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Building an Asia-Pacific youth employment coalition: Reviewing past policies and the way forward

Lin Lean Lim
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Preface

Promoting decent employment opportunities for the youth is becoming a global priority. While 400 million new jobs are needed in the next decade to keep with population growth, young people are still three to five times more likely to be unemployed than adults. In Asia and the Pacific, these rates only represent part of the challenge due to the predominance of the informal economy, the abundance of underemployment and the common struggle of working poverty. The region as a whole needs to maintain current levels of growth while creating formal jobs and fighting poverty and vulnerability, particularly in light of the 36.4 million young women and men between the ages of 15 and 24 who are looking for decent and productive employment.

In an increasingly uncertain economic environment, young people find it very hard to land decent jobs and employers restrict hiring to a minimum low. Yet investing in youth employment is crucial because it promotes social justice while encouraging productivity and growth.

The need for more and better jobs for young women and men was reiterated during the 2010-2011 International Year of Youth, and it has also been demonstrated by the level of frustration displayed by young people during the Arab Spring. From Cairo to Madrid and to Sanaa, images of disillusioned youth remind us that young people who lose hope in seeing their aspirations met are often left with very few choices: They step aside from the labour market to become part of the so called “Lost Generation”.

In his speech at the 100th session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2011, the President of Indonesia, His Excellency Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, called for a “Global Coalition for Youth Employment”. This commitment to see concerted measures for full, productive and freely chosen employment for young people puts forward the notion that isolated measures alone are not sufficient; and that long-term, coherent and concerted action over a wide range of macroeconomic, social and sectoral policies are needed to create enough job opportunities.

We hope this working paper, “Building an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition: Reviewing Past Policies and the Way Forward” will help policy-makers identify tangible action to build a coalition for youth employment. It gathers evidence from the resolution of the ILC 2005 on Youth Employment, as well as subsequent interventions, and suggests a method for placing youth at the heart of common action. Given this perspective, we hope it will provide a valuable insight to the upcoming G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting to be held under the Mexican Presidency in 2012.

I would like to thank the author, Ms Lin Lean Lim for her invaluable contribution, as well as ILO colleagues for their constructive review and suggestions.

I wish you a pleasant reading.

Sachiko Yamamoto
Regional Director
Asia and the Pacific

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Abstract

As the world continues to deal with a global recession and a widespread jobs crisis, the political commitment to address youth employment has become very high in Asia and the Pacific. The region may be leading the economic recovery, but young women and men between 15 and 24 years of age are still three to five times more likely to be unemployed in comparison to adults. This gap has resulted in economies not reaching their growth potential and has played a role in fomenting a sense of frustration among the underutilized youth.

This working paper addresses the importance of acting quickly to implement youth employment policies in a coordinated way. It provides elements of a response to a regional chapter of a possible “Global Coalition for Youth Employment” which was called for by the President of Indonesia, His Excellency Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the International Labour Conference in June 2011.

Following a review of existing policies and programmes, the paper suggests solutions which address both the supply and demand sides of the labour market. It calls for Asia-Pacific countries to unite in the formation of a coalition of governments, unions and employers in order to enhance youth employment within the context of economic prosperity and decent work for all.

About the author

Lin Lean Lim is an independent consultant who has dedicated her career to addressing employment related issues and enhancing opportunities for decent work.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in 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, or of any products, processes or geographical designations mentioned.

Executive summary

The topic of more and better jobs for youth is very high on the policy agenda at international, **regional** and national levels. Youth employment is a key dimension of the Global Jobs Pact. The United Nations (UN) declared an International Year of Youth which began in August 2010. At the 100th International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2011, the President of Indonesia called for a global alliance to promote decent work for youth. At the Cannes Summit in November 2011, G20 leaders set up a G20 Task-Force on Employment, with a focus on youth employment and tasked international organizations (IMF, OECD, ILO, World Bank) to report to Finance Ministers on how the economic reform agenda under the G20 Framework will contribute to job creation especially for youth.

Within this significant context, the paper reviews policies and programmes in the Asia-Pacific region for promoting youth employment and makes suggestions for building a regional Youth Employment Coalition.

Why the focus on youth employment

The focus on youth employment is both timely and crucial. The global youth unemployment rate saw its largest annual increase on record during the global economic crisis; with Asia-Pacific accounting for 45 per cent of the world's unemployed youth and young persons up to five times more likely to be unemployed than adults. More serious than open unemployment are: underemployment and precarious, informal working conditions of youth who have no choice but to work; the much higher rate of working poverty for young workers as compared to adults; the increasing rates of inactivity and discouragement among youth; and the wastage of human resources through mismatches between education and jobs.

Youth left behind in the transition from school to work or who are poorly integrated in the labour market cumulate multiple disadvantages, with long-term negative repercussions on career prospects, lifetime income, health prospects and social mobility and perpetuation of an inter-generational cycle of poverty. This “scarred generation” poses imminent dangers that have been described as a “time bomb” which risks damaging the social, economic and political fabric of countries.

Tackling the youth jobs crisis is critical also because it is inextricably linked to other key policy challenges for countries, including dealing with demographic transitions; promoting gender equality; eliminating child labour; addressing climate change; promoting information societies; and managing labour migration.

Review of youth employment policies and programmes

At the regional level, ASEAN implements the Manila Declaration on Strengthening Participation in Sustainable Youth Employment and the Vientiane Action Programme which has an important component on youth entrepreneurship. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has included youth as a priority for regional action in the Pacific Plan 2006-2015. At the national level, the countries have national action plans or specific policies and programmes aimed at improving decent work opportunities for young women and men.

Although strict evaluation has not been conducted in many cases, a review of the policies and programmes for promoting youth employment in Asia-Pacific highlighted some key considerations and lessons learned of what works:

- *Supply-side policies and programmes:*

- While Asia-Pacific is on track to achieve MDG2 on universal enrolment in primary education and also MDG3 on gender participation in secondary education, drop-out rates remain high and learning outcomes are not at all ensured in terms of successful labour market insertion. It is important to improve not just the quantity but the quality of *basic education* and reform *vocational education and training (VET) for skill development*.
 - Successful *skill development* measures share some common features: provision of different types of skills – cognitive, “life”, technical and entrepreneurial; involvement of the private sector and social partners linking VET with labour market demand; enabling youth to signal their acquired skills to employers; VET as part of an integrated package including financial supports, certification or accreditation and job search assistance; recognition of non-formal and informal learning and enhanced capacity of informal learning systems; and measures reaching out to informal economy workers.
- *Policies and programmes to facilitate the school-to work transition:*
- “*Apprenticeships* are good for the individual, the employer and the State. Our inquiry found only positive things to say. Programmes that either broker or financially support internships or work experience placements again enjoy broad support”. However, it is important to ensure that employers do not use apprenticeship/trainee schemes as a form of cheap labour.
 - As training pathways have become more varied and occupational requirements become less clearly defined, it is more important than ever to provide youth with up-to-date, realistic *labour market information, career guidance and job search and placement services*. Employment services tend to be most effective when they are linked on the one hand to potential employers and on the other to the education and training system.
- *Demand-side policies and programmes:*
- *Youth entrepreneurship* can be a valuable strategy for unleashing the productive and innovative potential of young people. Multi-faceted and comprehensive programmes – that combine entrepreneurship education and business start-up training and support including mentoring, business incubators, cooperatives and microcredit – have a higher chance of success. They are also likely to be more effective when embedded in an enabling policy and regulatory environment; public policy measures supporting small enterprise development are especially significant.
 - Several Asian countries have developed international *migration policies* as a means of dealing with labour market pressures. A central component of migration policy has to be the protection of young migrant workers, especially female migrants, from exploitation and abuse throughout the migration process. A sending country needs to pay particular attention to brain drain issues, especially when they are increasing their budgets for education and training and at the same time experiencing shortages of skilled and qualified labour and losing their “best and brightest”.
 - Labour-intensive *public works programmes* can help absorb the large numbers of young unemployed and underemployed and also have a triple win potential for tackling poverty, environment and gender issues. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) in India and the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) in Pakistan offer examples of innovative national schemes. The public employment programmes have to be specifically, carefully and sensitively targeted to avoid deadweight losses, substitution effects, displacement and creaming off.
 - *Wage subsidies and other incentives* (such as tax exemptions) should be limited in duration and should target the specific disadvantages faced by young people.

- There is no clear evidence or general agreement about the impact of *minimum wages* on youth employment. Without serious monitoring and evaluation, there appear to be few grounds for reducing minimum wages of young people as a means of cutting youth unemployment or increasing the demand for youth labour. Certainly, any wage policy must respect the labour rights of young workers and ensure they receive fair and adequate incomes.
 - *Employment protection legislation (EPL)* should be reviewed to minimize the dualism it creates between protected workers with permanent contracts and jobseekers and temporary workers and to ensure that young women and men seeking their first jobs are not unjustly penalized by overly strict EPL. The challenge is to strike the right balance between flexibility for employers to adjust to economic conditions and remain competitive and security and dignity at work for all workers, irrespective of age.
 - Countries need to strengthen *labour inspection* to ensure that the laws and regulations are being properly observed and implemented. At the same time, it is also important to raise awareness of young workers of the laws and regulations affecting them.
- *Policies and programmes for at-risk and marginalized youth:*
- Traditional employment policy instruments may be ill-suited to assisting young persons who are far removed from the labour force or who have only limited work experience. Specific policy measures to reintegrate long-term unemployed and inactive youth into the labour market include measures to expanded social safety nets to cover these young persons and measures to combine education or training with a financial stipend.

The way forward: an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition

An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition could be a major initiative for governments, employers' and workers' organizations, international organizations and youth organizations to jointly and effectively tackle the youth jobs crisis – and provide a model for a wider, global effort.

