

Addressing Rural Unemployment and Poverty in Contemporary India through Skill Development Programmes

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Abstract: In contemporary India, rural unemployment and poverty remain significant challenges despite rapid economic development and digital progress. According to CMIE data, rural unemployment stood at 7.7% as of December 31, 2022. Agriculture continues to be the primary occupation in rural India, yet many farmers, especially in rainfed areas, remain underemployed for several months due to seasonal cycles, monsoon dependency, and lack of diversification. This leads to a cycle of economic insecurity, social marginalization, and in some cases, farmer suicides. Through the lens of Tamil Nadu's villages and with a special focus on national and state-level initiatives like PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) and Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC), this article analyses the root causes of rural unemployment and explores skill development as a sustainable solution for rural poverty eradication.

Keywords: Gender-Inclusive Approach, Rural unemployment, Poverty alleviation, Skill development, Climate change

I. INTRODUCTION

Over 44 million rural families in India live below the poverty line, often suffering from lack of productive work, low wages, and low agricultural yields (NITI Aayog, 2023). Despite numerous rural development schemes such as MGNREGA, RURBAN Mission, and DAY-NRLM, challenges persist (Ministry of Rural Development, 2025). With increasing mechanization in agriculture and declining interest among the youth in farming, there is an urgent need to equip rural populations with alternate skills relevant to the local economy (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024). In Tamil Nadu, skill mismatch, small land holdings, and limited market access continue to hinder rural employment growth (NABARD, 2024).

II. MAJOR CAUSES OF RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

In modern India, especially in the post-pandemic years, rural unemployment and poverty remain entrenched due to a complex interplay of structural and contemporary challenges. One of the most critical issues is seasonal and rainfed agriculture, which results in irregular employment and income for rural households. Most farming activities depend heavily on monsoons, and the absence of assured irrigation facilities leads to joblessness during the lean seasons (India Meteorological Department, 2024).

This situation is further exacerbated by the low-profit margins in agriculture, where farmers invest heavily in seeds, fertilizers, and labour but receive meager returns. In states like Tamil Nadu, small and marginal farmers often earn as little as ₹16 per ₹100 invested in crop cultivation (NABARD, 2024). The issue of fragmented landholdings due to inheritance practices has resulted in uneconomical plots that diminish productivity and discourage innovation, causing further disinterest in agriculture among the younger generation (Planning Commission, 2013).

Another major factor is the lack of technological adoption in farming. Despite national efforts to promote smart agriculture, rural farmers still follow outdated methods, with limited awareness or access to modern technologies like drip irrigation, AI-driven soil testing, or precision farming (World Bank, 2022). This reflects a larger educational mismatch, where rural youth—even those with formal education—struggle to find suitable non-agricultural employment due to the lack of local industries and poor skill alignment (Swain & Sahu, 2021). Consequently, many are forced back into traditional agriculture, often against their aspirations, further reinforcing the cycle of underemployment.

In addition to these structural problems, inadequate rural infrastructure continues to be a bottleneck. Poor roads, electricity, lack of cold storage, and limited transport facilities hinder both production and post-harvest activities,

especially in remote villages (NITI Aayog, 2024). Furthermore, limited access to institutional credit and poor marketing networks mean that farmers rely on middlemen, who often exploit them, reducing their profit margins and discouraging further investment (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022).

Adding to these longstanding issues are contemporary challenges that have intensified rural distress between 2023 and 2025. Climate change, for instance, has led to erratic weather patterns, frequent droughts, and unseasonal floods that have disrupted crop cycles and worsened agricultural uncertainty (Department of Science & Technology, 2025; India Meteorological Department, 2024). The digital divide between urban and rural India continues to grow, with most rural communities lacking access to reliable internet, digital tools, and the training needed for e-governance or digital marketplaces (TRAI, 2025; Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Communications & IT, 2025).

