

The Youth Employment Challenge in Asia and the Pacific

If we support and work with young people to realize their own dreams and aspirations we will realize growth and prosperity across Asia and the Pacific.

At the 14th Asian Regional Meeting, ILO constituents concluded that promoting decent work opportunities and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men, especially through better school-to-work transition, is crucial for realizing the Asian Decent Work Decade.

Young people are an incredible source of energy and creativity. Still, although only one in five workers are between the ages of 15 and 24, this group accounts for almost half the region's jobless.

While young people do face certain disadvantages in the labour market, for many of the young working poor, unemployment is an unaffordable luxury. They work hard, for long hours in poor conditions, on short-term and precarious contracts with not much prospects for the future. There is a cruel irony in the co-existence of child labour and youth unemployment: demand for certain types of labour that is met by children who should not be working, there is also a supply of labour from young people that goes unutilised. The youth employment challenge also linked to the spread of HIV/AIDs and cross-border and rural to urban migration placing enormous pressure on urban labour markets to find jobs for youth

Greater access to decent employment means giving young people a chance to work themselves and their families out of poverty. Achieving decent work early in their working life would help avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion. Unless the causes and implications of the youth employment challenge are tackled, progress towards better economic and political governance in the region will remain uncertain.

As in other parts of the world, our work on youth employment is driven by a Life cycle perspective and the promotion of inter-generational solidarity in the achievement of Decent Work for all: efforts to promote youth employment cannot be divorced from efforts to improve employment prospects for adults and, in many countries, combat child labour.

As part of the ADWD resource kit, please download the booklet “The Youth Employment Challenge in Asia and the Pacific”. The booklet serves as a gateway into ILO expertise and knowledge within this regional priority area. It briefly discusses key challenges for the Asian region, and - in the electronic version – links directly to key resources, good practices and related projects.

For further information, please contact the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific at bangkok@ilo.org.