



International
Labour
Organization



ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE RESOURCE KIT: THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

ASIAN
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2006
2015

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

DECENT WORK

A better world starts here.

2nd
Edition

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2011

Second edition 2011

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publications (Rights and Permissions), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: pubdroit@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with reproduction rights organizations may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

**Asian Decent Work Decade resource kit: the youth employment challenge /
International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. – 2nd ed.
Bangkok: ILO, 2011
26 p.**

ISBN: 9789221248323; 9789221248330 (web pdf); 9789221248316 (CD-ROM)

International Labour Organization; Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
youth employment / knowledge management / role of ILO / Asia / Pacific
13.01.3

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

ILO publications and electronic products can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or direct from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 11th Floor, United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand, or by email: BANGKOK@ilo.org. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address, or by email: pubvente@ilo.org.

Visit our web site: www.ilo.org/publns or www.ilo.org/asia

Printed in Thailand

ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE RESOURCE KIT:

THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

Contents

1.	The youth employment challenge	1
	Causes of disadvantage for young people	4
2.	The ILO response	7
	Agreed principles and perspectives	9
	The ILO's comparative advantage	11
	Understanding the country context	12
	Supporting young workers	14
	Employers' and workers' organizations	16
	Policy choices	18
3.	Partnerships	21
	Technical cooperation and resources	22
	Drawing from ILO–IPEC experience	23
4.	Knowledge management and impact evaluation	26

Abbreviations

ACYF	All-China Youth Federation
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APYouthNet	Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Youth Employment
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia Europe Meeting
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EAST	Education and Skills Training project
EFA	Education for All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
JOY	Job Opportunities for Youth

Abbreviations

KAB	Know About Business
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
STWS	School-to-Work Transition Survey
SYB	Start Your Business
TREE	Training for Rural Economic Empowerment
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM is currently UN Women)
WISE	Work Improvement in Small Enterprises
YEN	Youth Employment Network

Introduction

Representatives of governments and employers' and workers' organizations committed themselves to an Asian Decent Work Decade during the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization in 2006 – reaffirming their dedication to the goal of full, productive and decent employment for all workers in Asia and the Pacific by 2015.

The Asian Regional Meeting participants recognized that if young adults can achieve decent work early in their working lives through a smooth transition from school to work, they can avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion.

To inspire their efforts and provide easy access to the rich knowledge, information and services that the ILO offers, the Regional Office in Bangkok developed the *Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit*. This booklet is one of six parts to that kit, serving as a gateway into ILO expertise and knowledge on the regional priority area of youth employment. It explains in a brief and user-friendly manner why this is a regional priority, the issues it addresses and how the ILO can help its social partners, detailing the available approaches, strategies and tools and possible partnerships. Where applicable, examples of good practices or adaptable projects are included.

If you are reading this as an electronic file on a CD-ROM, you will find hyperlinks to many associated publications, also on the CD-ROM. If your computer is connected to the Internet, you can use other hyperlinks to navigate to web sites. The links are both in the text and in boxes on the side margin marked “click here”.

If you are reading this as a printed booklet, you can access the documentation later by visiting the web sites: www.ilo.org/asia or www.ilo.org.

1. The youth employment challenge

2010–2011 marks the second International Year of Youth. The theme of this international year, “Dialogue and mutual understanding”, and the motto “Our Year, Our Voice” were designed to inspire policies that respond to the need and aspirations of young people for decent work and of societies for the creativity, dynamism and vigour of youth. The International Year of Youth promotes what the ILO has long realized: Young people are not the problem, they are the solution.

At the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting, the ILO’s constituents concluded that achieving the decent work goals would mean promoting opportunities and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men – especially by ensuring a better transition from school to work. While unemployment has risen generally, the brunt has been borne by young workers. Although only one in five workers is aged between 15 and 24, this group accounts for almost half of the region’s jobless (45 per cent, or 36.4 million people without

a job in 2009). Young people are at least three times more likely to be unemployed than adults in the region as a whole, and up to five times in South-East Asia and the Pacific. And yet, representing a fifth of the region’s population, young people are also the drivers of economic development.

For many of the young working poor, however, unemployment is a luxury. They have no choice but to work hard and for long hours to eke out a living, unprotected against hazards and risks, with informal or precarious contracts at low pay and few prospects. In the developing countries of the Asia-Pacific region, there are also significant gaps between women and men in income and in access to productive resources and credit. Moreover, while young women are increasingly participating in economic activities, they still take on a disproportionate share of unpaid work, including household responsibilities and child care.

[Click here for the International Year of Youth web site](#)

[Click here for the *Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting* and the *15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting* web sites](#)

[Click here for *Realizing Decent Work in Asia, Conclusions of the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting*](#)

[Click here for the August 2010 edition of the *Global Employment Trends for Youth*](#)

[Click here for *Labour and Social Trends in Asia and the Pacific 2006: Progress Towards Decent Work*](#)

Youth employment statistics, 2009

	East Asia	South Asia	South-East Asia and the Pacific
Youth unemployment (millions)	12.8	15.3	8.3
Youth unemployment rate (%)	8.9	10.3	14.7
Male	10.3	10.1	14.0
Female	7.4	10.9	15.7
Ratio of youth to adult unemployment rates	2.6	3.1	5.0

Source: ILO: Global employment trends for youth (Geneva, 2010).

