

Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific
(SKILLS-AP)

**Developing Skills and Employability for
Young People in Asia and the Pacific**

Report of ILO/SKILLS-AP/Japan
Regional Technical Meeting on Developing Skills and Employability for
Young People in Asia and the Pacific

Chiba, Japan
13-16 February 2007

International Labour Office

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Foreword

This *Regional Technical Meeting on Developing Skills and Employability for Young People in Asia and the Pacific* continues the series of activities of the ILO's Regional Skills Network inaugurated in the *First Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Institutions* in Incheon, Korea in November 2005. Building on the priorities identified at that meeting, as well as the global importance of the issue of skills for young people underlined in the ILC discussion of 2005, this meeting offered partners in the region the opportunity to consider existing tools, policies and approaches to improving skills and employability for youth, identify areas where each country should focus their efforts, and suggest areas for collaboration between Network members.

For its part, the International Labour Office for the region will seek areas for follow up and support to individual countries, in line with their Decent Work Country Programmes and national priorities. By publishing this report, in paper and on the internet, the ILO seeks to ensure that the ideas and opportunities identified through this meeting can be widely shared throughout the more than 150 members of the Regional Skills Network. The Office stands ready to assist partners in identifying opportunities for development, or for providing assistance to others.

I would like to acknowledge the continuing support of the Government of Japan and the Overseas Vocational Training Association and its staff for the ILO's SKILLS-AP programme and the Regional Skills Network. Their commitment continues to make opportunities for sharing ideas and building relationships between the members of the Network possible, and serves as a model to others. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Anne Richmond, Skills Development Specialist, ILO Bangkok, who planned and organized this meeting and prepared this report, with the support of Mr. Trevor Riordan and Ms. Wipusara Rugworakijkul of SKILLS-AP. Thanks also to Ms. Urmila Sarkar and Ms. Irmgard Nübler of the ILO, Ms. Lay Cheng Tan, UNESCO, Ms. Murdewi Siswandari, Ministry of Education, Indonesia, and Mr. Ali Reza Khan, Ms. Audrey Codera and Mr. Dev Appanah for their excellent expert contributions before and during the meeting. Finally, I observe with pleasure that this event marks a further step in the ongoing collaboration between UNESCO and ILO to provide practical support to constituents in the countries of Asia-Pacific.

Guy Thijs
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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***ILO/SKILLS-AP/Japan Regional Technical Meeting on Developing Skills and
Employability for Young People in Asia and the Pacific
Chiba, Japan, 13-16 February 2007***

Introduction

“The ILO should organize periodic, regional youth employment technical meetings in order to build knowledge and exchange experiences among youth employment policy-makers and the social partners...[and] support efforts to strengthen the capacity of workers’ and employers’ organizations to reach out and engage young workers and employers of young workers to ensure that their specific needs are taken into account in social dialogue processes, including collective bargaining.”

(Extracts from the Resolution concerning youth employment, adopted at the International Labour Conference, 2005)

In line with the priority issues identified at the first technical meeting of the ILO Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific in Korea in November 2005, this meeting focused on strategies and tool for improving the skills and employability of young people in Asia and the Pacific. Tools developed by the ILO and the ILO’s knowledge of innovations in member States around the world were complemented by the practical experiences of participants who shared their youth skills and employability policies and programmes. Participants represented member States in the region who are experiencing challenges common to many in the region, and those who have made progress in tackling the issue.

The main objective of the meeting was to exchange information on existing approaches (legislation, policies, and programmes) and good practices and to identify areas for potential country-to-country collaboration through the Regional Skills Network. This summary report of the meeting, and the internet version including country reports, is intended to ensure that all members of the Network have access to the information and links for follow up. A recommendation adopted by the meeting participants summarizes the areas they identified for national follow up, and where there is potential for country-to-country cooperation and assistance.

The meeting included ILO constituents from Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa and Sri Lanka; resource persons from ILO Geneva and ROAP, UNESCO Asia-Pacific, Indonesia Ministry of Education and three youth organizations in the region (Pakistan, Thailand and Philippines). The meeting was organized around four themes:

- Lost Opportunities: 15 to 19 year olds (focusing on disadvantaged youth including working children)
- Learning while Earning: Young people at work.
- What do young people need to know?: Priority skills.
- Making good choices: Career guidance and counseling.

For each theme, there was a substantive introduction, provided by one or more resource persons, additional comments from one or more participant (highlighting the relevant section of their country paper) and comments from the social partner perspectives. The theme was then discussed in small groups, with each group considering:

- The main issues and problems
- Good ideas and models for addressing the problems
- Areas for collaboration

A final plenary session followed in order to draw out common issues and areas of agreement.

Finally, the meeting offered a significant opportunity for networking and making personal connections. It was notable that a significant proportion of the participants had not previously attended an ILO meeting, and found the experience highly useful in gaining a new understanding and appreciation both of the ILO and of the opportunities for country-to-country connections. Each stated that they had found areas where there was scope for sharing ideas. A wide range of additional materials and references was distributed during the meeting – some provided by meeting participants, others from countries and organizations not directly participating – Viet Nam, and the ICFTU-APRO Youth Committee, for example. Participants found all these materials useful as a source of ideas and examples.

Inaugural session

Following registration and brief meetings of each of the tripartite groups to select chairs for the programme, the meeting was opened with speeches from Mr. Shinichi Hasegawa, Director, ILO Japan, Mr. Atsushi Nara, Director, Overseas Cooperation Division, Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, and Mr. Isao Aoki, President, OVTA.

Mr. Hasegawa welcomed the participants to Japan and thanked the Government of Japan for its support for the Regional Skills Network and to OVTA for hosting the meeting. He noted the wide range of issues to be discussed and looked forward to a positive outcome. Mr. Nara thanked the staff of ILO and OVTA for their work preparing for the meeting and emphasized the importance he placed on identifying practical steps to be taken to improve skills and employability for young people. Mr. Aoki welcomed the participants to OVTA and underlined the interest and commitment of OVTA and the Government of Japan to supporting further development in the important issues of youth.

Technical session 1: Update on the Regional Skills Network and introduction to the thematic discussion

This session was chaired by Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera (Workers, Sri Lanka). He welcomed the participants and explained that the session would introduce the subject of the meeting and the structure. Ms. Wipusara Rugworakijkul, ILO SKILLS-AP provided a presentation on the development of the Regional Skills Network from its re-establishment in Korea in November 2005, illustrating the main topics that had been addressed through a combination of research, technical meetings and information exchange. She noted that Network members had begun to initiate technical meetings, such as a discussion on competency standards initiated by Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia and including countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion, in mid 2006, and a discussion of the TREE methodology, hosted by TESDA, in early 2007.

Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok then provided an overview of the themes of the meeting and the background to the subject. She recalled the *ILO/Japan regional tripartite meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, 2002*, which had identified a number of issues critical to employability for young people: knowledge and skills – young people must be able to access training that provides employment-relevant skills; assistance in transition – access to information about jobs, realistic career counselling and expectations about work; and access to the workplace – work experience and on the job training. She noted that the present meeting would build on this foundation, with a specific focus on key issues, and on identifying areas for national action and collaboration within the Network. She also acknowledged the inclusive nature of the discussion, which was the result of collaboration with UNESCO and with a number of young people's

organizations from the region.

The Chair and panel members then provided comments on the expectations of their groups for the meeting. Ms. Dora Tuimaseve (Government, New Zealand) noted that governments were interested in forming effective networks to exchange information, in having a clear idea of the needs and interests of young people, and on increasing the participation of young people in the labour market.

By the end of the meeting, governments looked for the ILO to take account of the discussions, for recommendations that would help countries to launch initiatives or to start policies. Governments also noted and welcomed the collaboration of ILO and other UN agencies such as UNESCO.

Ms. Maryann Lameko (Employers, Samoa) said that employers across the region had similar issues regarding employability and supported the related Millennium Development Goal. She reported that employers were expecting to share experiences, particularly on areas where employers can assist, and on the specific skills needed. Employers were interested in government policies for equal opportunity and entrepreneurship promotion, and looked forward to working together towards a common understanding of tripartite roles.

Speaking for the Workers, Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera (Workers, Sri Lanka) added that his group looked to the meeting to support a shift in priority from academic qualification to skills acquired through experience; and expected the meeting's recommendations to support the Decent Work Agenda, address child labour issues and address the mismatches in expectations and available work among young people.

In discussion, other speakers noted that the meeting offered a positive opportunity for in-country as well as cross-country networking. Many speakers noted that it was often challenging to bring the stakeholders for youth skills development issues together within a country. Other speakers commented on the importance of 'striking the right' balance in terms of responsibilities: governments have some responsibilities, so do the social partners, and so do young people. A number of speakers noted the value of sharing both successful and failed approaches as the basis for improved progress.

Technical session 2: Learning while earning

Mr. Tariq Saeed (Employers, Pakistan) chaired this session. The theme "Learning while Earning" focused on ways employers, governments, workers' organizations, parents, young people and others could ensure that young people who are in work can continue to build their skills and gain qualifications or other formal skill recognition so that they are not trapped in 'entry level' positions or dead-end employment. He introduced Ms. Irmgard Nübler, ILO Geneva to provide an overview of the subject, focusing on formal and informal apprenticeships.

Ms. Nübler set out a number of critical points for understanding apprenticeship as a way to address skills training and employability challenges for young people, noting that it had evolved as an effective approach to provide and finance training of the young generation. It had been the main road to training in the crafts sector in pre-industrialised European countries and in many developing countries apprenticeship is the main training system in the informal economy and provides skills to the majority of young people in the craft and trade sector. Currently many developed countries have modernized their approach to apprenticeship as part of a reformed training system, introducing new types of occupations and new approaches to the balance and delivery of work/learning. She stressed that there were a number of secrets for success for apprenticeship: that it must be based in strong institutions that set and enforce rules that protect the interests of all parties, and create the framework for a 'win-win' situation where young people, employers and societies all benefit. She

described how in traditional systems the rules and institutions may be more based on cultural and personal norms and standards, whereas in modern systems the rules were more often formalized in laws and policies. In either case however, the rules must be respected. Because apprenticeships must be based in national institutions, which differ, she cautioned against attempts to directly ‘import’ foreign models. However, by describing how modern systems have evolved from informal and traditional ones, she suggested that countries could look to their own informal systems and begin to strengthen the institutional framework, over time developing a modern and formal apprenticeship system.

Mr. Ali Raza Khan, of the Pakistan National Youth Service (PNYS), gave a presentation on this organization. He opened by describing the plight of a boy in Pakistan who despairing of any future for himself, had lost his humanity and was able to commit terrible crimes. He used this, he said, to illustrate the need for ensuring that young people develop a sense of positive agency: the ability to imagine and succeed at positive actions. The PNYS offers support to young people to identify needs within their own communities and organize to fulfil them. Examples of local ‘un-met needs’ that local PNYS groups were addressing included basic education, health services, relief and rehabilitation projects, and more. Mr. Khan emphasized the need for governments and social partners to consider young people “as a solution not as a problem”, and thereby help the country as a whole “benefit from the energies, talents and creative abilities” of young people who would otherwise be considered “helpless and hopeless” – and, as he pointed out, potentially be willing recruits for negative and destructive activities. The PNYS is working to establish at least 100 youth-led service groups in Pakistan by the end of 2007. More information is available at their website at www.pnys.com.

The Chair then introduced comments drawn from the country papers from Japan, and his own. Mr. Takeshi Tokiwa (Government, Japan) noted that Japan had introduced a form of ‘dual system’ combining in school and in-enterprise training in 2004, but this alone had not had a significant impact on youth unemployment. Japan was exploring internships as a better means of linking vocational schools and corporations, and was also encouraging corporations to provide advice and guidance on the content of training in vocational schools, to improve their relevance. The Chair, Mr. Tariq Saeed, (Employers, Pakistan) noted a number of new innovations taking place in Pakistan, including modernization of the existing apprenticeship scheme, introduction of a longer term internship in which young graduates are provided with a stipend to encourage them to take up long term (1 year or more) internships, and private company initiatives such as a new initiative in Karachi where a company and a vocational training institute have collaborated with the British Council to offer students two weeks’ language training at the British Council and work experience in the company as part of the training.

Mr. Osama Tariq (Workers, Pakistan) supplemented the comments by Employer and Government speakers by reflecting on the world-wide impacts of globalization, which had led to job loss and what he described as ‘skill refugees’ within countries. He reminded the meeting that “hungry people become angry people” and stressed that unions are working to ensure that young people, and others, have access to skills training they need to get work.

In discussion many speakers noted that TVET is costly, and that well regulated apprenticeships were a cost effective approach to expanding access to this very necessary training. Others noted the need to modernize current approaches and to draw on good lessons from other jurisdictions for addressing key questions.

