

Youth Employment

The Challenge

The current global youth employment crisis is unprecedented, as globally young people are on average three times more likely than adults to be out of a job, and four out of every ten people unemployed worldwide are young people. According to ILO estimates, the world faces a monumental challenge of creating 600 million jobs over the next decade, in order to absorb the current 200 million unemployed plus the 40 million new job market entrants each year. More youth are poor or underemployed than ever before: some 309 million young people work but live in households that earn less than the equivalent of US\$2 per day. Millions of young people are trapped in temporary and involuntary part-time or casual work that offers few benefits and limited prospects for advancement at work and in life. Young women often face additional barriers.

Young people today build the foundations for the economies and societies of tomorrow. They bring energy, talent and creativity to economies and make important contributions as productive workers, entrepreneurs, consumers, agents of change and as members of civil society. Yet the lack of sufficient or sustainable decent jobs makes young people extremely vulnerable. The youth employment crisis is not only an integral element of the broader general employment situation; it has specific dimensions.

In industrialized countries, the youth employment challenge revolves mainly around finding decent jobs for millions of youth who are entering the labour market each year. In developing and transition countries, the challenge is more fundamental – not only creating jobs, but improving the quality of work for young people who are often underemployed and working in the informal economy.

Decent and productive employment for youth is a major component of the Millennium Declaration. Achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and youth, is a target of the Millennium Development Goals 1 which aims to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The ILO Response

In June 2005 the International Labour Conference agreed that tackling youth employment requires an integrated approach combining supportive macro-economic policies and targeted measures addressing labour demand and supply as well as the quantity and quality of employment. The Conference adopted a Resolution concerning youth employment setting out ILO policy and an overarching framework for the ILO's work in this area. The Resolution also contains a list of the main international labour standards relating to young people. The International Labour Conference of 2012 will hold a general discussion on the youth employment crisis.

The youth employment challenge is high on the international policy agenda. Youth employment has featured prominently in the discussion and deliberations of the G20 Leaders. At the 2011 Cannes Summit, G20 leaders established an Employment Task Force, with its immediate priority for 2012 being youth employment. This Task Force has been convened under the Mexican Presidency of the G20 with the ILO supporting its work together with other partners. The review of youth employment policies and programmes of the G20 countries and the proposal for a youth employment strategy are among the priorities discussed by the Task Force meeting in Mexico City (December 2011).



With its tripartite constituency and global alliances, the ILO can be a catalyst for action on youth employment. At the national level, governments, along with employers' and workers' 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 through a comprehensive strategy for employment and social inclusion of young people.

The ILO Programme on Youth Employment operates through a global network of specialists working in the technical departments across the ILO at its head-quarters 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 under employment;
- analysis of the effectiveness of country policies and programmes on youth employment;
- policy advice to strengthen in-country labour market policies and programmes for youth employment and capacity building for governments and employers' and workers' organizations;
- technical assistance in formulating and implementing national youth employment programmes that focus on employment-intensive investment, skills development, youth entrepreneurship, access to finance and other targeted active labour market measures;
- advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for youth with a focus on employability, employment and workers' rights;
- advisory services through the YEN partnership, including evaluation clinics and support to YEN lead countries;
- strategic partnerships on youth employment through the promotion of cross-country and global peer networks, inter-agency cooperation across United Nations and other international agencies, and collaboration between the private and public sectors at the international, regional and national levels.

Key Tools and Resources

In addition to the above-mentioned ILC Resolution:

International Labour Office (ILO). 2008a. *Guide for the preparation of national action plans on youth employment* (Geneva, ILO).

—. 2008b. *Youth employment: Breaking gender barriers for young women and men*. Brochure (Geneva, ILO).

—. 2010. *ILO school-to-work transition survey: A methodological guide* (Geneva, ILO).

Resource guide on youth employment. Online information resource, regular updates.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/youth.htm>

Youth employment knowledge sharing platform. Online resource, regular updates.
<https://papyrus.ilo.org/YE>

ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory. Online information resource, regular updates. Section on youth employment.
<http://www.ilo.org/pls/apex/f?p=109:1:0>



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