



## FACTS ON *Youth Employment*

500 million young people will enter the workforce within the next decade. While rapid globalisation and technological change offer new opportunities for productive work and incomes for the lucky few, for many working age young people, these trends only increase the vulnerability inherent in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Across the planet, millions of young people are failing to gain an entry into the workforce, and discrimination against young women is especially pervasive. The vast majority of jobs available to youth are low paid, insecure, and with few benefits or prospects for advancement.

A generation without the hope of stable employment is a burden for all of society. Poor employment in the early stages of a young person's career can harm job prospects for life. Underemployed or unemployed youth will have less to spend as consumers or to save and invest, which will hurt employers and economies. The economic investment of governments in education and training will be wasted if young people do not move into productive jobs that enable them to pay taxes and support public services. Young people without means are sometimes a source of rising crime rates and drug abuse.

***The ILO is the lead organization in the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN), created in the framework of the Millennium Declaration where Heads of State and Government resolved to "develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work."***

***The Network is a partnership between the UN, the World Bank and the ILO to bring together leaders in industry, youth and civil society representatives, and policymakers to explore imaginative approaches to the challenge of youth unemployment. The YEN includes a high-level panel of twelve experts and practitioners on youth employment which produced a set of***

*(continued overleaf)*

### ***Key Statistics***

- One in five people in the world are between 15 and 24 years old. Some 85% of them live in developing countries.
- Sixty-six million young people are unemployed. A much higher number are underemployed.
- Over the next decade, as many as 500 million young people are expected to enter the world's workforce.
- The unemployment rate for young people is two to three times higher than for adults.
- In South Africa, youth unemployment rose from 45% to 56% between 1995 and 2000.
- In over a quarter of industrialized countries, young women's unemployment rate is 20% higher than that for young men.
- The informal sector accounts for up to 93% of all jobs available to young people, wages in the informal sector are 44% lower than the formal economy, and protection and benefits are non-existent.
- Social security coverage for Latin American youth dropped from 44% in 1990 to 38% by the end of the decade.

*policy recommendations discussed in the General Assembly. These recommendations focus on four “E’s:” Employability, Equal opportunities, Entrepreneurship, and Employment creation. Senegal, Indonesia, Hungary, Sri Lanka, and Namibia have volunteered to be “champion” countries, to showcase successful youth employment practices that others can learn from. The Network is now working to be a catalyst for action at the country level, an example of which is a joint initiative being developed with Youth Business International in the Philippines.*

## **Youth Employment Policy: One Country’s Experience**

Australia, one of the member states of the ILO to realize early on the importance of active policies on youth employment, developed a National Youth Policy in 1997. Through government funding, states and territories are growing their vocational education and training programmes. The Aboriginal School Based Traineeship Programme is coordinated through the Western Australian Department of Training. Trainees who have completed compulsory schooling are enrolled in a certificate of education programme while working 15 hours per week. A wide range of traineeship areas is available. With an 85% retention rate, the programme is very popular with Aboriginal communities and schools.

In another part of the country, the Youth Desk of the Department of Industries and Business in the Northern Territory provides young people with access to business information and services. Those who are interested in self-employment can take planning seminars and workshops. They can access cash to start up a business either through available grants or competitions for youth business awards.

## **Role of the ILO**

The ILO approach rests on the belief that a sustainable society must create opportunities for young people to train for, find, and hold down decent jobs. As 500 million youth prepare to enter the workforce in this decade, the ILO is exploring ways to increase youth employability, which will help end the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion. Among its member states, employers’ and workers’ organizations, the ILO advocates for increased awareness of youth employment issues and helps fashion youth employment policies. It also documents innovative ways to keep young people from dropping out of higher education, so they can enter the world of work with better training and higher-paid skills.

- The ILO assists governments in designing youth career counselling programmes, vocational education, and workshops.
- Private sector employers use ILO guidelines to recruit and train young people.
- The ILO’s research and statistics are critical to policy-makers and enterprises – its *Key Indicators of the Labour Market* report includes detailed statistics on various aspects of youth unemployment.
- The ILO’s *Know About Business* package is an extensive entrepreneurship awareness package for young trainees at vocational and technical training institutions. It encourages young people to choose self-employment as a career. By using the package, aspiring entrepreneurs can practice meeting the challenges of starting and running a small business. Youth in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have used the package to start their own ventures.

International Labour Organization  
4, route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland  
Tel. 41 22 799 7912  
Fax 41 22 799 8577  
<http://www.ilo.org/communication>