Plenary and Working Group discussions

The major points of agreement from the working group discussions are found in the ‘Recommendations’ in Annex 3. Examples of good models and areas of cooperation discussed in the small groups include:

- There are many examples of positive incentives that can encourage apprenticeships, such as tax-based schemes.
- Governments can reduce employer resistance to taking on apprentices both with financial guarantees and by providing assistance (counseling, liaison) to help young apprentices adjust to workplace demands
- Other social actors (religious, cultural groups) can have roles in developing young people’s attitudes and values, several examples were given.
- The importance of ensuring occupational health and safety standards are met.
- Models for apprenticeship spanning the range from informal/traditional to fully formal and modern exist across the region, including in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, New Zealand. Governments and the social partners may be enthusiastic about sharing ideas for what they have developed.
- Individual companies and sectors have interesting models of training in schools and in the workplace that can be shared – for example, the hospitality industry in Indonesia combines local school training with work in companies abroad.
- There was general agreement on the need to promote skilled work as an attractive career choice for young people, and hence for structuring learning and work options to promote this as a positive choice, not ‘second best’.

Technical session 3: Lost opportunities

Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas (Government, Philippines) chaired this session. It focused on the long term impacts on young people who begin work aged 15-19 and who do not have opportunities to continue their training. This group would also include other vulnerable young people including former child labourers and those who had little to no opportunity for education. Ms. Urmila Sarkar, ILO Regional Office Asia Pacific introduced the topic by presenting recent ILO research on the subject and connecting to issues of Child Labour. She introduced the topic by sharing some statistics about the youth employment challenge in Asia and the role of skills development in easing the transition from school to work. She observed that young people from poor families often experience the most difficult circumstances: working without adequate training, with insecure contracts and in poor working conditions. She then reported on the main findings of a number of recent studies. In Indonesia, a study showed that early school drop-out results in child labour and a large pool of unemployed youth who lack the knowledge/skills to find decent work. Young people who had dropped out had a significantly lower age of marriage and birth of first child than their counterparts: 2.3 years earlier. They also had significantly lower incomes, with employed graduates of junior secondary school earning 56 per cent more overall, and self-employed were 39 per cent more than employed drop outs. Furthermore, on a range of indicators (job security, safety and health, use of qualifications, representational security and perception of well being) those who had completed junior secondary school recorded higher satisfaction than those who had dropped out of school and began to work at an early age. Other findings in an ILO/APEC collaborative report covering Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam showed that 15 - 17 year olds who had been forced to drop out of school and start work at an early age were more vulnerable to lower wages, poor working conditions and exposure to hazards than young people who had stayed in school and did not start work until older ages.

Ms. Sarkar summarized some of the major conclusions reached as a result of this research, the work of the ILO and its partners on the elimination of Child Labour, and collaboration across the UN on the Education For All initiative: The need for better counseling and awareness of the negative consequences of early work, as well as positive options including self employment; training through work experience; including core work skills, agricultural skills and OSH within training; and better training for vocational training teachers. She added that development and expansion of training opportunities for young people can be an effective strategy against the worst forms of child labour; but that such initiatives must be supported through adequate data collection and support services.

Ms. Lay Cheng Tan, UNESCO provided another view of the same topic from the perspective of UNESCO and the education sector. She noted the same challenging statistics mentioned by others: the large and growing youth population in the region, the relative scarcity of new jobs, and the mis-match between the skills and expectations of young people and the work available. She also highlighted the additional challenges faced by particular groups: young women, those with low education and additional barriers. She observed that young people who start work when aged 15-19 are usually from poor families who cannot afford to keep their children in school,; from rural areas with little access to training; poor performers in formal learning; and may be girls who do not continue in schooling for cultural reasons. The economic implications of this have a long term affect: producing a low skilled workforce, with low motivation and productivity. Consequently, the goal of the *Education For All* initiative includes ensuring the quality and quantity of education available, and that it is accessible to all. A critical focus is ensuring that young people can stay in school long enough to complete key learning, and that the skills they learn will support them in the future. Ms. Tan concluded with the challenge to all to ensure that young people whose journeys to decent work had been ‘interrupted’ had supports to resume that journey.

The Chair then invited two participants to provide comments based on their country papers. Mr. Vaigna Souvannachak,(Government, Lao PDR) summarized the situation in Lao PDR. The government is seeking to provide training and self employment assistance to young people in rural areas to provide alternatives to migration to urban areas and to other countries, as young people may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation when far from home. Mr. P.H.G. Premasiri, (Government, Sri Lanka) described initiatives taken to increase enrolment, retention and completion rates for young people in secondary and tertiary education, particularly for rural and disadvantaged groups. He added that better management and finance systems to improve the efficiency of education administration in a devolved model were a critical element in achieving better results. Finally, close collaboration between the different Ministries and Departments was necessary for improving the quality of education.

Ms. Sengdavone Bangonesengdet (Employers, Lao PDR) added that from an employer viewpoint a strong education system was critical, but that this was primarily a government responsibility. Employers would assist in defining skill needs and relevant core skills. Mr. Leuthsombath Rathapahsawang (Workers, Lao PDR) provided additional comments illustrating the importance of education as a way to improve the opportunities of young people, especially those with disadvantages.

Plenary and Working Group discussions

The major points of agreement from the working group discussions are found in the ‘Recommendations’ in Annex 3. Examples of good models and areas of cooperation discussed in the small groups include:

- Agreement that keeping young people in education is the best long term investment. Models of mechanisms to enable all children to attend are available in many countries: rural and

distant access in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, New Zealand's negative incentives against those who hire under-age workers, Samoa's active school retention program, etc.

- The role of all social actors in creating and maintaining a pro-education environment was noted.
- The challenges of identifying and serving out-of-school youth.
- Within countries, there should be better collaboration between Ministries, and with them and employers.
- Focus campaigns, like raising the awareness of parents on the value of staying in school, could be a way to encourage collaboration in a country.
- Between countries, information on how to better retain young people in school would be very valuable.
- Richer economies can provide resources to poorer ones to assist them to reform

Technical session 4: Making good choices

The Chair for this session was Mr. Osama Tariq (Worker, Pakistan). The session focused on ways to ensure young people are aware of work and training opportunities available to them, and supports to ensure they can succeed. The subject was introduced by Ms. Murdewi Siswandari Ministry of Education, Indonesia. She used the process of Career Development Planning in Indonesia's Vocational Senior Secondary Schools (SMK's) as an example. SMK graduates proceed either to work in industry, become entrepreneurs, or continue their studies at institutes of higher education. Career Development planning is integrated into the regular course of study at SMK's, where the regular course of study includes entrepreneurship training (at least 2 hours per week), production units to provide hands-on practice, and special additional programmes for those students wishing to become entrepreneurs, to bridge towards that at graduation. The SMK's use a range of existing tools, including the ILO's 'KAB' and 'SIYB' in entrepreneurship training, and the 'Pocket Guide' for students and 'Mentor Guide' to support job search. Indonesia's dual system of training provides young people with on the job experience which helps them confirm their career choice.