Young people are an incredible source of energy and creativity and are capable of offering new ideas and insights that are important for driving economic growth. Neglecting this potential is an economic and social waste. Decent employment early in their working life would help avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion. In a situation of widespread poverty and lack of opportunities, the growing number of disaffected youth has been associated with escalating urban crime, outbursts of ethnic violence and political instability. 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.



Young people are a source of energy and creativity. ©ILO/M.Crozet, 2005.

Unemployment is particularly high among educated youth. In some parts of the developing Asia-Pacific region, economic development has failed to keep pace with rapid increases in educational attainment. Higher unemployment is also related to the quality of education and the mismatch of skills. Job and wage reservations among

those who can afford to look for socially and culturally acceptable jobs contribute to the problem.

However, concentrating on unemployment trends in countries without effective unemployment-support mechanisms runs the risk of excluding from the analysis the less fortunate who simply cannot afford to be openly unemployed. Young people in developing countries of the Asia-Pacific region suffer from a lack of social protection. For most, the only alternative is to join the ranks of informal workers, which also places them in the category of the “working poor”; annually, youth account for 24 per cent of the working poor. Ensuring a basic level of social protection, or a “social floor”, and thus a decent life for these young people – many of whom are struggling just to survive – is a necessity and an obligation under international human rights instruments.

There is a cruel irony in the co-existence of child labour and youth unemployment and underemployment. While there is a 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 un- or under-used. Even those older than a country’s legal minimum working age but younger than 18 years are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour.

Children who drop out of school and begin working at too early an age tend to become youth with poor employment prospects who cannot lift their own families out of the poverty trap, cannot become parents who give their children a better life and cannot contribute fully to national development.

Many young people are also affected by HIV or AIDS, which is marring their productive potential and lessening their chances of finding secure, decent jobs. Those who live in households in which parents have become sick or have died may be forced to leave school and work in poor conditions in order to supplement the family’s diminishing income. But young people are also at risk of infection: Lacking the knowledge or the power to protect themselves from HIV infection, young people, especially women and girls, may be forced into some type of sexual exploitation.

Young people also make up the bulk of migrants streaming from the rural areas into towns and cities in search of jobs, putting enormous pressure on urban labour markets. Some go farther afield: Growing numbers of young Asian women, for example, are going abroad to work, mainly in domestic service, and in labour-intensive manufacturing which leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Recent labour market trends highlight that the youth employment challenge is associated with persistent gender gaps relating to employment opportunities, wages and job quality, particularly in less developed countries. There is noticeable progress, but equal access to new and better jobs is critical for strengthening social cohesion and ensuring that the benefits of recovery are shared fairly.

Another challenge lies in the need to address climate change and to promote “green jobs” – decent jobs that embrace environmental, economic and social values. Young women and men, who are already sensitive to environmental issues and to the effects of climate change, have a critical role to play regarding their growth and the endorsement of their principles.

Causes of disadvantage for young people

The youth employment challenge has multiple provocations. In some countries, youth unemployment and underemployment result partly from demographic changes. Whereas the “youth bulge” has largely passed, the size of the youth labour

force has not yet started to decline in some regions. In South Asia for instance, one million new entrants will enter the labour market every year until 2015.

Although the youth employment challenge is closely linked to the economic and employment environment, it has its own age-specific dimensions. Barriers to the labour market for youth can be further exacerbated by discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, race, culture, health, family status and other factors. Thus, while young people can benefit from a broad range of policies and programmes that promote economic growth, improve productivity and create jobs, it is crucial to address the disadvantages young people experience in making the transition from school to work.



Young people are staying longer in the education system. ©ILO/T.Falaise, 2005.

Causes of disadvantages for young people include:

- *Young people lack labour market and job-search information and experience.*
- *Wage and job reservations often reflect a mismatch between youth and parental aspirations and labour market realities.*
- *Young people are often the “last in” in times of surplus labour in which they compete for a limited number of jobs and have shorter work histories to offer, and they are the “first out” in times of crisis due to the perceived high cost of laying off more experienced adult workers.*
- *Labour market regulations that benefit adults already working tend to disadvantage youth, creating “insider-outsider” effects.*
- *Young people have fewer opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship because they lack business experience and the collateral needed to access resources.*
- *Young people are typically unrepresented in trade unions or employers’ organizations and thus have few channels through which to express their opinions.*

Over the next decade demographic trends bode well: Throughout much of the Asia-Pacific region, population growth rates are declining. This will take some pressure off the youth labour market, but it will still be important to improve job quality and ensure that young women have the same opportunities as young men. The goal for youth is not just any job but decent work.