Before countries can look to regional cooperation to solve the youth jobs crisis, they need to improve their own youth employment policies and programmes:

- First and foremost, the youth jobs crisis cannot be solved without putting employment and decent work at the core of national economic and social policies. The Global Jobs Pact offers a set of balanced and realistic policy measures to promote jobs and sustainable enterprises and protect people.
- A national youth employment strategy should be holistic – supportive policies should integrate growth and job creation, reform the education and training system, provide an enabling environment for enterprise, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, give attention to the informal economy and help young people overcome the specific barriers and disadvantages they face in entering and remaining in the labour market.
- A commitment to decent work is fundamental – focusing on both quantity and quality of employment for youth, respecting and promoting their labour rights.
- Multi-pronged programmes that integrate an array of services are likely to have greater and sustainable impact on creating jobs for youth than single interventions.
- Fragmentation of policies and programmes should be avoided among the many institutions and partners that play a role in youth employment policy development and implementation.

While youth employment issues should be tackled taking into account the particular circumstances, needs and resources of a country and its young people, collaborative or joint action at a regional level can have added and enhanced benefits. *A Coalition can provide a platform for countries in the region to work together to:*

- strengthen the knowledge base on youth employment policies and programmes relevant and effective for the region;
- gather and analyse evidence-based information and data to assist decision makers address key dilemmas in promoting youth employment;
- enhance regional capacity for evaluation of policies and programmes;
- encourage and support regional cooperation on the reform of education and training;
- promote the recognition and standardization of competency and skill qualification systems;
- jointly expand youth training and work experience avenues;
- more effectively manage labour migration and protect migrant workers; and
- forge linkages with other regional cooperation initiatives and networks to promote synergies and policy coherence and strengthen impacts on youth.

An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition must be a true coalition of governments, the social partners, international organizations and youth.

In terms of the role of *governments*, action must start at national level, but there are also regional and international frameworks urging “collective action for the benefit of all” and governments have committed to give effect to, importantly, the Millennium Declaration, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Global Jobs Pact and, more recently, the G20 Cannes Summit Final Declaration.

Social dialogue involving the key actors in the labour market is especially important in efforts to address the impacts of the economic crisis. Tripartite and bipartite mechanisms of social dialogue are also particularly suited for addressing the youth employment-related issues such as training, apprenticeships and skills matching.

Employers’ organizations and trade unions play a critical role in influencing the debate on policy areas affecting youth employment. The lobbying strategies and actions of these organizations at national, regional and international levels can greatly influence decisions, laws and regulations and general attitudes of key policy-makers. Employers’ and workers’ organizations are also directly involved in various types of activities and initiatives to do their part in promoting youth employment. At the international level, the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) are partners in the Youth Employment Network (YEN).

Active involvement of *youth organizations* will be a key determinant of success for an Asia-Pacific Coalition. Effective youth participation means that young people are not seen as passive recipients of national resources or the root causes of society’s problems. Instead they are seen as stakeholders who make an important contribution to their countries’ development and whose involvement must therefore be appropriately nurtured and cultivated. Major international and regional youth organizations have mobilized themselves into the Youth Consultative Group

(YCG) to work with YEN on how best to support active youth participation in youth employment policy development around the world.

The *UN family and the international financial institutions* are already working together through the YEN. They also have various collaboration with the regional organizations.

Abbreviations

ACE	ASEAN Confederation of Employers
ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ACYF	All-China Youth Federation
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALMP	active labour market policy
AMMY	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APYouthNet	Asia-Pacific Knowledge Sharing Network on Youth Employment
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CAMFEBA	Cambodia Federation of Employers and Business Associations
CAPE	Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers
CII	Confederation of Indian Industry
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking
CSR	corporate social responsibility
EDB	Economic Development Board
EEO	European Employment Observatory
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
EPL	Employment Protection Legislation
ICT	information and communication technologies
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOE	International Organization of Employers
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
ITUC-AP	International Trade Union Confederation—Asia-Pacific
IYF	International Youth Foundation
LMI	labour market information
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MGNREGP	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme
MISA	Migration Information System in Asia
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
NMC	National Manpower Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PISBDCN	Pacific Islands Small Business Development Centre Network
RCP	Regional Cooperation Platform
SDF	Skill Development Fund
SNEF	Singapore National Employers' Federation
SPRING	Singapore Enabling Enterprise
TUCP	Trade Union Congress of the Philippines
UN	United Nations
UNECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
VET	vocational education and training
VYE	Viet Youth Entrepreneurs
WFTU-AP	World Federation of Trade Unions-Asia Pacific Region
YBC	Youth Business China
YCG	Youth Consultative Groups
YCI	Youth Career Initiative
YE NAP	Youth Employment National Plan of Action
YEI	Youth Employment Inventory
YEM	Youth Entrepreneur Malaysia
YEN	Youth Employment Network

1. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific region accounts for 55 per cent of the total world population of youth aged 15 to 24 years. Decent work for these young women and men will determine how they succeed – as workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, agents of change, citizens, leaders, and mothers and fathers – and shape current and future economic, social political and technological developments and determine the region's place in the global arena. “We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future”.¹

More and better jobs for youth represent a key dimension of the Global Jobs Pact.² At the 99th International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2010, the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs focused on the topic of “youth employment in crisis.” The United Nations declared an International Year of Youth which began in August 2010. At the 100th ILC in 2011, the President of Indonesia called for countries to work together to promote decent work for youth, saying that this would be critical to creating a new era of social justice. Youth entrepreneurship will be the topic for General Discussion at the ILC in 2012. At the Cannes Summit in November 2011, leaders of the G20 committed to renew efforts to combat unemployment and promote decent jobs, especially for youth and others who have been most affected by the economic crisis. They set up a G20 Task-Force on Employment, with a focus on youth employment, that will provide input to the G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting to be held under the Mexican Presidency in 2012, and tasked international organizations (IMF, OECD, ILO, World Bank) to report to Finance Ministers on a global employment outlook and how the economic reform agenda under the G20 Framework will contribute to job creation.³

Within this significant context, the paper reviews the region's policies and programmes for promoting youth employment and makes suggestions for building an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition. Section 2 of the paper explains why it is essential to focus on youth employment. From a life-cycle perspective, of course, all age groups are important; but there is special significance and urgency in the issues of youth unemployment and underutilization of the human resources of the young. Section 3 highlights the related policy challenges – youth employment should be addressed in the context of other key concerns confronting countries in the region. While youth unemployment and underemployment is inextricably linked to the general situation of jobless growth that most countries in the region have been confronting, young people also face age-specific barriers in the labour market, as pointed out in Section 4. Section 5 reviews the policies and programmes in Asia-Pacific for addressing these barriers that youth face in both the supply and demand sides of the labour market and in making the transition from school-to-work. Although the policies and programmes have not been formally evaluated in many cases, the section attempts to provide international and regional experiences and lessons learned of what works and what does not work. Section 6, the final section, identifies the bases for an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition, suggests how countries could work together, and emphasizes the role of different actors, including youth themselves.

¹ F.D. Roosevelt: Speech at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 20 Sep. 1940.

² The Global Jobs Pact was unanimously adopted at the 2009 International Labour Conference.

³ *Building our common future: Renewed collective action for the benefit of all*, G20, Cannes Summit Final Declaration, 4 Nov. 2011, <http://www.g20.org/Documents2011/11/Cannes%20Declaration%204%20November%202011.pdf> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

2. Why the focus on youth employment

The global economic crisis has exacerbated a youth jobs crisis....

Among the gloomy indicators of the recent global economic crisis the surge in youth unemployment rates was most alarming. Between 2008 and 2009, the number of unemployed youth increased by an unprecedented 4.5 million worldwide, and the global youth unemployment rate saw its largest annual increase on record (ILO, 2011a, p. 1). The generation of young people who grew up during a period of prosperity increasingly felt the effects of the global economic recession. The Asia-Pacific region accounted for some 45 per cent of the world's unemployed youth. The crisis certainly confirmed that young women and men not only face certain age-specific difficulties in the labour market but are also more vulnerable than adults to economic shocks.

In 2010, Asia-Pacific led the world in economic recovery from the crisis.⁴ But the economic recovery has not been matched by labour market recovery, especially not for youth. In 2010, there were some 33.7 million unemployed young Asians and the youth unemployment rate remained near its cyclical peak. The youth unemployment rate was 13.6 per cent in South-East Asia and the Pacific, 8.8 per cent in East Asia and 9.9 per cent in South Asia. The ratios of youth-to adult unemployment rates are a good quantifier of the different outcomes between young and adult job seekers - youth were almost five times more likely to be unemployed than adults in South-East Asia and the Pacific, 2.7 times in East Asia and 4.5 times in South Asia (ILO, 2011c).

The open unemployment rate, however, is notoriously inadequate for reflecting the seriousness of the problem. *Firstly*, there is a growing gap between the current youth labour force count and the expected youth labour force based on pre-crisis trends (ILO, 2011b, p. 4). Many more young people are opting out of the labour market, “hiding out” in the education system rather than face the job search or are just idling away too discouraged to actively search for a job. Youth neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) face a high risk of social and economic exclusion. *Secondly*, and more significantly, most young persons in Asia-Pacific without social security and without families to support them or with families they have to support cannot afford the luxury of being openly unemployed. They have no choice but to go into whatever source of livelihood available – youth who are employed often work long hours under informal, insecure and intermittent work arrangements characterized by meagre earnings, low productivity and little or no social protection. Working conditions and remuneration from work are, therefore, key issues for employed youth. *Thirdly*, in the Asian countries for which data are available, working poverty is at least four percentage points and as much as 10 percentage points higher for young workers than for adult workers (ILO, 2011b). *Fourthly*, many young people have also been forced to trade down and accept inferior forms of employment relative to their levels of education – this mismatch between education and employment is obviously a waste of human resources.

