

The Issue of Unemployment in Nagaland: lack of opportunities or skills

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Abstract—This article examines Nagaland's escalating unemployment crisis, particularly among educated youth. Despite the state's cultural wealth and natural resources, its small economy, weak private sector, and heavy dependence on government jobs have created intense competition for scarce formal employment. Citing the 2025 Survey Report on Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration, the authors note over 71,000 registered job seekers (rising to nearly 72,871 by December 2025), a 16.07% unemployment rate, and — most tellingly — that 92% of unemployed youth lack technical or vocational training, revealing a stark skills-market mismatch. The article traces multiple causes: an education system oriented toward degrees rather than employability, underdeveloped industry and infrastructure in Nagaland's hilly terrain, a cultural preference for "dignified" white-collar or government work over trades, corruption and nepotism in hiring, and structural dependence on central grants rather than self-generated growth. The article incorporates extensive commentary from state officials and legislators who call for skill development, entrepreneurship promotion, private-sector investment, and a "mindset shift" away from government-job dependency. Proposed solutions include vocational training, support for cottage industries and commercial agriculture, entrepreneurship financing, and resolution of Nagaland's underlying political issues.

Index Terms—Unemployment in Nagaland, Jobless, Educated Unemployed, Job Crisis

I. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is one of the most serious socio-economic challenges faced by Nagaland in recent times. Despite being a state rich in culture, natural beauty, and potential, Nagaland continues to struggle with a high unemployment rate, especially among the youth. The issue has grown steadily over the years

due to limited job opportunities, a small private sector, heavy dependence on government employment, and a variety of social and structural factors. Understanding the causes, effects, and possible solutions to unemployment in Nagaland is important for creating a better future for its people. Nagaland has a young population, and every year thousands of students graduate from schools, colleges, and universities. However, the number of jobs available does not match the number of job seekers. The state's economy is small, and private industries are limited. As a result, most people depend on government jobs for stability. This has created intense competition, with thousands of applicants for very few vacancies. For many young people, securing a government job becomes the only goal, and this makes the unemployment situation even more pronounced.¹ Nestled in the lush hills of Northeast India, Nagaland is a state often celebrated for its cultural richness and strategic location- there lays a paradox. While government rhetoric speaks of a booming state and development agendas, such as the vision of a "Vikshit Nagaland", a growing number of young people are finding themselves without employment. The phrase "youth jobless spike" begins to sound far too familiar. According to the latest annual survey titled Survey Report on Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration, Nagaland, there are 71,034 youth registered as unemployed across the state (2025). The same report found that 92% of the respondents lacked technical or vocational training. The Periodic Labour Force Survey report shows youth unemployment as a major concern, with rates reaching 27.4% overall for those

¹ Lanukala, Unemployment in Nagaland, Morung Express, 14 January 2026.

aged between 15 and 29. These figures paint a clear message that youth unemployment in Nagaland is a serious challenge, and while some figures may suggest improvement, the story for younger cohorts presents escalating joblessness.² Though Nagaland has enjoyed a special status, central grants, and projects under various schemes, the growth has not translated proportionally into creating formal job opportunities for the youth. With 92% of the unemployed youth lacking technical or vocational training, there is a severe gap between job- market demands and youth preparedness. The harsh fact is that many have general academic qualifications but not the kind of “industry- ready” skills that attract employment. Many youths aim solely for government jobs, underestimating the role of private enterprise, entrepreneurship, and self- employment. The state infrastructure is also underdeveloped as compared to many other states, with a limited scale of manufacturing and few large private firms. These hinder job creation outside the public sector. For many young Naga people, the scenario is unsettling. Imagine, having completed college, maybe even a postgraduate degree, only to find that the few available jobs are either in the public sector with large odds or informal. There are many who are neither employed nor engaged in entrepreneurship, while some remain registered as job seekers for years.³ Unemployment has become a common disease, which is not warble until and unless one works very hard or one maintains the so called ‘Dignity of Labour’. Unemployment had widespread in the whole of Naga society and also extends to other places among the youths and with those who are well qualified. Unemployment can also be a condition in which an individual is not in a state of reward occupation despite his desire to do so.⁴ A total of 71,034 applicants were registered with employment exchanges in Nagaland as of March 31, 2025, according to the Survey Report on Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration

2025 released by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES) as of March 31, 2025.⁵

II. LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES OR LACK OF SKILLS AND INTEREST

According to officials, as many as 6,456 vacancies across multiple sectors were to be filled at the state-wide Mega Job Fair 2026 held in March 2026 at the Integrated Business Hub and Innovation Centre, Dimapur. It was reported that 33 companies both local, domestic and international participated in the fair to recruit potential candidates, but only about 900 out of the total 1,884 registered turned up for the interviews. The response to this commendable initiative by the state government does not align with the outcry over the unemployment issue. Is this discrepancy due to a social obsession with government jobs, lack of awareness, high expectations, or skills mismatch? Could it be related to the recent surge in self-employment, which rose from 1,374 in 2024 to 23,091 in 2025, as noted in the recently released Annual Administrative Report, or is the issue not as severe as it is being made out to be? Complaining about the lack of job opportunities, while refusing to seize the chances arises will not lead us anywhere. Youth should grab opportunities made available and explore alternative careers. They should be willing to work. At the same time, the government must address this urgent socio-economic challenge unemployment confronting the state by supporting local entrepreneurs, promoting the private sector, focusing on skill development, and attracting investors through investor-friendly policies.⁶ Unemployment is one of the most discussed topics in Nagaland, particularly among educated youth who are left frustrated by the lack of job opportunities in the state. Their disappointment is evident in their interactions on social media platforms. As of December 31, 2025, a total of 72,871 unemployed youth were registered with the Employment Exchanges in Nagaland, which facilitate job registration, counseling, and placement, as per the

² Jessica, Nagaland’s Youth Employment Paradox, Morung Express, 17 February 2026.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Longchar, Imna. Youth Unemployment in the Naga Context – What is the way out?, Morung Express, 27 April 2007.