In the coming decade, there will continue to be enormous pressure to create jobs for millions of young labour market entrants within the region, particularly in countries where the youth labour force will grow significantly, such as Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, the Pacific Island countries, Pakistan and Timor-Leste.

2. The ILO response

[Click here for the ILO's response on youth employment](#)

Developing young people's employability is central to ensuring their successful transition to the labour market and their access to career-oriented employment. As such, education and training, including on-the-job training or "training-plus" mechanisms, are essential requirements of a strategy to promote employability. Integrating skills development into national development strategies can also help stimulate and maintain a dynamic process of employment growth and result in a virtuous circle of rising productivity and high growth rates.

The ILO and its constituents in the region have been promoting productive employment and decent work for youth in a variety of ways, including:

- integrating youth issues in national employment policy;
- expanding opportunities for relevant basic education;
- reforming technical and vocational education and training systems to reduce skill mismatches and increase employability;
- developing school-to-work transition

[Click here for Youth Employment Promotion: A Review of ILO Work and Lessons Learned, 2005](#)

programmes, along with better labour market information and career guidance;

- increasing the labour demand for young people through labour market policies;
- promoting youth entrepreneurship;
- working with employers and trade unions; and
- pursuing global and regional cooperation.

The high and rising levels of youth unemployment and underemployment have been highlighted in the **Millennium Declaration**, which resolved "to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work". Youth employment features prominently as a target within the **Millennium Development Goals**.

To improve the quantity and quality of jobs for young people, the ILO provides assistance for developing coherent and coordinated interventions. The **Youth Employment Programme** (YEP) operates through a

[Click here for further discussion and analysis and for ILO: *Decent Work in Asia: Reporting on Results 2001-05 and Realizing Decent Work in Asia: Report of the Director-General, 2006*](#)



The Youth Employment Network – giving young people a chance to find decent and productive work.

global network of technical teams based in ILO headquarters in Geneva and in more than 60 offices around the world. YEP's work informs and shapes the ILO's contribution to the Youth Employment Network, a global partnership forged by the ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank to find durable policy and programme solutions to the youth employment challenge.

The 2002 ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific was the first major regional initiative for youth employment. It has paved the way for generating better statistics on youth, thematic studies and country papers as well as national and regional information-sharing activities that lead to pilot interventions.

*The Secretary-General of the United Nations, together with the Director-General of the ILO and the President of the World Bank, initiated the **Youth Employment Network** (YEN) in 2000. Taking the lead in organizing the YEN's work and hosting its secretariat, the ILO has been helping the lead countries in the region – Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka – prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment that involve youth organizations. In Indonesia, the ILO in the context of its Job Opportunities for Youth project, assisted the Ministry of Planning with hosting the first national adaptation of the network with the Indonesia Youth Employment Network Secretariat, known under its Indonesian acronym of JEJAKMU.*



Indonesia Youth Employment Network.

[Click here for ILO/ Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific web site](#)

Since then, the ILO and the tripartite constituents have focused on youth employment, which has become a priority outcome for many **DWCPs in countries**, including Indonesia, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island countries (Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).

Agreed principles and perspectives

The starting point for any employment policy directed at young people is the set of principles embodied in the **Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)** whereby “each member State shall declare and pursue, as a major goal, active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment”. In recent years, the overall framework has been provided by the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda and the Global Jobs Pact.

The YEN also drew from the policy pillars its “four Es”: **Employability, Entrepreneurship, Equal opportunities and Employment creation**. Progress in addressing the youth employment challenge has also been linked to progress in reaching other MDG targets on poverty reduction, education and HIV and AIDS.



Young people have to manage the transition from school to work. ©ILO/K.Cassidy, 2004.

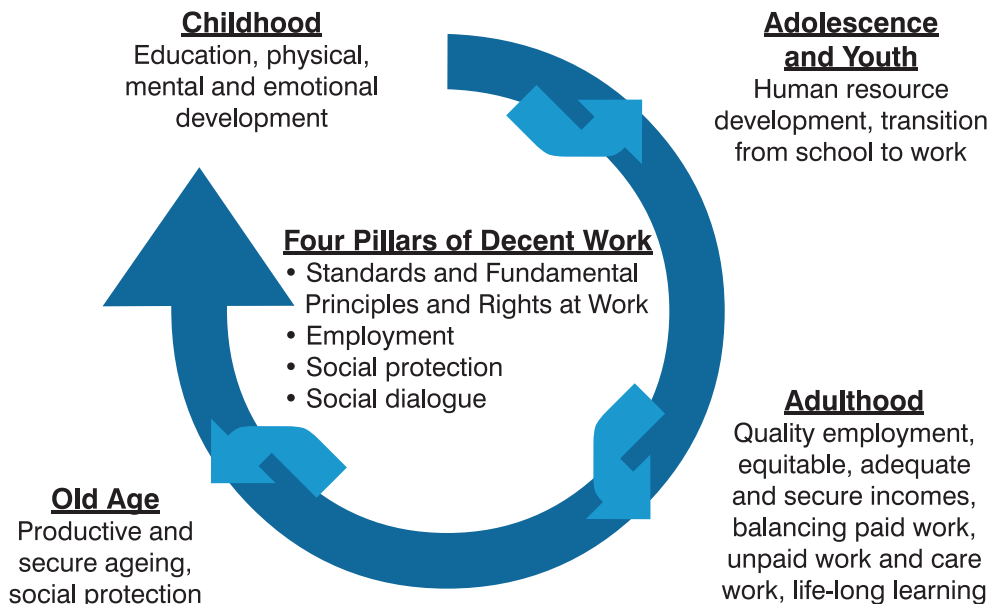
The Resolution Concerning Youth Employment (from the 2005 International Labour Conference) called for a life-cycle perspective that promotes intergenerational solidarity. This focuses on the stages of life when people are vulnerable to falling into poverty. Opportunities and experiences during their most formative stages shape people’s access to decent work and their chances of security and protection for the rest of their lives. If they are to manage the transition from school to work and begin a virtuous cycle of development and poverty reduction, young people need to be prepared for the labour market.

