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ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE KIT

ASIAN
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2006
2015

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

DECENT WORK

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ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE:
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE KIT

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The Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit is a collaborative product resulting from contributions from many people. It is dedicated to all people working on making decent work a reality and those who shared their expertise and resources verbally and through publications, project documents, mission reports and hand-written notes. Developed as a living document, the resource kit is to be updated as new information becomes available. Its purpose is to ensure that ILO constituents, ILO colleagues, donors and other interested parties have access to state-of-the-art knowledge on the various priorities in the Asia and Pacific region that will drive the Decent Work Agenda.

The kit has benefited from substantial contributions and support by the previous and current Regional Directors of the ILO, respectively Ng Gek Boo and Sachiko Yamamoto. Guy Thijs, Deputy Regional Director developed the concept and guided the package from start to conclusion. David Tajgman was responsible for the initial format, while Stephan Ulrich wrote extensive portions and coordinated the process towards finalization. Peter Stalker assisted with editing, rewriting, reformatting and adding illustrations to make the various booklets consistent. Thanks are also due to Sophy Fisher, Chanitda Wiwatchanon, Krisdaporn Singhaseni and Kwantawan Hongladarom for their assistance and advice with the editing process, design and layout in the accompanying web site. The authors of the booklets: Peter Stalker and Manolo Abella on migration, Michael Lerner and Abhik Ghosh on labour market governance, Urmila Sarkar on youth employment, Stephan Ulrich on competitiveness, productivity and jobs, and Ginette Forgues and Stephan Ulrich on local development.

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Foreword

The launch of the Asian Decent Work Decade during the 2006 Asian Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization was a significant step forward in the world of work in Asia and the Pacific. Female or male, young or old, skilled or unskilled – all stand to benefit from the realization of decent work goals for a fair share of the fruits of this region's stunning economic growth.

However, many observers rightly wonder how we can achieve those decent work goals in only one decade. Obviously, this is an enormous challenge and one that will differ from country to country. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (adopted in June 2008) reaffirmed the global commitment to an integrated approach that enables progress towards the goals of the Decent Work Agenda. In Asia and the Pacific the good and hopeful news is that the details are being put in place – through a growing list of Decent Work Country Programmes designed according to national priorities and needs, with help from the ILO as required.

To support countries in their efforts to achieve their goals the ILO is constantly improving its services – both what it offers and how it delivers. In this connection, two things are clear:

- The ILO's strength lies in what it knows, whether held in documents or in the minds of its people and based on the experiences they draw from their work.
- We have to share what we know.

The *Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit* is a way of communicating the riches of ILO's knowledge via advances in technology and the Internet. The Kit's guiding principles are simplicity and accessibility and the organizing framework reflects our regional priority areas of action.

The Resource Kit is also a way of rallying global and regional ILO resources – human, financial and intellectual – in helping countries further address their priority action areas. It will remain a living and dynamic product with evolving and updated content, the result of an ongoing process within the ILO and in collaboration with its constituents.

This introductory booklet explains the genesis of the Asian Decent Work Decade and how the ILO intends to support constituents in member States in Asia and the Pacific in their efforts to make it happen. The accompanying five booklets serve as gateways into ILO expertise and knowledge in the five priority areas, outlining the key challenges and providing information, resources, examples and access to useful ILO tools. I hope this resource kit will contribute in its own modest way to bringing Decent Work for All closer to reality.

Sachiko Yamamoto
ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

Navigating the booklets

This resource kit offers a brief introduction to ILO's knowledge base on Asia and the Pacific. If you want more detail, it also gives links to further reading, guides, data, projects and web sites. The resource kit can be useful to people who have a general interest in the issues as well as specialists who need additional technical resources.

If you are reading this as an electronic file on the CD-ROM, you will find hyperlinks to many associated publications. If your computer is connected to the Internet you can use these hyperlinks to navigate to web sites. The links are both in the text and in boxes on the side margin marked "click here".

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ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE RESOURCE KIT: THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

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ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE RESOURCE KIT:

THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

Introduction

Representatives of governments and employers' and workers' organizations committed themselves to an Asian Decent Work Decade (ADWD) during the 14th Asian Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (2006) – reaffirming their dedication to the goal of full, productive and decent employment for all workers in Asia and the Pacific by 2015.

The Asian Regional Meeting participants recognized that if young adults can achieve decent work early in their working lives through a smooth transition from school to work, they can avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion.

To inspire constituents' efforts and provide easy access to the rich knowledge, information and services that the ILO offers, the Regional Office in Bangkok developed the Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit. This booklet is one of six parts to that kit, serving as a gateway into ILO expertise and knowledge on the regional priority area of youth employment. It explains in a brief and user-friendly manner why this is a regional priority, the issues it addresses and how the ILO can help its social partners, detailing the available approaches, strategies and tools and possible partnerships. Where applicable, examples of good practices or adaptable projects are included.

