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**Report on the training and up-skilling
of vulnerable groups in TPSEP
countries: Brunei Darussalam, Chile,
New Zealand and Singapore**

A tripartite initiative adopted under the Memorandum of Understanding on
Labour Cooperation of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership
(TPSEP) Agreement

Skills and
Employability
Department

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Preface

The primary goal of the ILO is to contribute, with its member States, to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, a goal embedded in the ILO Declaration 2008 on *Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*¹, and which has now been widely adopted by the international community.

In order to support member States and the social partners to reach the goal, the ILO pursues a Decent Work Agenda which comprises four interrelated areas: Respect for fundamental worker's rights and international labour standards, employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue. Explanations of this integrated approach and related challenges are contained in a number of key documents: in those explaining and elaborating the concept of decent work², in the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) and in the Global Employment Agenda.

The Global Employment Agenda was developed by the ILO through tripartite consensus of its Governing Body's Employment and Social Policy Committee. Since its adoption in 2003 it has been further articulated and made more operational and today it constitutes the basic framework through which the ILO pursues the objective of placing employment at the centre of economic and social policies.³

The Employment Sector is fully engaged in the implementation of the Global Employment Agenda, and is doing so through a large range of technical support and capacity building activities, advisory services and policy research. As part of its research and publications programme, the Employment Sector promotes knowledge-generation around key policy issues and topics conforming to the core elements of the Global Employment Agenda and the Decent Work Agenda. The Sector's publications consist of books, monographs, working papers, employment reports and policy briefs.⁴

While the main findings of the research initiatives are disseminated through the Employment Working Papers, the *Employment Report* series is designed to consolidate the major evaluations of employment programmes, conclusions and resolutions of workshops and seminars, and other information details that are particularly, though not exclusively useful to the work of the ILO and its constituent partners.

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Executive Director
Employment Sector

¹ See http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/download/dg_announce_en.pdf.

² See the successive Reports of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference: *Decent work* (1999); *Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge* (2001); *Working out of poverty* (2003).

³ See <http://www.ilo.org/gea>. And in particular: *Implementing the Global Employment Agenda: Employment strategies in support of decent work*. "Vision" document, ILO, 2006.

⁴ See <http://www.ilo.org/employment>.

Foreword

In 2005, the Governments of Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Labour Cooperation as part of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPSEP) Agreement. The MOU provides a promotional framework and a forum for the four governments to come together and engage in meaningful consultations, dialogue and sharing of experiences on labour issues of mutual interest. The MOU also provides a useful platform for the tripartite social partners of the four countries to discuss and formulate programmes and activities with the aim of enhancing understanding and cooperation among social partners.

In line with the objectives of the MOU, Senior Labour Officials Meetings (SLOM) of the four governments are organized annually at the sidelines of the International Labour Conference in June. Representatives of the social partners of each country are also invited to participate in tripartite meetings/workshops to discuss and share experiences on labour and employment issues of common concern.

This report represents a significant milestone and progress achieved in the implementation of the TPSEP MOU on Labour Cooperation. It was one of the key initiatives and outcomes of the 2007 SLOM meeting and tripartite workshop where it was agreed that a joint research project on training and up-skilling of vulnerable workers in the four countries would be commissioned. The ILO was approached to undertake this study based on its experience in the area of skills development. This study was conducted with contributions from the four governments and their social partners who provided relevant information on their experiences in implementing training policies and programmes targeting groups of workers considered vulnerable in their respective countries.

This report produced by the ILO for the TPSEP Tripartite Workshop in June 2008 has enabled each member of the TPSEP to have a better understanding of the issues and challenges they each face in the areas of training and up-skilling of vulnerable groups. It has also greatly facilitated sharing on the different approaches adopted by each country and meaningful tripartite dialogue amongst the four countries' social partners during the workshop discussion. Both the ILO and members of the TPSEP countries have been delighted to have contributed to this successful initiative aiming to benefit and enhance the well-being of workers. It has been a good model of cross-region knowledge sharing on a critical topic of common interest.

We take this opportunity to register our appreciation to Mr. Trevor Riordan of the ILO Skills and Employability Department and Mr. Torkel Alfthan, former ILO Official, for their support and assistance in putting together this excellent report. We would also like to thank the TPSEP countries, and their social partners, for their collaboration in providing their national data and perspectives to ensure this report is robust and reflective of their experiences and aspirations.

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Deputy Secretary
Singapore Ministry of Manpower &
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Acronyms

CDCs	Community Development Councils
CET	Continuous Education and Training
DCN	District CareerLink Network
DPB	Domestic purposes benefit
ESS	Employability Skills System
JRP	Job Re-creation Programme
JRT	Job Readiness Training
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NTUC	National Trade Union Congress
PnT	Place-and-Train
TIA	Training incentive allowance
TOP	Training Opportunities Programme
TPSEP	Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership
SDL	Skills development levy
SLOM	Senior Labour Officials Meetings
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SNEF	Singapore National Employers Federation
SRP	Skills redevelopment programme
WDA	Workforce Development Agency
WSQ	Workforce Skills Qualifications

Skills training and up-grading programmes for vulnerable groups in P4 countries (Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore)

1. Introduction

This paper examines skills training and up-grading programmes for vulnerable population groups in P4 countries: Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore. It is based on responses received to a questionnaire (Annex) that the ILO sent out to the countries concerned. Each country was asked to provide succinct information on:

- a) The general socio-economic situation prevailing in the country.
- b) Definitions and descriptions of labour market and population groups the country considers vulnerable with respect to employment, incomes and livelihoods.
- c) Descriptions and analysis of skills training and up-grading policies, programmes and initiatives which governments, the private sector and the social partners have implemented to overcome these vulnerabilities.
- d) Assessments and evaluations of the outcomes, in particular in terms of employment, of these programmes and descriptions of the indicators used to measure outcomes.
- e) The lessons that have been learned from the implementation of these policies, programmes and assessments, and their strengths and weaknesses.

The structure of the paper follows largely the above list.