⁵ Ambrocia, Medolenuo. Nagaland registers 71,034 unemployed youth in latest state survey, East Mojo, 19 September 2025.

⁶ Nagaland's Paradoxical Employment Scene, Eastern Mirror, 26 March 2026.

Annual Administrative Report 2025–26 of the Directorate of Employment, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. The survey revealed that more than half of the applicants have been job hunting for over three years, highlighting the severity of the crisis. This is not surprising, as Nagaland lacks large-scale industries and companies, while the public sector has limited capacity, which is why lawmakers and officials have long been urging young people to consider career options beyond government jobs. What is surprising, however, is the poor participation in the recent job fair organized by the Nagaland Skill & Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDMD) under the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN) in collaboration with the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) Kohima, with an aim to connect job seekers with employers amid the growing unemployment issue in the state.⁷ The rise of unemployment among the youths in Nagaland is becoming a serious problem of the present day. There are many individuals seeking government jobs, but there are limited opportunities available in the state. Due to the high number of unemployment, the state's economy has seen a major setback. A significant portion of the unemployed are educated youth. The educated youth of the state has a strong preference for governmental jobs which is viewed as the benchmark for stable and respectable employment options. Nagaland has a weak industrial sector and an underdeveloped Agri-allied sector, making it difficult for the educated youth to find suitable alternatives outside the government sector. Nagaland is increasingly perceived by outsiders as a land of opportunities. However, this has become a concern for the locally educated youths, as most of the business and construction sectors are being controlled and operated by outsiders rather than by the locals, leading to a major setback for the youths in the entrepreneurial sector. Due to the lack of opportunities, many educated youths are being pushed towards joining armed rebel groups, which is an alarming trend. Although it may not be possible to eradicate unemployment completely, it can be

reduced by creating more job opportunities.⁸ MLA Nyamnyie Konyak expressed concern over rising unemployment among educated youth, which he said had risen from 7% earlier to nearly 30%. As per the Forest Department recruitment drive in 2025, the applicants included even PhD holders though the minimum qualification was Class 8, creating unfair competition for genuinely eligible candidates also show the seriousness of the situation of unemployment in the state leading to youth frustration that results to alcoholism and social unrest, he urged the creation of industries in both urban and rural areas, promotion of handloom and handicrafts, lifting restrictions under NLTP, and exploring industries like oil refineries at Dikhu for the generation of more employment opportunities.⁹

III. EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In Nagaland, a total of 32,915 students were enrolled in 72 colleges during 2024-25, The report informed that a total of 10,436 students were enrolled in government colleges during 2024-25, while 22,479 students enrolled in private colleges during the same period.¹⁰ Our education does not prepare the minds of our young men and women to become self-employed; on the contrary, it makes them dependent on the government to find for them some jobs. Some of our young men and women are not prepared to undertake jobs which are considered to be socially 'degrading' or 'indecent'. For example, as auto rickshaw and taxi drivers, working as a salesman or salesgirl in shops, doing waiter's work and clerical work in hotels, etc. Since the spirit of dignity and Labour is not properly inculcated in them, they become the victims of 'false prestige' and face the risk of unemployment, regarding the students in the modern world. Unemployment is not only a societal problem; it is

⁸ Patton, Chumthungo. Issue of unemployment: A concern for Naga youth, Nagaland Post, 16 June 2025.

⁹ Nagaland Assembly discusses rising unemployment crisis; CM Rio calls for mindset shift and skill-oriented growth, Nagaland Tribune, 02 September, 2025. Also read Rising unemployment a burning issue, says Rio.

¹⁰ Khrozoh, Livine. Nagaland enrolls 32,915 students in 72 colleges for 2024-25, Eastern Mirror, 23 July 2026.

⁷ Ibid.

also an individual problem. An unemployed youth or person loses self-respect and faces a discouraging outlook. The pitiable position of the wage owner who has lost his job for one reason or another is equally unfortunate. Unemployment damages our physical and moral health also. A person may get mental worries, anxieties and tension adversely affecting the mental health of the unemployed youth.¹¹

Education plays a significant role in unemployment. Although Nagaland has a high literacy rate, many students lack employable skills such as communication, technical knowledge, computer skills, and practical training. There is a gap between what students learn in schools and colleges and what the job market actually requires. This mismatch thus leads to educated unemployment, where degree holders are unable to find suitable jobs. Many young people aspire for white-collar or office jobs, but such opportunities are limited. Vocational training, skill development, and entrepreneurship education are still not strong enough across the state.¹² On education, residents had an average of 11 years of formal schooling, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of 22 years. According to Survey report (Govt. of Nagaland, 2025) about 16 percent of respondents studied up to graduation, 4 percent consist of postgraduates and above, while 2 percent are illiterate. The findings also revealed that 92 percent of residents did not have any technical education or vocational/technical training. The labour force participation rate in Nagaland was recorded at 56 percent. The employment rate was estimated at 83.92 percent, while the unemployment rate stood at 16.07 percent. At the district level, Wokha had the highest labour force participation rate with 75 percent, while Tuensang registered the lowest at 41 percentages. Mon district recorded the highest employment rate at 91.08 percent, while Phek reported the lowest at 75 percent. In contrast, Phek registered the highest unemployment rate at 25 percent, while Mon had the lowest at 8.92 percent. The survey further found that 56 percent of respondents were self-employed. Salaried employees