The life-cycle approach emphasizes the individual, the family and society. Strategies to give young people a chance

for decent work are thus inseparable from efforts to combat child labour and improve employment prospects for adults. The life-cycle perspective also involves reaching out to vulnerable children and youth at an early stage. However, this requires a better information base to succeed. The 2010

Global Employment Trends for Youth report argues for more statistics and detailed analysis of the situation of disadvantaged youth who are at risk of alienation from the labour market yet cannot afford to be unemployed. There is a reasonable fear that many of them will become part of a “lost generation”.

Decent work throughout the life cycle



Source: Adapted from *Realizing Decent Work in Asia: Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting*, Busan, Republic of Korea. ILO, 2006.

The ILO's comparative advantage

The ILO and its constituents place employment and youth at the heart of economic and social policies, aiming to overcome the specific disadvantages that young people might experience when entering and struggling to remain in the labour market.

To confront the disadvantages, the ILO developed technical expertise and leadership capacity in the following areas:

- improving the knowledge base on the youth labour market;
- expanding the understanding of policy and programme interventions needed to ease the transition from school to work for young people in general and for disadvantaged youth in particular;
- providing technical advice and tools on skills training and career guidance to increase the employability of in- and out-of-school youth;
- providing technical advice and tools for promoting entrepreneurship and

local economic development to increase opportunities for productive and sustainable self-employment;

- providing technical advice and tools to improve the quality of jobs and address such issues as **occupational safety and health**, the **worst forms of child labour**, **HIV and AIDS** and **gender inequalities**;
- providing advice on both youth-specific policies and action plans, integrating youth concerns into a common national development framework and delivering youth employment services; and
- enabling employers and workers and their organizations to engage in policy development.

The ILO, with its tripartite constituency, its technical competence and its principles-based, life-cycle perspective, is uniquely situated to help countries grapple with youth unemployment, underemployment and poor working conditions.

Understanding the country context

In the absence of labour market information systems, the ILO and its constituents recommend rapid appraisals based on existing data, such as census results and surveys of education or household expenditure. These can contribute both to a current snapshot as well as to improved long-term information on the youth labour market. Governments also need to review education and training systems to see if students are prepared and employable.



Surveys can assess the issues young people face at work. ©ILO/P.Deloche, 2000.

To supplement regular national labour market surveys and labour market information systems, the ILO developed the

The School-to-Work Transition Survey (STWS) has been conducted in China, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. The STWS is a tool that allows countries to capture both quantitative and qualitative variables, such as young people's education and training experiences, their perceptions and aspirations in terms of employment, their life goals and values, the job search process, the family's influence in the choice of occupation, barriers to and support for entry into the labour market, the preference for wage employment or self-employment, attitudes of employers towards hiring young workers, current employment/working conditions, control over resources, job satisfaction, marriage and family responsibilities and gender differentials. In Indonesia, building on the STWS findings, a subsequent survey examined the relationships between school drop-outs, child labour and future career and life development. In all these countries the survey findings have highlighted the situation of vulnerable youth in the education system and their experiences when they started to work and have contributed significantly to programme and policy design.

School-to-Work Transition Survey, which explores the experiences of young people as they leave the education system and enter the world of work. These surveys focus on the variables behind the relative ease or difficulty in making the transition to gauge where and how countries can proceed to improve the process of matching supply and demand in the youth labour market.

The ILO also has carried out country reviews on youth employment in Indonesia, Pacific Island countries, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, assessing the challenges and government responses while mapping what the ILO and other agencies are doing in the field.