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1. The youth employment challenge

“What should be done to improve the lives of young people? More opportunity should be given to build confidence, skills and capacity. We are not the problem; we are the solution to the problem”. – Youth delegate to the 2005 Pacific Youth Summit for the Millennium Development Goals.

At the **14th Asian Regional Meeting** the ILO's constituents concluded that promoting decent work opportunities and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men – especially by ensuring a better transition from school to work will be crucial for realizing the Asia n Decent Work Decade. Young people are an incredible source of energy and creativity that are important for driving economic growth. Still, although only one in five workers are between the ages of 15 and 24, this group accounts for almost half the region's jobless. Young people are at least three times more likely to be unemployed than adults in the region as a whole and up to five times in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

While young people do face certain disadvantages in the labour market, for many of the young working poor, unemployment is an unaffordable luxury. They have no

choice but to work hard and for long hours, unprotected against hazards and risks, on informal or precarious contracts with low pay and few prospects for the future. In the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, there are also significant gaps between women and men – in income and in access to productive resources and credit. Moreover, while young women are participating more in economic activities, they still take on a disproportionate share of unpaid work, including household responsibilities and childcare.



Young people are a source of energy and creativity. ©ILO/M.Crozet, 2005.

Neglecting the potential of young people is an economic and social waste. Achieving decent work early in their working life

would help avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion. In a situation of widespread poverty and lack of opportunity, the growing number of disaffected youth has been associated with an escalation of urban crime, outbursts of ethnic violence and political instability. Unless the causes and implications of the youth employment challenge are tackled, progress towards better economic and political governance in the region will remain uncertain.

those who can afford to look for socially and culturally acceptable jobs contribute to the problem. However, concentrating on unemployment trends in countries without effective unemployment-support mechanisms runs the risk of excluding from the analysis the less fortunate who simply cannot afford to be openly unemployed.

There is a cruel irony in the co-existence of child labour and youth unemployment and underemployment. While there is a demand for certain types of labour that is

Key youth employment statistics, 2007

	East Asia	South Asia	South-East Asia and the Pacific
Youth unemployment (millions)	10.9	16.0	10.0
Youth unemployment rate (%)	6.9	10.5	16.3
Male	7.9	10.1	16.0
Female	5.8	11.2	16.7
Ratio of youth to adult unemployment rates	2.8	2.7	4.7

Source: ILO: Global Employment Trends Model, 2008

Unemployment is particularly high among educated youth. In some parts of the developing Asia-Pacific region, economic development has failed to keep pace with rapid increases in educational attainment. Higher unemployment is also related to the quality of education and the mismatch of skills. Job and wage reservations among

met by children who should not be working, there is also a supply of labour from young people that goes un- or under-used. Even those older than the legal minimum working age but younger than 18 years are also vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour. Children who drop out of school and begin working at too early an age tend to become

youth with poor employment prospects who cannot lift their own families out of the poverty trap, cannot become parents who give their children a better life and cannot contribute fully to national development.

Many young people are also affected by HIV or AIDS, which is destroying their productive potential and lessening their chances of finding secure decent jobs. Those who live in households in which parents have become sick or have died may be forced to leave school and work in poor conditions in order to supplement the household's diminishing income. But young people are also at risk of infection: Lacking the knowledge or power to protect themselves from HIV infection, young women and girls in particular are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

Young people also make up the bulk of migrants streaming from the rural areas into towns and cities in search of jobs, putting enormous pressure on urban labour markets. Some go farther afield. Growing numbers of young Asian women, for example, are going abroad to work, mainly in domestic service, labour-intensive manufacturing and the entertainment industry, all of which leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Causes of disadvantage for young people

The youth employment challenge has multiple causes. In some countries, youth un- and underemployment result partly from demographic changes. Though young people are spending more time in the education system and thus delaying their entry into work, rapid population growth in South-East Asia and the Pacific, and especially in South Asia, has increased the supply of young labour market entrants. East Asia, on the other hand, where population growth is slow, longer periods in education are shrinking the youth labour force.

Although the youth employment challenge is closely linked to the economic and employment environment, it has its own age-specific dimensions. Barriers to the labour market for youth can be further exacerbated by discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, race, culture, health, family status and other factors. Thus, while young people can benefit from a broad range of policies and programmes that promote economic growth, enhance productivity and create jobs, it is crucial to address the disadvantages young people face in making the transition from school to work.