accounted for 16 percent in the public sector and 13 percent in the private sector. A large share of respondents, 88 percent, was ineligible for social security benefits. Similarly, 88 percent of those engaged in principal economic activity did not pursue any subsidiary activity.¹³ Advisor for Industries & Commerce, Hekani Jakhlu in the assembly session raises on the issue of unemployment in the Nagaland, stating that Nagaland is one of the youngest among the states in the country with 40% of the population comprising of citizens from ages 15 to 35 as per the 2011 census and that in the next 15-20 years, they are set to become the main drivers of the state's socio-economic developmental affairs and it is of utmost need to look into ways to shape and mould the youth of today for the growth of the state. Jakhlu stressed that the proportion of educated youth and the labour force has been constantly rising but growth in the rate of employment opportunities still remain to be very slow, in the government and private sector alike. She remarked that there also needs to be a clear understanding in the meaning of unemployed and unemployable, referring to the former as a symptom and the latter as an illness thereby stating that to tackle the illness, the Government of the day needs to fix the unemployment issue. She also stated the importance of the education system in preparing the youth for the job market and that although one may pass out with a certificate if there is lack of skills it becomes difficult to fit into the requirements of the job market thereby, stressing on the importance of up skilling, adapting to new technologies so as to keep pace with the said requirements. Stressing on the important roles played by the stakeholders, she stated that the members of legislative assembly, officers and staff of the state government, parents, and the youth themselves play a key role in the mindset shift so as to promote dignity of Labour in all fields of work and thus it is essential to upgrade the education system, up skilling through internship, apprenticeship programs, and governmental support in entrepreneurial ventures and MSME, adding that the state need to provide additional focus on individuals that are creating jobs, promoting capacity building programmes have been aggressively taken up in the

¹¹ Longchar, Imna. Youth Unemployment in the Naga Context – What is the way out?, Morung Express, 27 April 2007.

¹² Lanukala, Unemployment in Nagaland, Morung Express, 14th January 2026.

¹³ Morotsung Longchar, 'Employment, Unemployment, Skill And Migration ' In Nagaland, DIPR Nagaland, n.d., 2025.

state it has received lukewarm response due to lack of financial incentives.¹⁴ Advisor, School Education & SCERT, Dr. Kekhrielhoulie Yhome, stressed on the dignity of the workers especially in the private sector, he mentioned that there are three categories in wages, unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour which is covered under the Nagaland minimum wage act 2025 and pointed that Nagaland was the lowest in the country, he therefore urged the need to create a schedule list and salary structure on employment based on sectorial categories and job trades. He further said that our youth need to look at the demand labour market at the domestic and the international level and need to venture out abroad and bring back the best practices to upscale our entrepreneurial literacy and financial literacy to nurture and nourish a new sense of Naga livelihood pattern. On the importance of vocational training and skill development, he said that with the introduction of NEP 2020, the department has vocational training in schools to address the high rate of unemployment. By integrating vocational subjects into the curriculum, the aim is to provide students with the specific skills needed for employment. He also proposed to come out with a system which will onboard all educational institutions and departments which are providing vocational education to upscale the certifying process and accreditation systems. He further added that the department will be launching a 'SOAR mission' programme on 5th September to upscale the curriculum on vocational programmes.¹⁵ In an address at the Governor's felicitation programme for the toppers, rank holders and achievers of HSLC and HSSLC Examinations 2022 at Dr Imkongliba Ao hall at Raj Bhawan in Kohima. The then Governor of Nagaland and Assam Governor Prof Jagdish Mukhi, said the high literacy rate in Nagaland is not getting translated into job opportunities and the hard-earned peace thus is not giving economic prosperity.¹⁶ In terms of general education, the state has performed relatively well. Apart from the illiterate population

(2%), 21% of residents have studied up to the middle level, 9% up to the primary level, and 3% remain below the primary level. Taken together, these figures place Nagaland's literacy rate at 98%. Notably, 20% of the literate population are graduates or above, positioning Nagaland among the more educated states in the country in terms of formal schooling attainment. A striking 92% of residents reported having no technical education at all, underscoring the near-total absence of structured skill formation, it is very concerning that no respondent in Peren district reported receiving any technical education, while Longleng and Phek recorded the highest proportions without technical education at 99% each. Tuensang reported the lowest share of residents without technical education at 77%, followed by Kohima (83%) and Mokokchung (87%), while the remaining districts ranged between 92% and 98%. Meanwhile, only 1% from each of this district was reported to have a technical education in agriculture, engineering/technology, or medicine, while 2% were trained in other technical subjects. Participation in craft-based technical education was nil.¹⁷ An analysis of the UDISE plus report over five years showed that the state witnessed the highest dropout rate in the secondary level was in 2020-21 with a record of 24.4%. However, it may be noted that the world was hit by lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic during this period. The dropout rate in the following year 2021-22 declined to 17.5%, while it slightly increased to 19.44% during 2022-23. However, the UDISE plus 2023-24 showed a significant decrease in the dropout rate during the academic year at 10.29%. This has also significantly impacting the rise of unemployment.¹⁸

IV. IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment causes physical hardship and mental agony not only to the individuals of employable age but also to his family members. It upsets the balance of the family life. The entire family may face uncertainty and indefiniteness. As a result, children

¹⁴ NLA Deliberates on issues Pertaining to Unemployment in Nagaland, DIPR Nagaland, 02 Sept., 2025.

¹⁵ Opcit., Longchar(2025)

¹⁶ Gogoi, Bhadra. Nagaland's high literacy rate not translated into jobs, says Governor Jagdish Mukhi., Northeast Now, 09 June 2022.

¹⁷ Jamir, Moa. 98% literate, 92% lack technical skills: Nagaland's education paradox, Morung Express, 05 January 2026.