Ms. Siswandari stressed that the ability of young people to make good choices was also conditioned by the education and training system: it is important to provide flexibility so that people who make one choice are not subsequently locked out of access to other courses or streams. In addition, people who are already working should be able to build on their prior learning and gain new skills to support changing their occupations. In conclusion, she suggested that helping young people to be aware of the range of choices available to them, and to make good choices, was an important contribution to national competitiveness. Information about the types of work available, in a globalizing world, is critical. Equally important is promoting entrepreneurship and self employment, as many new jobs are needed for young people.

Mr. Sailendra Dev Appanah, Thai RuralNet presented information on social entrepreneurship as a potential avenue for youth employment, and the work of the Youth Social Partnership Initiative in promoting this approach. In contrast to the profit-model of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship focuses on innovation in addressing a social problem or need, and as such, offers young people another positive option for channelling their enthusiasm and creativity while also earning a reasonable living. His presentation featured a number of example businesses and entrepreneurs, and showed a guide for young social entrepreneurs that has been developed. His presentation offered an additional possible career choice for promotion to young people. More information is available at www.ysei.org

The chair then invited participants to add additional information drawn from the country papers. Ms. Dora Tuimaseve, (Government, New Zealand) described how New Zealand's transition

support programmes are designed to allow for career exploration. They also function as a way of encouraging young people to stay in school past the minimum age. Improved career education advice within schools is another major initiative and is assisted by Industry Training Organizations. Career information is also available to young people who are not in school.

Mr. Lemalu Tate Simi, (Government, Samoa) provided a contrasting view, noting that making choices, let alone good choices, in developing countries, is usually a luxury with the limited options available. Partly for that reason, in Samoa, career guidance and counselling had not been highly developed. Advice is available from a number of government and non government sources, and the Small Business Enterprises Centre, SBEC, runs training programmes for people wanting to start their own businesses, as a prerequisite for granting small loans or seed money for that purpose. Other non-government organizations work closely with government in promoting awareness among young people of training and career choices available to them through “Career Day” activities and the distribution of brochures and other similar information. However, in Samoa the demand for work is almost always high and the supply, low and under the circumstances many young people cannot afford to be too choosy.

Mr. David Lowe (Employers, New Zealand) stressed the importance of consultation and involvement of the tripartite partners in assessing labour market skill needs. He noted that New Zealand’s approach gave young people the chance to try out different occupations and therefore make better choices for further training.

Plenary and Working Group discussions

The major points of agreement from the working group discussions are found in the ‘Recommendations’ in Annex 3. Examples of good models and areas of cooperation discussed in the small groups include:

- Need for improved information about labour market needs, careers – for example, a sort of ‘menu’ for young people.
- Recognition that choice is not realistically available for many young people, especially rural, isolated and disadvantaged.
- Concerns about the role, interests and information provided by private recruiting agents (domestic and international)
- An important area for tripartite collaboration, and for greater involvement by all social actors, including parents, communities etc.
- Potential for countries to share both high and low tech resources: Good examples of the sorts of models are resources that exist include job descriptions, job matching systems, career guidance curricula for schools, internship/stipend programs, the role of youth organizations in articulating needs, and public-private partnerships, for example for job matching.

Technical session 5: Priority skills

This session was chaired by Mr. Vincente Leogardo Jr. (Employer, Philippines). It focused on the core skills for employability for young people, including what the skills are, how they can be learned, and how they are assessed and recognized. The topic was introduced with a presentation by Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok. Her presentation summarized the positions expressed in a range of ILO and international papers published in the past 7 years on the subject of ‘priority skills’ and the points raised in the country papers. Overall she identified three common themes found in the literature: first, that there are basic skills for employability common to any occupation or type of work, necessary for employment, self employment and further training; second, that there need to be ways for employers to effectively signal their needs for specific type of skills, numbers,

timing; and thirdly that there is a need to find ways to maximize the value of investments made in skills training by governments, individuals and industry.

On employability skills, she observed that there were many lists and definitions, with a high degree of overlap and interest, but a lack of consistent terminology, and that such lists were often created with a specific context. However, it was clear that there are skills which can be considered ‘foundation’ – necessary for all future learning and development, and that it is in society’s interests to ensure that all people have the opportunity to learn them, ideally early but later if needed. She noted that such skills are often acquired over time: some once in a lifetime, others needing continual refreshment or reinforcement. On Employer signalling, an issue that had also been touched on in other sessions, she noted general agreement that this should be actively sought, and that direct employer involvement: through training councils, industry groups, shared responsibility for training were effective means to do this. To maximize the value of investments, education systems should strive to develop core skills in students and reduce the need for costly parallel and remediation systems. In addition, common ways to recognize and certify skills which are highly transferable are needed so that re-training is not needed to ensure a person has a skill.

Ms. Audrey Codera, Philippine Youth Employment Networks, presented information on the “Youth Multiversity” programme. This was developed as a youth-initiated response to a crisis in youth employment in the Philippines: high unemployment rates, skills mis-matches, unrealistic earning expectations by young job seekers, and relatively few job openings. The ‘Youth Multiversity’ addresses a number of these challenges through an innovative programme of research, training and capability building for youth leaders, entrepreneurs, labor and human rights advocates, youth organizations, and networks. It is an exchange program that provides intensive experiential learning for its participants. Through a series of structured activities combining workshops, placements, developing networks and communities of practice, and support to develop a personal action plan, participants are enabled to develop their own organizations and enterprises. She concluded with telling the story of Ambo, a young, gang involved man who following his involvement with the Multiversity has started his own business which now supports him and his family. More information is available at the website www.youthtoendpoverty.org.

The chair then invited participants to add additional information drawn from the country papers. Mr. Mulyanto, (Government, Indonesia) gave an overview of Indonesia’s system, with an emphasis on the national qualification system, which is based on national (and international) competencies. This focus is important both for ensuring that training in a large and diverse country can produce consistent results and better equip trainees from any provider to find work. He emphasized the importance of life long access to learning and upgrading as a key driving goal of all system reforms.

Ms. Huhana Te Uru Naomi Manu, (Workers, New Zealand) gave an example of the type of support and recognition needed by young people by telling the story of a relative who is a rugby player with a national team. Originally he was not given a spot on the field, but as she described, it took a coach who was willing to give him a chance to show his skills for him to be recognized as the quality player he is. She said this was an example of what was needed in the world of work – a chance for young people to show what they could do. Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas, (Government, Philippines) gave an overview of the Philippines national Technical Education and Skills Development Plan, which is designed to address the sobering fact that for every 100 grade 1 pupils, only 21 go on to graduate from the tertiary level: 7 in TVET and 14 in academic. This loss of human capital is a serious problem for the Philippines, and many efforts are being directed to addressing it, including improved career guidance, a ladderized education system that promotes ongoing learning and movement into more employment relevant fields, and scholarships that link training to existing jobs.