Youth migration has also surged, as educated and able-bodied young people leave villages for urban employment, leaving behind an ageing rural workforce with limited capacity to adapt or innovate (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024). Compounding the problem is the skill mismatch between available government training programs and actual local employment opportunities. Many national skilling schemes fail to cater to region-specific needs, leaving trainees either underemployed or entirely unemployable in their rural settings (NSDC, 2023).

Together, these factors illustrate why rural unemployment and poverty persist in India today. Addressing them requires an integrated approach that combines infrastructure development, localized skill training, irrigation reform, financial inclusion, and climate-resilient agricultural practices (World Bank, 2022; Swain & Sahu, 2021).

Rural unemployment and poverty in India are deeply rooted in the structural deficiencies of the agricultural sector and the broader rural economy (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022). One of the primary causes is the seasonal and rainfed nature of agriculture, which leads to limited work availability throughout the year. Most rural farming is dependent on monsoon rains, and in the absence of assured irrigation facilities, agricultural activities are restricted to only a few months annually (India Meteorological Department, 2024). As a result, farmers and agricultural laborers face several months of joblessness, contributing to chronic underemployment and economic instability in rural households (Swain & Sahu, 2021).

Another significant factor is the low profit margins in agriculture. While agriculture remains the primary livelihood source for nearly half of India's rural population, the returns from farming are often inadequate to sustain a decent living (NITI Aayog, 2023). The cost of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and labour continues to rise, while market prices for produce remain stagnant or fall. For instance, in many parts of Tamil Nadu, marginal farmers earn as little as ₹16 for every ₹100 invested, making agriculture economically unviable (NABARD, 2024). This low profitability discourages investment in agriculture and pushes families deeper into poverty.

The fragmentation of landholdings due to inheritance practices is another critical issue. As agricultural land is passed down across generations, it gets divided into smaller and smaller plots. These fragmented holdings are often too small to be cultivated profitably or mechanized effectively (Planning Commission, 2013). With diminishing returns and high cultivation costs, many small landholders either leave their land fallow or abandon farming altogether. This not only reduces agricultural productivity but also increases rural unemployment (World Bank, 2022).

Compounding the problem is the lack of technological adoption in agriculture. A majority of farmers in rural India still rely on traditional methods of cultivation that are labor-intensive and yield relatively lower output. There is limited awareness and access to modern innovations such as drip irrigation systems, precision farming techniques, soil health cards, or AI-based crop monitoring (World Bank, 2022). This technological gap keeps productivity low and fails to create opportunities for skilled rural employment in agri-tech and related sectors (NSDC, 2023).

The problem is further intensified by an educational mismatch and growing youth disinterest in agriculture. Many educated rural youth do not find meaningful employment opportunities in their villages due to the absence of diverse industries or service sectors. With limited exposure to alternative careers and lack of vocational training, they are often compelled to continue in traditional farming, even when it is no longer economically sustainable or aligned with their aspirations (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024). This results in disguised unemployment and frustration among the youth.

Additionally, inadequate rural infrastructure plays a major role in hindering economic development and job creation. Many rural areas suffer from poor transportation networks, lack of storage facilities (especially cold storage), unreliable electricity, and insufficient irrigation infrastructure (NITI Aayog, 2024). These deficits obstruct the expansion of rural enterprises, reduce efficiency in agriculture, and limit access to markets, further depressing incomes and employment opportunities (Swain & Sahu, 2021).

Finally, the lack of institutional credit and organized marketing systems significantly affects small and marginal farmers. Most of them are unable to secure loans from banks due to lack of collateral or credit history, forcing them to rely on informal moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates. Moreover, the absence of organized markets and cooperative systems allows middlemen to dominate the agricultural supply chain, depriving farmers of fair prices for their produce (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022). This erodes their profits and discourages participation in the market economy.

Together, these interconnected issues create a cycle of poverty, low productivity, and unemployment in rural India. Without targeted interventions to address these root causes, rural development will remain incomplete and uneven across regions (World Bank, 2022).