¹⁸ Rhakho, Reyivolu. Dropout rate declines in Nagaland -Report, Eastern Mirror, 23 July 2026.

may develop delinquent tendencies. This state of affairs may even lead to the breakdown of the family. If unemployment is not checked or controlled it may ultimately prepare the way for social disorganization. Unemployment can also be called as a social curse and it even pollutes the economic and political fields.¹⁹ Nagaland stands at a crossroads today. On one hand the state is blessed with rich cultural heritage, natural resources, and a young population, while on the other, it is grappling with one of the most pressing challenges, unemployment. The situation is fast becoming a crisis, demanding urgent attention from both the government and society. The problem of unemployment compounds every year where thousands of graduates step out of colleges and universities only to find themselves unemployed. Even today, government sector is seen as the most secure and respected option though the state govt. can only absorb so many. Even without considering the ratio between educated unemployed youths in the state and the number of vacancies, it is still very limited, and the current employment scenario is such that it is not under employed. The limited vacancies within a growing number of aspirants only make the aspirants disappointed. Besides, the crisis is also deepened by 'educated unemployables' where on one hand they find it difficult to compete and which is also worsened by lack of any skills.²⁰ The consequences of unemployment are far-reaching. High unemployment leads to frustration, stress, and low morale among the youth. Many young people migrate to other states or cities like Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Mumbai in search of better opportunities. This results in brain drain, where talented and educated individuals leave the state instead of contributing to its development. In some cases, unemployment can also cause social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and even involvement in anti-social activities. Families struggle financially when their children cannot find jobs, and this affects the overall well-being of society. Despite the challenges, the government and

various organizations are making efforts to address unemployment. Skill development programmes, entrepreneurship workshops, livelihood missions, and youth-oriented schemes are being introduced to encourage self-employment and small businesses. The tourism sector is being promoted as a potential source of income, with Nagaland's unique culture, festivals, and natural beauty attracting visitors. There is also an increasing awareness about the importance of skill-based education, digital literacy, and vocational courses. Encouraging start-ups, strengthening agriculture, improving connectivity, and supporting local entrepreneurs can help create more jobs in the long run.²¹ Opportunities in the private sector, which could have eased the burden, still remain negligible. The equation will not change unless Nagaland's industrial base grows. While other states economy is driven by large-scale industries and service hubs, they are missing in Nagaland. So, Nagaland's economy is heavily dependent on small businesses, agriculture, and informal work. Yet, these sectors face a lot of obstacles starting with poor infrastructure, inadequate market linkages, and lack of investment, and which will only deepen the unemployment crisis. Though, a lot of emphasis is given on skilling, it still remains a major concern because of the skills and education mismatch. Yes, Nagaland may boast of a high literacy rate, literacy alone does not guarantee employability. And the age of technology students that spend more time on screen than on studies and skilling will only result in producing more 'educated unemployables.' Many youths hold degrees but lack technical or vocational training that present day jobs demand. The entrepreneurial spirit in the few enterprising Naga minds is also being stifled. There are many young people who have the creativity and ambition to start their own ventures, but find themselves confronted by challenges of limited access to credit, bureaucratic hurdles, and poor support systems including market linkages.²² Nagaland's unemployment crisis has reached alarming proportions, with joblessness among citizens aged 15 and above jumping from 4.3 per cent to 7.1 per cent since the COVID-19 pandemic - a devastating 65 per cent increase that far

¹⁹ Longchar, Imna. Youth Unemployment in the Naga Context – What is the way out?, Morung Express, 27 April 2007.

²⁰ Dr Tzudir, Asangba. Unemployment, Nagaland's Growing Crisis, Morung Express, 02 September 2025.

²¹ Lanukala, Unemployment in Nagaland, Morung Express, 14 January 2026.

²² Opcit., (2025)

exceeds national averages. Tourism and Higher Education Minister Temjen Imna Along in the legislative assembly reveal that urban areas face the most severe challenges. The worker population ratio climbed dramatically from 32.8 per cent to 68.1 per cent, primarily due to a sharp rise in educated unemployed youth concentrated in cities. He attributed the state's above-national-average unemployment growth to limited private sector expansion, excessive dependence on government positions, and problematic work ethics among educated youth.²³

The consequences of unemployment are being felt. While unemployment crisis are not limited to the economy, the prolonged joblessness will only lead to frustration, despair, and the larger social unrest leading to instability and stagnation. Unless the unemployment scenario changes, Nagaland is heading towards such a dark future. As such, the situation demands bold and practical solutions. And having reached a saturation point, the govt. must divert from creating government jobs towards fostering a diversified economy and also ease the dependency syndrome. Sectors such as agro-based industries, eco-tourism, handicrafts, and information technology hold enormous potential. With proper investment, policy support, and infrastructure, and which can really work on the cost effectiveness, they can generate sustainable employment. While Skill development must be given top priority, vocational training centers, IT hubs, and entrepreneurship incubation centers needs greater expansion for greater economic growth. However, both education and skilling needs to be sincerely pursued because it has become a lifeline. Nagaland's youth are its greatest asset and given the right opportunities, their energy, creativity, and resilience can transform the state's economic landscape. Considering the urgency and criticality of the issues associated with unemployment it is time for envisioning as well as translating the vision into action.²⁴

²³ Tsanglao, Loreni. Nagaland's unemployment rate surged 65 per cent post-COVID: Minister, India Today, 02 Sept., 2025.

²⁴ Dr Tzudir, Asangba. Unemployment – Nagaland's Growing Crisis, Morung Express, 02 Sept.2025.

V. CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

There are several reasons for the rise of unemployment in the state.