Causes of disadvantages for young people include:

- lack of labour market and job-search information and experience;*
- wage and job reservations reflecting a mismatch between youth and parental aspirations and labour market realities;*
- young people are at the end of the queue for jobs because employers opt for more experienced workers at the same wage level or for cheap labour by children;*
- labour market regulations that benefit adults already working tend to disadvantage youth, creating “insider-outsider” effects;*
- young people have fewer opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship because they lack business experience and the collateral needed to access finance;*
- lack of organization and voice – young people are typically unrepresented in trade unions or employers’ organizations and have few channels through which to express their opinions.*



Young people are staying longer in the education system. ©ILO/T.Falise, 2005.

the Pacific, population growth rates are declining. This will take some pressure off the youth labour market, but it will still be important to improve job quality and ensure that young women have the same opportunities as young men. The goal for youth is not just any job but *decent work*. In the coming decade, there will continue to be enormous pressure to create jobs for millions of young labour market entrants, particularly in Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

2. The ILO response

The ILO and its constituents in the region have been promoting productive employment and decent work for youth in a variety of ways. They include:

- integrating youth issues in national employment policy;
- expanding opportunities for relevant basic education;
- reforming technical and vocational education and training systems to reduce skill mismatches and increase employability;
- developing school-to-work transition programmes, along with better labour market information and career guidance;
- increasing labour demand for young people through active labour market policies;
- promoting youth entrepreneurship;
- working with employers and trade unions;
- pursuing global and regional cooperation.

The high and rising levels of youth unemployment and underemployment have been highlighted in the **Millennium Declaration**, which resolved “to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.” Youth employment features prominently as a target within the **UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

To enhance the quantity and quality of jobs for young people, the ILO provides assistance to develop coherent and coordinated interventions. **The Youth Employment Programme (YEP)** operates through a global network of technical teams at ILO headquarters in Geneva and in more than 60 offices around the world. YEP’s work informs and shapes the ILO’s contribution to the **Youth Employment Network (YEN)** – a global partnership forged by the ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank to find durable policy and programme solutions to the youth employment challenge.

ILO: Decent work in Asia: Reporting on results 2001 – 2005 and Realizing Decent Work in Asia, Report of the Director General, Korea, 2006



The Youth Employment Network – giving young people a chance to find decent and productive work.

*The Secretary-General of the United Nations, together with the Director-General of the ILO and the President of the World Bank, initiated the **Youth Employment Network (YEN)** in 2000. Taking the lead in organizing the YEN's work and hosting its secretariat, the ILO has been helping the lead countries in the region – Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka – prepare national review and action plans on youth employment that involve youth organizations.*

The 2002 ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific was the first major regional initiative for youth employment.

It has paved the way for better statistics on youth, thematic studies and country papers as well as national and regional information-sharing activities leading to pilot interventions.

Since then, the ILO and the tripartite constituents have focused on youth employment. Most countries in the region have either prioritized or highlighted youth employment in their **Decent Work Country Programmes**.

A number of countries note it as a priority outcome – Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and the Pacific island countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).

This priority is also reflected in the UN Development Assistance Frameworks that addresses youth employment directly and also considers it in the context of expanding basic education, skills development and livelihood opportunities for young people.

Agreed principles and perspectives

The starting point for any employment policy directed at young people is the set of principles embodied in the **Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)** whereby “each member State shall declare and pursue, as a major goal, active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment”. In recent years, the overall framework has been provided by the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, while the specific policy pillars are outlined in the Global Employment Agenda. The YEN also drew from the policy pillars its “four Es”: **employability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities and employment creation**. Progress in addressing the youth employment challenge has also been linked



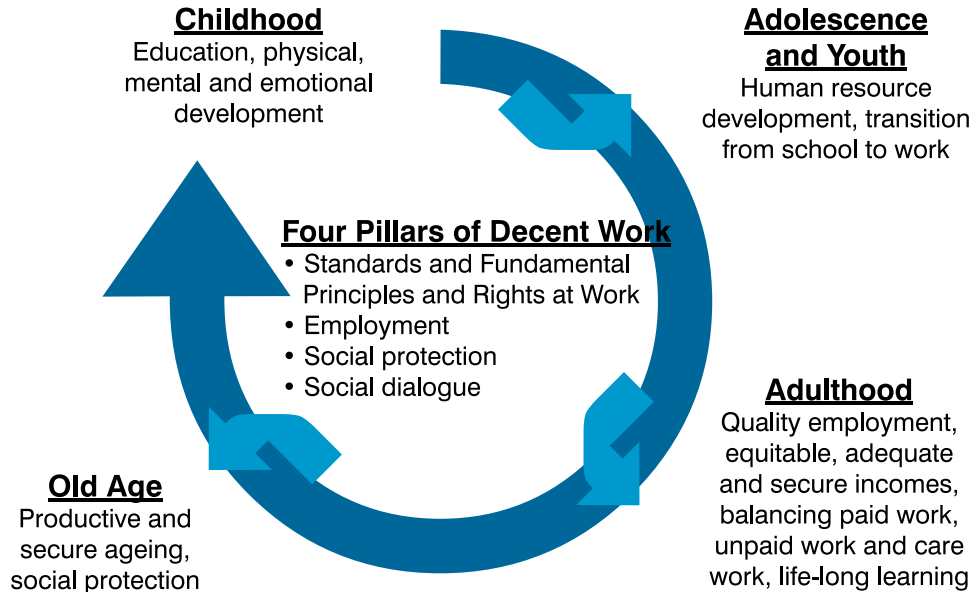
Young people have to manage the transition from school to work. ©ILO/K.Cassidy, 2004.

to progress in reaching other MDG targets on poverty reduction, education and HIV/AIDS.