[Click here for School-to-Work Transition Survey web site](#)

In terms of regional research priorities, each country defines a research agenda based on national circumstances. But it can also be informed by regional studies. For example:

- A closer examination of the scale and vulnerabilities of the young working poor was part of the regional analysis of trends among the working poor, with a focus on micro estimates. Country studies were conducted in Bangladesh and Philippines, which have data from labour force and household income and expenditure surveys.*
- Promoting an entrepreneurial culture and socially responsible entrepreneurship, the ILO collected experiences and identified good practices through the ASEAN+3 member countries network.*
- To look at promoting youth training and employment in both farm and off-farm work, the FAO, ILO and UNESCO collaborated on a multicountry study covering Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.*
- A gender dimension of the school-to-work transition study, conducted through the Joint UN Girls' Education Initiative, looked at the differences in opportunities for training and employment between young women and men in Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam. A follow up to the study in those same countries as well as in China, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste took place in 2011.*

Supporting young workers

Addressing youth employment over the long-term depends on the overall health of the economy. There needs to be sound macroeconomic conditions and a positive investment climate along with investments in education and training systems. At the same time, governments can devise labour market policies, institutions and programmes in cooperation with employers' and workers' organizations, the business sector and other stakeholders to create opportunities for young people.

A range of measures can smooth the transition from school to work, including:

- making the labour market work better for young people
 - counselling, job search skills
 - wage subsidies
 - public works programmes
 - anti-discrimination legislation
- improving chances for young entrepreneurs
- skills training for young people
 - vocational training, including apprenticeship systems

[Click here for the World Bank's Global Inventory of Interventions to Support Young Workers: Synthesis Report, 2007](#)

- literacy and numeracy – young adult literacy programmes
- second-chance and equivalency programmes
- making training systems work better for young people
 - information
 - credit to individuals or enterprises
 - financial incentives (subsidies, vouchers)
- protecting the rights of young workers and improving conditions of work
- improving programmes to counteract residential segregation of disadvantaged young people
- improving labour market regulations to the benefit of young people
- improving programmes for overseas employment of young people
- promoting voluntary national service programmes.

Making the labour market work better for young people – As a result of the findings of the School-to-Work Transition Survey

in Indonesia, the ILO published a *Career Guidance Manual* for use by secondary and technical schools and a pocket-size *Mentor's Guide for Youth Seeking Work*, for use in formal career counselling programmes and in non-formal, individual or community-based programmes. Similarly, in Viet Nam, the ILO helped produce a *Pocket Guide for Young Job Seekers* for use in job fairs. In Philippines, the ILO helped the Department of Labor and Employment develop a career guidance manual. Also in Indonesia, the ILO's Job Opportunities for Youth project supported the launch of Employment Service Centers that are equipped with online facilities.

Public works and community services have been used by many Asian governments, particularly during economic downturns and after natural disasters, such as the December 2004 tsunami. Although these programmes do not offer long-term employment solutions, they can increase the productivity of low-skilled workers and help young workers gain a foothold in the labour market. Sri Lanka's Youth Corps, for example, fits young people into community-defined development projects.

Promoting youth entrepreneurship in and out of school – To provide young people with greater entrepreneurial awareness, the

ILO in partnership with education ministries in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam introduced **Know About Business (KAB)** into the curricula of secondary school and vocational training centres. In China, the All China Youth Federation, in cooperation with the ILO and the YEN, piloted KAB in the curriculum of Chinese universities.

The ILO also supported the adaptation of its **Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)** materials in Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Viet Nam. SIYB was first piloted in Aceh, Indonesia (initially in response to the December 2004 tsunami), and was later rolled out along with KAB to eastern provinces of the country, targeting out-of-school youth through the Dutch government-funded Education and Skills Training (EAST) project.

Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam (through the Vietnam Women's Union) used the ILO's *GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise: Training Package and Resource Kit* to empower women entrepreneurs.

Reform of vocational training systems to improve skills matches and increase employability – Many countries have been looking to reform their vocational and education training systems by merging

various types of educational institutions and providing workplace-based learning. Australia and New Zealand, for example, introduced broad, competency-based training programmes that meet the requirements of adaptability and flexibility in rapidly changing labour markets. In Singapore, the Critical Enabling Skills Training programmes aim to develop generic or core work skills.

At the same time, many developing countries, with ILO support, are keen to provide skills training programmes that are flexible, employment oriented, learner centred and gender sensitive. In Pakistan, for example, the ILO assists the vocational and skills training programme through the **Training for Rural Economic Empowerment** (TREE) methodology. The ILO helps the Government in conducting rapid assessments of training institutions to plan, design and implement short-cycle skills training programmes.

Employers' and workers' organizations

Experience worldwide has shown the value of involving employers' and workers' organizations in confronting the youth employment challenge. They can assist



Vocational training needs to be linked to market requirements. ©ILO/M.Crozet, 2005.

in devising labour market policies and strengthening the links between education and training institutions and in designing and executing sector-based policies. As a tripartite organization, the ILO can call on its constituents to help formulate the most effective interventions. Both the **Bureau of Employers' Activities** and **Bureau of Workers' Activities** have produced handbooks for employers and trade unions that can be adapted to a local situation and updated to reflect current trends.

It is also vital to involve young people. Vulnerable youth in particular need to have a much greater say in the selection, design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Young people can protect their rights at work through trade unions.