One of the major problems for the rise of unemployment is the obsession of securing a government jobs. a majority of young people still aspire to secure government jobs. However, the number of such jobs is very limited. Many youths lack the skills that today's job market demands. To address this issue, the government should focus on providing skill development programs and vocational training to students. Organizing job fairs, workshops, and supporting entrepreneurship through financial aid and mentorship can also make a big difference. Young people should be encouraged and empowered to start their own ventures when job opportunities are scarce. Public discussions and consistent media coverage can push stakeholders to take action. Unemployment is not an individual problem; it affects the overall development of our society.²⁵ Another major cause of unemployment in Nagaland is the lack of industries and factories. The state's hilly terrain, poor road connectivity, and limited infrastructure make it difficult for large industries to set up their operations. This restricts economic growth and limits job creation. Small businesses, tourism, agriculture, and entrepreneurship have potential, but they are not developed enough to absorb the growing workforce. Many young people do not consider agriculture or farming as a career because of traditional mindsets, low income, and lack of modern techniques. As a result, even the agricultural sector faces shortages of skilled and willing workers.²⁶

According to Dr. Neisatuo Mero highlighted that unemployment has emerged as one of the most pressing crises, with the job market becoming increasingly difficult due to massive job losses, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. He pointed out that with over 50% of India's population currently under the age of 25, nearly 7–8 million individuals will soon enter the job

²⁵ GN, Rangcholi. Rising Unemployment in Nagaland, Morung Express, 09 June 2025.

²⁶ Lanukala, Unemployment in Nagaland, Morung Express, 14 January 2026.

market, making it vital to implement effective measures and policies to tackle the issue. If left unchecked, unemployment could also lead to the rise of undesirable social elements in the state. He further noted that while the government has introduced several schemes and initiatives to encourage self-employment, there remains significant potential for the youths to pursue opportunities in masonry, carpentry and other secondary activities if properly skilled.²⁷

Advisor, Social Welfare, Wangpang Konyak mentioned that over dependence on Government jobs, gap between education and skills, part time workers not accounted for are some of the factors for high unemployment rate in Nagaland. He said that Schools and College curriculums in the State must be aligned with National and International standards in order to make the youth employable not just in Nagaland but in India and Abroad. He also encouraged the youth to look beyond white-collar jobs and to inculcate the value of hard work and dignity of Labour and to look for employment in the private sector, service sector, start businesses.²⁸ Furthermore, there are some solutions to overcome the Naga youth unemployment. Government of India should implement the two agreed agreement "Framework Agreement" signed between Government of India (GoI) the NSCN (IM) and the "Agreed Position" signed between the Government of India (GoI) and the WC, NNPGs in order to bring development and maximize employment opportunities in Nagaland for the youngsters. This problem can be cured by implementing the two gentlemen Agreement signed by our Naga Political Groups (NPGs) on behalf of the Naga people. I believe, once the Government of India implement the two agreement (Framework Agreement and the Agreed Position) with the little mindfulness and careful scrutiny, the menace of Naga youth unemployment can be won over.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ NLA Deliberates on issues pertaining to Unemployment in Nagaland, DIPR, 02 Sept. 2025.

²⁹ Ezung, Zanben. The alarming rise of youth unemployment in Nagaland, Nagaland Post, 02 March 2026.

VI. SURVEY AND STATISTICS

The Directorate of Economics & Statistics released a Survey Report on 'Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration' in Nagaland, 2025 on 19th September 2025 at an official release programme at DES Conference Hall with Advisor IT&C, Economics & Statistics and Evaluation.³⁰ (See DIPR, 2025). A state-wide survey has revealed troubling gaps in employment, technical education, and household income across Nagaland, underlining the urgent need for targeted policy intervention. The 2025 Survey Report on Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration, released on 19 September by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, shows the labour force participation rate at 56 per cent, with unemployment at a concerning 16.07 per cent. A striking 92 per cent of Nagaland's population lacks technical education, with only a quarter of respondents registered with the employment department. Information technology is the most common vocational skill, yet job opportunities remain scarce.³¹ The survey also highlights sharp income inequality. Household spending in the state ranges from as little as Rs 1,133 to as high as Rs 3.6 lakh a month. Dimapur tops the list with an average monthly expenditure of Rs 22,716, while Longleng reports the lowest at Rs 13,849. The overall state average stands at Rs 16,522. While newly created districts Shamator, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Tseminyu and Meluri could not be included. However, it was noted that household samples from such districts were merged within the existing districts. The survey reported that the average household size in Nagaland is four members, with household sizes ranging from one to eleven. The average monthly household expenditure was estimated at Rs.16,522, with the lowest at Rs.1,133 and the highest at Rs.3,61,647. The average age of people in the working-age group stood at 34 years.³² Migration trends show that 55 per cent of respondents have moved from rural to urban areas in

³⁰ Longchar, Morotsung. 'Employment, Unemployment, Skill And Migration' In Nagaland, DIPR Nagaland, n.d., 2025.

³¹ Aparmita, Nagaland faces high unemployment, weak technical skills and income gaps: Report, India Today, 19 Sep 2025.

³² Opcit., Longchar (2025)

search of work, business prospects, or marriage. However, most migrants continue to earn below Rs 20,000 a month even after relocation. Releasing the report, Advisor H. Sethrongkyu Sangtam said the findings will be vital in designing evidence-based policies to tackle unemployment and bridge skill gaps. He stressed that balanced growth across all districts is essential for achieving “Viksit Nagaland.” Director Neidilhou Keditu, presenting the data, said the survey covered 4,395 households across 11 districts earlier this year, using the 2011 census as a reference. He noted that the findings expose a “wide gap in income disparity” that demands immediate attention.³³ On the issue of unemployment, H. Sethrongkyu Sangtam added that district-wise socio-economic data in the report would help address unique challenges in each district while strengthening policy implementation. He urged policymakers, researchers, administrators and other stakeholders to utilize the report, expressing confidence that it would enrich public discourse on employment and inform both official and public opinion.³⁴ In recent years, Nagaland state has witnessed a troubling increase in youth unemployment, a growing issue that demands urgent attention from all sectors of society. The rising number of unemployed young people not only affects the individuals themselves but also threatens the economic stability and social fabric of our state. Naga youth unemployment has become a grave concern demanding immediate consideration. There are limited job opportunities for the young generation despite completing their education. The major causes of the Naga youth unemployment are absence of domestic Industries and Multinational Companies (MNCs). The issue of youth unemployment leads to various social unrest. Increase in crime rates, substance abuse and suicidal cases in the Naga society. Solving Naga youth unemployment requires immediate Implementation of the Naga political issue by the Government of India (GoI), as these strategies are crucial for creating state owned Multinational Companies and Industries could be a solution to overcome youth unemployment. With the increasing number of youngsters entering the job market,