The Resolution Concerning Youth Employment (from the 2005 International Labour Conference) called for a life-cycle perspective that promotes intergenerational solidarity. This focuses on the stages of life when people are vulnerable to falling into poverty. Opportunities and experiences during their most formative stages shape people’s access to decent work and their chances of security and protection for the rest of their lives. If they are to manage the transition from school to work and begin a virtuous cycle of development and poverty reduction, young people need to be prepared for the labour market.

The life-cycle approach emphasizes the individual, the family and society. Strategies to give young people a chance to get decent work are thus inseparable from efforts to combat child labour and improve employment prospects for adults. The life-cycle perspective also involves reaching out to vulnerable children and youth at an early stage. However, this requires a better information base to succeed. The **Global Employment Trends for Youth** have argued for more statistics and detailed analysis of the situation of those disadvantaged youth who cannot afford to be unemployed.

Decent work throughout the life cycle



Source: Adapted from *Realizing Decent Work in Asia: 14th Asian Regional Meeting, Busan, Republic of Korea. ILO, 2006.*

The ILO's comparative advantage

The ILO and its constituents place employment and youth at the heart of economic and social policies, aiming to

overcome the specific disadvantages that young people might experience when entering and struggling to remain in the labour market.

To confront the disadvantages, the ILO has developed technical expertise and leadership capacity in the following areas:

- enhancing the knowledge base on the youth labour market;
- expanding the understanding of policy and programme interventions needed to ease the transition from school to work for young people in general and for disadvantaged youth in particular;
- providing technical advice and tools on skills training and career guidance to increase the employability of in- and out-of-school youth;
- providing technical advice and tools for promoting entrepreneurship, and **local economic development (LED)** to increase opportunities for productive and sustainable self-employment;
- providing technical advice and tools to improve the quality of jobs and address such issues as **occupational safety and health (OSH)**, the **worst forms of child labour**, **HIV/AIDS** and **gender inequalities**;
- providing policy advice on both youth-specific policies and action plans, integrating youth concerns into a common national development framework and delivering youth employment services;
- enabling employers and workers and their organizations to be engaged in policy development.

The ILO, with its tripartite constituency, its technical competence and its principles-based, life-cycle perspective is uniquely placed to help countries grapple with youth unemployment, underemployment and poor working conditions.

Understanding the country context

In the absence of labour market information systems, the ILO and its constituents recommend rapid appraisals based on existing data, such as censuses and



Surveys can assess the issues young people face at work. ©ILO/P.Deloche, 2000.

surveys of education or of household expenditure. These can contribute both to a current snapshot as well as to improved long-term information on the youth labour market. Governments also need to review education and training systems to see whether students are prepared and employable.

To supplement regular national labour market surveys and labour market information systems, the ILO has developed the **School-to-Work Transition Survey (STWS)**, which explores the experiences of young people as they leave the education

system and enter the world of work. These surveys have focused on the variables behind the relative ease or difficulty in making the transition to gauge where and how countries can proceed to improve the process of matching supply and demand in the youth labour market.

The ILO also has carried out country reviews on youth employment in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and the Pacific islands, assessing the challenges and government responses, while mapping what the ILO and other agencies are doing in the field.

The School-to-Work Transition Survey has been conducted in China, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. The STWS is a tool that allows countries to capture both quantitative and qualitative variables, such as young people's education and training experiences, their perceptions and aspirations in terms of employment, their life goals and values, the job search process, the family's influence in the choice of occupation, barriers to and supports for entry into the labour market, the preference for waged or self-employment, attitudes of employers towards hiring young workers, current employment/working conditions, control over resources, job satisfaction, marriage and family responsibilities and gender differentials. In Indonesia, building on the STWS findings, a subsequent survey examined the relationships between early school drop-outs, child labour and future career and life development. In all these countries, the surveys have highlighted the situation of vulnerable youth in the education system and their experiences when they start work – and contributed significantly to programme and policy design.

In terms of regional research priorities, each country defines a research agenda based on national circumstances. It can also be informed by regional studies. In the Asia-Pacific region these include:

- *Closer examination of the scale and vulnerabilities of the young working poor as part of the regional analysis of trends of working poor with a focus on micro-derived estimates. First pilot country studies have been carried out in Bangladesh and the Philippines, which have data from labour force and household income and expenditure surveys.*
- *Promoting an entrepreneurial culture and socially responsible entrepreneurship. Experiences and identification of good practices have been completed through the ASEAN+3 member countries network.*
- *Promoting youth training and (self-)employment in both farm and off-farm work. FAO, ILO and UNESCO are collaborating on a multi-country study covering the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.*
- *Gender dimension of the school-to-work transition. The Joint UN Girls' Education Initiative is a study of the differences in opportunities for training and employment between young women and men in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam.*

Supporting young workers

Addressing youth employment over the long-term depends on the overall health of the economy. There needs to be sound macroeconomic conditions and a positive

investment climate along with investments in education and training systems. At the same time, governments can devise labour market policies, institutions and programmes in cooperation with employers' and workers' organizations, the business sector and other key stakeholders to create opportunities for young people.