Plenary and Working Group discussions

The major points of agreement from the working group discussions are found in the ‘Recommendations’ in Annex 3. Examples of good models and areas of cooperation discussed in the small groups include:

- Challenges within countries in bringing different agencies and stakeholders together to develop relevant information about present and future skills needs, and the benefits of sharing international examples.
- A focus on how education systems can be strengthened to ensure young people both stay in school, and receive education which gives them a ‘foundation’ for further training.
- The need for teachers to be regularly updated in the real needs of the world of work.
- The potential for national ‘training Needs Assessments’ as a way to bring all stakeholders together to identify needs.
- While there was agreement on the general value of ‘soft’ skills, others noted that for less developed countries the priority was on developing specific vocational skills.

Site visit

The technical meeting included a field trip to two innovative youth employment sites operated by the Employment and Human Resources Development Organization of Japan: *Young Hello Work* (a youth version of the ‘Hello Work’ employment service) and *Young Job Spot* (a pre-employment counseling and assessment service, designed specifically to help young NEETs and ‘freeters’ (and their families) identify career options and goals). This field trip was very much appreciated by participants as they had a chance to see the centres and their staff in action with clients. More information is available at www.ehdo.go.jp/

Adoption of the recommendations of the meeting and closing session

Following a final working group session for the three constituents’ groups to consider a draft set of recommendations, and a final session for adoption and closing was chaired by Ms. Dora Tuimaseve (Government, New Zealand) with a panel consisting of the spokespersons from the Employers (Ms. Maryann Lameko, Samoa) and Workers (Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera, Sri Lanka).

The draft text of the recommendations had been reviewed by each of the three groups, and the spokespersons had met to agree on a proposed consolidated draft, which was presented for discussion and adoption. Additional comments from the floor were reflected in the final text, which was adopted by the whole group.

Ms. Richmond thanked the spokespersons and the participants for their work in developing recommendations to guide the thinking of national stakeholders, and to inform their peers throughout the Regional Skills Network. She also acknowledged the high degree of participation and excellent contributions made by all participants throughout the technical meeting, observing that though the agenda had been ambitious, the quality of their work had led to a very useful result.

The Chair invited each of the spokespersons to comment on the meeting and to reflect on the degree to which the expectations of their groups had been met by the meeting. For governments, she said, a key point was ‘learning while earning’, as they are seeking ways to improve the quality of training and its practical links to employment. In that regard, the ideas and examples discussed were of great interest. She also observed that there were significant differences in the quality and access to services for young people between and within countries, for example, even in developed countries rural youth may not be well served. The meeting had also introduced a number of useful approaches

for all countries to consider. The governments therefore felt that the meeting had met their expectation.

Ms. Maryann Lameko (Employers, Samoa) observed that for employers, the question of ‘lost opportunities’, and means of ensuring that young people could get foundation skills was critical, although this did imply a need for more resources. She emphasized that while employers support training that involves the workplace, any such arrangements should be freely chosen and not imposed. She also welcomed the many strong statements made in support of entrepreneurship during the meeting and hoped they would be reflected in the report. As for the group’s expectations, they had hoped for opportunities to come together and discuss concerns about the employability of young people, and to identify areas for action. Employers had had the opportunity to discuss both across countries and with their national counterparts, and had identified a number of positive ideas and new directions.

Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera (Workers, Sri Lanka) commented that although for unforeseen reasons the worker’s group had been small; it had been exceptionally strong and had well represented workers’ interests throughout the meeting. These issues included the importance of non-academic qualifications and skills, and support for the overall decent work agenda. The group’s expectations had been met by the meeting as there had been discussion of the need for access to decent jobs, not just any job, and the links to child labour: that it was better on many fronts for young people to stay in school and continue their education rather than moving too early into work. He looked forward to opportunities for further collaboration, nationally and internationally.

After many acknowledgements and thanks to the organizers and hosts of the meeting, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Annex 1

ILO/SKILLS-AP/Japan Regional Technical Meeting on Developing Skills and Employability for Young People in Asia and the Pacific

Chiba, Japan
13-16 February 2007

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 13 February 2007

0800 – 0830	Registration/orientation
0830 – 0930	Individual meetings of Government, Employer and Worker participants
0930 – 1030	<i>Inaugural session</i> Addresses: Mr. Shinichi Hasegawa, Director, ILO Japan Mr. Atsushi Nara, Director, Overseas Cooperation Division, Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan Mr. Isao Aoki, President, OVTA Introduction of participants Programme and arrangements for the meeting Group photograph
1030 – 1100	Tea/coffee break
1100 – 1230	<i>Technical session 1: Update on the Regional Skills Network and introduction to the thematic discussion</i> Panel Chairperson: Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera, Sri Lanka Introduced by: Ms. Wipusara Rugworakijkul, ILO SKILLS-AP Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok Panel members: Ms. Dora Tuimaseve, New Zealand Ms. Maryann Lameko, Samoa Questions and comments
1230 – 1400	Lunch
1400 – 1530	<i>Technical session 2: Learning while earning</i> Panel Chairperson: Mr. Tariq Saeed, Pakistan Introduced by: Ms. Irmgard Nübler, ILO Geneva Presentations: Mr. Ali Raza Khan, Pakistan National Youth Service

Mr. Takeshi Tokiwa, Japan
Mr. Tariq Saeed, Pakistan
Panel members: Mr. Takeshi Tokiwa, Japan
Mr. Osama Tariq, Pakistan
Questions and comments

1530 – 1600 Tea/coffee break

1600 – 1730 *1st Working Group session: Learning while earning: ideas to share and issues for collaboration (three mixed working groups)*

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Tariq Saeed, Pakistan
Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok

Wednesday, 14 February 2007

0830 – 0930 *Presentations and synthesis of the Working Group discussions*

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Tariq Saeed, Pakistan
Facilitated by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok

0930 – 1030 *Technical session 3: Lost opportunities*

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas, Philippines
Introduced by: Ms. Urmila Sarkar, ILO Regional Office Asia Pacific
Presentations: Ms. Lay Cheng Tan, UNESCO
Mr. Vaigna Souvannachak, Lao PDR
Mr. P.H.G. Premasiri, Sri Lanka
Panel: Ms. Sengdavone Bangonesengdet, Lao PDR
Mr. Leuthsombath Rathapahsawang, Lao PDR