competition for acquiring jobs is also becoming intense. The heightened competition level not only present challenges for the Naga youth seeking employment opportunities, but also for the job markets accommodating the jobs as well. With limited job opportunities, many deserving individuals are left jobless. Another major factor causing youth unemployment is corruption. To elucidate, with the growing number of population, there is an increase in the rate of corruption with the hiring process. Those individuals having some family or political connections with the hiring authorities reserve their positions. This practice leads to nepotism, favoritism and bribery, which results in less deserving candidate being accommodated over the more qualified and deserving ones. Absence of state owned Multinational Companies (MNCs) and Industries is one of the prominent reasons for youth unemployment and has a drastic impact on younger generation. As the number of population increases, the need for the basic living is also increasing significantly. There are no job opportunities for the younger generation to meet their daily living requirements and for their future as well. To meet their day-to-day needs, Naga educated youth seek jobs outside Nagaland, primarily due to severe scarcity of private sector opportunities, a saturated government job market, and limited local Industrial development in Nagaland. The unemployment of Naga youth also leads young people engage in petty thefts, pickpocketing, pilfering and burglary. There are very few job opportunities for youngsters and an intense competition growing in their fields, they find it challenging to acquire the targeted jobs. This makes youth of today’s generation more anxious, hopeless, and furious about their future achievements and plans. And it results in mental pressure, such as stress and depression, which increases the risk of suicidal thoughts and actions. With uncertainty of the Naga educated unemployed youth looming in large, instability could haunt the state government and may compel youth led protest against the politicians due to lack of economic opportunities.³⁵

³³ Opcit., Aparmita.(2025)

³⁴ Longchar, Morotsung. 'Employment, Unemployment, Skill And Migration ' In Nagaland, DIPR Nagaland, n.d., 2025.

³⁵ Ezung, Zanben. The alarming rise of youth unemployment in Nagaland, Nagaland Post, 02 March 2026.

VII. EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED

With Nagaland's unemployment rate in 2026 among the 15-29 age group standing at 16.7 per cent, nearly 65 per cent of unemployed youth being educated, and around 15,000 to 20,000 graduates entering the job market annually, Meripeni Ngullie, Under Secretary and Project Lead, Nagaland Skill & Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDMD), highlighted the growing employment challenge in the state during a one-day sensitization programme on skill development. Speakers at the programme stressed that government employment alone cannot absorb the state's growing educated workforce and called for a shift towards entrepreneurship, vocational skills and self-employment and emphasized the need for greater participation in skill development initiatives. Despite the concerns raised, the programme drew only around 90 participants from different parts of Mokokchung district.³⁶ MLA, Achumbemo Kikon in Nagaland legislative session spoke on the need for a policy that focuses on educated and uneducated unemployed youth alike as the youth have also realized that without working, it is difficult to survive. There is an oversaturation of the government offices, and therefore the youth must realize their purpose through entrepreneurial ventures, and that the government needs to provide a conducive environment for them to be able to thrive.³⁷ According to Meripeni Ngullie, around 15,000 to 20,000 graduates pass out from institutions within Nagaland every year, while thousands more pursue higher education outside the state every year. There is a limited availability of government jobs, only about 250 to 300 NPSC posts are advertised annually; and more than 16,000 candidates appeared for the preliminary examination conducted for 96 vacancies in 2025. She said these figures clearly indicate the need for youth to diversify their career aspirations and consider entrepreneurship and skill-based professions. Ngullie also observed that employers today increasingly value practical skills, work

experience and adaptability over academic qualifications alone. She said many young job seekers continue to face difficulties during interviews because of limited exposure and the mismatch between education and industry requirements.³⁸ Higher Education & Tourism Minister Temjen Imna Along confirmed that unemployment in Nagaland rose sharply from 4.3% in 2022-23 to 7.1% in 2023-24. He said the steepest rise was among educated and urban youth, with postgraduates recording 27% unemployment, diploma holders 36.2%, and graduates 19.2%. However, he noted that the worker population ratio had improved significantly from 32.8% in 2017-18 to 68.1% in 2023-24, mainly due to agriculture, allied sectors, tourism, arts, and soft skills. He called for more youth-linked education, private sector growth, self-employment, and entrepreneurship, urging urban youth to shed over-dependence on government jobs and social media criticism, and instead contribute productively to the economy. Citing the 20,000 applicants for just 150 forest guard posts, he also called for decentralized recruitment exams to ensure transparency. With government employment now saturated, Rio stressed the urgent need to expand opportunities in private industries and skill-based occupations. To this end, Rio has directed the Department of Employment and Skill Development to conduct a comprehensive study and recommend corrective actions. CM Dr. Neiphiu Rio cited the Chief Minister's Micro-Finance Scheme, which offers collateral-free loans up to Rs. 15 lakh for youth who undergo skill training. He also identified the handloom and handicrafts sector as an area with high potential for commercial viability. Rio attributed the failure of major industries in Nagaland to an in conducive business climate caused by the unresolved political issue and multiple taxation. He further revealed that the state lost Rs. 443 crore in 2024 was because government departments failed to utilize sanctioned funds, resulting in central penalties. Unemployment is a collective responsibility, urging that Nagaland must align with India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047 by creating an investment-friendly environment and equipping its youth with employable skills.³⁹

³⁶ Nagaland faces growing employment challenge as educated youth outpace job opportunities, Nagaland Tribune, 23 July 2026.

³⁷ NLA Deliberates on issues Pertaining to Unemployment in Nagaland, DIPR Nagaland, 02 Sept., 2025.