Defining vulnerable groups

The P4 countries define their “vulnerable groups” somewhat differently. Rather than labelling particular groups as being *explicitly* vulnerable, Singapore centers its response around *low-skilled workers* (i.e. having O-levels or lesser qualifications), *low-wage workers* (i.e. earning less than S\$1200 (US\$877) per month), *older workers* (mostly aged 40 and above) and also *unemployed workers*. New Zealand, on the other hand, identifies the following major vulnerable groups: *young people* (aged 16-24), *older workers* (aged 50-64), *women*, particular ethnic groups, *Māori and Pacific peoples*, in particular, and *people with disabilities*. These groups “continue to experience labour market disadvantage and have concentrations of vulnerable workers”. Chile identifies two vulnerable groups: *young people* and *women* (with special focus on poorer women with low education). Brunei categorizes as vulnerable: *unskilled young persons* and *school leavers*, *older workers or pensioners* (>65 years old), *workers in the informal sector*, and *low-wage workers in small and medium-sized enterprises* (SMEs).

2. Recent socio-economic developments in P4 countries: How have vulnerable groups fared?

Favourable economic and labour market developments in P4 countries...

In recent years, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore have shared many positive socio-economic developments. The countries have had rapid economic growth. In 2007 GDP growth in Chile was 5.1 per cent; in 2008 the economy is expected to grow 4-5 per cent. In 1999-2007, the New Zealand' economy grew by an annual average of 3.4 per cent.⁵ In 2004-2007, the Singapore economy expanded by an annual average of 8.1 per cent. By contrast, Brunei, largely dependent on the crude oil and natural gas sector, has had relatively modest GDP growth overall: 2.8 per cent in 2000, 0.4 per cent in 2005 and 5.1 per cent in 2006. With a per capita gross national income of close to US\$50,000 in 2006, Brunei is a wealthy country.

Employment growth has been favourable in all the countries: In New Zealand employment grew on average 2.4 per cent in 1999-2007, in Singapore 5.9 per cent on average in 2004 - 2007. Aggregate unemployment has also fallen and is now (2007) 7.9 per cent in Chile (the lowest in 9 years), 3.4 per cent in New Zealand (during the past 4 years unemployment has been less than 4 per cent) and 2.1 per cent in Singapore (down from 3.4 per cent in 2004). Figures on employment in Brunei are scarce. In 2006, Brunei's population was 383,000 and the workforce comprised some 45,000 workers in the government sector, and 107,000 workers in the private sector (excluding domestic servants and members of the security Forces). The unemployment rate is about 4 per cent. Table 1 summarizes some data on economic and employment growth and on unemployment in the P4 countries.

Table 1. Economic and employment growth and unemployment in P4 countries: some figures

Country	GDP growth	Employment growth	Unemployment
Brunei Darussalam	2.8% (2001) 0.4% (2005) 5.1% (2006)	n/a	4% (2008)
Chile	5.1% (2007) 4-5% (expected 2008)	2.42 (2007)	7.9%% (2007)
New Zealand	3.4% (1999-2007)	2.4% (1999-2007)	3.4% (2007)
Singapore	8.1% (2004-2007)	5.9% (2004-2009)	2.1% (2007)

⁵ Economic growth of 3.4 per cent can be split into 2.4 per cent employment growth per year and 1 per cent labour productivity growth.

...but large numbers of adult workers remain low skilled or have poor literacy and numeric skills

Favourable employment figures overall conceal higher unemployment prevailing among particular labour force groups, particularly young people (in all countries), and ethnic minority groups (Māori and Pacific people) in New Zealand. Also, both Singapore and New Zealand identify large groups of people who are “low-skilled workers” (i.e. have only secondary and lesser qualifications, as in Singapore) or are “adults who have literacy and numeric skills below those needed to participate fully in the knowledge society”. Low-skilled workers comprised as many as “51.6 per cent of Singapore’s population”. Among adults in New Zealand in 2006, 43 per cent had poor literacy skills and 51 per cent had low numeric skills. As the New Zealand report observes, low literacy and numeric skills “can affect employees’ level of engagement in the workplace and limit their resilience and potential in the labour market. People with low literacy, numeric and language skills generally have fewer employment options and are less able to adapt to changes in their work environment”. Low skilled poorer women in Chile (1st decile) have an unemployment rate of 42.7 per cent. Vulnerable groups in Brunei constitute only a “minimal” share of the labour force. As the present report repeatedly emphasizes, people belonging to the identified vulnerable groups in the countries concerned, tend, overall, to have low skills, including literacy and numeric skills.

Worsening labour shortages

Rapid economic growth has brought about a worsening of labour shortages, both of skilled and unskilled labour. In New Zealand, the Quarterly Survey of Business Opinion reported that in December 2007 46 per cent of firms had difficulty finding skilled staff, compared with 41 per cent in September 2007. 33 per cent of firms also had difficulty finding unskilled staff in the December 2007 quarter, up strongly from a net 19 per cent in the September 2007 quarter. A shortage of labour was the main constraint on expansion for 21 per cent of firms at December 2007. In Brunei, there is a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour. Work permits for foreigners are issued to fill these shortages, but only for short periods; they must be continually renewed. The estimated 100,000 foreign temporary residents of Brunei make up a significant share of the work force.

Diminished gender disparities in employment, skills and incomes

In New Zealand, tight conditions in the labour market have contributed to lesser disparities there between the sexes, and also between women belonging to different ethnic groups. Labour force participation and unemployment rates of women of different ethnic groups are converging. Women are more likely to work part-time than men and as a result work fewer hours on average, a pattern that has been relatively stable over the past five years. Gender disparities in qualifications levels have diminished over the past 20 years. This trend is likely to continue, as young women are more highly skilled than their male counterparts. There is still a significant pay gap between men and women, with estimates of the gap ranging from 12 to 16 percentage points. Data from 2006 show that women were over-represented among the 50 per cent of people who had the lowest earnings, while men made up three-quarters of those 10 per cent who had the highest earnings. However, median earnings for women grew by 24.1 per cent between 2001 and 2006, compared with 19.9 per cent for men.