Click here for World Bank: Global Inventory of Interventions to Support Young Workers: Synthesis Report, 2007

A wide range of measures can smooth the transition from school to work, including:

- making the labour market work better for young people –
 - *counselling, job search skills,*
 - *wage subsidies,*
 - *public works programmes,*
 - *anti-discrimination legislation;*
- improving chances for young entrepreneurs;
- skills training for young people –
 - *vocational training including apprenticeship systems,*
 - *literacy and numeracy – young adult literacy programmes,*
 - *second-chance and equivalency programmes;*
- making training systems work better for young people –
 - *information,*
 - *credit to individuals or enterprises,*
 - *financial incentives (subsidies, vouchers);*
- protecting the rights of and conditions of work for young workers;

- programmes to counteract residential segregation of disadvantaged young people;
- improving labour market regulations to the benefit of young people;
- programmes for overseas employment of young people;
- voluntary national service programmes.

Making the labour market work better for young people. As a result of the findings of the School-to-Work Transition Survey in Indonesia, the ILO has published a Career Guidance Manual for use by secondary and technical schools, and a pocket-size Mentor's Guide for Youth Seeking Work, for use in formal career counselling programmes and in non-formal, individual or community-based programmes. Similarly, in Viet Nam, the ILO has helped pilot a Pocket Guide for Young Job Seekers for use in job bazaars. In the Philippines, the ILO has helped the Department of Labor and Employment develop a career guidance manual.

Public works and community services have been used by many Asian governments, particularly during economic downturns and after natural disasters such as the

December 2004 tsunami. Although these programmes do not offer long-term employment solutions, they can increase the productivity of low-skilled workers and help young workers gain a foothold in the labour market. Sri Lanka's Youth Corps, for example, fits young people into community-defined development projects.

Promoting youth entrepreneurship in and out of school. To provide young people with greater entrepreneurial awareness, the ILO in partnership with Ministries of Education in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam have introduced **Know About Business (KAB)** into the curricula of secondary school and vocational training centres.

In Indonesia, the ILO also has supported the adaptation of the ILO's **Start Your Business (SYB)** materials for young women and men in senior vocational secondary schools. In response to the December 2004 tsunami, SYB was introduced and piloted in Aceh, Indonesia, targeting out-of-school youth. The Vietnam Women's Union has used the **ILO GET AHEAD package to empower women entrepreneurs**. In China, the All China Youth Federation, in cooperation with the ILO and the YEN, has piloted KAB in the curriculum of Chinese universities.

Reform of vocational training systems to improve skills matches and increase employability. Many countries have been looking to reform their vocational and education training systems by merging various types of educational institutions and providing workplace-based learning. Australia and New Zealand, for example, have introduced broad, competency-based training programmes that meet the requirements of adaptability and flexibility in rapidly changing labour markets. In Singapore, the Critical Enabling Skills Training programmes aim to develop generic or core work skills.

At the same time, many developing countries, with ILO support, are keen to provide skills training programmes that are flexible, employment oriented, learner centred and gender sensitive.

In Pakistan, for example, the ILO has been assisting the vocational and skills training programme through the **Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)** methodology.

The ILO supports the Government in undertaking rapid assessments of training institutions to plan, design and implement short-cycle skills training programmes.

Employers' and workers' organizations



Vocational training needs to be linked to market requirements. ©ILO/M.Crozet, 2005.

Experience worldwide has shown the value of involving employers' and workers' organizations. They can assist in devising labour market policies, and strengthening the links between education

and training institutions and in designing and executing sector-based policies. As a tripartite organization, the ILO can call on its constituents to help formulate the most effective interventions. Both **ACT/EMP** and **ACT/TRAV** have produced handbooks for employers and trade unions that can be adapted to the local situation and updated to reflect current trends. It is also vital to involve young people. Vulnerable youth in particular need to have a much greater say in the selection, design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Young people can protect their rights at work through trade unions. In this regard, the ILO is working with the Youth Committee representatives of the International Trade Union Confederation for Asia and the Pacific (**ITUC-AP**).

Young people can also be role models. For example, successful young entrepreneurs

*The Employers' Confederation of the Philippines has supported the **Philippines Youth Business Foundation**. The ILO has helped broaden the range of business development support for youth to include post-entrepreneurship training services.*

In Viet Nam, stronger links with the education sector are being forged through greater input into the curriculum and work experience programmes and apprenticeship as part of upper secondary education or vocational training. A business management mentoring programme and "clinics" for young entrepreneurs are being established through collaboration between national and foreign employers' associations.

In Nepal, trade unions are addressing the working conditions of young people, including those aged 15-17 who are risk of the worst forms of child labour.



Young women at a rural development vocational training center in Vanuatu. ©ILO/U.Sarkar, 2007.