[Click here for Decent Work: A Common Goal of Youth and Trade Unions](#)

[Click here for Meeting the Youth Employment Challenge: A Guide for Employers](#)

*The Employers' Confederation of the Philippines supported the **Philippines Youth Business Foundation**, through which the ILO helped broaden the range of business development support for youth to include post-entrepreneurship training services.*

In Viet Nam, stronger links with the education sector are being forged through greater input into the curriculum and work experience and apprenticeship programmes as part of upper secondary education or vocational training. A business management mentoring programme and "clinics" for young entrepreneurs are being established through collaboration between national and foreign employers' associations.

In Nepal, trade unions are addressing the working conditions of young people, including those aged 15–17 who are at risk of falling into the worst forms of child labour.

In this regard, the ILO is working with the Youth Committee representatives of the International Trade Union Confederation for Asia and the Pacific.



Young women at a rural development vocational training center in Vanuatu. ©ILO/U.Sarkar, 2007.

Young people can also be role models. For example, successful young entrepreneurs can serve as peer educators for other young people eager to follow the same path. They can do so through national and regional youth bodies or entrepreneur networks, such as the ASEAN Council of Youth and the Asian Youth Council. In New Zealand, a network for women who are interested in self-employment, called WISE, keeps members up to date with legislation and business trends and helps them meet role models. Good practices also can be drawn from the YEN and its Youth Consultative Group, using its publication *Joining Forces with Young People: A Practical Guide to Collaboration for Youth Employment*.

The Youth Committee of the International Trade Union Confederation for Asia and the Pacific represents and advocates for young people. In its recent Youth Charter, the Youth Committee called for a range of interventions, including:

- action by social partners and international institutions to create quality jobs for youth;*
- measures to improve employability, such as relevant vocational training;*
- decent working conditions and social safety nets for youth;*
- action to address poverty, HIV infection and drug problems among youth; and*
- greater youth participation within trade unions.*

All-China Youth Federation (ACYF) –
The ACYF has over 77,000 members and since 2005 has worked with the Youth Employment Network (consisting of the ILO, other UN agencies and the World Bank) to establish a Chinese Youth Employment Network office. An important area of the ACYF's employment-related work has been its Youth Entrepreneurship Campaign. Between 1998 and 2000, this and other related youth enterprise initiatives helped 86,000 young people start businesses, creating over one million new job opportunities.

Policy choices

Policies and programmes to promote decent work for young people vary according to national circumstances but should consider certain fundamentals, such as:

- Young people should be the focus – and not the indirect beneficiaries – of job creation policies. To the extent possible, young people should be involved in designing youth employment policies, strategies and

action plans. Involving young people in such a way can help address the severe mismatch that exists between the demand and supply of skills and that, on some occasions, even make youth unemployment and shortage of labour ironically coincide.

- Children need to move out of work and into education – learning the skills they will need to compete in the job market as young adults. Governments need to address both out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out, in particular those from poor families.

- Education and training policies need to ensure that young people have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet the demand of businesses. This requires that educational institutions work with employers.
- Young workers are more likely to get jobs if there is high and sustained economic growth. This requires sound macroeconomic policies and economic and political stability that will encourage investment, improve productive capacity and boost aggregate demand.

Depending on the most critical issues facing youth in a country, improved labour market information, job-search assistance, apprenticeship programmes and other measures could ease the school-to-work transition. This also includes challenges young workers are particularly vulnerable to, including poor working conditions and the worst forms of child labour, HIV infection and gender inequalities. Through the extensive network of trade unions, young people have a greater chance of ensuring that their opinions are heard and protecting their rights at work.

The disadvantages young people face in making that smooth transition from school

to work can be tackled by employment strategies and/or **national action plans on youth employment** that include the goal of sustained employment generation, poverty reduction and education and training. Experience has shown that simple action plans work best, along with finding the right “hook” or best entry point. This could be the action plan itself, a particular policy or a new country-led initiative. Consultations with tripartite partners, civil society and young people during the process of designing an action plan have proven important for influencing political will. This has been achieved by highlighting the problems convincingly, based on sound problem analysis. It is important to consolidate what initiatives exist in a country that promote decent work for youth and use them as building blocks to progress towards more broad-based programmes.

Ultimately, it is about finding the right mix of interventions linked to relevant development (such as UNDAF Common Country Assessments, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Education for All and technical and vocational education and training), which can lead to a more coherent delivery of youth employment services by public and private providers. A toolkit to assist policy-makers and practitioners in supporting young workers was developed

and adapted for the region in collaboration with the International Training Centre and Youth Employment Programme of the ILO, through regional and country-based forums.

National action plans on youth employment – The YEN's lead countries for the Asia-Pacific region – Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka – as well as Nepal and the Philippines have developed national action plans on youth employment. These plans are either integrated into the country's overall development action plan or issued as separate documents.