In Singapore, women’s unemployment stands at 4.3 per cent, slightly higher than the resident overall of 4 per cent. Similarly, in Chile, women’s unemployment is somewhat higher than men’s (9.6 versus 7.1 per cent). But while there has been an

increase in the labour force participation rate from 31.7 per cent in 1990 to 38.5 per cent in 1996, the poorest 10 per cent have only a 24.4 per cent participation rate. Income differentials between the sexes have decreased somewhat since 1990. However, wage income differentials between the sexes still remain considerable. A fifth of women and less than a tenth of men in Chile earn less than the minimum wage (US\$285 per month).

Young people: a particularly vulnerable group in most P4 countries

Notwithstanding favourable labour market conditions in all P4 countries, youth unemployment remains higher than among other labour market groups. In Chile, youth unemployment among 15-24 year olds was 18.9 per cent in 2007 and 24.2 per cent among 15-19 years old. Young people between 15-24 years of age belonging to the poorest 60 per cent of the population numbered some 1.6 million. Out of these, those who were aged less than 18 and not studying numbered some 78,900; young people older than 18 years, not studying numbered some 281,700 were unemployed; in Singapore the figure for the 15-24 year old group was 8.9 per cent. Brunei does not provide youth employment figures, but its report contends that young people “are very choosy” in certain (i.e. private) job sectors like restaurants, construction industry, and cleaning occupations. Although the public sector offers limited job opportunities, government employment is still the first choice for local people. Job security, stable income and attractive fringe benefits are among the reasons why locals prefer to work with the government. Some locals do work with the private sector but just temporarily, using the private sector as the stepping-stone to government employment.

Youth labour force participation rates in P4 countries tend to be lower than among other groups as they are engaged in school and tertiary education. Young people are also likely to change jobs more frequently, and work more in part-time jobs due to study commitments. In Singapore, the youth unemployment rate is higher than among other groups due to seasonality; most tertiary students graduate in the middle of the year. Singapore does not consider youth unemployment a problem. In New Zealand, on the other hand, “young people need support to find and retain work. Many young people do not have the work history or networks that help older people, nor the referees who could vouch for the required attitudinal factors in the work environment”.

Although the number of young people leaving school with no qualifications has decreased, there are still many unqualified and low-skilled young people in New Zealand. They are increasingly at risk of disadvantage in the labour market, as the proportion of very low-skilled entry-level jobs declines over time. New Zealand’s strong labour market performance in recent years has meant that many low-skilled and unqualified young people have still been able to find work, thus gaining work experience and contacts. However, if they are not encouraged to gain qualifications on the job, they remain very vulnerable to an economic downturn. Although New Zealand’s workers participate in job-related training at a high level by OECD standards, and employers understand the benefits of training and are investing in it, employers tend not to invest much in basic skills training.

Older workers: Higher labour force participation

New Zealand and Singapore specifically target older (i.e. ≥55 years old) workers by means of employment and training programmes. The Chilean report does not mention older workers as a particular vulnerable target group of its labour market programmes. Brunei mentions “older workers and pensioners”.

In recent years, older workers in both New Zealand and Singapore have faced a buoyant labour market and their employment rates have increased. In 2007, 41.8 per cent of older workers in New Zealand were employed. In Singapore the employment rate of people aged 50-54 was 74.6 per cent and 56.2 per cent among those aged 55-64. Unemployment has regressed and is very low: only 1.4 per cent of older workers in New Zealand and 3.6 per cent of resident older workers in Singapore were unemployed in 2007.

The reasons for older workers staying longer at work versus retiring are complex and not well understood. In New Zealand from 1991 to 2005, there was no appreciable difference in growth in employment of older workers having post-school qualifications compared to those having no qualifications. True, a buoyant labour market has stimulated older people to stay at work but other factors have also played a role. Also, institutional and regulatory factors, such as raising the age of eligibility to New Zealand Superannuation from 60 to 65 years and the abolition of compulsory retirement, have encouraged many people to work longer. More recently, age-related work-test exemptions have been removed for older unemployment benefit recipients. Different attitudes towards paid work and careers among the baby boom generation (particularly women) are also a factor, with more women continuing to work as they become older.

More research is required in this area to better understand recent trends and whether they can be sustained. As low-skilled work becomes increasingly scarce, further improvement in older workers' participation in the labour market is likely to hinge on them being able to raise their skills. Table 2 below summarizes a few labour market indicators pertaining to women, youth and older workers in Chile, New Zealand and Singapore.

Table 2. Women, youth and older workers in Chile, New Zealand and Singapore: some labour market indicators 2007

Country	Women labour force participation rate	Women Unemployment rate	Youth labour force participation rate (15-25 yrs old)	Youth unemployment rate (15-25 yrs old)	Older workers labour force participation rate ≥55 yrs old	Older workers Unemployment rate ≥55 yrs old
Chile	40.7%	9.6%	n/a	18.9%	n/a	n/a
New Zealand	62.4%	n/a	56.3% ¹	14% ¹	41.8%	1.4%
Singapore	42.7%	4.3%	37.7	8.9%	56.2% ²	3.6% ³

¹ 15-19 years old

² employment rate among 55-64 years old residents

³ 55-64 years old residents

Singapore: Low-skilled and low-wage workers

In Singapore, much attention is being paid to the employment, skills and training challenges that older workers face. These workers are more likely to possess low skills and qualifications that become obsolescent in economic restructuring. Older workers (more than 55 years old) and low-skilled workers (having O-levels or lower qualifications) are also less likely to participate in training than the average worker. In 2007, more than 207,000 workers aged 55-64, and 313,900 low-wage workers (earning S\$1,200 or less per month) possessed only 'O' levels or lower qualifications. 339,000 low-income workers were in full-time employment in 2007, comprising 13 per cent of all employed workers. Many workers belong simultaneously to several of the older worker, low-skilled worker and low-wage worker categories.