A “scarred” generation represents a “time bomb”....

In 2011 and looking ahead, with the economic recovery stalling and the threat of prolonged recession looming larger, it is even more urgent to solve the youth jobs crisis.

The youth jobs crisis has been described as creating a “scarred” generation (ILO, 2011b, p. 6). Youth left behind in the transition from school to work or who are poorly integrated in the labour market cumulate multiple disadvantages. Delay in finding initial employment and long spells of unemployment have long-term negative repercussions on career prospects, lifetime income, health prospects and social mobility and perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty – mainly through effects associated with human capital (*i.e.* deterioration of skills and foregone work experience) or signalling effects (*i.e.* periods of

⁴ In 2010, Developing Asia grew by 9.3 per cent, fuelled by the People's Republic of China growth of 10.3 per cent, India's growth of 9.7 per cent and ASEAN's growth of 6.7 per cent. The Newly Industrialized Asian economies grew by 8.2 per cent. By comparison, world output increased by 5.0 per cent (IMF, 2011).

unemployment convey a signal of low productivity to potential employers). Even when jobs come back, employers might choose to reach past today's unemployed, who might appear to be damaged goods, and pick from the next crop of fresh graduates. The longer the unemployment spell lasts, the more individual productivity will be affected and the lower the level of initial qualification, the longer the scarring effects are likely to last. Unemployment and precarious work also bring with them the absence of financial autonomy which may constrain opportunities to live independently, start a relationship and begin a family. Long term negative consequences include psychological impacts with young people increasingly distrustful of the political and economic system, increasingly frustrated and more susceptible to the temptations of crime and drugs.

The imminent dangers posed by such a “scarred generation” have also been described as a “time bomb” which risks damaging the social, economic and political fabric of countries (Coy, 2011; International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), 2009). The role of young people in the Arab Spring is a stark illustration of what happens when a nation cannot generate enough decent jobs to absorb its youth and creates a lost generation of youth that has become disheartened about the future and increasingly angry and violent.

Asia-Pacific faces a distinct problem in that it is the only region where an ageing society overlaps with an ongoing youth bulge. On the one hand, the population of many Asian countries is rapidly ageing.⁵ “In many countries, the young are being crushed by a gerontocracy of older workers who appear determined to cling to the better jobs as long as possible” (Coy, 2011) – but increasingly, it is the younger generation that will have to shoulder the costs of pensions and health care for the “greying population”. On the other hand, several countries are still experiencing a youth bulge. In South Asia, an average of 1 million young people will enter the labour market each year until 2015. The youth labour force is also projected to grow significantly in the coming decade in Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pacific Island countries, Pakistan and Timor-Leste. The large numbers of young new entrants will put further pressure on over-saturated labour markets. Some governments are also confronting the tension of balancing policies to help young workers to enter the labour market against pressures to extend the working lives of older workers through raising or removing compulsory retirement ages.⁶

Asia-Pacific has shown impressive strides in educational attainment. But there is significant mismatch between young people's education and the needs of the labour market. A major complaint of employers is that many young people are “unemployable” – available jobs often go unfilled because young people do not have the relevant qualifications and skills. When governments and the private sector are pouring funds into education and training and producing the best educated generation of young human resources, it is a great waste of valuable resources that these young women and men are not able to fully utilize their potentials and contribute to national development.

3. The related policy challenges

It is critical to tackle the youth jobs crisis not only for the reasons listed above but also, and importantly, because of the significant links with other key policy challenges facing countries in Asia and the Pacific.

⁵ By 2020, the share of population aged 60 years and above will have risen to 16.9 per cent from 12.5 per cent in East Asia, 11.6 from 8.6 per cent in South-East Asia and the Pacific, and 9.3 from 7.2 per cent in South Asia. More than a third of Japan's population and more than a quarter of Singapore's population would be above 60 years by 2020 (United Nations, 2009)

⁶ However, it is important to avoid the “*lump-of-labour*” fallacy according to which there is only a fixed number of jobs to be distributed between workers. In fact, across countries, the relationship between employment of youth and that of older workers is positive. In addition, while smaller youth cohorts may imply young persons will have more job opportunities, they can only benefit if they possess the skills required by the labour market (OECD and ILO, 2011).

3.1. The promotion of gender equality

Asia-Pacific has made great strides towards achieving the education component but not the employment component of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 on gender equality. The gender gaps in education have been narrowing and in many cases young women are doing better than young men in school. But female youth still encounter greater barriers in making the transition from school to work.⁷ The full potential of young women to contribute to development remains untapped. In all subregions except East Asia, the unemployment rate is higher for young women than young men and also the youth labour force participation rate and employment-to-population ratio are significantly lower for young women than young men.⁸ Where young women find work, it is commonly in low-wage, labour-intensive export-oriented manufacturing or in other forms of vulnerable employment in the poorest segments of the informal economy (ILO and ADB, 2011).

3.2. Child labour

Child labour affects both the supply and demand sides of youth labour markets. On the one hand, child labour prevents children from acquiring the education and skills needed to succeed in labour markets as youth. On the other hand, there is a cruel irony in the coexistence of child labour with youth unemployment and underemployment. While the demand for certain types of labour is met by children who should not be working and should be at school, there is also a supply of educated young women and men whose labour goes unused or underused. Asia-Pacific has the world's largest number of child labourers; around 114 million children, or more than one child in eight, aged between five and 17 years are engaged in child labour, 48 million in hazardous conditions (ILO, 2010a, p. 10). Tackling the problems of child labour and the youth jobs crisis together will have greater impact and success than separate efforts. It is not enough to eliminate child labour without ensuring that the alternatives provide opportunities for education and the acquisition of skills that are in demand and improve the employability of young people. Action to address the detrimental health effects of premature employment and hazardous work of children would also serve to ensure that employability during the most vigorous and productive years of youth is not impaired. Measures to promote more effective functioning labour markets would help to reorient the demand for labour away from children towards young people.

3.3. Climate change and environmental degradation

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Declaration at their annual meetings has consistently noted that the region faces heightened challenges with regard to the protection of the environment and natural resources and emphasized the necessity to jointly address climate change. APEC and also the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have also made special note of the implications of climate change and environmental degradation for the lives and livelihoods of young people and the role that youth can play in sustainable development. The youth of today will be in the frontline in the coming decades dealing with the threats and opportunities of climate change; therefore, capacitating and involving them in the response to climate change is critical. There will be winners and losers among young people. Losers would include those who lose the natural resources they are

⁷ ILO school-to-work transition surveys reached the conclusion that "successful transitions are often correlated with gender. There are serious gaps in participation rates and transition outcomes between young women and men. In most countries, young women remain much more likely to be neither economically active nor in school. Many young women are not free to pursue the possibility of working outside of the home, and for others, the lack of outside demand for productive work by women, due to social or cultural reasons, is enough to discourage them from engaging in the job search. Most young women who do enter the labour market face a lengthy job search before finally settling into an unsatisfactory job where they will be paid less than men (Matsumoto and Elder, 2010).

⁸ The lower unemployment rate and, simultaneously, higher labour force participation rate for young women as compared to young men in East Asia is unique in the world. This is due to East-Asia's success in creating opportunities for women in the workforce, but it also reflects reliance on the labour of young women who are seen to be "more tractable and subservient to managerial authority, less prone to organize into unions, more willing to accept lower wages because of their own lower reservation and aspiration wages, and easier to dismiss using life cycle criteria such as marriage and childbirth" (UNESCAP, 2002).

dependent on for their livelihoods or whose jobs become redundant or disappear with green growth strategies; while winners would include those who are equipped with the necessary skills and empowered to seize opportunities for new, green jobs.

3.4. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

ICT has been acknowledged as a key ingredient in knowledge economies and information societies. In today's world, it is young people who are the early adopters and adaptors and leading creators of ICT - highly-valued skills for spurring innovation and economic growth. Technology is what young people have grown up with, what they know more about than their parents and what gives them an edge. Recent social movements, civil demonstrations and political upheavals have shown how the young have acquired a powerful social media tool to connect, communicate, innovate, instigate and organize action on things that matter to them on a scale that transcends their locality – making them not just national but regional and global actors. Young people care about many things, including the lack of employment opportunities, corruption and cronyism, climate change and the environment, social justice and human rights, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Because of their ideals, youth who are proficient with ICT and are motivated to create change can be a very potent force for linking the use of technologies to socio-economic development goals. At the same time and importantly, ICT-related jobs offer numerous new employment opportunities for young women and men.⁹ However, there are still huge digital divides – young people in poor countries still have limited access to computers and the internet.

3.5. Migration

Labour migration is high on the policy agenda of the region. Youth make up the bulk of migrants streaming from the rural areas into towns and cities and also overseas in search of jobs. For many young men and women, migration can be a positive experience with important emancipating and empowering impacts.¹⁰ But young migrant workers, especially young female migrants, often end up in situations of serious disadvantage, discrimination, marginalization and vulnerability as compared to older migrants, urban residents or nationals in a receiving country.¹¹ In internal migration to the towns and cities, the young migrants provide the often much needed labour force for labour-intensive manufacturing, construction and services such as domestic help and work in the tourism and food industries. But often they also lead to overcrowding of urban housing, infrastructure and social services. For the rural areas they leave behind, the shortage of workers for agriculture and food production can become a serious issue.