In the years 2023 to 2025, India's rural economy continues to grapple with a new wave of challenges that go beyond the traditional issues of land, labour, and capital. One of the most pressing contemporary concerns is climate change, which has increasingly disrupted the rhythm of agriculture across various states, especially in rain-dependent regions (Department of Science & Technology, 2025). Erratic monsoons, unseasonal rainfall, prolonged droughts, and flash floods have become more frequent, leading to crop failure, soil degradation, and water scarcity (India Meteorological Department, 2024). The unpredictability of climate patterns not only reduces farm productivity but also creates a state of constant economic insecurity for millions of rural households. The recent drought in parts of Tamil Nadu, combined with flooding in coastal and low-lying areas, has highlighted the growing vulnerability of agriculture to environmental shocks (Swain & Sahu, 2021). These changes in weather patterns demand an urgent shift toward climate-resilient agriculture, yet the rural population remains underprepared due to lack of awareness, training, and support (World Bank, 2022).

Parallel to environmental challenges, the digital divide has emerged as another critical barrier to inclusive rural development. While urban India rapidly transitions toward a knowledge economy and embraces technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and blockchain under the banner of Industry 4.0, many rural communities remain digitally excluded. Poor internet connectivity, lack of digital devices, and minimal digital literacy hinder rural populations from accessing e-governance platforms, online learning resources, digital marketplaces, and financial services (TRAI, 2025; Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Communications & IT, 2025). This digital backwardness has created a widening gap between urban and rural India, leaving farmers and rural youth unable to participate meaningfully in the digital economy. Even schemes like Digital India and BharatNet have not reached their full potential in the remotest villages, especially those in hilly, tribal, and drought-prone regions (USOF, 2024).

Adding to this complexity is the phenomenon of youth migration, which has intensified in the post-COVID era. A large number of educated and semi-educated youth from rural India are migrating to cities in search of better employment opportunities, often taking up low-skilled jobs in the informal sector (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024). This outmigration leads to the depletion of the rural workforce, leaving behind the elderly, women, and children, and weakening the social and economic fabric of village communities. The absence of young and dynamic labour also stifles innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas, further entrenching poverty. In Tamil Nadu and other southern states, this trend is more pronounced due to better road and transport connectivity to urban centres, making migration both easy and attractive (NITI Aayog, 2024). However, urban migration is not always a solution—it often results in overcrowding, slum development, and poor living conditions in cities, while villages continue to stagnate.

Moreover, a skill mismatch between training programs and real-world rural employment opportunities has become a major roadblock to solving rural unemployment. While the central government has launched large-scale skilling initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and the Skill India Mission, many of these programs follow a standardized curriculum that is not tailored to the local economic realities of rural India (MSDE, 2024a). For instance, training rural youth in computer hardware or hospitality may not be useful in areas where the primary demand is for skills in agri-processing, livestock management, eco-tourism, or rural construction (NSDC, 2023). This disconnect often leads to trained individuals remaining unemployed or migrating to cities for unrelated jobs (ILO, 2023). Additionally, the certification provided through these programs is sometimes not recognized by local employers, diminishing their value (MSDE, 2025). The situation calls for a decentralised, demand-driven skilling model that integrates rural development goals with vocational training, ensuring that the youth are skilled in locally relevant trades and industries (World Bank, 2022).

In this, the period between 2023 and 2025 has brought forward complex, interrelated challenges for rural India—ranging from climate-induced disasters and digital exclusion to demographic shifts and ineffective skill training. Addressing these issues requires not just programmatic reforms, but a holistic, community-driven approach that bridges the gap between rural needs and national development goals (NITI Aayog, 2024; Swain & Sahu, 2021).

III. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND EMERGING REALITIES 2023–25

In the evolving context of rural India, particularly during the period from 2023 to 2025, skill development has emerged as a powerful catalyst for transforming lives, improving livelihoods, and reducing rural poverty and unemployment (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024). Traditional agriculture alone is no longer sufficient to sustain rural households, given its seasonal nature, low profitability, and increasing vulnerability to climate change (Department of Science & Technology, 2025; India Meteorological Department, 2024).