Singapore's population is aging rapidly and the pool of mature workers will increase. However, enterprises are less inclined to invest in training these workers due to their perceived low productivity at work and their limited job skills. Enterprises do not expect high returns from investing in long-term skills development programmes. They rather provide narrow training for just-in-time skills needed in specific jobs. Due to perceived lesser productivity of older and low-skilled workers, enterprises are also less inclined to hire them. The growing pool of low-skilled workers, made bigger by an influx of foreign low-skilled labour, puts downward pressure on their wages.

Singapore has put in place what it calls a "robust" Continuous Education and Training (CET) system to enhance the employability and competitiveness of Singapore's workers. A majority of participants are low-skilled and older workers. It also runs programmes that are specifically targeted at these groups of workers (see 3.2).

Ethnic minorities

Among the P4 countries only New Zealand identifies specifically ethnic minorities to be vulnerable in the labour market. In its answer to the questionnaire, NZ singles out Māori and Pacific people.

Māori

Māori people, comprising 10 per cent of New Zealand's labour force, are most likely to be engaged in low- or semi-skilled work. However, Māori have performed strongly in the labour market over the past years and have posted gains in employment participation and record low unemployment. As a result, they have further narrowed labour market disparities with other ethnic groups. The unemployment rate for Māori fell to a low of 7.7 per cent for the year 2007, down from 16.6 per cent in 1999. For 2007, Māori labour force participation was at a record high of 68.0 per cent, very close to the national average of all labour force participants (68.8 per cent). Employment growth for Māori has been high at an average 4.7 per cent per annum since December 1999, and 4.3 per cent for 2007. This expansion in employment is higher than the economy-wide average of 2.4 per cent (since 1999).

Māori are over-represented in export-oriented industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, and manufacturing), but the share of all Māori employed in these industries has fallen from 29.1 per cent to 24.5 per cent in the past five years. Māori employment growth has been most rapid in construction over the past five years. In general, employment growth among Māori has been strong across most industries. Relatively rapid employment growth in the skilled and semi-skilled occupation groups would suggest a structural shift towards more sustainable, higher paid forms of employment for Māori. Nevertheless, many Māori remain employed in lower skilled, lesser paid jobs.

Pacific people: Heavy concentration in low-skilled work and occupation groups

Pacific peoples (4.4 per cent of New Zealand's labour force in December 2007) are on average younger and less educated than other population groups in New Zealand. These two characteristics account for their higher concentration in low-skilled employment. However, again due to favourable labour market conditions in general, Pacific people's labour force participation rate rose to 64.1 per cent in 2007, the highest for 18 years. In 2007, around two-thirds (65.5 per cent) of Pacific peoples were employed in service-related industries, with a large proportion employed in the wholesale and retail trade industry (13.1 per cent). The most common single sector of employment of Pacific people was the manufacturing industry (24.0 per cent), partially reflecting the employment opportunities in urban areas where most Pacific people live.

Pacific people tend to engage in low- and semi-skilled work as plant and machine operators and assemblers, in service and sales occupations, and elementary occupations. In 2007, 66.2 per cent of Pacific people were employed in either low- or semi-skilled occupations (down 5.3 per cent from 2002), compared to 47 per cent for non-Pacific people.

People with disabilities

Only New Zealand identifies explicitly people with disabilities as a vulnerable group in the labour market. Of the identified vulnerable groups there, people with disabilities have the second lowest participation rate (43.6 per cent) and employment rate (39.6 per cent). Among people without disabilities the rates were respectively 69.8 per cent and 65.7 per cent. A host of factors, including negative (employer) attitudes, stereotypes, physical and communication barriers, workplace policies, layouts and procedures, low educational attainment and lack of skills are accountable for the significantly lesser participation of people with disabilities in employment.

3. Skills training and up-grading policies, programmes and initiatives for vulnerable groups

The P4 countries' answers to the questionnaire identify broadly two major types of policy and programme responses to the needs of members of vulnerable groups for employment related skills training and upgrading. Firstly, there are the national active labour market programmes available to all vulnerable groups, and also for workers who are not classified as vulnerable. New Zealand's Training Opportunities Programme (TOP) comes into this category. Then there is the Singapore model of skills training and upgrading for employment. The objective of Singapore's CET system is to provide education and training and support services that develop the skills, employability and competitiveness of Singapore's workers. The CET system benefits all workers (both in or outside employment), but provides older workers with a higher training subsidy than younger workers to encourage them to improve their skills. Secondly, P4 countries have put in place programmes that endeavour to reach out to particular target groups by providing skills training and up-grading services specifically tailored to meet their needs. These two types of programme are examined below.

3.1 Comprehensive skills training and up-grading programmes for vulnerable groups

New Zealand's Training Opportunities Programme (TOP)

The TOP is a fully funded, active labour market programme that provides foundation and vocational skills training to people who are disadvantaged in employment and educational terms. In 2006, Training Opportunities trainees numbered 17,000, distributed between various ethnic groups as follows: Māori 41 per cent, European 36 per cent, Pacific people 11 per cent and Asian 5.8 per cent. Women represented 52 per cent of participants.

New Zealand provides training and other services to the unemployed and people who wish to enter the labour market. This assistance covers, for example, a new Course Participation Assistance Grant designed to help cover the cost of participating in shorter-term employment and training programmes. Other assistance includes wage subsidies that help to cover the costs of training provision in the first year of employment.

Some vulnerable workers also access subsidized skills up-grading opportunities provided in the general tertiary education system. They can also access the industry training system. Trainees enter into a training agreement with their employers and most training takes place on-the-job. The system is administered by Industrial Training Organizations. These develop and maintain sector-wide skill standards and qualifications, facilitate on-the-job training and also contract off-the-job training and courses with training providers.

Singapore's CET system

Starting in 2003, the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA), a statutory board under the Ministry of Manpower, has built up a comprehensive national CET system. Its major elements are the Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) system and the Employability Skills System (ESS).

The WSQ system is an integrated CET system based on competencies rather than academic skills. This gives workers access to training, particularly those workers who have no formal academic qualifications. In consultation with industry leaders, WSQ identifies the skills that each sector needs. WSQ caters for adult workers who have widely diverse training needs. It therefore offers a correspondingly wide range of certifications and qualifications, from certificate to graduate diploma. WSQ frameworks have been developed in most industries of the Singapore economy.