1030 – 1200 Tea/coffee break combined with
2nd Working Group session: Lost opportunities: ideas to share and issues for collaboration (three mixed working groups)

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas, Philippines
Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok

1200 – 1800 *Lunch and Site Visit*
Young Job Spot
Young Hello Work

Thursday, 15 February 2007

0900 – 1000 *Presentations and synthesis of the Working Groups discussion*

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas, Philippines
Facilitated by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok

1000 – 1030 Tea/coffee break

- 1030 – 1130** ***Technical session 4: Making good choices***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Osama Tariq, Pakistan
 Introduced by: Ms. Murdewi Siswandari Ministry of
 Education, Indonesia
 Presentations: Mr. Sailendra Dev Appanah, Thai RuralNet
 Ms. Dora Tuimaseve, New Zealand
 Mr. Lemalu Tate Simi, Samoa
 Panel: Mr. Lemalu Tate Simi, Samoa
 Mr. David Lowe, New Zealand
- 1130 – 1230** ***3rd Working Group session: Making good choices: ideas to share
 and issues for collaboration (three mixed working groups)***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Osama Tariq, Pakistan
 Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok
- 1230 – 1400** Lunch
- 1400 – 1500** ***Presentations and synthesis of the Working Group discussions***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Osama Tariq, Pakistan
 Facilitated by: Ms. Anne Richmond ILO SRO-Bangkok
- 1500 – 1530** Tea/coffee break
- 1530 – 1630** ***Technical session 5: Priority skills***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Vincente Leogardo Jr., Philippines
 Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok
 Presentations: Ms. Audrey Codera, Philippine Youth
 Employment Networks
 Mr. Mulyanto, Indonesia
 Ms. Huhana Te Uru Naomi Manu, New
 Zealand
 Panel: Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas, Philippines
 Mr. Mulyanto, Indonesia
 Ms. Huhana Te Uru Naomi Manu, New
 Zealand

Friday, 16 February 2007

- 0900 – 1000** ***4th Working Group session: Priority skills: ideas to share and
 issues for collaboration (three mixed working groups)***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Vincente Leogardo Jr., Philippines
 Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok
- 1000 – 1030** Tea/coffee break

- 1030 – 1130** *Presentations and synthesis of the Working Groups discussion*
- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Vincente Leogardo Jr., Philippines
Facilitated by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok
- 1130 – 1230** *5th Working Group session: Identification of key ideas to share and issues for collaboration (Government, Employer and Worker Groups)*
- Panel Chairperson: ILO
Introduced by: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok
- 1230 – 1400** Lunch
- 1400 – 1500** *Presentations and synthesis of the Working Groups discussion*
- Panel Chairperson: Ms. Anne Richmond, ILO SRO-Bangkok
Panel: Ms. Dora Tuimaseve, New Zealand
 Ms. Maryann Lameko, Samoa
 Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera, Sri Lanka
- 1500 – 1530** Tea/coffee break
- 1530 – 1630** *Adoption of the recommendations of the meeting*
Closing Ceremony
- Chairperson: Ms. Dora Tuimaseve, New Zealand
Panel member: Ms. Maryann Lameko, Samoa
 Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera, Sri Lanka

Annex 2 List of Participants

Mr. Mulyanto

Director of Standardization, Competency and Training Programme
Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration
Jalan Gatot Subroto Kav. 51, Floor 7B,
Jakarta Selatan
Indonesia
Tel: (62 21) 526 2643
Fax: (62 21) 526 2643
E-mail: relationship_06@yahoo.com

Mr. Vaigna Souvannachak

Director
Skill Development Division,
Department of Labour,
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
P.O Box 347,
Vientiane
Lao PDR
Tel: (856 21) 911 505
Fax: (856 21) 213 287
E-mail: vaigna@yahoo.com

Mr. Leuthsombath Rathaphasawang

Secretary of President Committee
Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)
P.O. Box 780
Vientiane
Lao PDR
Tel: (856 21) 212 753-4
Fax: (856 21) 212 750
E-mail: phasawang@yahoo.com

Mr. David Lowe

Advisory Services Manager
Employers & Manufacturers Association
(Northern) Inc.
Private Bag 92066
Auckland 1030
New Zealand
Tel: (64 9) 367 0900
Fax: (64 9) 367 0920
E-mail: david.lowe@ema.co.nz

Mr. Masrana Sama

Coordinator of the Organization, Regional
Guidance and Public Relation Division
Employers' Association of Indonesia
(APINDO)
Plaza Great River Fl. 15.,
Jl. HR Rasuna Said X-2 Kav,
Jakarta 12950
Indonesia
Tel. (62 21) 579 38823
Fax: (62 21) 579 38825, 579 38873
E-mail: masrana@ai.astra.co.id

Ms. Sengdavone Bangonesengdet

Deputy Secretary General,
Director of Employer's Bureau Activities
Lao National Chamber of Commerce and
Industry (LNCCI)
P.O. Box 4596
Kaysone Phomvihane Ave,
Saysettha District,
Vientiane
Lao PDR
Tel: (856 21) 452 579
Fax: (856 21) 452 580
E-mail: sengdaourvone@gmail.com

Ms. Dora Tuimaseve

Senior Policy Analyst
Department of Labour
P.O Box 3705
Wellington
New Zealand
Tel: (64 4) 915 4732
Fax: (64 4) 915 4242
E-mail: dora.tuimaseve@dol.govt.nz

Ms. Huhana Te Uru Naomi Manu

Maori Officer
New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
19 Mahoe St.
Tawa
New Zealand
Tel: (64 4) 232 2717
Fax: (64 4) 801 4799
E-mail: noomi.manu@aus.ac.nz

Mr. A.R. Abid
Joint Secretary (HRD)
Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas
Pakistanis B Block Pak Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan
Tel: (92 51) 925 2583
Fax: (92 51) 925 2586
E-mail: abidjs@gmail.com

Mr. Osama Tariq
Deputy General Secretary
Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF)
Bakhtiar Labour Hall,
28 Nisbat Road,
Lahore
Pakistan
Tel: (92 42) 722 2192, 722 9419
Fax: (92 42) 723 9529
E-mail: pwf@brain.net.pk

Mr. Vicente Leogardo, Jr.
Director General
Employers' Confederation of the Philippines
4th Floor, ECC Building,
355 Senator Gil Puyat Avenue,
Makati City,
Phillipines
Tel: (63 2) 899 0411
Fax: (63 2) 895 8576
E-mail: secretariat@ecop.org.ph