In this backdrop, national-level initiatives have taken center stage in promoting rural skilling. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0, launched for the period 2023–26, emphasizes demand-driven, short-term skill training that aligns with industry needs while also focusing on rural inclusion (MSDE, 2024a). The scheme aims to train youth in job-relevant sectors such as agriculture, handicrafts, food processing, and digital technologies, with certification and placement support (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has been instrumental in empowering rural women through the promotion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which receive capacity-building support to run micro-enterprises (Ministry of Rural Development, 2025). The integration of skilling with SHGs helps in building local entrepreneurship and generating community-level employment (Swain & Sahu, 2021).

Additionally, programs under Digital India and e-Gram Swaraj aim to enhance digital literacy, governance participation, and service delivery in rural areas, equipping Panchayati Raj institutions and citizens with basic ICT skills to access online platforms, government benefits, and e-commerce services (TRAI, 2025; Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Communications & IT, 2025).

At the state level, Tamil Nadu has taken a leadership role in localized skill development. Through the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC) and the flagship *Naan Mudhalvan* Scheme, the state has targeted rural youth, school dropouts, and women to receive structured training across sectors like agriculture, logistics, renewable energy, and services (TNSDC, n.d.). The *Naan Mudhalvan* initiative goes a step further by collaborating with industry partners, NGOs, and educational institutions to deliver both soft skills and technical skills, thus increasing employability (NABARD, 2024). Complementing this, the *Kalaigarnar Magalir Urimai Thittam*, launched in 2023, provides financial assistance of ₹1,000 per month to eligible women, which enables them to invest in self-employment or small enterprises, particularly in agri-allied activities such as poultry, tailoring, food vending, and floriculture (Press Information Bureau, 2024). These schemes not only address unemployment but also contribute to women's economic empowerment and rural income diversification.

An essential part of rural skill development lies in agriculture and allied sectors, which offer high potential for income generation when combined with the right training and infrastructure. Rural populations are increasingly being trained in goat and poultry rearing, organic farming, mushroom cultivation, sericulture, floriculture, and horticulture (Swain & Sahu, 2021). Training in food processing, agri-business, rural tourism, and fisheries helps tap into emerging markets and government support systems (World Bank, 2022). With the promotion of agri-tech entrepreneurship, rural youth are also encouraged to engage with modern technologies like drip irrigation systems, solar-powered farming tools, and mobile-based farm advisory services (NSDC, 2023). These diversified skillsets not only create sustainable self-employment opportunities but also contribute to reducing seasonal unemployment and stabilizing rural incomes.

Skill development is no longer a peripheral issue but a central pillar of rural transformation in India. Its success depends on aligning training with local resources, market demand, and cultural contexts (ILO, 2023). A coordinated effort between the central and state governments, Panchayati Raj institutions, private sector, and civil society is essential to scale up these efforts (NITI Aayog, 2024). With proper implementation, skill development can become the bridge that connects rural aspirations with economic opportunities, ensuring inclusive growth, self-reliant villages, and a stronger rural India (World Bank, 2022).

IV. SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL TRANSFORMATION

Skill development has become a crucial instrument in addressing the persistent challenges of rural unemployment, poverty, and underemployment in India (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022). The government's shift from subsidy-based welfare to empowerment-based development is clearly reflected in its skill development initiatives aimed at equipping rural populations with job-relevant abilities (MSDE, 2024b).

At the national level, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0 (2023–2026) represents a renewed effort to create a workforce aligned with the changing needs of industries and emerging technologies (MSDE, 2024a). PMKVY 4.0 prioritizes demand-based skill development and expands its rural outreach to include economically

weaker sections, school dropouts, and women (ILO, 2023). Parallely, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) continues to play a pivotal role in empowering rural women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). By integrating skill training with access to credit and livelihood promotion, NRLM supports rural entrepreneurship and income generation (Ministry of Rural Development, 2025).