As a complement to the WSQ, WDA has established the ESS, which prepares people for careers by offering training in generic skills needed at the workplace. These skills are portable, essential and relevant in any industry and will help workers remain employable as the economy and jobs change. Workers can also tap on the ESS to have their basic skills certified before they progress to WSQ qualifications at a higher level.

In 2007, approximately 67,500 workers upgraded and had their skills certified through WSQ and ESS. About 67 per cent of them were low-skilled workers with an educational profile of "O" levels or below, and 50 per cent were workers aged 40 and above. While the CET system benefits all workers, a higher level of subsidies is provided to workers aged above 40 to encourage them to train more. Course fees are generally subsidized at 80 per cent for younger workers, while workers aged above 40 receive a 90 per cent subsidy.

3.2 Training targeted on particular vulnerable groups

P4 countries also target special training programmes on specific target groups, endeavouring to meet the particular needs for employment related training of their members. Youth training programmes are examined below.

Youth training in New Zealand, Chile, Singapore and Brunei

At 14 per cent, youth unemployment (among the 15-19 years old) in New Zealand is relatively high, four times higher than the overall national average. The government finances a variety of initiatives designed to assist young people to make successful transitions into the labour market. Key initiatives include the *Youth Training*, *Skill Enhancement*, and *Gateway* programmes, and the *Youth Apprenticeship Scheme*.

Youth Training provides full-time, fully-funded foundation and vocational skills training to young people who have left school with no or few qualifications. Learners in

2006 totalled 11,000 young people, comprising 46 per cent Māori, 40 per cent European, 11 per cent Pacific peoples and 1.2 per cent Asians. 55 per cent were girls and young women. 26 per cent were under 16 years of age; 68 per cent were 16-17 years old, and young people aged 18 and older comprised 5.5 per cent. Skills enhancement is another vocational training programme specifically targeted at Māori and Pacific young people. When directed towards Māori, the programme is known as Rangatahi Māia while among Pasifika it is called Tupulaga Le Lumana'i. In 2006, there were 558 Skill Enhancement trainees. The *Gateway* programme is designed to strengthen the pathways of senior students (during their 11th - 13th years of schooling) from secondary schools to workplace learning and post-secondary education and training. *Gateway* students pursue individual learning plans to gain new skills and knowledge in a workplace in their local community during part of the school week. Building on *Gateway*, the *Youth Apprenticeship Scheme* was introduced to support schools to broker a wide range of learning opportunities in partnership with local training providers and employers and offer applied learning opportunities to young people. In 2009, the scheme will be extended to all schools.

In Chile, where many young people are out of work, three programmes explicitly target them: the *Apprentice* and the *Bicentenary Youth* programmes, and a *Bonus* programme that encourages employers to recruit young people. The *Apprentice* programme is aimed at young people aged 15-25 years. The government gives the employer a subsidy that covers 50 per cent of the apprentice's wage (1-2 times the minimum wage) for the first 12 months of her/his contract. In return the employer assigns an experienced worker to the young person to provide her/him with occupational skills training. Apprentices are also given funding (US\$680) to participate in a training course outside the working place. In 2008, the *Apprenticeship* programme will cover some 6,000 young people. Also in 2008, the *Bicentenary Youth* programme was started, training 10,000 young people in that year. The programme provides for consultancy and advisory services, 400 hours of training, 300 hours of internship with an employer, and job search assistance. The total programme costs amount to US\$2,400 per trainee. Under the *Bonus* programme, the government gives employers a bonus of 50 per cent of the minimum wage as an incentive to recruit poor young people during their first 12 months of contract.

In Singapore, the NEXSTEP Programme targets "disengaged" youth aged 15 to 25 who do less well in traditional academic education, but can succeed in vocational areas, for example in the retail, food and beverages and beauty industries. The programme provides them with skills to make a living and advance in their careers. The pilot phase was launched in March 2006. By end of March 2007, 104 youths had benefited from the Job Readiness Training. Fifty had participated in Work Trial and 27 had received certificates for Specific Skills Training.

In 2008, Brunei allocated US\$156 million for human resource development. The programmes include skills and knowledge development, entrepreneurial development, a graduate employment scheme and training for school leavers. The government has also earmarked large sums of money to raise the skills of young local job-seekers. The key programme is composed of various types of training and work attachments with companies to "promote young people's careers and champion efforts in enhancing the competitiveness and employability of the workforce". A resource centre supports growth and development of SMEs, by providing them training and technology services, incubation programmes and technical and entrepreneurial advisory services and information.

Women's training programmes

The P4 countries provide little information on training programmes that target women explicitly. In New Zealand women (often comprising the majority of participants)

participate in many active labour market programmes for young people and ethnic groups in general. In addition, the *Training Incentive Allowance* (TIA) subsidizes the costs of education and training courses. Although at present not targeting women per se, it was initially introduced (1983) to address the disadvantage of female sole parents who wished to re-enter the workforce. At present, TIA provides financial assistance to job-seekers receiving a domestic purposes benefit (DPB), an invalid's benefit or a widow's benefit to enable beneficiaries to undertake employment related training that will improve their skills and increase their chances of getting work. This can include tertiary education. Chile also targets single parent women, in particular. Assistance includes the universalization of child care services – from March 2006 to December 2009 pre-school services will be extended to 10,000 children. A special programme of labour training for inactive, unemployed women, or women looking for work for the first time has an annual coverage of 15,000 women, in various occupations, providing job mediation services (3,000 women), and encouraging employers to hire women by providing subsidies of up to 40 per cent of their wages for eight months.