³⁸ Op cit., Nagaland Tribune (2026)

³⁹ Rising unemployment a burning issue, says Rio, Nagaland Post, 03 Sept. 2025.

According to the Joint Commissioner of Taxes and Vice President, Ao Officers' Telungjem, Imosong Imsong, only around 10 out of every 100 educated youths could able to secure government employment, leaving the remaining majority to seek alternative career options. He expressed concern that despite Nagaland being one of the country's most literate states, educated unemployment continues to rise. He also noted that although the government regularly advertises skill development programmes across districts, participation remains low, young people must make use of institutions such as ITI Mokokchung, Nagaland Polytechnic, Mokokchung, and other technical institutes in the state to acquire employable skills and pursue entrepreneurship. Nagaland faces growing employment challenge as educated youth outpace job opportunities.⁴⁰

VIII. SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Beyond economics, prolonged youth unemployment carries serious social consequences. When educated young people remain idle for extended periods, frustration, anxiety, and disillusionment can grow. This can lead to rising migration as many seek opportunities outside the state, resulting in a steady brain drain. Families invest heavily in education with the expectation of stable livelihoods, and unmet expectations often create psychological and financial strain. Moreover, unemployment weakens social mobility and widens inequality between those with access to networks and those without. If productive energy is not channeled into meaningful work, the demographic advantage of a young population risks turning into a demographic liability. Policy responses must therefore move beyond short-term schemes and address structural transformation. Data-driven planning, stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industry, and localized employment mapping can create more realistic strategies. Public-private partnerships could expand internship pipelines, apprenticeships, and incubation hubs for

young entrepreneurs.⁴¹ Chief Minister Dr. Neiphiu Rio, addressees the rising unemployment crisis in Nagaland required a shift in mindset, promotion of entrepreneurship, and strengthening of skill-based growth cautioning that unemployment, if left unattended, could become a "time bomb," but if channeled properly, it had the potential to turn into an opportunity for growth and progress. He refereed the youth as the "future and hope of the State." and that it necessary to change the mindset of youth, parents, and society at large. Stating "We must broaden opportunities in entrepreneurship, private industries, skill-based occupations, and service sectors,"⁴² MLA Dr. Neisatuo Mero described educated unemployment as a severe problem, citing CMIE data showing Nagaland's unemployment rate at over 20%, the highest in India. Warning that unchecked joblessness could lead to social issues such as crime, substance abuse, and corruption, he suggested promoting nano-retail, poultry, piggery, and church-sponsored institutions for large-scale employment. Advisor Temjenmenba said over 70,000 job seekers were registered with employment exchanges as of December 2023, but less than half had tertiary education, and very few possessed technical degrees. "Unemployment is no longer just about numbers. it's about quality, dignity, and relevance," he said, calling for strengthening technical education, integrating vocational skills through NEP 2020, and closer coordination between industries, IT, and skill development departments. Drawing lessons from Assam's workforce preparation for a semiconductor hub, he urged Nagaland to equip youth for emerging sectors like renewable energy, agro-tech, digital services, and manufacturing.⁴³

IX. MEASURE AND PROPOSALS

Advisor TN Mannen said Nagaland's greatest asset was its youthful, largely educated population, but the State had failed to convert this into an advantage. Stressing the difference between employment and

⁴⁰ Nagaland faces growing employment challenge as educated youth outpace job opportunities, Nagaland Tribune, 23 July 2026.

⁴¹ Jessica, Nagaland's Youth Employment Paradox, Morung Express, 17th February 2026.

⁴² Rising unemployment a burning issue, says Rio, Nagaland Post, 03 Sept. 2025.

⁴³ Nagaland faces growing employment challenge as educated youth outpace job opportunities, Nagaland Tribune, 23 July 2026.

employability, he called for skill development and vocational training to make youth job-ready. He warned that saturation of government jobs had bred inefficiency and stressed encouraging youth towards opportunities in the private sector, entrepreneurship, and self-employment. He also emphasized strict merit-based implementation of government self-employment schemes and the importance of creating an investment-friendly environment with improved infrastructure and security to attract investors. Mannen further noted challenges in accessing finance due to lack of proper land records. However, he said, the extension of the SARFAESI Act to Dimapur and Mokokchung in 2022 had enabled loans against land pattas. The government, he added, was contemplating cadastral surveys across all townships to expand this benefit while ensuring safeguards against alienation of land to non-Nagass.⁴⁴

Some of the measures and suggestions for a way out or to remove unemployment are as follows⁴⁵

- i. Job opportunities do not increase at same rate to accommodate the growing population. Hence, population control has to be made more popular and other suitable steps are to be taken to minimize or neutralize its growth.
- ii. The main solution for unemployment lies in achieving of real importance in economic development. This can be materialized, only if attention is paid equally to agriculture and industry.
- iii. Cottage and household industries play a vital role in the development of economy. Hence, they should be given due encouragement. Basket-making, bricks-making, toy-making, carpentry and furniture making, leather works and carving, such other works are to be encouraged to keep our people engaged with work that fetch economic rewards.
- iv. Commercial crops can make agriculture task economically more attractive and interesting. Commercial crops such as coffee, tea, pepper, cardamom, ginger, cashew, tobacco, ground

nuts, various types of vegetables and fruits etc. can bring a good sum of income to the hard working people, like in other countries. For example, USA is the largest producer of Tomato, Maize and soybeans. China is known for Cotton, Rice, Tobacco, etc.

