

**ILO/Regional Skills Programme/Japan
Regional Workshop and Study Programme
on “Improving Skills and Employability for Youth Employment”**

Japan Vocational Ability Development Associate (JAVADA)

Tokyo, Japan: 05-08 March 2013

Background Note

Background & Justification

The world experienced a significant increase in youth-led social and political protests movements across the globe in 2011. Most of the grievances of these young people were centered on jobs, freedom and social justice. Youth unemployment reached high proportions in a number of countries severely affected by the global financial crises and about four out of every ten young people are faced with difficulties of finding decent work.

In Asia and the Pacific, youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. The Asia Pacific region is home to 55% of the total world population of youth aged 15-24 years old and accounts for 45% of the world’s unemployed youth. Young people are in a vulnerable situation because they are faced with challenges such as transition to adulthood and to the world of work, many of them lack skills and work experience, job-search skills and financial resources to find decent jobs. They are also disadvantaged because of factors like gender, racial, ethnic or migrant background and geographical isolation. Further, the situations faced by young women and men are often different, which implies that gender equality concerns need to be addressed when tackling youth unemployment.

Unemployment figures, albeit alarming, provide only a partial description of the region’s youth employment problems. Among the unemployed, youth are often those who are better off and higher educated – and hence struggle to find a job that suits their qualifications – or lose their jobs because of “last hired, first fired” policies. Worse off are the poorer youth who cannot afford unemployment, who are more likely to be underemployed in the informal economy – occupations that are also likely to be socially unprotected or hazardous. A number of countries will experience significant increases in their youth populations in the coming years. These countries will need to achieve steady economic growth and develop appropriate employment and social policies to help young people overcome their specific problems and vulnerabilities. Making employment central to economic and social policies is a cornerstone of addressing the youth employment challenge.

In terms of labour force participation rates, young men have higher rates at 56.3 per cent compared to women at 40.7 per cent in 2011. A number of countries will experience significant increases in their youth populations in the coming years. These countries will need to achieve steady economic growth and develop appropriate employment and social policies to help young people overcome their specific problems and vulnerabilities. Making employment central to economic and social policies is a cornerstone of addressing the youth employment challenge.

Based on the above, the donor, in consultation with the ILO Regional Skills Programme and in consultation with the concerned offices in the ILO, noted the urgent need to, and within the framework of decent work, support youth employment through improving the skills and employability of youth for decent employment. One of the ways in which the ILO aims to improve the skills and employability levels in the region is through assisting its constituents in developing and expanding workplace learning systems which prepare young women and men for decent and productive work. However, workplace learning schemes vary from country to country as these schemes can be formal or informal, paid or unpaid, enterprise-based, school-based and/or workshop based and can last from weeks to years.

For this year's programme, the following countries will be invited to participate in the regional workshop and share information, their experiences and future work. These countries are:

- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Myanmar
- Pakistan
- the Philippines
- Sri Lanka

Approach

The ILO has a long experience in facing concerns on youth employment. One of the main focus was setting standards for the protection of the welfare of young workers and which later on expanded to cover policies, strategies and programmes for youth employment. ILO's International Conventions and Recommendations on employment policy, human resource development and labour market policies reflected youth concerns. Two International Labour Conferences (ILC), in 2005 and at the present one, 2012 reflected the latest issues affecting youth employment and the proposed collective actions of ILO's constituents. For the June 2012 International Labour Conference, a Report has been prepared: *Report V: The youth employment crisis: time for action--for a renewed sense of urgency for action* due to the countries which were severely affected by the global financial and economic crisis.

In the area of promoting the skills and employability of young women and men, **skills development** has become a primary approach to create a smooth transition from school to work for the youth. To ensure that young women and men are integrated in the labour market, the ILO has implemented a comprehensive set of interventions which constitutes relevant and quality skills training, labour market information, career guidance and employment services, recognition of prior learning, incorporating entrepreneurship with training and effective skills forecasting. Coupled with these are direct action programmes toward improving basic education and core work skills which are particularly important to enable youth to engage in lifelong learning as well as transition to the labour market.

There are many instances where young people leave school without the knowledge or foundation required to find and retain a good job. Employers are not merely looking for graduates with good technical knowledge but also with non-technical capabilities, also known as core skills or competencies, key or employability skills. Core skills are those attributes of workers other than technical competence that make them an asset to the employer. According to authors, Sherer and Eadie (1987), “*Employability Skills are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer.*” These skills are also meant to describe the preparation or foundation skills upon which a person must build job-specific skills (i.e. those being unique to specific jobs) like communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving and management of organizational processes.