Within the context of YEN and in collaboration with the UN Secretariat, the World Bank and other relevant specialized agencies, the ILO provides technical assistance to governments in the elaboration of their national action plans. This process involves policy-makers from various government agencies, labour market institutions (including employers' and

workers' organizations) and representatives of civil society, including youth associations. Participatory approaches are essential to ensure broad-based support for reforms and measures aimed at improving the employment prospects of young people.

In addition to action plans, countries have used other means of integrating youth employment concerns into national policy. In Viet Nam, for example, the ILO assisted in the drafting of the country's first Youth Law and helped ensure the inclusion of a component on employment for young people. The Youth Law, which the National Assembly adopted in 2005, creates a solid legal environment in support of youth employment. Sri Lanka's current Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper focuses on the development of an entrepreneurial culture and attitudes among young people through education and a more responsive business environment.

[Click here for Sri Lanka YEN](#)

[Click here for Indonesia Youth Employment Action Plan 2004–2007](#)

3. Partnerships

Within countries, the ILO is working with its tripartite partners as well as with the UN family and civil society organizations. Collaboration is not always easy, but where it does work, the results are well worth the time invested. A number of countries address youth employment directly and, in

the context of expanding basic education, skills development and livelihood opportunities for young people.

Cooperation with regional bodies on youth employment –The ILO is working with APEC, which brings together both

UN and regional organizations: possible entry points for collaboration on youth employment	
Organization	Possible entry points on youth employment
World Bank UNDP UNESCO ADB Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA (UNESCO, UNESCAP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, UNIFEM, civil society organizations, donors) APEC ASEM ASEAN	Employment, basic education and skills development, livelihoods, small and medium enterprise development Employment including youth employment, livelihoods Basic education and skills development, life-skills Employment, basic education and skills development Basic education and skills development; child labour (education) and youth employment links Building on previous collaboration on child labour (education) and youth employment links; human resources and skills development Youth employment, social protection, skills development Youth entrepreneurship

donor and recipient countries to build capacity and mobilize resources in this field. The links between child-labour elimination, education, skills training and youth employment are being strengthened further through the Regional Thematic Working Group on Education for All.

The ILO and the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) have collaborated on several fronts to encourage youth employment creation. At the third ASEM Ministerial Labour and Employment Conference in Leiden (December 2010) and under the theme Full Employment and Decent Work for All: Getting Out of the Crisis with a Stronger Social Basis for Our Citizens, the Leiden Youth Declaration, Creating Opportunities for More and Better Youth Employment, was presented.

While youth entrepreneurship provides greater opportunities for skills development and employment as well as innovation in products and services, it is not the solution to youth unemployment alone. Many of the difficulties young women and men face in obtaining finance for their businesses is due to their lack of previous business experience, the absence of sufficient collateral upon which the loan can be secured or the result of a general bias against young women and men taking

The ILO entered into a partnership with ASEAN+3 to explore strategies to promote youth enterprise in Asia, building on good practices and lessons learned of the member countries. There is a continued need to promote an entrepreneurial culture and enabling policy environment to ensure more options for youth in waged or self-employment in the region. Within ASEAN, there is practical experience in public-private partnerships (Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong (China) and Singapore), role models, youth business competitions (Thailand), promoting an entrepreneurial culture (China), entrepreneurship education and working with young entrepreneurs' associations.

such initiatives. The opportunities and challenges are being explored further, including through the proposed ASEAN+3 Knowledge Network on Youth Enterprise.

Technical cooperation and resources

Technical cooperation enables the ILO to support countries and constituents to address youth employment with resources for developing knowledge, tools and

competency and implementing pilot interventions that can inform policy advice. This of course requires mobilizing the needed resources.

The South-East Asia and Pacific subregion has received the largest growth in technical cooperation in recent years, including in Indonesia with the Education and Skills Training for Youth Employment (EAST project); the Job Opportunities for Youth (JOY) project as well as strategic youth employment projects with workers and employers; the Subregional Programme to Promote Education, Employability and Decent Work for Youth in the Pacific Island countries; the Youth Employment Promotion Programme in Timor-Leste; the Youth Employment Through Local Economic Development in Viet Nam and the Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth in the Philippines.

Promoting Decent Work for Youth in Sri Lanka and the Jobs for Peace in Nepal mark the first major projects dedicated to youth employment in South Asia. In East Asia, there are activities to support youth employment in China and Mongolia, including through the Joint Programmes Youth Employment and Migration (YEM).

To maintain its technical cooperation role with the reform movement ongoing within the United Nations towards a “One UN”, the ILO will need to increasingly develop joint programmes within UN country teams. The MDG Achievement Fund provides great opportunities to mobilize resources in the areas of youth employment, migration, gender and the environment. Joint programming will require strong skills in ensuring efficient inter-agency collaboration. Programmes in China (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of China’s Vulnerable Migrants) and in Philippines (Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth) are being financed by the Millennium Development Goal Fund on Youth, Employment and Migration.

