Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India.

Ms. Uma Mahadevan



Uma Mahadevan is an IAS officer posted as Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, Government of Karnataka. She has worked in different sectors including WCD, Panchayat Raj, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, & Livelihoods, Education, and Health. She was a member of the working group that prepared Karnataka's first Human Development Report. She has also been a member of the ECCE Taskforce, Government of India.



Ms. Sabina Dewan



Sabina Dewan is the Founder and Executive Director of the JustJobs Network - a global institution that produces cutting-edge, actionable research on good job creation and workforce development. Under Ms. Dewan's leadership, the JustJobs Network has grown to exert significant influence on the global discourse on employment and the governance of labour markets.

Ms. Dewan has been a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in India, and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. Before this, she served as a Senior Fellow and Director for International Economic Policy at the Center for American Progress in Washington DC.

Ms. Dewan's research examines how major forces from technology to climate change are upending traditional employment. Rapid and constantly changing labour markets call for equally dynamic education and skills development policies and practice. Ms. Dewan's work draws on field-based research and partnerships to connect findings from the ground to policy at national and international levels. She works closely with governments, businesses, multilateral, and grassroots organizations providing critical labour market insights to help generate more employment, cultivate employability, and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Ms. Dewan's wide experience includes working with institutions including the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, and the European Commission, as well as grassroots organizations in Sierra Leone, India and Western Samoa. She serves on several global and local committees. She is one of six advisors to the Swedish Prime Minister's Global Deal initiative. She serves as a member of the Global Challenges Foundation's Climate Governance Commission. She is a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry's National Committee on Skills and Livelihoods; Niti Aayog's advisory committee for 'Vision 2035', and is part of the advisory group for Work Fair and



Free Foundation. She played a key role in integration of vocational education in India's National Education Policy 2020 and National Curriculum Framework 2023.

Ms. Dewan appears regularly in several international media outlets, including The Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, US News and World Report, Mint, Hindu Business Line, CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, TimesNow and NDTV.