Another vital national-level initiative, *Digital India*, along with *e-Gram Swaraj*, is enabling rural citizens to participate more actively in governance and digital service delivery (TRAI, 2025). These platforms also serve as mediums for spreading digital literacy, offering rural youth and women the skills needed to navigate an increasingly digital world and participate in online commerce, e-governance, and digital financial transactions (Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Communications & IT, 2025).

Focusing on Tamil Nadu, the state has been a frontrunner in customizing skill development programs to suit regional and demographic needs. The Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC), in collaboration with the *Naan Mudhalvan* Scheme, has expanded access to structured training programs, particularly targeting rural youth, school dropouts, and women (TNSDC, n.d.). These programs cover a range of industries including healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture, retail, and information technology. They also emphasize soft skills, communication, and personality development, making trainees job-ready for both wage employment and entrepreneurship (NABARD, 2024).

A major boost for rural women came in 2023 with the launch of the *Kalaigarnar Magalir Urimai Thittam*, which provides financial support of ₹1,000 per month to eligible women (Press Information Bureau, 2024). This initiative is more than just a welfare measure—it complements skill development and enables women to invest in micro-enterprises, thereby promoting financial independence and economic activity in villages (NITI Aayog, 2024). Together, these state-level interventions are helping to reverse the trend of rural distress and outmigration by creating local employment opportunities.

Beyond formal training schemes, there is growing recognition of the potential in agriculture and allied sectors as viable sources of rural livelihoods. With declining returns from traditional farming, rural youth are being encouraged to pursue diversified skill sets that include goat and poultry rearing, organic farming, mushroom cultivation, floriculture, and sericulture (Swain & Sahu, 2021). These activities require low capital investment and offer consistent income, especially when supported by modern training and access to markets (World Bank, 2022).

Additionally, training in food processing, rural tourism, fisheries, and agri-tech entrepreneurship is being promoted under various central and state schemes (NSDC, 2023). These skill sets not only provide income opportunities but also help in building resilience against the risks posed by climate change and market volatility (Department of Science & Technology, 2025). The use of technology in farming—such as mobile apps for weather updates, precision irrigation, and soil health monitoring—is also gaining traction among trained rural youth (India Meteorological Department, 2024).

By integrating traditional knowledge with modern skills and market access, rural communities can gradually transform their local economies from subsistence to sustainability (World Bank, 2022). Skill development is not just about job training—it is about empowering rural India to participate meaningfully in the nation's growth story. When implemented effectively, it can reduce migration, improve household incomes, promote gender equality, and build self-reliant, vibrant rural communities (NITI Aayog, 2024).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL INDIA

To effectively tackle the twin challenges of rural unemployment and poverty, a multifaceted and localized approach to skill development is essential. One of the most critical recommendations is the establishment of Localized Skill Hubs at the village and block levels. These hubs should be integrated with the specific needs and potential of the local economy, whether it is agriculture, handicrafts, livestock, or services (Swain & Sahu, 2021). For example, in regions where banana or turmeric farming is dominant, training programs can include post-harvest processing, value addition, and packaging. Localized centers ensure accessibility for rural youth and women and reduce dependency on urban institutions for training (World Bank, 2022).

Alongside this, the promotion of Agri-Entrepreneurship must be given priority. Supporting Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and nurturing start-ups in rural value chains can transform farmers into entrepreneurs and job providers (NABARD, 2024). These institutions can facilitate bulk purchasing of inputs, collective marketing of produce, and value-added processing—all of which enhance income and reduce exploitation by middlemen (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022). Moreover, young farmers can be trained in building agro-based enterprises such as food processing units, cold storage chains, and logistics for perishable goods (NITI Aayog, 2024).

Another strategic recommendation is to promote Modern Irrigation Practices, especially in regions suffering from erratic rainfall and water scarcity. Training in micro-irrigation techniques like drip and sprinkler systems, rainwater harvesting, and precision farming can significantly improve productivity while conserving water resources (Department of Science & Technology, 2025). These technologies are vital in the face of climate change and need to be made accessible through skill training and government support (India Meteorological Department, 2024). Alongside this, there is a pressing need to revisit and reform land use practices. Land Reform Reorientation should focus on preventing further fragmentation of agricultural holdings and encouraging collective or cooperative farming (Planning Commission, 2013). This approach allows small and marginal farmers to pool resources, access better technology, and increase scale, thus making agriculture economically viable. Training programs can also guide communities on legal frameworks, cooperative models, and land use planning.