Workplace learning schemes, apprenticeships and internships provide opportunities for youths to ease the transition from full-time education to work. It benefits enterprises and their employees to acquire a wide range of skills, aptitudes and abilities which will ultimately benefit the wide economy.

ILO has identified the key features of apprenticeship as: “based in the work place supervised by an employer; intended for young people; fundamental aim is learning a trade/acquiring a skill; training is ‘systematic’ i.e. follows a predefined plan; governed by a contract between apprentice and employer; training to established standards for a recognized occupation; and long-term training.”¹

In many countries formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an option for a small minority of young people. Workplace learning for the youth, internships, and workplace learning schemes in the informal economy offer many more young people an opportunity to learn a trade and enter the world of work. While building on existing local institutions catered to workplace learning, ILO’s research and policy guidance seeks to improve the quality of workplace learning training, the recognition of acquired skills, working conditions and opportunities for young women and men.

¹ ILO, Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues, November 2012

The Regional Skills Programme will continue to support cross-country and inter-institutional learning and facilitate partnership between industries and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, improve the quality of skills development for youth, improve core and soft skills. From one of the online discussion forums, there was a broad consensus that one of the key characteristics of a successful workplace learning system was that ‘youths’ should be enrolled in the off-the-job training in the TVET system as well as on the job training at the workplace. It was further suggested that perhaps workplace based learning must provide access to working in the full range of functions appropriate to the occupation (which in the case of national qualification meant the full complement of units of competency required for the national qualification). A successful workplace learning system may need a qualification pathway that was relevant to the industry that enables progression in line with the respective individual’s ability or skills.

In light of the above, the 2012 Programme is designed to respond to the need of member States in improving skills and employability for youth. There is a need to strengthen the link between education and training systems and the world of work as a priority under youth employment.

Objectives

This regional workshop will help the participants explore practical work place learning schemes, internships, apprenticeships and on-the-job schemes that can assist young people in transitioning from school to employment.

This workshop is designed to provide opportunities for participating countries to:

- share global trends and good practices in assisting young people obtain decent employment
- identify the role of skills in promoting youth employment and share information, knowledge, tools and experiences in meeting the skills and employability needs for youth;
- share country experiences on workplace learning schemes, apprenticeship schemes and internships;
- identify the key elements to be included in a generic skills portfolio for youth;
- identify the role of employers’ and workers’ organizations in guiding youth and improving their skills and employability in general, and in developing and promoting workplace learning schemes, in particular

By the end of the Workshop, the participants are expected to have deepened knowledge of:

- improving the links between education, training and the world of work for the youth;
- global trends and good practices in assisting youth obtain decent employment
- country experiences on workplace learning schemes, apprenticeships schemes and internships;
- improving and monitoring workplace learning schemes, apprenticeships, internships and other related schemes;
- priority components of a generic/core skills programme for the youth
- role of employers and workers organizations in promoting workplace learning places; and
- suggestions to ways to strengthen informal/traditional workplace learning to be more structure and regulated

Workshop Structure & Methodology

The workshop will consist of a number of technical sessions, panel discussions, including country presentations, and technical working group sessions.

The study programme will include field visits to learn more about ‘skills and employability of youth for youth employment’ in Japan.

Participation

Tripartite delegations from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka will be invited. Participants should be senior level staff of the Ministry/agencies/organizations, who are involved in promoting and implementing youth employment in the above sub-themes with a view to improving the skills and employability for youth employment. Participation of women in the meeting is strongly encouraged.

Country papers and presentations

All participants are requested to jointly prepare brief paper and presentation for the workshop. **Each government representative, in collaboration with the representative from workers and employers organizations from their country, is requested to prepare a country paper. Country representatives will be requested to make presentations during the workshop and will be notified of their specific assigned subject areas.**

The length of the paper should be no more than 12-15 pages, A4 and single-spaced. Please refer to the guiding questions below in preparing the paper and presentation.

- I. General situation, national approaches, policies and institutional arrangements on youth employment and improving skills and employability of young workers
- II. Policies and programmes in the country on implementing workplace learning schemes, internships and apprenticeships for the youth
- III. Challenges in implementing workplace learning schemes in the country
- IV. Good practices and examples/case studies of workplace learning schemes for youth employability; government regulated formal workplace learning system used to support skills development in the informal economy; characteristics of successful workplace learning system.
- V. Mechanisms for engaging social partners
- VI. Core skills and components
- VII. Recommendations and way forward

All country papers should be submitted in Microsoft Word 97-2003 format and lower versions only. Deadline of submission of country papers will be on **26 February, 2013**. **Kindly send the country paper to Ms Alin Sirisaksopit by email at alin@ilo.org.**