The ITUC-AP Youth Committee represents and advocates for young people. In its recent *Youth Charter*, the Youth Committee called for a range of interventions, including:

- action by social partners and international institutions to create quality jobs for youth;
- measures to improve employability such as greater vocational training;
- decent working conditions and social safety nets for youth;
- action to address poverty, HIV and AIDs and drug problems amongst youth;
- greater youth participation within trade unions.

can serve as peer educators for other young people eager to follow the same path. They can do so through national and regional youth bodies or entrepreneur networks, such as the ASEAN Council of Youth and the **Asian Youth Council**. In New Zealand, a network for women who are interested in self-employment called WISE, keeps members up to date with legislation and business trends and helps them meet role models. Good practices also can be drawn from the YEN and its Youth Consultative Group, using its publication **Joining Forces with Young People: A Practical Guide to Collaboration for Youth Employment**.

All-China Youth Federation (ACYF) – The ACYF has over 77,000 members. Since 2005, it has worked with the Youth Employment Network – comprising ILO, UN and the World Bank – to establish a Chinese Youth Employment Network office. A key area of the ACYF's employment-related work has been its Youth Entrepreneurship Campaign. Between 1998 and 2000, this and other related youth enterprise initiatives helped 86,000 young people start their businesses, creating over 1 million new job opportunities. The goal for 2006-2008 was to help 500,000 young people learn business start-up skills and help 200,000 to start their businesses.

Policy choices

Policies and programmes to promote decent work for young people vary according to national circumstances but should consider four major policy areas:

- Children need to move out of work and into education – learning the skills they will need to compete in the job market as young adults. Governments need to address both out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out, in particular those from poor families.
- Education and training policies need to ensure that young people have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet the demand of businesses. This requires that educational institutions work with employers.
- Young workers are more likely to get jobs if there is high and sustained economic growth. This requires sound macroeconomic policies and economic and political stability that will encourage investment, enhance productive capacity and boost aggregate demand.
- Depending on the most critical issues facing youth in a country, improved

labour market information, job-search assistance, apprenticeship programmes and other measures could ease the school-to-work transition. This also includes challenges young workers are particularly vulnerable to, including poor working conditions and the worst forms of child labour, HIV/AIDS and gender inequalities. Through the extensive network of the trade unions, young people have a greater chance of ensuring their voice gets heard and protecting their rights at work.

The disadvantages young people face in making a smooth transition from school to work can be tackled by employment strategies and/or **National Action Plans on Youth Employment** with the goal of sustained employment generation, poverty reduction and education and training. Experience has shown that designing action plans that are simple work best, along with finding the right “hook” or best entry-point. This could be the action plan itself, a particular policy or a new country-led initiative.

Consultations with tripartite partners, civil society and young people during the process of designing an action plan have proven important for evolving political will. This has been achieved by highlighting

the problem convincingly, based on sound problem analysis. It is important to consolidate what initiatives exist in a country that promote decent work for youth and use them as building blocks to progress towards more broad-based programmes.

Ultimately, it is about finding the right mix of interventions linked to relevant development (such as UNDAF/CCA, PRSP, EFA, TVET), which can lead to a more coherent delivery of youth employment services by public and private providers. A toolkit to assist policy makers and practitioners in supporting young workers has been developed and has been adapted for the region in collaboration with the International Training Centre and Youth Employment Programme of the ILO through regional and country-based forums.

National action plans on youth employment

The YEN's lead countries for the Asia-Pacific region – Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka – as well as Nepal have developed National Action Plans on Youth Employment. These plans are either integrated into the country's overall development action plan or issued as separate documents.

On International Youth Day 2004 in Indonesia, YEN with ILO support unveiled a plan of action for youth employment, "Unlocking the potential of Youth". To ensure that young people's views were included, a series of "youth-for-youth" consultations were organized. The key policy recommendations covered: making education affordable and of high quality; developing a national skills qualification framework; strengthening the network of vocational training centres; building bridges between businesses and the education sector and improving the readiness of school leavers for the labour market.

Within the context of YEN and in collaboration with the UN Secretariat, the World Bank and other relevant specialized agencies, the ILO provides technical assistance to governments in the elaboration of their national action plans.

This process involves policy-makers from various government agencies, labour market institutions (including employers' and workers' organizations) and representatives of civil society, including youth associations.

Highly participatory approaches are essential to ensure broad-based support for reforms and measures aimed at improving the employment prospects of young people.

In addition to action plans, countries have used other means of integrating youth employment concerns into national policy. In Viet Nam for example, the ILO assisted in the formulation of the country's first Youth Law and helped ensure the inclusion of a component on employment for young people.

The Youth Law, which was adopted by the National Assembly in 2005, creates a solid legal environment in support of youth employment.

In Sri Lanka, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper focuses strongly on the development of an entrepreneurial culture and attitudes among young people through education and a more responsive business environment.

3. Partnerships

Within countries, the ILO is working with the tripartite partners as well as with the UN family and civil society organizations. Collaboration is not always smooth, but where it does work, the results are well worth the time invested. A number of countries address youth employment directly as well as in the context of expanding basic education, and skills development and livelihood opportunities for young people.