Training members of minority ethnic groups

Ethnic minority groups are explicitly targeted in New Zealand only. The country's comprehensive Youth Training programme, aimed at all vulnerable groups (including minority ethnic groups), and the Skills Enhancement Programme for Māori and Pacific young people have already been described. Several other initiatives aim to improve the employment outcomes of Māori job-seekers. Implementing agencies at both the local and national levels include Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Māori Development), Housing New Zealand Corporation and the District Health Boards. Some programmes are concentrated in regions having proportionately large Māori populations. They provide localized models of trade training to Māori, building management, governance and leadership skills training, and financial and entrepreneurship education. There are also partnerships with other agencies to generate sustainable jobs for people through skills development. Other initiatives create partnerships with local and regional councils to generate employment schemes that benefit local communities. The Hui Taumata Taskforce - a group comprising eminent Māori individuals, Business New Zealand (the National Employers' Organization) and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions - has initiated many training activities, including the Māori Workforce Development project which focuses on quality lifelong learning for Māori to raise their skills.

Training people with disabilities

Only New Zealand's response to the questionnaire mentions explicitly people with disabilities as a vulnerable group. The omission by the other P4 countries is somewhat surprising, since a significant share of most countries' populations consists of people with disabilities. Three of the P4 countries have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention calls on governments to give people with disabilities access to general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination, on equal basis with others.

The NZ Government funds tertiary education organizations to assist people with disabilities to participate in tertiary education and training. In addition, specific funding is available to support people with disabilities to enter employment. The funding can also be used for training. Under the *Pathways to Inclusion* policy (2001), the government also funds various vocational training providers who provide skills upgrading and job entry support to people with disabilities. In recent changes to general employment and assistance programmes, specialist advisors and employment co-ordinators have been appointed, providing support and services to people in ill health and with disabilities.

Training unemployed, older, low-wage and low-skilled workers (Singapore)

In addition to its NEXSTEP programme intended for “disengaged” youth (see page 9), Singapore has targeted several training programmes for the following “vulnerable” groups: the unemployed, older or mature workers, and low-wage and low-skilled workers. These programmes are described below.

First are examined the *Skills Redevelopment Programme (SRP)* and the *Skills Development Fund (SDF)* which both target all the above labour market groups. SRP encourages employers to send their employees for certifiable training. It pays for the training if it is conducted during working hours. In addition, WDA, in conjunction with NTUC (National Trade Union Congress), SNEF (Singapore National Employers Federation) and industry associations, uses the fund to invest in CET infrastructure that supports lifelong learning, including workplace learning.

The SDF gives employers and training providers incentives, e.g. course fee support, to encourage skills upgrading of Singapore’s workers. The Fund is financed by proceeds from the Skills Development Levy (SDL). Under the SDL Act, all employers must contribute 1 per cent of the monthly salary of workers earning \$2,000 or less. Employers are refunded at different rates, depending on the particular programme.

Unemployed workers

The *Place-and-Train (PnT) programmes*, run by the WDA, match unemployed job-seekers with job positions before the actual training begins. This targeted approach minimizes training wastage, helps skilled local workers access growth industries and enlarges the scope of employment opportunities available to participants. Low-wage workers and older workers can also join PnT programmes to up-grade their skills and access better jobs. *The Prepare, Place and Train (PPnT) programmes*, run by WDA in conjunction with the District CareerLink Network (DCN) equip less work-ready and unemployed job-seekers with employability and basic vocational skills. It also helps them to master job interviews better. WDA, working jointly with the Community Development Councils (CDCs), runs also the *Work Support Programme*, which provides financial assistance to the unemployed needy, in return for their efforts to find a job.

Helping older workers stay in or reenter employment

Under the ADVANTAGE! programme, Singapore’s WDA, in partnership with the social partners (NTUC and SNEF) encourages enterprises to employ mature workers aged 40 and above, or re-employ workers aged above 62. The programme supports age-friendly enterprise initiatives like training, re-training and other human resource practices, wage restructuring, and job-re-design.

Training low-wage and low-skilled workers

The WDA’s and NTUC’s joint *Job Re-creation Programme (JRP)* aims to improve the productivity, job worth and prospect, working conditions and image of existing jobs. Many jobs have been re-designed into higher productivity and higher paying jobs in hawker centres, in cleaning, healthcare and teaching occupations and as landscape technicians. Work has also been done with, e.g., finance, public transport, retail and childcare enterprises, to open up more job opportunities for vulnerable workers by means of re-training and job re-design.

Furthermore, the WDA, through its DCN, reaches out to many unemployed workers, low-wage workers and older workers with job placement, training assistance

and career counseling on available job opportunities and the training needed to access them. In addition to its PnT programme, it distributes *lifelong learning* programmes via television and issues awards (e.g. Lifelong Learner awards to worthy individuals). The DCN covers Singapore's five CDCs and the NTUC.

4. Assessments and outcomes of training programmes for vulnerable groups

The P4 countries were asked to also provide information about assessments made and outcomes achieved from their skills training and up-grading programmes for members of vulnerable groups. How effective were these programmes, for example in placing participants in employment after training? The information the countries provided is somewhat sketchy.

In 2004, New Zealand undertook a systematic evaluation of its active labour market programmes to determine which programmes were working well for individuals, which ones were working well for particular groups of people, and how cost-effective these programmes were. Are participants' outcomes, for example finding a job after training, the result of taking part in a programme? The NZ report notes that training (in NZ and also elsewhere) is "one of the most expensive programmes in terms of overall costs and because large numbers of job-seekers participate in the programmes". Hence the need to evaluate programme impact and determine whether the (mostly public) investments in them are justified.

The 2004 evaluation showed that the large training interventions of the TOP and the TIA had a modestly positive post-participation effect. However, the locking-in effects (i.e. leading to extended length of participation in training) of TOP tended to cancel its positive post-participation effect, leading to a small overall positive impact. TIA, on the other hand, did show a sustained, positive impact on the likelihood of sole parents, who received the DPB, being independent of work and income assistance. The latter was defined as "receiving a core benefit or participating in an employment programme". Overall in New Zealand, training appears to benefit some groups, in particular the long-term unemployed and DPB recipients. In addition, and in contrast to international experience, TOP had a higher than average positive impact on participants aged less than 20.