- v. Depending upon the local needs and practices, new agriculture programmes and projects are to be launched so that the young people of a particular area get new opportunities to use their talents and energy for the development programmes.
- vi. Our education is not much job oriented. Due practical training should be given to our educated youths to help them to pursue proper guidance and information regarding new job opportunities. Employment bureaus and employment exchange agencies can play a vital role in this regard.
- vii. It does not indicate or suggest that every citizen has a right to government job or the job of his choice. Promising job for all is not an easy task. So, the government should not only suggest that the right to work should be included in the fundamental rights but it should also be translated into reality.
- viii. The problems of unemployment are growing day by day. It is becoming more and more complex also. In such a case, this complex problem will have to be tackled in a planned manner. It is possible only with the combined effort of the government and the public.
- ix. Skill development and vocational training: Create training programs that align with market demand, such as digital skills and startup manufacturing basics.
- x. Promote private sector and entrepreneurship: Create an ecosystem where private firms feel confident investing in Nagaland, such as better infrastructure and workshops for starting micro- businesses.
- xi. Change mindset and expectation: Youth must recognize that government employment is not the only route. College curricula, career counseling and exposure to different work models will help.
- xii. Leverage local strength: Nagaland's unique cultural, linguistic and ecological diversity means opportunities in tourism, organic

⁴⁴ Opcit., Nagaland post (2025).

⁴⁵ Longchar, Imna. Youth Unemployment in the Naga Context – What is the way out?, Morung Express, 27 April 2007. Also see Jessica, Nagaland's Youth Employment Paradox, Morung Express, 17 February 2026.

agriculture, creative industries and crafts can be tapped.

Nagaland stands at a crossroads. With youth representing about 40% of the population with potential and the rising unemployment rate among the same category, could become a burden if not addressed. The narrative of booming Nagaland must meet the reality of its young workforce. If nothing changes, many educated young people may spend years waiting for the elusive government job while their talents remain dormant. In the end, the question is simple yet profound: Will Nagaland build job opportunities for its youth, or will its youth be left waiting for jobs?⁴⁶ Nagaland Chief Secretary Sentiyanger Imchen on January 8, 2026 stressed that self-reliance is essential to address the state's growing unemployment problem, asserting that the government alone cannot provide jobs for the increasing number of aspirants. Speaking as the chief guest at the General Conference of the 44th Asetkong Kaketshir Telongjem Mungdang (AKTM) at Kobulong, Mokokchung, Imchen cited the State Survey Report on Employment, Unemployment, Skill and Migration 2025, which revealed that Nagaland has over 71,000 registered job seekers, while nearly 92 per cent of youths lack formal technical or vocational training. He stated that the Government of Nagaland does not have the capacity to create more vacancies, resulting in limited opportunities in government service each year. Emphasizing that a general degree alone is insufficient in the current labour market, Imchen urged students to pursue employable skills alongside formal education, noting that private sector jobs often offer better remuneration. While acknowledging the value of cracking competitive examinations, he encouraged young people to prepare alternative pathways if white-collar employment does not materialize. Calling youth unemployment the state's biggest challenge, Imchen said the issue can only be addressed when individuals and communities take responsibility, with the government playing a supporting, "hand-holding" role. Referring to the Naga context, he observed that most Nagas have access to land rich in natural resources, yet remain heavily dependent on central funds. He called for

⁴⁶ Jessica, Nagaland's Youth Employment Paradox, Morung Express, 17 February 2026.

introspection on whether the lack of self-reliance stems from the land or from the people, urging a revival of the work ethic of the forefathers to reduce dependence and curb excessive imports. Imchen further appealed to students to become problem-solvers rather than merely identifying problems, stating that meaningful solutions must begin at the individual and community levels, as lasting change cannot be imposed from outside. Advisor for Labour & Employment, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Excise, Moatoshi Longkumer, urged students to invest in education, discipline and collective effort to achieve self-reliance. He stressed that self-reliance is rooted in mindset rather than wealth, encouraging students to prepare for the future by building skills, fostering enterprise and avoiding dependency.⁴⁷ Equally important is monitoring the effectiveness of existing employment schemes to ensure accountability and measurable outcomes. Transparent governance, long-term infrastructure investment, and targeted skill certification programs can gradually bridge the mismatch between qualifications and opportunity. Without sustained and coordinated reform, unemployment will persist not as a temporary setback but as a defining challenge of Nagaland's development trajectory.⁴⁸

X. CONCLUSION

Unemployment in Nagaland is a multifaceted issue with complex and deep-rooted causes. It affects individuals, families, and society as a whole. To overcome this problem, a combined effort from the government, educational institutions, the private sector, and the youth is necessary. By improving infrastructure, promoting entrepreneurship, enhancing skill development, and diversifying the economy, Nagaland can create more opportunities and build a future where young people can work, grow, and contribute to the development of the state. Only with consistent effort and long-term planning can Nagaland reduce unemployment and ensure a

⁴⁷ Kobulong, Government alone cannot address unemployment, self-reliance crucial to tackle youth unemployment, Nagaland Tribune, 09 January, 2026.

⁴⁸ Jessica, Nagaland's Youth Employment Paradox, Morung Express, 17 February 2026.

better quality of life for its people.⁴⁹ According to Wangpang Konyak, Social Welfare Advisor, the over-dependence on government jobs, gaps between education and skills, and statistical issues with part-time workers as contributing factors to high unemployment rates.⁵⁰ Nagaland continues to face structural challenges, including dependence on government employment, heavy reliance on imported goods despite its fertile land, and limited industrial development. Skill development is essentially value addition to human resources and has the potential to contribute significantly to the district, state and national economy. Skill development cannot succeed without creating a favorable ecosystem involving families, communities, educational institutions and government. While the government can provide opportunities, he said the aspiration to learn and improve must come from individuals themselves. Nagaland possesses immense potential in traditional sectors such as bamboo crafts, handloom, tea, coffee and beauty services, the state must build upon these strengths. With a young population, there is tremendous scope for developing small enterprises and local industries. Guidance alone is insufficient and must be accompanied by consistency, infrastructure and continuous mentoring. The mismatch between education and employment, many graduates possess academic qualifications but lack practical skills demanded by industries and thus youth must focus on acquiring real skills instead of merely collecting certificates.⁵¹

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