The migration of young women and men overseas has also been escalating involving a search for employment, job-related education or better conditions of life. At one end of the spectrum, young Asians

⁹ Wayan Vota provided these examples: “For those outside the formal sector - the majority of economic activity in most developing world countries - there are increasingly technology-driven opportunities. One is micro tasking, or small jobs that can be done by anyone with basic skills. Sites like CrowdFlower, CloudCrowd, and Amazon Mechanical Turk allow youth to perform simple online tasks for payment. SamaSource is similar but specifically focuses on engaging workers from the developing world. A key aspect of micro tasking is the ability to build an entire value chain, which youth can use to climb out of poverty. Digital Divide Data has been using the data entry and digital preservation needs of publishers and libraries to empower youth in Southeast Asia with competitive wages, subsidized formal secondary and university educations, and achieve incomes with other employers that are four times the average income in Cambodia and Laos” (Vota, 2011).

¹⁰ For example, a recent report that documents the spread of labour unrest across the country's export zones indicated that China's young migrant workers believe manufacturers can afford bigger pay rises and they are increasingly willing to strike to win them, and that they are increasingly adept at using the internet to mobilize. “China's ‘new generation’ of increasingly assertive workers from the countryside, who have no desire to return to farms and want to win a foothold in urban society, despite discrimination and high costs” (Buckley, 2011).

¹¹ In the People's Republic of China, some 41.6 per cent of the 150 million migrant workers in 2010 were aged between 16 and 25 years. Although 85 percent of the young migrants had signed labour contracts, the proportion of those with social security insurance was much lower, especially when compared with the rates for urban workers. Reports of sexual abuse and violence against young women migrants are all too common. “The results of the survey confirm that nearly all of the problems that have traditionally affected migrant workers, low pay, long hours and poor working conditions remain unresolved. Indeed, for young migrant workers with higher expectations than their parents, life may even be worse” (China Labour Bulletin, 2011).

make up the bulk of unskilled or low-skilled migrants going into “dirty, difficult and dangerous” (3D) jobs; they are often smuggled or trafficked and find themselves in irregular or undocumented situations. Young Asian women make up the bulk of domestic workers “in other people’s homes in other countries” where they often work long or even excessive hours, receive low wages and are exposed to physical and sexual harassment and violence and abuse. As domestic workers, often they are not covered by labour, social protection or other laws. At the other end of the scale, highly educated and professional young Asians are migrating for better opportunities or they seek education and training in the developed countries and then do not return; they are normally able to obtain the necessary papers to live and work in the host countries. But for their sending countries, they represent a serious brain drain of valuable human resources – not able to create sufficient decent jobs, these countries are losing “the best and the brightest” of their workforce.

4. General and age-specific reasons for the youth jobs crisis

Youth unemployment and underemployment are closely related to the more general issues concerning the quantity and quality of employment in a country. *National employment policy is at the heart of the problem and also of the solution.* The harsh reality is that countries have been struggling with jobless growth. As mentioned above, economic recovery from the crisis in Asia-Pacific has not been matched by labour employment recovery. And without expanding aggregate demand for labour, it is not possible to have successful programmes to integrate disadvantaged youth into the labour market – hence, the critical importance of putting productive employment at the heart of macroeconomic and social policies, of giving effect to the Global Jobs Pact.

But it is not just that young workers experience the adverse effects felt by all workers when the labour market is tight; their adversity is disproportionately large and the youth labour market has its own particular and problematic dimensions. To a varied extent, the barriers that youth in different Asian countries face in the labour market include:

- *Mismatch between academic qualifications and skills needed* with the consequence of that employers may prefer to hire older and more experienced workers. Employers often complain that even when they have job openings, they are not able to find young workers with the right types of education and training.¹² It is not just mismatches between technical skills and job requirements; mismatches in non-technical skills, such as numeracy, literacy, soft and life skills, are increasingly recognized as a key barrier to employment youth.
- As first-time jobseekers, *young people without recognized skills and work experience are disadvantaged relative to adult workers.* The ILO school-to-work transition surveys confirmed that the transitions of young women and men are lengthy and difficult (Matsumoto and Elder, 2010). Particularly in tight labour markets employers can be choosier and hire experienced workers. Even highly qualified young people have increasing difficulty in finding a job and have to undertake apprenticeships, traineeships and precarious or temporary contracts before gaining secure employment and full labour rights.
- “Insider-outsider” effects: Adults already in the labour market have an advantage over youth trying to enter it. Strict labour market regulations may make it difficult for young job seekers to compete with workers who are already employed. Employment protection legislation may enhance the dualism between protected workers with permanent contracts on the one hand, and jobseekers and temporary workers on the other hand.

¹² A December 2010 report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India noted that “the principal reason behind India’s growth is its youth force, the largest in the world. However, millions of young Indians are jobless because they do not receive proper vocational training. The huge numbers of Indian youth are not only unemployed but unemployable, whereas large numbers of white collar jobs are waiting for suitable candidates... though 90 per cent of jobs in sectors like information technology (IT) and IT Enabled Services (ITES), biotechnology and the services sector are skill-based and require training, only six per cent of the total workforce receive such training” (*Economic Times*, 2010).

- Job search barriers *lead to information gaps between job seekers and potential employers*. Without career guidance and access to realistic labour market information, young people often end up in sub-optimal job allocations. Compared to adults, young people also tend to be disadvantaged in terms of access to job networks and social capital. Another important information gap is in terms of poor signalling – for young people, acquiring a degree may not mean much in the labour market if employers are not aware of what the degree means in terms of skills level.
- Constraints on self-employment and entrepreneurship development: Young people have fewer resources than adults in the form of skills, knowledge and experience, savings and credit, business networks and sources of information. Banks and financial institutions tend to regard them as a high-risk group because they lack collateral and business experience and do not have a credit history.
- Limited organization and voice: Young people are often not represented in trade unions and employers' organizations and do not belong to political parties. Traditional forms of association have become less appealing to youth. But as a result, decision-makers may not be acquainted with the needs and aspirations of young people.

5. Regional and national youth employment initiatives

At the international level, the Millennium Declaration in 2000 resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work” (paragraph 20). In response the Youth Employment Network (YEN) was established as a partnership of the UN, ILO and the World Bank, together with the social partners and youth organizations, to find durable solutions to the youth employment challenge. YEN is a service provider focusing on policy advice, innovative pilot projects, evaluation, knowledge sharing and brokering partnerships to improve employment opportunities for youth (YEN, 2011). YEN has partnered with other organizations to establish the Youth Employment Inventory (YEI) which is a comprehensive database providing comparative information on youth employment interventions worldwide (Youth Employment Inventory, 2011¹³). The YEN Lead Country Network is a group of countries that have voluntarily committed themselves to prioritizing youth employment on their national policy agendas. The goal of the Lead Country Network is to identify benchmarks for successful youth employment initiatives that can be shared and replicated in peer Lead Countries. Indonesia¹⁴ was the first to become a Lead Country and to create IYEN, which is the first of its kind physical secretariat at the national level, located at the Ministry of Planning (BAPPENAS) and focusing on coordination among line ministries for youth employment as well as knowledge sharing.

Regional groupings of Asia-Pacific countries have taken a number of initiatives to promote youth employment. **ASEAN** cooperation on youth is overseen at the Ministerial level by an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth, which meets once every three years (ASEAN, 2009). The implementation of the programmes and activities for youth matters is carried out by the ASEAN Senior Officials on Youth, which reports to the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY). Youth cooperation in ASEAN is directed by the Work Programme on Preparing ASEAN Youth for Sustainable Development, which was considered and adopted during the AMMY IV in September 2003. The Work Programme serves as the major channel for pursuing ASEAN cooperation in youth development, and outlines the following four priority areas: (i) Policy Development; (ii) Promoting ASEAN Awareness and Civic Responsibility; (iii) Promoting Employability of Youth; and (iv) Information Exchange/Promoting Partnership. The ASEAN Secretariat supports its Member Countries in the implementation of the ASEAN Manila Declaration on Strengthening Participation in Sustainable Youth Employment and the Vientiane Action Programme,

¹³ <http://www.youth-employment-inventory.org/>

¹⁴ The other Asian country in the YEN Lead Country Network is Sri Lanka.

under which youth entrepreneurship is an important element. In November 2007, the ILO and the ASEAN Secretariat joined forces to organize an ASEAN+3 Workshop on Youth Entrepreneurship.

Leaders at the 2005 **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)** included youth as a priority for regional action in the ten-year Pacific Plan 2006-2015. The need for the increased involvement of youth for sustainable development in the region was reiterated in the 2007 Pacific Plan review. In May 2009, Pacific Education Ministers endorsed a 2009-2012 Development Framework that points to the necessity of better preparing young people for the challenges of both formal and informal employment, through improved education and training. The Communiqué of the PIF held in New Zealand in September 2011 reported that “the Leaders acknowledged the need for greater action in mainstreaming youth issues nationally and regionally, increasing employment and other meaningful opportunities for youth, and including the voice of youth in decision making. Leaders underlined the important role of government, the private sector and technical and vocational training institutions in urgently addressing youth unemployment. Leaders also recognised the need for the development of a regional framework for youth employment, the contribution that labour mobility offers, and emphasised the importance of having annual labour and employment statistics that are disaggregated by gender and age” (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2011).

At the national level, Asia-Pacific countries have adopted specific plans or programmes aimed at improving decent work opportunities for young women and men, as shown in Boxes 1 and 2.

Box 1:
Youth employment initiatives in Asia-Pacific countries

Indonesia: With the fourth largest youth population in the world, youth employment is a top priority for the Government. Indonesia was one of the first countries to join the YEN Lead Country Network back in 2002. The National Medium-Term Development Plan 2010-2014 includes a directive to overcome the youth employment challenge and the Office for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction has been tasked to develop a Youth Employment Strategy based on existing programmes and activities implemented by various ministries. At the 2011 International Labour Conference, the President of Indonesia stressed the importance of decent job creation for youth and called for a Global Coalition for Youth Employment.

