



Skill Education for Women & Girls: Entrepreneurship and Employment (Case Studies, Government Initiatives)

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Abstract:

As India targets the ambitious milestone of **Viksit Bharat @2047**, the national developmental strategy is undergoing a fundamental shift from a degree-heavy educational model to a "**Skills-First**" paradigm. This paper examines how India is mobilizing its massive demographic dividend by replacing generic training with "precision skilling" tailored to the demands of Industry 4.0. Central to this transformation is the social and economic empowerment of historically marginalized groups, specifically women and rural youth.

Through an analysis of flagship initiatives like **PMKVY 4.0, SANKALP, and the Lakhpati Didi scheme**, this study illustrates how decentralized vocational frameworks are dismantling the traditional "urban-premium" of education. By integrating entrepreneurship and digital literacy into technical training, these programs transition youth from mere wage-seekers to "Job Creators." Empirical case studies—ranging from the "**Eco-Weavers**" of Assam to **Agri-Tech consultants in Vidarbha**—demonstrate that localized, tech-enabled skilling can revitalize rural economies and reverse distress migration. The paper concludes that by valuing practical competencies alongside academic credentials and linking certification to micro-capital, India is engineering a resilient, self-reliant generation capable of navigating the volatility of a globalized, high-tech economy.

Keywords: *Viksit Bharat @2047, Skills-First Paradigm, Demographic Dividend, Precision Skilling, Inclusive Entrepreneurship.*



1. Introduction

The vision of **Viksit Bharat @2047** is far more than a simple deadline for economic growth; it is a profound commitment to reinventing India as a high-income, tech-driven powerhouse. However, the true strength of this transformation doesn't lie in infrastructure or balance sheets, but in the strategic mobilization of our people. As the world moves deeper into the era of Industry 4.0—where AI, automation, and the Green Economy are rewriting the rules of work—the old reliance on traditional degrees is quickly giving way to a "**Skills-First**" paradigm.

Skill education is no longer a "plan B" or a secondary vocational track. It has become the primary engine of national productivity and the most effective tool for social justice. For India's youth, who represent the largest demographic dividend on the planet, mastering market-relevant competencies is the only real protection against the unpredictable shifts of the global labor market.

This shift is particularly vital for those who have historically been left behind. Women and girls continue to face systemic hurdles, while youth in rural or marginalized communities are often sidelined by geographic and economic distance. To bridge this gap, we are seeing a move away from generic, one-size-fits-all training toward "**precision skilling**"—a model where the curriculum is shaped by what the industry needs today, rather than outdated educational modules.

This paper explores this fundamental shift in how India empowers its workforce. It looks at how entrepreneurship is being woven directly into vocational learning, ensuring that young people aren't just looking for jobs, but are equipped with the financial and digital tools to create them. By analyzing flagship programs like **PMKVY 4.0** and **SANKALP**, this study highlights how decentralized, inclusive frameworks are finally breaking the "urban-premium" of education. The ultimate goal is a future where a girl in a remote village or a young person from an underserved community has the same opportunity to compete in the global economy as someone in a major city.

2. Empowering Women and Girls: From Survival to Success

The modern policy landscape has shifted its focus from merely sustaining women in low-paying informal work to helping them lead high-value enterprises. The goal is no longer just "employment," but the creation of "Wealth-Creators."

2.1 Policy Frameworks and National Initiatives

Several key programs are currently bridging the gap between talent and opportunity:

- **The Swavalambini Programme (2025):** This joint venture between the MSDE and NITI Aayog is a game-changer for women in smaller cities (Tier-2 and Tier-3). Rather



than just teaching a trade, it acts as an incubator for women-led startups, providing the high-level mentorship and market access needed to scale a business.

- **The Lakhpati Didi Initiative:** This ambitious program aims to lift 30 million women within Self-Help Groups (SHGs) into a higher income bracket—targeting at least ₹1 lakh annually. It breaks traditional gender roles by training women in "non-traditional" fields like drone piloting, organic agri-business, and electronics manufacturing.
- **Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA):** By focusing specifically on rural girls, DISHA is tackling the digital divide head-on. It equips them with the tools to navigate e-commerce, allowing a local artisan to sell her products to a global audience from her own village.