Drawing from ILO–IPEC experience

Through the International Labour Conference proceedings on youth employment, the ILO and its constituents have strongly recommended drawing upon the experience of large-scale technical cooperation programmes, such as the ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). ILO–IPEC has been targeting vulnerable

children and youth since 1992. Considering it is now operational in 88 countries and is the largest international programme on child labour, youth employment programmes can benefit from its breadth of experience in data collection and research, pilot interventions, policy development and knowledge management. Forging operational links more systematically will provide greater opportunities to improve and broaden the impact of projects on child labour and youth employment.



Young Nepalese girl. ©ILO/J.Maillard, 1985.

Both ILO–IPEC and the youth employment programme are striving to ensure decent work over the life cycle of vulnerable children, including 15- to 17-year-olds working in the worst forms of child labour. It is important to understand how gender, migration and the spread of HIV impact upon child labour and youth employment challenges.

The significant technical cooperation portfolio and the wide range of products and tools that have been developed by child labour and youth employment programmes form a solid basis upon which to work towards improving educational attainment and employability of out-of-school youth and children and youth at risk of dropping out of school.

ILO–IPEC can bring its experience in reaching out-of-school youth and children and youth at risk in low-income communities in both urban and rural or remote areas. Youth employment programmes offer considerable expertise in ensuring relevant education, training and career counselling and guidance as well as entrepreneurship towards increased employability of youth (and away from children). The materials that have been developed for use in secondary and vocational schools can be adapted for use by out-of-school youth vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour.

A handbook for ILO field staff entitled *Forging Linkages Between Child Labour and Youth Employment Programmes Across Asia and the Pacific* outlines specific child

[Click here for Forging Linkages Between Child Labour and Youth Employment Programmes Across Asia and the Pacific](#)

labour and youth employment challenges, conceptual links and the pillars upon which collaboration can be built (such as policy, knowledge development, social mobilizing

and technical cooperation). It also makes concrete suggestions for future technical interventions.

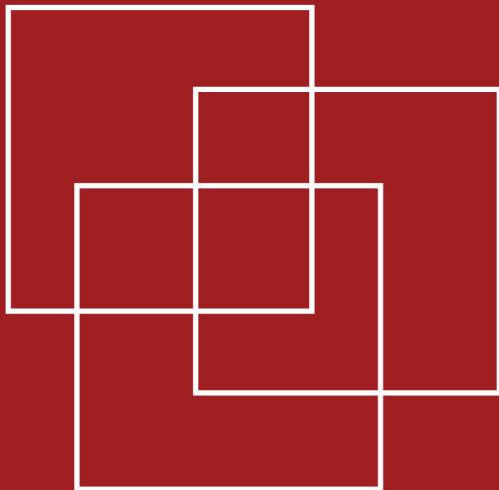
Child labour and youth employment links in India – The US\$40 million INDUS, which has since been completed was the largest ILO technical cooperation project in the Asia-Pacific region and target 80,000 children employed in hazardous work. It partnered with the National Child Labour Project Scheme and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Universal Elementary Education Programme). INDUS provided an integrated approach to tackling the worst forms of child labour and promoting access to relevant education, training and decent work opportunities for youth. For example, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the Government of India and five state governments, the project developed three demand-driven vocational skills training models that the Indian National Child Labour Programmes Central Monitoring Committee recommended for scaling up. Several other experiences from the project have been mainstreamed into government vocational training policies and programmes.

In Mongolia – The Labour and Social Welfare Office implemented pilot activities to provide adolescents with alternatives to working in hazardous conditions by increasing the access and relevance of employment services and vocational training. The first step was to assess existing training and employment services for young people, taking into account psychological factors for working children. Parents participated in the assessments and in the employment service information sessions. The Labour and Social Welfare Office also conducted awareness-raising sessions for potential employers that increased the number of jobs offered to trainees and helped achieve an 80 per cent placement rate. The pilot also allowed the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in developing a curriculum matched to local labour market needs and providing employment services to ease the school-to-work transition.

4. Knowledge management and impact evaluation

Evaluation evidence on youth employment programmes is weak throughout the region. There is a real need for the ILO to work with other UN agencies and institutions to produce more evidence on what interventions to support young workers have succeeded and what has failed and under what circumstances. While such a comprehensive thematic evaluation should be pursued over the long term, valuable lessons can be learned from also monitoring and evaluating technical cooperation on youth employment.

In response to demands from constituents, the ILO in 2008 launched the **Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Youth Employment (APYouthNet)**, an online community of practice, connecting people passionate about youth employment issues in the Asia-Pacific region. The network was launched within the framework of the Asian Decent Work Decade and now includes more than 700 active members. It may be accessed at <http://ap-youthnet.ilobkk.or.th>.



The Resource Kit brings together the ILO's expertise, knowledge and tools as they relate to Decent Work and the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade (2006-2015) in a single, accessible package. It has been created to help workers, employers, governments and other interested parties learn more about the priority areas, the key challenges and the resources available to meet them.

ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Bldg, Rajdamnern Nok Ave
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel. +66 2288 1234
Fax. +66 2288 3062

Email: BANGKOK@ilo.org
www.ilo.org/asia

ISBN: 978-92-2-124832-3