Cooperation with regional bodies on youth employment – In 2001, the ILO and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) launched an **inter-regional initiative** to address the problem of the worst forms of child labour and the lack of educational opportunities in Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. The initiative encourages APEC member economies to use education to combat


A list of some UN and regional organizations and possible entry-points for collaboration on youth employment

Organization	Possible entry-points on youth employment
World Bank	Employment, basic education and skills development, livelihoods, SMEs
UNDP	Employment including youth employment, livelihoods
UNESCO	Basic education and skills development, life-skills
Asian Development Bank	Employment, basic education and skills development
Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA (UNESCO, UNESCAP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, UNIFEM, CSOs, donors)	Basic education and skills development; child labour/ education/youth employment linkages
Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)	Building on previous collaboration on child labour/ education/youth employment linkages; human resources and skills development.
ASEAN	Youth entrepreneurship

child labour. The ILO is working with APEC, which brings together both donor and recipient countries to build capacity and mobilize resources in this field. The links between child-labour elimination, education, training and youth employment are being strengthened further through the Regional Thematic Working Group on Education For All.

Technical cooperation and resources

Technical cooperation enables the ILO to support countries and constituents to address youth employment with resources for developing knowledge and tools, competency-building and implementing



The ILO also has entered into a partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations+3 to explore strategies to promote youth enterprise in Asia, building on good practices and lessons learned of ASEAN+3 member countries. There is a continued need to promote an entrepreneurial culture and enabling policy environment to ensure more options for youth in wage or self employment in the region. Within ASEAN, there is practical experience in public-private partnerships (Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Hong Kong (China)), role models, youth business competitions (Thailand), promoting an entrepreneurial culture (China), entrepreneurship education and working with young entrepreneurs' associations.

While youth entrepreneurship does indeed provide greater opportunities for skills development and employment as well as innovation in products and services, it is not the solution to youth unemployment alone. Indeed, many of the difficulties young women and men face in obtaining finance for their business is due to their lack of previous business experience, the absence of sufficient collateral upon which the loan can be secured or the result of a general bias against young women and men taking such initiatives. The opportunities and challenges are being explored further, including through the proposed ASEAN+3 Knowledge Network on Youth Enterprise.

pilot interventions that can inform policy advice. This requires resource mobilization. While the education sector has not historically been considered a traditional ILO partner, the ILO became a part of the Education Sector Support Programme, developing the US\$22 million EAST project in Indonesia.

To maintain its technical cooperation role with the reform movement ongoing within the United Nations towards a “One UN”, the ILO will need to increasingly develop joint programmes within UN country teams. **The MDG Achievement Fund** provides great opportunities to mobilize resources in the areas of youth employment, migration, gender and the environment. Joint programming will require strong skills in ensuring efficient inter-agency collaboration.

New programmes on youth employment in China (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of China’s Vulnerable Migrants) and the Philippines (Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth) are being financed by the Millennium Development Goal Fund on Youth, Employment and Migration.

*The South-East Asia and Pacific subregion has received the largest growth in technical cooperation in recent years, with the US\$22 million **Education and Skills Training for Youth Employment (EAST)** project in Indonesia and the \$2.5 million Subregional Programme to Promote Education, Employability and Decent Work for Youth in the Pacific island countries.*

Promoting Decent Work for Youth in Sri Lanka marks the first major project dedicated to youth employment in South Asia. In East Asia, on a relatively limited resource base, there are activities to support youth employment in China, Mongolia and Viet Nam. **The Youth Employment project in Indonesia**, with smaller components in Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, is the first regional technical cooperation dedicated to youth employment in recent times. The recently concluded **Promoting Youth Employment in the Philippines: Policy and Action** project is an invaluable source of good practices and lessons learned.

Drawing from ILO–IPEC experience

Through the International Labour Conference proceedings on youth employment, the ILO and its constituents have strongly recommended drawing upon the experience of large-scale technical cooperation programmes, such as **ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)**. ILO–IPEC has been targeting vulnerable children and youth since 1992. Considering it is now operational in 88 countries worldwide and is the largest international programme on child labour, youth employment programmes can benefit from its breadth of experience in data collection and research, pilot interventions, policy development and knowledge management. Forging operational links more systematically will provide greater opportunities to improve and broaden the impact of projects on child labour and youth employment.

Both ILO–IPEC and the Youth Employment Programmes are striving to ensure decent work over the life cycle for the most vulnerable, including 15- to 17-year-olds working in the worst forms of child labour. It is important to understand how gender, migration and the spread of HIV impact upon child labour

and youth employment challenges. The significant technical cooperation portfolio and the wide range of products and tools that have been developed by child labour and youth employment programmes form a solid basis upon which to work towards improving educational attainment and employability of out-of-school youth and children/youth at risk of dropping out of school.



Young Nepalese girl. ©ILO/J.Maillard, 1985.