2.2 Case Study: The "Eco-Weavers" of Assam

In the rural heartlands of Assam, weaving was traditionally a quiet, domestic skill with very little financial return. However, through a government-backed Cluster Development Program, a group of 50 young women transformed this heritage into a business. By learning advanced jacquard techniques and natural dyeing alongside digital marketing, they moved into a "Direct-to-Consumer" (D2C) model.

The Result: By forming a cooperative and using the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), their household incomes jumped from a mere ₹4,000 to over ₹22,000 per month. This proves that when you combine traditional craftsmanship with digital literacy, a hobby becomes a scalable, sustainable industry.

3. Rural and Marginalized Youth: Dignity Through Innovation

For youth in remote areas, distance and social barriers often create a "double disadvantage." The current strategy of "**Hyper-Local Skilling**" aims to change this by creating high-quality career paths within their own communities.

3.1 Modernizing the Grassroots

- **PM-SETU (2025):** This initiative has breathed new life into 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), upgrading them with labs for AI, Green Hydrogen, and Augmented Reality. It ensures that a student in a rural district has access to the same cutting-edge tech as a student in a metro city.
- **SANKALP:** This program focuses on the "last mile," strengthening local district planning to ensure that even the most isolated hamlets are not left out of the national skill map.



- **Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi:** Specifically designed for tribal communities, this program helps youth monetize indigenous knowledge—such as forest-based products—by teaching them modern branding and processing.

3.2 Case Study: The Agri-Tech Pioneers of Vidarbha

In Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, a group of 20 young people from marginalized backgrounds chose a different path than migrating to a crowded city for manual labor. Through a local PMKK center, they became certified in **Soil Health and Micro-Irrigation Technology**.

Today, instead of being laborers, they run a technical consultancy. They use IoT sensors and drones to help local farmers optimize water and pesticide use. This "Precision Farming" model keeps the rural economy vibrant and proves that high-tech jobs can exist—and thrive—outside of urban centers.

4. Addressing the Challenges Ahead

Even with these successes, the "Skill Gap" is a moving target. To keep pace with the future, three key shifts are necessary:

1. **Human-Centric Skills:** Technical training is not enough. We must integrate "Soft Skills" and mental health resilience into every curriculum to help youth navigate the pressures of a modern workplace.
2. **The "Campus-to-Cubicle" Bridge:** Rural ITIs need deeper, mandatory partnerships with local industries to ensure that every graduate has a clear path to a job.
3. **Capital for Graduates:** We should link skill certifications directly to micro-loans. A certificate should be more than just a piece of paper; it should be a "key" that unlocks the funding needed to start a business immediately.

6. Conclusion

The true power of India's youth can be found at the crossroads where specialized skills meet genuine opportunity. As we have seen throughout this study, we are witnessing a historic pivot: moving away from a "Supply-Driven" system—which often pushed generic training onto a disconnected workforce—toward a **"Demand-Led" framework**. This isn't just a policy shift; it is a change that turns a training certificate into a functional passport for economic independence.

For women and girls, the stakes are even higher. The move into tech-enabled entrepreneurship does more than just put money in their pockets; it fundamentally shifts the power dynamics within their homes and communities. By breaking out of traditional,



low-wage vocational roles, women are finally shattering the glass ceilings that have long defined the rural informal economy.

Similarly, for youth in marginalized or rural areas, the introduction of high-tech training in fields like **Agri-Tech and Green Energy** offers a way out of "distress migration." Instead of leaving their homes for low-skilled labor in crowded cities, these young people are staying to revitalize their own local ecosystems. The stories of the "Eco-Weavers" in Assam and the "Agri-Tech" consultants in Vidarbha are not just isolated success stories; they are proof that when you combine technical skill with digital literacy and financial mentorship, young people stop looking for jobs and start building futures.

These "**Job Creators**" are the pioneers of **Viksit Bharat @2047**. They prove that the most effective way to grow a nation is to invest in its people in a way that is inclusive and localized. For this model to last, our educational infrastructure must remain flexible, digital-first, and accessible regardless of geography. By creating a society where a practical skill is valued as highly as a traditional degree, India is doing more than just fighting unemployment—it is fostering a resilient, self-reliant generation ready to lead on the global stage.

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