Chile gives a few outcome measures of its youth training programmes. The *Apprenticeship* programme performs well. Some 60 per cent of the young workers who participated in the programme in 2007 managed to stay in employment after the expiry of the 12 months' wage subsidy paid to the employer. Being a new programme, *Bicentenary Youth* has not yet been evaluated. However, the design of the programme took many lessons from an earlier programme (Chile Joven); the employment rate (after training) of young people who participated in the latter programme was 70 per cent. The *Bonus* programme, which targeted employers to hire poor young people, has had poor results. In 2007, money was available to provide a bonus for hiring 1,200 young people, but only 200 were actually recruited. The poor take-up was attributed to discrimination towards young people having low incomes.

For Singapore, Table 3 summarizes information (i.e. programme name; target group(s); indicator(s) of programme achievement/outcomes; and actual achievements/outcomes) provided pertaining to five selected training schemes or programmes. These programmes targeted mature, unemployed, low-skilled and/or low-wage workers.

Table 3. Selected training programmes for target groups in Singapore: Achievements and outcomes

Scheme/ programme	Target group(s)	Indicator(s)	Outcomes/ achievements
ADVANTAGE!	Mature & older workers	Recruited workers aged ≥ 40 ; re-employed workers aged ≥ 62	By 3/07, 411 companies had joined scheme, committed to recruit 3013 mature workers and re-employ 3873 older workers
Place and Train(PnT)	Unemployed workers	No. of PnT programmes implemented	By 3/07, 20 programmes implemented in food & b., healthcare, retail industries
Prepare, Place and Train (PPnT)	Unemployed workers	No. of participating job-seekers since 9/06	199 participants 9/06 – 3/07
Job Re-creation Programme	Low-skilled and low-wage workers	No. of participants 4/06-3/07	12000 participants S\$12.5 million disbursed 4/06-3/07
Work Support Programme	Unemployed workers	No. of job-seekers successfully placed in jobs	917 placed in jobs S\$1.5 million disbursed 7/06-3/07

5. Skills training and up-grading programmes for vulnerable groups: Some lessons learned

Some lessons can be learned from the implementation, and evaluations and outcome assessments made, of training programmes that target vulnerable groups. These lessons tend to center around the following propositions:

- *Vulnerable groups: The need to raise their labour force participation and productivity from work.*

Vulnerable groups are often disadvantaged in the labour market. They tend to be less economically active than other population groups. They also engage in comparatively low value work. Therefore, New Zealand pursues a mix of policies that encourage labour force participation, but not to the detriment of people's other activities such as caring responsibilities. New Zealand also positions skill development as a central element of policies to raise workers' productivity and produce more value from work.

- *Training and skills development programmes for vulnerable population groups must be centered on identified labour market needs and opportunities.*

New Zealand emphasizes the importance of linking skills development with the overall needs of industry and the economy. The proportion of people with formal qualifications is a good indicator of the overall skill level of a nation, but is not the whole story. Formal qualifications must reflect the skills needed in the jobs for which they are designed, and managers must support workers to work to the best of their ability and potential. In Chile, training and skills development alone are not considered sufficient for effective integration of vulnerable groups into employment. In order to be effective, training must be supported by job intermediation services that link job opportunities with trained people. Chile also stresses the need to work on the demand side of the employment equation. Incentives or bonuses to employers must be used to raise the demand for the labour of people belonging to vulnerable groups.

- *The importance of raising the literacy, language and numeric skills of members of vulnerable groups*

In all P4 countries, significant numbers of workers have low literacy and numeric skills (see p.3). Skills development and upgrading activities are of limited value if employees do not have these basic skills. The countries recognize the need to develop these skills that are fundamental to individuals' ability to find, retain and progress in employment. Singapore ESS (see p. 8), is a structured government response to develop these fundamental skills, particularly among the country's large pool of low-skilled workers. New Zealand is also implementing a Literacy, Language and Numeracy Strategy. It is progressively building up, over five years, the demand for and supply of literacy, language and numeric skills learning opportunities. The capacity of education and training providers in this area is also being raised. The objective is to build a system that is responsive to changing demands in the workplace and in the wider community. A range of approaches to delivery are being pursued that ensure both value and quality in provision, while raising enterprises' and individuals' understanding of the impacts of these skills on employment prospects, and of their learning options.

In New Zealand at present, the demand for work-based literacy, language and numeric skills training is low. The government is looking into ways to engage employers and employees in literacy, language and numeric skills training in the workplace. Exploratory partnerships are being formed with employers, training providers and other stakeholders, including unions. The partnerships are being evaluated to improve the evidence base, including whether improved literacy, language and numeric skills assist low paid, vulnerable workers to progress to higher skilled, higher paid jobs or benefit from productivity-related wage increases in their current jobs.

- *Towards tripartite and partnership approaches to skill development for vulnerable groups*

New Zealand and Singapore stress the advantages of a tripartite approach to skills development and training for vulnerable groups. In New Zealand, working with employers and workers on skills training and upgrading initiatives has become even more important in the context of the country's low unemployment and therefore its greater focus on training the employed, rather than unemployed, workforce. A tripartite partnership approach to skills issues has been adopted through the Skills New Zealand Tripartite Forum. A Skills Strategy discussion paper was recently released by government, Business New Zealand, the New Zealand Council for Trade Unions and the Industry Training Federation for discussion with wider stakeholders: <http://www.skillsstrategy.govt.nz/>. The Skills Strategy proposes that one of the most important drivers of productivity and economic growth is the skills and technical knowledge of workers. New Zealand's continuing wealth will depend on the skills of its people and how firms and industry support New Zealanders to work to the best of their potential. Skills are key to economic transformation; the skills of workers increasingly determine enterprises' ability to build competitiveness.

Likewise, in Singapore, the strong tripartite collaboration established between employers, unions and the government has been instrumental in convincing workers to learn and train for skills and careers, while also convincing employers to invest in and provide training for their employees. Close tripartite collaboration in training has promoted the interests of both workers and employers. Programmes and initiatives organized in partnerships between employers and unions themselves, for example ADVANTAGE! and JRP, have contributed greatly to the effectiveness of skills training and up-grading of vulnerable workers.