Pakistan: The National Youth Policy, which was formulated in 2008, aims at creating a youth centric focus by integrating and coordinating the programmes of various Ministries and institutions and providing overall guidance for youth development. The Plan of Action has detailed measures for “enabling employment (harnessing the youth dividend)”, including promoting skills development and vocational training, entrepreneurship, micro-finance, internships, on-campus jobs and job placements and targeted action for marginalized and vulnerable youth. The Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Programme introduced in late 2008 offers a monthly stipend and access to training for 100,000 young persons in each province.

Nepal: The National Action Plan for Youth Employment is part of the country’s Three Year Interim Plan 2008-2010. The National Action Plan for Youth Employment is intended to cover the period 2008-2015; it focuses on youth specific employment issues and youth targeted initiatives to supplement general employment policies. The Plan aims to increase the number of boys and girls at school until the age of 16 and to facilitate school-to-work transitions through employment service centres and the provision of training for emerging sectors of employment. Specific measures target vulnerable youth, including conflict-affected young women and men and those with disabilities.

Sri Lanka: In December 2010, the Ministry of Youth and Skills Development prepared a road map for implementing the National Plan of Action for Youth Employment (YE NAP) with detailed proposals for action that adheres to the ‘4Es’ conceptual framework developed by the UN-sponsored Youth Employment Network initiative: equal opportunity, employment creation, employability, and entrepreneurship.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Strategic Assessment and Policy Recommendations for a National Action Plan for Youth Employment: Sri Lanka*, YEN, 2006, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms_114017.pdf (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

Viet Nam: The country's Socio-Economic Development Plan 2011-2015 has a section on Youth Development Strategies, which includes "motivating and creating opportunities for them to actively participate in and effectively carry out socio-economic development projects, proposals, programmes. Issuing innovative policies on training highly-qualified young human resources, meeting the needs of modernization and industrialization associated with employment, increasing income". The country has a Law on Youth and a National Strategy for Youth Development, with special attention given to "young people in rural, disadvantaged, remote and hinterland areas". Measures to help young people access decent employment emphasize vocational training and also include "Young Entrepreneurs Associations and Young Businesses Clubs".

Philippines: The National Youth Commission is a government agency that specifically addresses issues surrounding the Filipino youth. The Commission released the Philippine Medium-Term Youth Development Plan which serves as a guiding framework for youth development and empowerment. The plan is a broad guide for action, and young Filipinos play a very important role in ensuring that the recommended policies, programmes, and courses of actions are carried out. A recent assessment found that many policies and programmes affect the supply and demand for youth labour and the institutional constraints on the youth labour market, but they were not adequate for coherently addressing high youth unemployment and underemployment.

Cambodia: The Cambodia National Youth Policy signifies the commitment of the Government to address youth challenges. Education and employment feature prominently in the Policy. A Cambodian National Council for Youth Development is given the responsibility of coordinating public and private institutions and civil society and the monitoring of the youth action plan. The Council will play a significant role in promoting the youth programme into national budgeting, within various line ministries, public institutions and local authorities at all levels. The Government has also created a National Employment Agency which is tasked with providing effective and efficient labour market services especially for young people so that they are guided to future jobs as foreseen in the National Strategic Development Plan.

Malaysia: To improve the employability of youth, the Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015 emphasizes that more balance will be sought in developing technical as well as soft skills. The National Youth Skills Institute, which offers skills courses that have high market demand, will be expanded to provide greater options for youth. The courses offered will be fully accredited under the Malaysian Skills Certificate. Entrepreneurship training and awareness programmes will be expanded through various institutions including the Malaysia Youth Development Academy. Leadership skills will be strengthened through internship programmes at government departments, companies and NGOs for up to one year.

China: A diverse range of policies aim to improve employment and employability especially for young migrant workers and recent graduates. Under the "Labour Reserve System Training" vocational skills accreditation institutions assess the skills of migrant workers after they have completed training; and public employment service agencies provide free services, including counselling, labour market information and job placement, for young migrant workers. The "Internship Programme" encourages in-house training within enterprises and aims to reach one million unemployed university graduates between 2009 and 2011. The "Three Supports and One Assistance" Programme encourages university graduates to work at the grassroots level supporting rural education, agricultural construction and rural medical services, while assisting with poverty alleviation.

Japan: The Japanese Government has introduced a series of reforms to address the problems of NEET (those not in education, employment or training) and FREETERS (young people who do not have a permanent full-time job, but have one or more part-time jobs or move from one short-term job to another). The reforms include setting up a residential training camp for discouraged youth, job cafés, a one-stop service centre for young jobseekers, and the Job Card system which allows unemployed youth to receive practical job training from participating companies (they are given a card indicating their training record and the company's evaluation of their vocational abilities). In 2008, Japan also instituted an extensive employment subsidy scheme to any company that hired as full-time employees school leavers.

Republic of Korea: In 2010, the Minister of Employment and Labour launched "My Project for Youth" which aims to tackle youth unemployment. The project is being actively implemented by the Ministry, including through strengthened labour-management cooperation, to target the creation of some 70,000 jobs for youth by 2012. Specific measures under the project include increasing hiring of youth in public institutions and state-run organizations; "restructuring universities" measures to address the oversupply of youth with inappropriate tertiary

education; subsidies for young social entrepreneurs; support for constructive partnerships between large enterprises and youth-operated SMES; and assistance to young interns to engage in regular employment relations.¹⁶

Australia: The National Strategy for Young Australians was launched in 2010 to put into effect the Government's vision "for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them." "Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain, and be successful in, employment" is one of eight priorities of the Government's strategy and its applied budget for investing in young Australians".¹⁷ (See also Box 2 below). A skill-first welfare policy was also introduced in April 2009 requiring 15-19 year olds to engage in education as a condition for income support.

Vanuatu: In 2007 the National Youth Policy was launched, of which employment was one of four priorities. This was followed in May 2009 with the agreement to draft a National Action Plan on Youth Employment (NAP) and then in October 2009, the re-establishment of the National Youth Council. Vanuatu recently became a lead country in YEN.

Box 2: National strategy for young Australians

What the Australian Government is already doing to help young people with work Future Directions

- Guaranteeing every young Australian a place in education or training to help equip them with the skills they need to take up the jobs of tomorrow. This guarantee is in our \$277 million Compact with Young Australians.
- Helping young people who are struggling with their studies to make the best decision they can about staying in school or linking up with further education. This is being achieved through the \$623 million National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions as well as the new Youth Connections program.
- Increasing opportunities for young people to enter traditional trade training and improve their chances of engaging with long-term employment through the \$100 million Apprentice Kickstart Package.
- Building the workplace skills and experience of young people aged 17 to 24 who are facing barriers to starting work. A total of 10,000 places are on offer in the \$77.2 National Green Jobs Corps.
- Helping young people who are most at risk from joblessness and unemployment to get a job by supporting them with specialist and tailored assistance through \$4.9 billion Job Services Australia.

Employment opportunities for young people have been a key priority for the Australian Government. We will continue to work with young people, other governments, local employers, community organisations, unions, Job Services Australia providers and training providers to:

- Develop adaptability and resilience in our young people, to help give them the attitudes and knowledge to flourish in a constantly changing labour market.
- Focus on young people and job readiness by capturing opportunities that prepare them for the workplaces of the future.
- Provide early intervention and extra support for those young people who need the most help at key transition points.
- Create more work experience, training and employment opportunities for young people by working with business. From 2010 more schools will have connections with business through the Business–Schools Connections Roundtable.
- Expand youth mentoring opportunities, including peer-to-peer mentoring, to support young people to make the transition to work.

¹⁶ *Investment Guide*, EUCCK, 2011, <http://www.slideshare.net/ioless/2011-8300314> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

¹⁷ *National strategy for young Australians*, Australian Government, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/OfficeForYouth/YouthPrograms/Documents/NatStrat.pdf> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

- Informing young people and answering their questions about employment and workplace relations issues through the Young Workers Toolkit. The Toolkit is funded as part of the Fair Work Education and Information Programme funded for around \$8 million.
- Reform the apprenticeship system to make it more attractive to young people and provide easier access and more support.

Source: *National strategy for young Australians*, Australian Government, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/OfficeForYouth/YouthPrograms/Documents/NatStrat.pdf> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

6. Review of youth employment policies and programmes

As evident from the text boxes above, the policies and programmes specifically aimed at promoting employment creation, employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunity for young women and men are diverse; they can be grouped as follows:

- On the supply side, school education and training policies and programmes such as measures to prevent early school leaving; improve the quality of general education; promote vocational education and training; and link education and training to labour market demand;
- School-to-work transition policies and programmes such as measures to link education with work experience; guidance and counselling services; and job search services for youth;
- On the demand side, labour market and employment-related policies and programmes: including entrepreneurship programmes and measures to promote self-employment; mobility and migration policies; active labour market policies; and labour laws and regulations; and
- Policies and programmes to target marginalized and at-risk groups of young women and men and promote non-discrimination.

6.1. Supply-side policies and programmes

Learning outcomes matter more than enrolment and completion rates....

The first crucial step toward productive youth employment (and the elimination of child labour) is schooling. The Asia-Pacific region as a whole is on track to achieve MDG 2 of ensuring universal access of children to primary school and also MDG 3 of gender parity in secondary education. However, school completion rates lag significantly behind enrolment rates; drop-out rates at secondary and tertiary levels of education are high especially for girls; and disparities among and within countries in the region are still great.¹⁸ In addition to measures to prevent early school leaving (such as through compulsory, free or heavily subsidized primary schooling and conditional cash transfer programmes to encourage school attendance among children from disadvantaged backgrounds), countries have instituted second-chance programmes for those who had not acquired the basic skills by the time they left school.