ILO–IPEC can bring its experience in reaching out-of-school youth and children/youth at risk in low-income communities in urban and rural, remote areas. Youth Employment Programmes offer considerable expertise in ensuring relevant education, training and career counselling and guidance as well as entrepreneurship towards increased employability of youth (and away from children). The materials that

have been developed for use in secondary and vocational schools can be adapted for use by out-of-school youth vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour.

A handbook for ILO field staff entitled **Forging Linkages Between Child Labour and Youth Employment Programmes Across**

Asia and the Pacific outlines specific child labour and youth employment challenges, key conceptual links and the pillars upon which collaboration can be built (such as policy, knowledge development, social mobilization, technical cooperation). It also makes concrete suggestions for future technical interventions.

Child labour and youth employment links in India – The US\$40 million INDUS is the largest ILO technical cooperation project in Asia and the Pacific and targets 80,000 children employed in hazardous work and works in partnership with the National Child Labour Project Scheme and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Universal Elementary Education Programme). INDUS provides an integrated approach to tackling the worst forms of child labour and promoting access to relevant education, training and decent work opportunities for youth. For example, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the Government of India and five state governments, the project has developed three demand-driven vocational skills training models that the Indian National Child Labour Programmes Central Monitoring Committee has recommended scaling up. Several other experiences from the project have been mainstreamed into government vocational training policies and programmes.

In Mongolia – The Labour and Social Welfare Office has implemented pilot activities to provide adolescents with alternatives to working in hazardous conditions by increasing the access and relevance of employment services and vocational training. The first step was to assess existing training and employment services for young people, taking into account psychological factors for working children. Parents participated in the assessments and in the employment service information sessions. The Labour and Social Welfare Office also conducted awareness-raising sessions for potential employers that increased the number of jobs offered to trainees and helped achieve an 80 per cent placement rate. The pilot also allowed the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in developing a curriculum matched to local labour market needs and providing employment services to ease the school-to-work transition.

4. Knowledge management

Evaluation evidence on youth employment programmes is weak throughout the region. There is a real need for the ILO to work with other UN agencies and institutions to produce more evidence on what interventions to support young workers have succeeded and what has failed and under what circumstances. While such a comprehensive thematic evaluation should be pursued over the long term, valuable lessons can be learned from also monitoring and evaluating technical cooperation on youth employment.

In response to demands from constituents, the ILO has launched the Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Youth Employment (APYouthNet) – a community of practice that connects constituents active in youth employment policy and programme design to improve technical capabilities, advice and partnerships in countries and across the region. Launched within the **Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Decent Work**, members come from the tripartite partners as well as international organizations, academia and youth associations.

APYouthNet features:

- *E-group: An email group connecting members facilitated by the ILO. Members receive e-newsletters containing queries, upcoming events and information resources.*
- *Website (forthcoming): An ILO regional Youth Employment web page, embedded within the new ILO regional website (November 2008), will add rich information and contain tools, contacts and relevant links on youth employment related issues.*
- *Web-based interactive platform/portal (November 2008): The portal will enable and facilitate real-time discussions between members and provide space for storing and sharing information, contacts, events, resources and track other contributions from members.*
- *Events: Members can share knowledge and experiences through face-to-face technical trainings, workshops and conferences.*

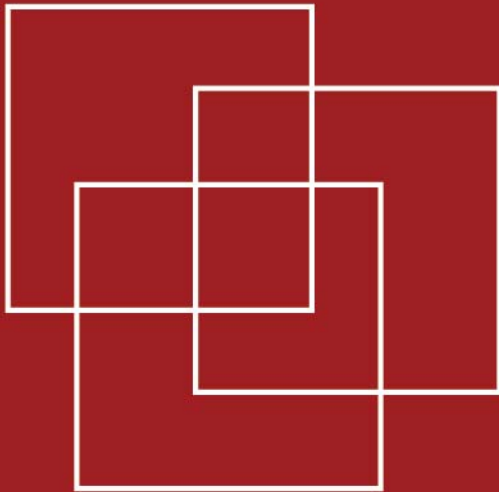
A lively network provides a collaborative environment for sharing information and experiences which is paramount to understanding and addressing the youth employment challenges in the region.

Abbreviations

ACTEMP	Bureau of Employers' Activities
ACTRAV	Bureau of Workers' Activities
ACYF	All-China Youth Federation
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EFA	Education for All
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILS	International Labour Standards
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
ITUC-AP	International Trade Union Confederation for Asia and the Pacific
KAB	Know About Business

Abbreviations

LED	local economic development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NAP	National Action Plan
OSH	occupational safety and health
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SYB	Start Your Business
TVET	technical and vocational education training
UNDAF/CCA	United Nations Development Assistance Framework / Common Country Assessment
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WISE	Work Improvement in Small Enterprises
YEN	Youth Employment Network



The Resource Kit brings together the ILO's expertise, knowledge and tools as they relate to Decent Work and the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade (2006-2015) in a single, accessible package. It has been created to help workers, employers, governments and other interested parties learn more about the priority areas, the key challenges and the resources available to meet them.

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