- *Sharpened focus on training young people and school leavers for higher skills and qualifications*

In New Zealand, concern has recently been raised about an “hour glass” workforce in the making, characterized by a large share of workers having high skills and access to continuous development opportunities co-existing with a similarly large share of workers with few or no skills and little access to training, and in the middle a small group of people having medium level skills. With an ageing population, New Zealand cannot afford the loss of potential and productivity that result from young people leaving education to move into low-skilled employment. Policy attention is therefore increasingly centered on ensuring that more young people are gaining higher levels of qualifications and skills, and can use these in workplaces. The government announced *Schools Plus* in January 2008. *Schools Plus* is being developed to achieve the government's goal that all young people are in education, skills development, or structured learning, relevant to their needs and abilities, until the age of 18. A major emphasis of *Schools Plus* will be on increasing the retention and achievement of young people in schools.

- *The need to cater to the many and diverse training and development needs of vulnerable workers*

Invariably, members of various vulnerable groups have different backgrounds, educational qualifications, career and occupational ambitions, abilities and interests. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all training solution. Singapore's CET system therefore caters to various groups and categories of workers by providing a wide range of courses that fit individuals' different needs.

- *The need for public funding of skills training and upgrading programmes for vulnerable workers*

Availability of training courses and opportunities does not necessarily mean that individuals who belong to vulnerable groups will participate in them. They need, in particular, incentives and financial support to be able to do so. Singapore stresses the need for public financing of training that targets vulnerable workers. Also, ILO's Human Resources Development Recommendation (no.195), 2004, calls on governments to assume “the primary responsibility for training the unemployed, those seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market, and people with special needs, to develop and enhance their employability to secure decent work, in the private and public sectors, through such measures as incentives and assistance”. In Singapore, funding packages can take the form of training subsidies or award of bloc grants to selected enterprises that participate in the programmes. The bloc grants may be used by enterprises to build the necessary infrastructure of the CET system. Singapore has also moved from an employer-based to a worker-based funding approach to benefit unemployed workers. These funding packages are tied to measurable outcomes, which participating enterprises and/or individuals have to reach. This approach ensures greater value and improved economic return on the money spent.

6. Possible areas for future collaboration between P4 countries

The P4 countries have put considerable effort into skills training and up-grading programmes that assist members of vulnerable groups improve their labour market prospects. Recently, the countries have been blessed with highly favourable economic conditions that have boosted the demand for labour. Well designed and targeted policies have also facilitated improvements in labour market outcomes of vulnerable groups. Skills training and upgrading programmes have contributed to these outcomes. However, there is still considerable scope for further work and improvement.

The P4 countries can certainly learn from the experiences of each other. To be able to do so, they could consider steps that would make information about vulnerable groups more consistent between the countries, facilitate inter-country comparisons, and provide a more solid base for the drawing of conclusions about the effectiveness of training programmes. Ultimately, improved inter-country information could encourage the emulation of one country's successful experience in another. The countries could, for example, agree on a common approach to the definitions of "vulnerable groups". At present these are highly diverse; there are altogether more than ten different, but often overlapping, categories of vulnerable groups.

In addition, what data - economic, employment, labour market, education, skills and training data - should the countries collect to facilitate inter-country comparisons? The countries may consider agreeing also on common time frames pertaining to the data that is collected.

Perhaps most important, the P4 countries could agree upon a common framework for measuring programme outcomes, after individuals' participation in training. For example, did they find jobs? Did they improve their incomes? What factors contributed to the success (or lack of success) of the programme? Such evaluation and impact data were largely absent in the countries' responses. Answers to questions such as these will greatly help in drawing the right conclusions and provide guidance whether a programme can be replicated or emulated in another country setting. In this context, P4 countries could agree on developing jointly methodologies for assessing the impact and cost-effectiveness of training programmes that target vulnerable groups. This is an area of work that also the ILO could participate in, and learn from.

Questionnaire for Joint Research Project Training and Up-skilling for Vulnerable Workers in TPSEP Countries

Scope of the questionnaire:

- Responses should focus on training and up-skilling policies, programmes and initiatives in Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore only.
- The responses should be limited to training and up-skilling policies, programmes and initiatives for vulnerable workers, both employed and unemployed.
- ‘Vulnerable workers’ should be defined as (but not limited to) low-wage, low-skill workers for the sake of simplicity and comparability across the four countries. It is expected that other groups that could be labelled ‘vulnerable’ would be captured within the low-skill, low-wage group e.g. outsourced and contract workers.
- Other groups of vulnerable workers who face difficulty seeking employment/re-employment (e.g. older workers, women and youth), could also be included in the response.
- Training and up-skilling programmes operated by governments and/or their tripartite social partner agencies (i.e. trade unions and employers) should be included in the response.
- The response should not include benefit systems or job search services.
- The responses provided should be in English, in electronic form (MSWord or similar program), and submitted to the ILO before 9 May 2008 at the latest.

Section A. Background Information

1. *What is the socio-economic situation in your country?*
Please provide a one-page note (maximum) which includes basic data on growth, employment and structure of the economy.
2. *Which are the main vulnerable groups and what are the major constraints faced by each group with respect to training and employment?*
 - a. Please provide a half page note for each vulnerable group identified.
 - b. Please provide an indication of the size of the groups affected (e.g. % of population/labour force).
 - c. Please indicate the location of these groups (e.g. urban/rural, formal/informal economy).

Section B. Policies, programmes and initiatives

1. *What policies, programmes and/or initiatives have been developed and implemented to address the challenges/constraints identified in Section A2?*
Please provide a one page note (maximum) which explains the key features of the policies/programmes etc., and describes how each of these have been implemented. Please also include numbers covered under each of these initiatives.
2. *What assessments have been made of the effectiveness of these programmes and what indicators were used to measure effectiveness?*
(e.g. number/percentage employed after training)
Please provide a half-page summary (maximum) of the findings for each initiative.
3. *What lessons have been learnt from the implementation of these policies and programmes (and the assessments)?*
Please provide a half-page summary (maximum) of the lessons learnt and the strengths and/or weaknesses of each initiative.

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