Evaluations of educational programmes make the point that more important than the number of years of schooling is the quality of education – many children and young people are spending years without acquiring fundamental literacy, numeracy and crucial thinking skills. “Increasing participation in education cannot be an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to improving learning outcomes and the employability and

¹⁸ For example, the number of out-of-school children has been increasing in the Pacific (UNESCAP, ADB and UNDP, 2010), and in India, the richest 20% average eleven years of schooling compared to three years for the poorest 20% of rural females (UNESCO, 2010).

competences of the workforce” (OECD and ILO, 2011, p. 13). A recent report is worth highlighting: “By measuring progress through enrolment and completion, global education reform remains primarily focused on an access-driven agenda. Despite a growing emphasis on the quality learning agenda among important stakeholders, too many policy statements are still focused almost entirely on increasing access to education with little to no mention of improving the quality of learning in the classroom.... An equitable learning approach removes the false choice between access and quality and positions the real goal of education – knowledge acquisition and skill development – at the centre of achieving education for all children, youth and adults” (Winthrop and Adams, 2010).

Several studies have underscored the difficulties educated youth, especially secondary school graduates, have to access good quality jobs. In Indonesia, for example, a recent World Bank study noted that despite the higher schooling achievement of youth, senior secondary school graduates are not entering the labour market with the skills necessary to find good quality jobs (World Bank, 2010b). Box 3 highlights its recommendations.

Box 3:
Promoting education, training and labour market outcomes for youth in Indonesia

To address the generally slow transition to the labour market and the difficulty for educated youth, especially senior secondary school graduates, to access good quality jobs, a World Bank report made the following recommendations for Indonesia:

- Judging by the trends towards more technology-based industries and a service-oriented economy, there is a need to meet the demand by employers for skilled workers with a stronger base of soft skills. A more flexible approach that combines a stronger adaptable skill base with more practical and on-the-job training is likely to be more effective at improving the employability of young graduates;
- Focus on preventing early dropouts and improve the quality of basic education;
- Improve cognitive skills of students before they reach senior secondary education and ensure an adequate supply of senior secondary schools in the desired stream;
- There is a need to take a closer look at the supply and demand for senior secondary education, with a special emphasis on the availability of public senior secondary schools;
- Do not plan supply-driven expansions of vocational schools, but focus on broadening the skill base and improving quality;
- Explore alternative modes of delivering vocational education, increasing practical training and linkages with the private sector;
- Improve the capacity of the non-formal training system to compensate the lack of skills, as well as provide a viable way to train unskilled workers and retrain and upgrade skills for educated workers;
- Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms through the establishment of competency-based standards and a clear and enforceable accreditation mechanism; and
- Entrepreneurship programmes may be a viable way to assist youth to improve earnings prospects, but they are not substitutes for providing adequate and relevant skills for the labour market.

Source: World Bank, 2010b, pp. 40-42

“Better educated” should translate into “appropriately skilled” youth for the labour market....

The Asia-Pacific countries have placed high priority on skill development to enhance employability of youth and overcome labour market constraints posed by skills mismatches (an inadequate supply of skills relative to the demands of firms), skills shortages (insufficient supply of the right skills) and skills gaps (an inadequate mix of skills) – Box 4 provides examples.

Box 4:
National skill development policies

Singapore: The major reasons behind the nation state's remarkable success in upgrading workforce skills include the following:

- First, a general linkage between economic development needs and skill formation and development has been facilitated by an institutional structure that places the Economic Development Board (EDB) at the centre of the effort with responsibility for both areas. A high-level National Manpower Council brings together the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Manpower to jointly manage the supply of skills in light of current and estimated future demand.
- Second, the EDB's model of technology transfer, which over a period of time brought about the integration of three crucial aspects linking foreign direct investment to skills development and joint government-private sector operation for skills training, was crucial in the ability of the economy to meet its short- and medium-term skills development needs.
- Third, educational reform for long-term skills development – including the introduction of vocational education in secondary schools, which was later replaced by a separate system of industrial training – was instrumental in providing work-appropriate skills to youth.
- Fourth, a levy/grant scheme (the Skills Development Fund) that induces private sector firms to invest in upskilling.
- Finally, a coordinated and inclusive governance model – government institutions, as well as the network of specific education and training institutions, benefit from interlocking board and council membership, ensuring a steady flow of information and encouraging a common approach to skill development. Moreover, the management of these institutions is often tripartite. The involvement of employers, labour unions, and public officials helps ensure that skill development reflects the interests of all interested parties concerned. In sum, Singapore's system is consistent with the notion of a concerted national effort.

India: The Indian Government has established three apex bodies: the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development, the National Skill Development Coordination Board, and the National Skill Development Corporation to prepare 500 million skilled people by 2022, with a focus on the unorganized sector with sufficient skills to meet the domestic and global requirements. Some of the innovative measures proposed in a Government of India policy paper on skill development include:

- using innovative delivery models such as decentralized delivery, mobile training, distance learning, e-learning and web-based learning;
- involving *panchayats*, municipalities and other local bodies in skill development and employment generation at the local level in collaboration with self-help groups, cooperatives and NGOs;
- establishing sector-specific Labour Market Information System and Human Resource Planning at national and state levels, and area-specific planning at local levels with the help of Sector Skill Councils (under National Skill Development Corporation) to undertake labour market analysis;
- establishing a “National Vocational Qualifications Framework” to facilitate standardized and acceptable, international comparability of qualifications; and
- strengthening and upgrading Employment Exchanges under the National Employment Service to provide counselling, guidance and placement services to employment seekers.

Sources: Kuruvilla and Chua, 2000, Prasad et al, 2010, UNCTAD, 2011

Reviews/evaluations of skill development measures identify what is important for promoting youth employment:

- Firstly, it is critical to distinguish and to provide for the different types of skills required for lifelong learning, successful employability and adaptability to changing labour market demands. Youth need to be equipped with: (1) “academic” (cognitive) skills, which are better acquired early in life, provide a broad base of knowledge that is directly related to subject matters (mathematics, language, science) and are completely transferable between jobs; (2) “generic” or “life” skills, such as problem solving, effective communication, ability to work in teams, motivation and discipline. These also start early in life and go to the core of behaviours and attitudes of youth, are completely transferable between jobs but are not directly related to subject matter; (3) technical skills, which are job specific, narrowly defined and could be associated with a subject matter, and could be transferable (computer skills, management) or non-transferable (use of a specific machine or a specific process); and (4) entrepreneurial skills, which can benefit young people even if they do not go into self-employment or start a business by promoting creativity, managerial and decision-making skills.
- Measures are needed to inform and motivate young men and women to take up VET. Available evidence suggests that high-quality vocational education pathways in upper secondary education can help engage youth who have become disaffected with academic education and thereby improve graduation rates and ensure smoother transitions from school to work. However, vocational education at school level is often given a low priority and low status and not treated at par with the arts, science and commerce streams. It is often perceived as a dead end and therefore not considered as an attractive option by the students.
- Avoid gender bias in VET. Enrolment in several types of vocational courses is often strongly gender biased, with many skills taught culturally identified with one gender only. Promoting gender equality in skill development should be a key consideration.
- To ensure that VET is not just a supply side intervention, it is crucial to promote close interactions with the demand side of the labour market – connect VET to the world of work and the evolving reality of labour markets, enterprises and workplaces in different economic sectors. Effective measures include review of curricula based on detailed labour market information and various incentives for the private sector to provide work-relevant training for youth. It is crucial to involve the private sector, the social partners and community leaders to assess local or national demand for skills. Forward planning based on assessments of emerging skill needs, importantly for green jobs, will also enhance youth employability.
- Address the issue of poor signalling. It is crucial not only to ensure that young people have realistic and up-to-date labour market information on the skills that are in demand in the labour market but also that young first-time jobseekers are able to signal their acquired skills to employers. The establishment of competency standards and skills certification systems is important.
- The provision of skills training for young people has a higher chance of success when complemented by other support services and incentives. These include financial support to trainees such as through training subsidies and training vouchers; financial incentives to employers to cover workplace training and/or subsidize labour costs; support services to facilitate participation of young women and men, such as childcare support and transport stipends; and access to certification or accreditation.¹⁹
- Especially in developing Asia-Pacific, improving the capacity of the non-formal or informal training systems to provide a viable way to train unskilled workers, improve access to training for the poor and

¹⁹ Impact assessments of programmes conducted in Latin America identified as a success factor “a holistic training approach that combines in-classroom and on-the-job training, provides technical and non-technical skills, supports entrepreneurial thinking, and facilitates job placement” (ILO, 2010c, p. 56).

school drop-outs; and retrain and upgrade skills for educated workers. A complementary measure is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Young people pick up skills in a wide variety of activities outside the classroom (for example, informal sector, part-time or holiday jobs). Validation presents an opportunity for young people to acquire formal recognition of their skills and competencies or simply to improve their self-awareness and self-esteem. Young people at risk of leaving school without any type of qualification can also be supported through recognition of prior learning, which for some might present a more accessible alternative to formal education and training (Westphal and Pratt, 2011, p. 13).

- In developing countries where many young people are not in formal learning institutions and are already in unskilled, low-wage jobs in the informal economy, it is important to enhance their skills for decent employment. The efforts of the Government of India are highlighted in Box 5.