Ms. Maryann Lameko
Member, ILO Committee
Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CSL, Lotemau Centre,
Private Bag,
Apia
Samoa
Tel: (685) 777 3458
Fax: (685) 20932
E-mail: maryann@csl.ws

Mr. Vajira Ellepola
Senior Industrial Relations Advisor
Employers' Federation of Ceylon
385 J3, Old Kotte Road,
Rajagiriya
Sri Lanka

Mr. Tariq Saeed
Human Resource Manager
Johnson & Johnson Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd
Plot No. 10 & 25, Sector No. 20,
Korangi Industrial Area,
Karachi 74900
Pakistan
Tel: (92 21) 504 5181, 504 5560-64
Fax: (92 21) 504 4283, 504 4357
E-mail: TSAEED@jnjpk.jnj.com

Mr. Zeus P. Ampuyas
Director III, (OIC) - Regional Director
Technical Education and Skills Development
Authority (TESDA) - Region IX
TESDA IX, San Roque
Zamboanga City
Phillipines
Tel: (63 62) 991 3229
Fax: (63 62) 991 3229

Mr. Lemalu Tate Simi
Chief Executive Officer
Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour
P.O Box 862
Apia
Samoa
Tel: (685) 22739, 20441
Fax: (685) 20443
E-mail: ltsimi@mcil.gov.ws

Mr. Premasiri Pallimulle Hewa Geeganage
Secretary
Ministry of Skills Development & Public
Enterprise Reforms
6th Fl., "Nipunatha Piyasa",
Elvitigala Mawatha, Narahenpita
Colombo 5
Sri Lanka
Tel: (94 11) 255 3891
Fax: (94 11) 255 3891
E-mail: premasiri@sdper.gov.lk

Mr. Harindranath Sandrasekera
Senior Vice President, International Affairs
& Industrial Relations
Ceylon Workers Congress
72, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha
Colombo 7

Tel: (94 11) 286 7941, 286 7966-8
Fax: (94 11) 286 7942
E-mail: vajirae@empfed.lk

Sri Lanka
Tel: (9411) 230 1359
Fax: (9411) 230 1355
E-mail: harrysnrvp@yahoo.com

Resource persons

Ms. Lay Cheng Tan
Programme Officer
UNESCO Bangkok
920 Sukhumvit Road, Prakanong,
Bangkok 10110
Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 391 0577, ext. 211
Fax: (66 2) 391 0866
E-mail: lc.tan@unesco Bangkok.org

Ms. Murdewi Siswandari
Senior Staff for Institutional Cooperation
Directorate of Technical & Vocational
Education, Directorate General for
Management of Primary and Secondary
Education, Ministry of National Education
Jl. Jenderal Sudirman, Komplek Depdiknas
Gd. Lantai 12-13
Senayan-Jakarta 10270
Indonesia
Tel: (62 21) 572 5467
Fax: (62 21) 572 5467
E-mail: murdewis@yahoo.com

Mr. Sailendra Dev Appanah
YSEI Program Coordinator
Thai RuralNet
5th Floor Expand Bldg,
472 Soi Ratchadaphisek 28
Ratchadaphisek Rd., Samsennok, Huaykwang
Bangkok 10310
Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 938 1800
E-mail: dev@thairuralnet.org

Ms. Audrey Espinosa Codera
Chairman
Philippine Youth Employment Network
L38 Maxima Santos Ave.
Pleasant Village
Manggahan Pasig City 1611
Philippines
Tel: (63 2) 645 8307, (63 917) 803 9759
Fax: (63 2) 645 8307
E-mail: aecodera@gmail.com

Mr. Ali Raza Khan
CEO and Founder
Pakistan National Youth Service/YES
Network Pakistan
84, 85 Old Rifle Range
Chouburji Prk
Lahore
Pakistan
Tel: (92 42) 740 1518
Fax: (92 42) 740 1518
E-mail: connectwithali@yahoo.com

Ms. Irmgard Nübler
EMP/SKILLS
International Labour Organization
Switzerland
Tel: (41 22) 799 8756
E-mail: nuble@ilo.org

Ms. Urmila Sarkar
Child Labour and Education Specialist
International Labour Organization
11th Floor, United Nation Building
P.O. Box 2-349, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200
Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 288 1713

Ms. Anne Richmond
Skill Development Specialist
International Labour Organization
10 Floor, Block A, UN Bldg.
P.O. Box 2-349, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200
Thailand
Tel: (66-2) 288 1780

Fax: (66 2) 288 3062
E-mail: sarkar@ilo.org

Fax: (66 2) 288 3060
E-mail: richmond@ilo.org

Ms. Wipusara Rugworkijkul
SKILLS-AP Programme Officer
International Labour Organization
11 Floor, Block A, UN Bldg.
P.O. Box 2-349, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200
Thailand
Tel: (66-2) 288 2478
Fax: (66-2) 288 1086
E-mail: wipusara@ilo.org

Observers

Mr. Atsushi Nara
Director
Overseas Cooperation Division,
Human Resource Development Bureau
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo 100-8916
Japan
Tel: (813) 3502 6959
Fax: (813) 3502 8932

Mr. Takeshi Tokiwa
Deputy Director
Overseas Cooperation Division
Human Resource Development Bureau
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo 100-8916
Japan
Tel: (813) 3502 6959
Fax: (813) 3502 8932

Mr. Takio Takazawa
Manager, Internatioanl Labour Affairs Group,
Labour Policy Bureau II
Japan Business Federation
(Nippon Keidanren)
Keidanren Kaikan., 3rd Fl.
9-4, Otemachi 1-chome, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8188
Japan
Tel: (81 3) 5204 1920
Fax: (81 3) 5204 1943
E-mail: intl@keidanren.or.jp

Annex 3 Recommendations

Recommendations of the meeting Adopted 16-02-07

Introduction

The purpose of this technical meeting was to examine strategies and tools for improving the skills and employability of young people in Asia and the Pacific. This topic was identified as a priority at the first technical meeting of the ILO Regional Skills Network in November 2005; and in addition follows the ILC Resolution concerning youth employment, adopted in 2005, which calls for regional technical meetings to build knowledge and exchange experiences. Recognizing that there is a large body of research and many conferences on the subject, this technical meeting focused on the practical experience of constituents rather than new research from a technical expert. Discussions were organized around four themes:

- a) Lost Opportunities: 15 to 19 year olds.
- b) Learning while Earning: Young people at work.
- c) What do young people need to know?: Priority skills.
- d) Making good choices: Career guidance and counseling.

