



FACTS ON *Youth employment*

A job, a future

“Creating jobs for youth is not enough. Across the planet, youth are not only finding it difficult if not impossible to find jobs, but are finding it even more difficult to find decent jobs. What young people need today is not only a job, but a job that enables them to make contributions as workers, citizens and agents of change. This is the challenge we face.”

Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General

Today's young people are the most educated generation ever. They have clear ideas about fulfilling their aspirations at work and in society and want opportunities for personal autonomy and active citizenship. They want *the chance of a decent job*. Yet young people aged 15 to 24 today face a growing deficit of full and productive work and high levels of economic uncertainty.

The youth employment challenge is huge. More than 85 million youth were unemployed by the end of 2005. But unemployment is only the tip of the iceberg: another 300 million were “working poor” living on less than US\$2 a day; and approximately 20 million youth had given up on the job search altogether. Among young people who do manage to find a job, working conditions tend to be below what is considered as a “decent and productive” standard. Young workers are more likely to be working long hours, on short-term and/or informal contracts with low pay, little or no social protection and no voice at work. In all, about one third of the 1.1 billion youth in the world suffer from a deficit of decent work opportunities.

The inability to find employment creates a sense of vulnerability, uselessness and idleness among young people. The youth employment gap poses significant challenges, therefore, to youth themselves, but also significant economic costs in terms of lost savings and human capital, as well as social costs in terms of remedial action to counter crime and drug use.

Targeted and integrated national youth employment policies and programmes, fostered by international aid, are required to meet this global challenge. At the international level, youth employment has become a major focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This was reaffirmed by the High-level segment of the 2006 UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which has committed to “develop[ing] and implement[ing] strategies that give youth everywhere a real and equal opportunity to find full and productive employment and decent work”.

For more information on youth employment trends, please see: <http://www.ilo.org/trends>, or more information on ILO's Youth Employment Programme, see: <http://www.ilo.org/youth>

Key Statistics

- ◆ There are more than 1 billion young people aged 15-24 in the world today, and 89 per cent of them live in developing countries.
- ◆ The youth labour force participation rate declined from 58.9 to 54.7 per cent between 1995 and 2005, mainly as a result of young people staying longer in education. But this has not sufficed to improve their employment prospects.
- ◆ In 2005, of the 657 million in the youth labour force, 85 million were unemployed (13.5 per cent).
- ◆ Between 1995 and 2005, the youth population grew by 13.2 per cent, youth unemployment by 14.8 per cent and youth employment by only 3.8 per cent.
- ◆ Approximately 300 million youth – half of all young women and men who work – were unable to lift themselves and their families above the equivalent of US\$2 per day.
- ◆ Unemployed youth make up 44 per cent of the world's total unemployed while the youth share of the total working-age population is 25 per cent.
- ◆ Compared to adults, youth are more than three times as likely to be unemployed.

The Decent Work Agenda

Decent Work is a development strategy that acknowledges the central role of work in people's lives: work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom to express concerns, opportunity to organize and participate in decision-making, and equal opportunity and treatment for all women and men. Decent Work belongs at the heart of global, national and local strategies for economic and social progress. It is central to efforts to reduce poverty, and is a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

Putting the Decent Work Agenda into practice is achieved through the implementation of its four strategic objectives:

Creating Jobs – an economy that generates opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, job creation and sustainable livelihoods;

Guaranteeing rights at work – obtain recognition and respect for the rights of workers. All workers, and in particular disadvantaged or poor workers need representation, participation, and good laws that are enforced and work for, not against, their interest;

Providing basic social protection – marginalization and poverty mean that those most in need do not have minimum protection against low or declining standards of living; and

Promoting dialogue and conflict resolution – people in poverty understand the need to negotiate and know dialogue is the way to solve problems peacefully. Social dialogue, involving strong and independent worker's and employers' organizations, is central to increasing productivity and avoiding disputes at work, and to building cohesive societies.

Role of the ILO

The ILO, with its tripartite constituency and global alliances, can be a catalyst for action on youth employment. At the national level, governments, along with employer and worker organizations, are major players in the development of youth employment policies and programmes. At the international level, the ILO's leading role in the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) – a global partnership of the World Bank, the United Nations and the ILO – provides a major opportunity to build international consensus and influence the international agenda with a comprehensive strategy for the employment and social inclusion of young people.

The ILO's programme on youth employment operates through a global network of technical specialists at its headquarters in Geneva and in more than 60 offices around the world. It provides assistance to countries in developing coherent and coordinated interventions on youth employment. Work in this area includes:

- ◆ Data collection on the nature and dimensions of youth employment, unemployment and underemployment;
- ◆ Analysis of the effectiveness of country policies and programmes on youth employment, technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of plans of action on youth employment and development of tools and training material;
- ◆ Policy advice to strengthen in-country labour market policies and programmes for youth employment and capacity building for governments, employer and worker organizations;
- ◆ Advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for youth with a focus on employability, employment and workers' rights;
- ◆ Establishment of strategic partnerships on youth employment between private and public sectors at the international, sub-regional and national levels;
- ◆ Promotion of cross-country and global peer networks to achieve better performance and share good-practice experiences among ILO constituents and other stakeholders;
- ◆ Collaboration with multilateral and other international institutions to ensure policy coherence across national initiatives affecting youth employment.