Box 5:
Skill development and training for workers in the informal economy

The Government of **India**, in a recent policy paper on skill development, has proposed the following measures for promoting skills development and training for unorganized workers:

- Various avenues/institutions, including schools and public/private training institutions/civil society organizations/NGOs will be encouraged to conduct skill development programmes for the unorganized sector.
- Mobile training vans will also be deployed in rural and remote areas where training infrastructure is very deficient.
- Skill development centres will conduct skill development programmes primarily to support services needed in the unorganized sector.
- Public training institutions will be given greater managerial and academic autonomy to design and offer programmes that meet the requirements of the local economy and specific target groups.
- Skill development programmes will be devised in existing/traditional skills and knowledge. Mechanisms will be evolved to upgrade them into modern skill areas.
- Skills of local trainers will be upgraded in modern techniques, technologies and pedagogy. They will be trained and developed into master craftsmen. Opportunities for linking these arrangements to formal training institutions will be explored to extend expertise, pedagogical support and tools & equipment.
- Skill development initiatives for the unorganized sector will include a definite component on literacy, basic education and soft skills.
- Skill development will be emphasized for gainful and decent employment for unorganized sector workers.
- Competency standards and certification systems will be developed for unorganized sector workers and incorporated in the national testing and certification system.

Source: Indian Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2009

6.2. School-to-work transition policies and programmes

Combining work and study facilitates labour market entry....

Various surveys and evaluations have emphasized that work experience is key to young people finding decent jobs. Youth employment policies, therefore, seek to promote workplace learning experiences such as apprenticeship schemes, internships, classroom learning combined with compulsory practical training and incentives to employers for providing on-the-job-training. Some of the main findings are:

- “Apprenticeships are good for the individual, the employer and the State. Our inquiry found only positive things to say. Programmes that either broker or financially support internships or work experience placements again enjoy broad support” (UK Commission on Employment and Skills

(UKCES), 2011). Dual schooling systems that combine classroom-based learning with work-based apprenticeship have received significant attention. Apprenticeship contracts are especially important for low-skilled youth where they can acquire at the same time skills and work experience. However, it is important to sound a note of caution as there have been reports of Asian employers using apprenticeship/trainee schemes as a form of cheap labour – they keep young workers, especially women in export-oriented factories, for relatively long periods as “on-the job trainees” to pay them low wages, restrict them from labour rights and do not offer them regular jobs after the training period.

- It is necessary to raise the profile of apprenticeships so that young people see it as a viable route and more employers become involved. In some countries, apprenticeships may be too much associated with being an option for low achievers or NEETs; therefore, it is important to make it an attractive option for those with good academic qualifications.
- Financial support/incentives offered by the government to employers can be important for improving training and work experience for youth. In an economic downturn when employers are more reluctant to offer places and some apprentices lose their job before completing training, governments could provide subsidies to promote apprenticeship for unskilled young people and support measures to help apprentices made redundant to complete their training. To enhance the potential stepping-stone effect of any apprenticeship contract, employers could also be financially encouraged to hire their former apprentices on a more permanent basis at the end of the apprenticeship. But care should be taken to avoid the risk of deadweight, especially among larger employers. Deadweight occurs when public funding pays for something that would have occurred anyway in the absence of such funding. On the other hand, small employers may have a greater need for such support but are often not aware of government incentives.
- One practical way for governments to leverage apprenticeships, internships or work experience for young people is to make it a component of public sector procurement policy. Companies bidding for large government contracts could be required to provide for opportunities to enhance youth employability and employment. Of course, governments could also set a good example and offer internships within government agencies at national and local levels.

Good labour market information and guidance more important than ever...

As education and training pathways have become more varied and as occupational requirements change and become less clearly defined, it is more important than ever to provide young women and men with up-to-date labour market information that they need to make informed, realistic career choices. Asian countries have therefore improved guidance and job search and placement facilities, including “job fairs”, public employment services including one-stop facilities that offer a range of services to young people in one location, and making increasing use of the Internet to provide relevant information and facilitate job search and job matching processes, as shown in Box 6. Reviews suggest that:

- Most Asian countries are still weak in terms of measures to provide efficient career guidance and counselling at institutions of learning, especially secondary schools. They are not reaching young people at a stage in their lives when critical choices need to be made, and a major reason for labour supply-demand mismatches can be traced to the unrealistic expectations that young people have of jobs.
- Partnerships between employment services and private employment agencies are important to support young people in their job search. Partnerships between labour offices and municipal authorities, the social partners, social services and civil society organizations are important to improve the targeting of discouraged youth and also young people working in the informal economy. In the countries where private employment agencies are heavily engaged in exporting labour to other countries, it is essential

for the government to exert strict control to ensure that unscrupulous agencies and agents do not exploit young women and men.²⁰

- Employment services are much more effective when there are close linkages and cooperation not just with potential employers but also, and very importantly, with the education and training system. Referrals from schools to public employment services are essential if youth disengagement is to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools should encourage young graduates to register with employment services where a profiling process could be implemented as quickly as possible to determine who is job-ready, who requires further training and who is hard-to-place and needs special assistance to stay connected to the labour market. See Box 6 for examples.

Box 6:
Employment services for young people

China: Government agencies including the Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, State Development and Reform Commission, and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, hold annual national employment services for millions of university graduates, with positions available online and at job fairs throughout the country. Employment experts are invited to university campuses and job fairs to offer job seeking tips to students due to graduate the next year. The Government agencies also offer other assistance to job-hunting students, including free job-hunting consulting, skill training, internship program, and financial support for impoverished graduates. They encourage university graduates to work in the rural areas in West China region with favorable policies such as guaranteed salaries and medical care, and subsidies for those who go to undeveloped and remote rural areas.

Malaysia: Jobs Malaysia is the Ministry of Human Resources free jobs matching Internet portal.²¹ Some 110,000 job seekers registered with the portal gained employment in 2010. There are currently some 12 Jobs Malaysia centres throughout the country and the aim is to increase the number of centres and provide staff to assist those who do not have computers or internet facilities in their localities.

Philippines: Public Employment Services Offices (PESOs) can be found in every province, key city and other strategic areas throughout the country. The PESO is community-based and is maintained largely by local government units, NGOs, community-based organizations and state universities and colleges. In total, there are some 1,680 PESOs. The objectives of the PESO are: to ensure the prompt, timely and efficient delivery of employment services and provision of information on the employment and labour market situation in the area, and to network with other PESOs within the region on employment for job exchange purposes. The primary task of a PESO is to facilitate the interface between the companies in the city or municipality in need of employees/workers and the job seekers who fit the requirements for these job vacancies.

6.3. Demand-side policies and programmes

The pros and cons of entrepreneurship development for youth....

Self-employment and entrepreneurship programmes for youth are among the most common measures countries have adopted. Youth entrepreneurship is increasingly promoted as a valuable strategy for unleashing the productive and innovative potential of young people. A joint ASEAN and ILO meeting pointed out that there are many benefits to youth entrepreneurship development but warned that there are also certain situations and conditions where youth enterprise should not be promoted (Box 7).

²⁰ Many studies emphasize the role of private employment agencies in the exploitation and abuse of young migrant workers.

²¹ *Jobs Malaysia*. PANAFIAN: Ministry of Human Resources, 2011, <http://www.jobsmalaysia.gov.my/jcs/index.faces> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

Box 7:
Promoting or not promoting youth entrepreneurship development

“There are many good reasons to promote enterprise amongst young women and men. Youth enterprise helps young people develop new skills and experiences that can be applied to many other challenges in life. It creates employment, both for the young person who owns the enterprise and those employed in the business. Youth enterprise provides valuable products and services for the country and promotes innovation and development – it encourages young people to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things. Moreover, by engaging young women and men in productive economic activities, a new resource for innovation and change can be accessed. Young people bring new ideas and approaches. They can present alternatives to the organization of work, the transfer and use of technology and a new perspective to the market. Furthermore, enterprise education provides valuable life skills; an entrepreneurial mindset promotes confidence, communication and decision making skills. This aspect of enterprise education has the ability to benefit young people regardless of whether or not they go on to begin their own business.

However, youth enterprise is not the solution for youth unemployment alone. There are certain situations and conditions where youth enterprise should not be promoted. Especially when it is only concerned with ‘keeping young people busy’, or where it sets young women and men up for failure by not providing sufficient support. Youth enterprise can sometimes be presented as a solution to all the problems of the economy (e.g., ‘small business alone will save the economy’) or of young people (e.g., ‘young people must address their problems themselves by starting their own businesses’). It can encourage unrealistic ideas of quick wealth acquisition and can encourage young men and women to start business when there is no market or too many competitors”.

Source: ASEAN and ILO, 2009, p. 6.

Some key considerations for youth entrepreneurship policies and programmes include:

- Successful entrepreneurship has to start with initiative on the part of young women and men themselves. Two basic steps should be taken. The first step is to create awareness and understanding of what enterprise is and what it takes to own and manage a business – so as to allow young women and men to realistically consider the suitability of self-employment as a career option. Once a young person has decided to explore further or to start their own business, the enterprise promotion programme can address the ways for young people to acquire the skills, business and financial services and supports needed.
- The issue of pathways to youth entrepreneurship is critical to the design of cohesive policies and programmes. It is important to recognize the different resources and capacities young people can bring to business, and the different agencies and stakeholders that can influence their success. Programmes to promote entrepreneurship as a career path for young people need to be carefully planned; entrepreneurship is both demanding and inherently risky, particularly for young people who are already passing through a tenuous and vulnerable transition in life, while at the same time generally having limited business experience and material assets. Many young entrepreneurs are found in the informal economy.
- Identify and target the specific areas of need and opportunity. Young women and men share many of the problems of adults in small business development such as a lack of business acumen and management skills and abilities. But in addition, young people have specific constraints including limited business networks and contacts, fewer relevant role models and lack of a financial/credit record. Young people also suffer from a lack of credibility often due to age discrimination; customers, suppliers and staff of financial institutions tend not to take young people seriously.
- Multi-faceted and comprehensive entrepreneurship programmes have a much higher chance of success. Through entrepreneurship education and business start-up training – and support programmes – including business incubators, cooperatives and microcredit – young women and men can acquire the necessary attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviour, experiences, support services and assets that increase their chances to obtain decent work by being more employable or by starting a

business. Strengthening the voice of young entrepreneurs is key to address the specific barriers they face and can facilitate graduation from self-employment in the informal economy to successful entrepreneurship.