Discussion

Discussion of each theme covered three questions:

- The main issues and problems
- Good ideas and models for addressing the problems
- Areas for collaboration

A number of issues recurred throughout the discussions: the need to include young people at all stages of planning and program development and in delivery, the importance of a strong and meaningful educational system, the impact that families and communities have, and the need for positive visions and aspirations. Many speakers noted the value of in-country collaboration between the various stakeholders: the ILO tripartite partners, other government Ministries and agencies, youth organizations, and other social actors. There are significant differences in resources and capacity between the most and least developed countries, but participants found value in sharing ideas and experiences, as many approaches to solving specific challenges are relevant in a range of countries, though they would have to be adapted to meet local needs.

Recommended areas for action

This technical meeting was intended to identify practical ideas that could be used by constituents in Asia Pacific to improve skills and employability for young people. The recommendations are organized by the four themes and identify areas where the participants found the experiences and approaches of other countries useful and relevant. This could indicate areas for potential bilateral assistance. For the Regional Skills Network, it suggests areas where the collection and sharing of information would be most valuable.

Lost Opportunities: 15 to 19 year olds

Keeping young people in school, if possible through to secondary graduation, will dramatically improve their employability and the likelihood that they will continue to develop skills for productive employment. Actions to take include:

- Working to realize the commitments under the ILO's Child Labour conventions, to provide education up to the minimum working age (C138), and up to 18 years (C182), recognizing that for many countries this is a long term goal.
- Strategies to identify and support children and young people at risk of dropping out or failing in their education.
- Compulsory free, basic education to increase participation/retention, including the enforcement of local regulations to ensure young people are kept in schools.
- Mobilizing parents, communities, social partners and youth organizations to build pro-education social norms.
- Make 'school' an inclusive, systemic process that considers a range of different types of learning situations, so that different needs can be met and opportunities provided.
- Strategies and plans to deal with the issues of scarcity of resources for education and training for young people must be addressed through national planning.

Lack of coherence and cooperation within a country can be a significant barrier to a sustainable education system. Actions to take include:

- Better inter-ministerial cooperation, potentially through work on a common strategy or goal.
- Finding positive, appropriate ways for social partners to advise on and participate in education policy and other key issues.
- International networking.

Learning while Earning

Approaches to combining institution- and workplace-based learning, such as apprenticeship, are a good way to ensure that training is relevant and that young people have assistance in transitioning into employment. Ideally these become win-win systems. Complete national models cannot be transferred to other countries, but the ways that different systems have addressed common problems are of great value to others who are creating or improving their own models. Areas for sharing information include:

- Formal and informal systems.
- Involving small and rural employers and trainees
- How employer concerns about responsibility and liability are addressed.
- Quality assurance systems for the training provided
- Approaches to financing.
- Certification processes.
- Improve knowledge and access to educational opportunities.

Recognition for skills learned at the workplace is a critical feature. Systems to recognize skills gained, and to provide access to nationally-recognized qualifications within a common system will enhance the employability of young people. Areas for action include:

- Development of national qualification frameworks and skill competencies.
- Establishing processes to test and certify skills gained at the workplace, in formal and informal settings. (This is also an action point under Lost Opportunities and Priority Skills)

Making Good Choices

Good quality career guidance and counseling should be widely available to young people and to the people that influence them. Information on a wide range of jobs and work, including self employment, should be designed to ensure young people's choices are not limited by stereotypical beliefs or limited exposure to opportunities, nor unrealistic in terms of the types and conditions of work available. Areas for action include:

- Cross country collaboration to share information on occupations.
- Making available the career and mentoring guides of ILO and other countries for guidance.
- Educational institutions including guidance and work information as part of their curriculums.
- Businesses actively partnering with education and training providers to ensure that students are aware of different types of work and the skills required in them.
- Include entrepreneurship for young people as part of the school curriculum.

Real exposure to different types of work and occupations is a powerful tool for helping young people make good choices. Areas for action include:

- Including work exposure, internships and job fairs as part of the regular school curriculum, starting at early years.
- Work with the social partners to make a range of options available.

Labour market information, and particularly information about longer term trends for skill needs and occupational demand, helps young people and their educational and training institutions make better decisions about the studies to pursue. More sophisticated systems support job matching for job seekers. Areas for action include:

- Where strong LMI systems exist, ensuring that information is available to and can be effectively used by schools and other counseling and guidance locations.
- A number of useful models for job matching system exist in the region and may be adapted to other countries (eg, Sri Lanka, Japan)
- Where labour market information systems are weak or absent, alternate ways to collect and analyze information are available and can be used (School to work surveys, Labour market assessments for training institutions, etc.)

Priority skills

Young people need to have foundation skills in place as the basis for employment and for further skill development. Ideally, these should be acquired through the education and training system. Actions to take, in addition to those noted under the section on "Lost opportunities" include:

- Establishing, in consultation with employers and other stakeholders as well as educators, national standards for minimum 'foundation' or 'work skills' to be achieved by students at different stages of schooling.
- Developing strong public-private partnerships to achieve the translation of these concepts into reality.

A country's economic and social development plans will depend on the presence of a range of skills to be successfully achieved. In the same way, individual business's planning will consider skills as a necessary input. These needs should be reflected in government and other policies that encourage development of specific skills. Areas for action include:

- Assessing and publicizing the skills that will be most needed to support future development.
- Establishing policies that favour pursuing some types of training over others (for example, higher levels of support for those pursuing specific courses of study or training)
- Some countries have needs for skills specific to a rural economy.

Annex 4 Comments from Youth Participants

The three resource persons representing youth organizations were invited to prepare a joint statement reflecting their perspective on the meeting. This is what they provided:

Key learnings /values

- The recognition of perspectives of youth leaders by the ILO and UNESCO which represent the international development community
- The ability to build social capital by the youth leaders to further strengthen their personal networks
- Getting insightful knowledge and information on the priorities and mindset of workers, employers and governments
- Acquire variety of knowledge models from selected countries in the region for local adaptation and application
- The opportunity for youth leaders to share their models and experiences with interested stakeholders

Issues to consider

- Social Enterprise/ Blended value elements to be included within employment educational curriculum and policies
- Lack of integration of the youth perspectives that were presented into the meeting discussion session
- There exists a gap in understanding social enterprise and other youth employment needs by meeting participants and thus these issues have to be further developed and clarified.
- Focus was on designing service for youth instead of viewing youth themselves as an important asset in delivering services to other underprivileged youth
- There was considerable focus easy-to-access youth as opposed to underprivileged and inaccessible youth, particularly in rural areas and informal groups
- Participants should be sensitized on the general issues surrounding youth & changes that have taken place before delving into the specifics of addressing youth employment

Submitted by:

Ali Reza Khan, Audrey Codera, Dev Appanah
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