In today's digital age, bridging the digital divide is non-negotiable. Training rural youth and women in e-commerce platforms, digital payment systems, online marketing, and use of mobile applications for agriculture and small business management can unlock access to broader markets (TRAI, 2025; Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Communications & IT, 2025). For instance, farmers can sell directly to consumers or institutional buyers through digital platforms, bypassing intermediaries (USOF, 2024). Furthermore, effective Awareness Campaigns are vital to ensure that rural populations, especially the illiterate and marginalized, are informed and inspired to participate in skill development initiatives. Traditional and culturally resonant tools like street plays, folk songs, puppet shows, and local radio broadcasts can be leveraged to create interest and dispel myths around vocational training (Swain & Sahu, 2021).

Lastly, a Gender-Inclusive Approach must be embedded at every level of skill development planning and implementation. Women, particularly those in Self-Help Group (SHG) networks, should be given tailored training that builds on their existing strengths—be it in food processing, tailoring, organic farming, or small trade (Ministry of Rural Development, 2025). Access to seed capital, marketing support, and digital literacy must accompany skill training to ensure real empowerment (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Gender-sensitive infrastructure like safe training spaces, child care support, and flexible schedules can further enable higher participation of rural women (NITI Aayog, 2024). When women are economically empowered, the entire community benefits through better nutrition, education, and health outcomes.

In essence, a decentralized, inclusive, and technologically integrated skill development strategy that respects local context and leverages rural potential is the way forward to build a resilient, self-reliant rural India (World Bank, 2022).

VI. CONCLUSION

As India marches toward its ambitious goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, it must recognize that inclusive rural development is not just desirable but indispensable (NITI Aayog, 2024). Nearly 65% of India's population resides in villages, and any progress that overlooks this demographic risks being unequal and unsustainable. Skill development stands out as a transformative tool that can bridge the divide between rural aspirations and economic opportunities (NSDC, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

However, for this transformation to be meaningful, skilling efforts must be rooted in local realities, cultural contexts, and economic potentials (ILO, 2023). Whether it is through enhancing productivity in agriculture by training farmers in modern techniques, or promoting non-farm livelihoods such as food processing, animal husbandry, rural tourism, and digital services, a contextual and community-based skill development approach can create resilient and diversified rural economies (Swain & Sahu, 2021). Importantly, skilling is not just about employment—it is about empowerment, dignity, and creating self-reliant villages that contribute meaningfully to the national economy (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2022).

Tamil Nadu's integrated efforts through state schemes such as *Naan Mudhalvan*, TNSDC, and *Kalaigarnar Magalir Urimai Thittam* provide a replicable model for other states (TNSDC, n.d.; Press Information Bureau, 2024). These programs combine targeted skill training with social protection, access to digital tools, and financial support—particularly for youth and women (NABARD, 2024). Moreover, Tamil Nadu's promotion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as agents of rural entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise development underscores the power of community-led initiatives (Ministry of Rural Development, 2025). But the journey ahead requires more than isolated programs; it demands convergence and collaboration across levels of governance and sectors (NITI Aayog, 2023).

From Panchayati Raj Institutions, which are best placed to assess local needs, to state departments, non-governmental organizations, corporate CSR wings, and educational institutions, all stakeholders must join forces to make rural

skilling a people's movement (World Bank, 2022). Only then can we harness the true potential of India's rural workforce and ensure that economic growth does not remain an urban phenomenon.

As the nation balances innovation with inclusion, let us be guided by the vision: "Let us reduce hunger not by importing food but by skilling our farmers to feed the nation." This vision not only captures the essence of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India) but also affirms the power of knowledge and skills as the real capital of rural transformation (ILO & Institute for Human Development, 2024).

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