- To compensate for the lack of experience and weak business networks, mentor support can be particularly effective for young entrepreneurs during the first years of business start-up, since this is when youth enterprises tend to have high failure rates. Employers' organizations can play an important role in providing one-to-one mentoring support to young entrepreneurs (ILO, 2001).
- Specific youth entrepreneurship programmes are likely to be more effective when embedded in an enabling policy and regulatory environment. Public policy measures to support small enterprise development would be particularly important (the vast majority of new jobs are created in small and medium enterprises) in providing greater opportunities for young people to access productive employment. Such measures include ensuring that the rules and regulations are not overly burdensome, that small enterprise owners have access to credit, and that technology and business services and management training are readily available.

Governments, private companies and NGOs in the region have developed youth entrepreneurship programmes (Box 8). What is most striking is that many of the programmes have been initiated and implemented by young women and men themselves.

Box 8:
Policies and programmes to support youth entrepreneurship

China: Youth Business China (YBC) was initiated by the All-China Youth Federation (ACYF), the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and other agencies in November 2003. YBC is implemented by the China Youth & Children Foundation for Social Education. By using the tried model from Youth Business International and marshalling resources from all social sectors of China, especially the business community, YBC provides business mentoring, seed money, skills training and network support to young entrepreneurs. YBC helps young people aged between 18-35 who are unemployed, under-employed and have a viable business idea and the passion for entrepreneurship but who lack business experience and have no access to seed money. It provides young entrepreneurs with between US\$4,000 to US\$6,600 seed money; one to one accompanied mentoring; knowledge and know-how in running a business and access to business networks. As a non-profit programme with a think-tank function, YBC has been pursuing its goal to "promote entrepreneurship, enhance employability, create job opportunities, revitalise the economy, implement social responsibility and promote social harmony". YBC inspires the potential of youth and encourages them to take action. In 2005, YBC was accredited as the best practice program by the UN Secretary General's Youth Employment Network Office China. In September 2008, Hewlett-Packard China established a Chinese centre for microenterprise development in cooperation with YBC, providing support and training to microenterprises and enterprise starters to use technology to build and grow their business.

Singapore: The nation amended its civil law to revise the age for starting and running a business from 21 to 18 years of age. The national enterprise development agency, SPRING (Singapore Enabling Enterprise) launched the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme for Startups (YES! Startups) and also the Young Entrepreneurs Scheme for Schools (YES! Schools). Under the YES! Startups scheme, SPRING provides funding support of up to S\$50,000 for youths to set up their innovative startup. SPRING matches S\$4 for every S\$1 that a young person (below 26 years) raises through self-funding, schools or third-party sources, the grant is capped at S\$50,000. The grant can be used for business development expenses such as manpower and operating expenses, purchase of equipment, software, materials and consumables, acquisition of intellectual property right, and professional services, and marketing/promotion activities. The YES! Schools scheme provides schools with grants of up to S\$100,000 to put in place a comprehensive entrepreneurship learning programme for their students. The scheme is open to polytechnics, institutes of technical education, junior colleges, centralized institutes and secondary schools.

Viet Nam: Viet Youth Entrepreneurs (VYE) is the first NGO in Viet Nam which targets solely on entrepreneurship activities amongst college students. The local chapters of VYE organize regular events, workshops, networking mixers, etc. for college students. An annual entrepreneurship camp held in August 2011 featured *Gear Up*, a popular entrepreneurship course from Stanford University; panel discussions; intensive business plan development sessions, and experience-sharing by entrepreneurs/investors (from both Viet Nam and overseas). VYE

online platform promotes communications between Vietnamese youth interested in entrepreneurship around the world. It also organizes investor panels where Venture Capitalists and Angel Investors in Viet Nam and around the world convene to listen to pitches by the teams nurtured through VYE Bootcamp and other young start-ups.

Pacific Islands: The University of Guam Pacific Islands Small Business Development Centre Network (PISBDCN) and the Guam Small Business Development Centre was opened in 1995. From 1999 through 2002 five additional centres were opened, creating the first international SBDC Network and located in the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau and Republic of the Marshall Islands. The local service centres are hosted by the respective state governments through contractual agreements with the PISBDCN. The PISBDCN supports a well established, respected, adequately funded and capable Small Business Development Centre network, recognized by the public, the private sector and host entities as the preeminent economic development agency in the region providing high quality business counselling, training and information. Special programmes operated by the PISBDCN include two directed at youth entrepreneurship: the Shell LiveWire Business Planning Competition, Sanctuary and Children, Youth, and Families at Risk through which entrepreneurial training is provided to at-risk youths.

Malaysia: Youth Entrepreneurs Malaysia (YEM) is a collective of young entrepreneurs which offers a sense of belonging to those who are just starting out on their own. In the past, such initiatives were championed by training companies and not youths themselves. YEM promotes two distinct principles: entrepreneurship among youths, and cultivating enterprising youths for employment. In galvanising the youth entrepreneurship movement, YEM initiates and supports business clubs, conferences and forums. To date, YEM has supported some 100 events, including SEA for CHANGE (a collaboration with Youth Asia to get 1 million young people in South-East Asia to share their thoughts on change through the internet) and the Youth Engagement Summit (which gave young Malaysians the opportunity to interact with top international executives including from Facebook, Twitter, LiveAid and Air Asia). YEM has come up with two business models: content provider and a sort of match-maker between enterprising youths and the private sector. YEM has been approached by private corporations, under their respective corporate social responsibility programmes to consult and craft youth development projects. YEM has also created products to help young people accelerate their businesses, including a survey across the country to find out the challenges in setting up a business and the incentives needed.

Promoting mobility can improve youth employment but there must be effective management of labour migration and protection of migrant workers....

Internal and international migration has become a key component of employment policy in many Asia-Pacific countries. The mobility policies most directly affect young women and men as they represent the bulk of migrants. Although not specifically youth targeted, countries that have effective labour market information and job search services encourage and facilitate mobility of young people to better match labour supply and demand in different parts of the country (and thereby also promote balanced regional development). Some countries such as China have youth employment policies focusing on young migrant workers and provide special incentives to encourage the mobility of young people to the less developed rural areas to contribute to more balanced development (refer back to Box 6).

Several Asian countries have developed international migration policies as a means of dealing with labour market pressures (see Box 9 below). For example, Viet Nam's Socio-economic Development Plan 2011-2015 has a target of sending 450,000 workers overseas with an emphasis on skilled and qualified workers. The policies of Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal also emphasize skilled out migration.²² The Philippines has traditionally been a major sending country. To ensure that such policies truly benefit the potential young migrants themselves, their families and the sending country itself, the following considerations which were made for Viet Nam are worth quoting, as in Box 9. A central component of migration policy has to be the protection of young migrant workers from exploitation and abuse throughout the entire migration process. Measures include age limits (at least 18 years of age), compulsory pre-departure training, control

²² "The implicit consensus seems to be that it is important to send skilled workers abroad rather than low skilled workers given the numerous protection problems and low wages associated with the latter. This view is also influenced by the lack of rewarding opportunities for skilled workers inside the countries, and the positive views about the contributions of diaspora communities abroad" (Wickermasekara, 2011, p. 21).

of recruitment agencies and bilateral agreements with receiving countries to establish the terms of employment. For young female migrant domestic workers, the recently adopted ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (C189) is especially important.

Box 9:
Ensuring that migration benefits the migrants, their families and the country

Viet Nam's Socio-Economic Development Plan 2011-2015 has set a target for international labour migration. A Decent Work Toolkit Assessment of the Plan emphasized that such a component of its employment policy should be carefully examined and a realistic labour migration policy is needed so as to maximize the benefits to the migrant workers, their families and Viet Nam. The elements of such a programme would include:

- Measures to tap employment opportunities - based on rational assessment of labour supply and demand in Viet Nam and potential receiving countries and taking into account demographic dynamics and realistic assumptions about the growth of particular sectors (not just a question of identifying receiving countries but of ensuring that exported skills do not exacerbate the skills shortages that the country is already experiencing);
- Measures to promote mutual recognition of skills qualifications and competency standards: the receiving countries must be assured that they are getting appropriately qualified workers and the sending country must know that it is training workers in demand;
- Measures to find foreign markets for migrant workers – there can be government-to-government agreements, public recruitment agencies or licensing of private recruitment agents or labour contractors. Institute proper regulation and supervision of recruitment to minimize fraud, abuses and malpractices and to encourage efficient recruitment;
- Measures to assert and defend the rights and obligations of its nationals working abroad – in addition to the regulation of recruitment agents, such measures could include the enforcement of minimum standards for employment contracts, intensive pre-departure orientation programmes (including awareness raising on the dangers of being trafficked, exploited or abused); and labour attaché services in the Vietnamese embassies abroad;
- Measures to insure migrant workers against various contingencies – a sending country has to provide for contingencies such as failure of recruitment and the forced return of their nationals, the legal defence of nationals involved in court litigations in the countries of employment, medical care for workers abandoned by their employers, etc.;
- Proper financial institutions and arrangements for remittances and savings of migrant workers – both to ensure that the migrants' hard earned remittances are safe and to enhance the development efficiency of remittances in Viet Nam. Migrant remittances often represent an important source of foreign exchange; productive investment of such remittances would contribute to the country's development;
- Measure to support and facilitate the return and reintegration of migrant workers – such measures should cover both voluntary and involuntary return and should assist workers to reintegrate into the local labour market with the skills they acquired while abroad and also to deal with the social and family reintegration problems that many returnees face.

Source: ILO, 2011d.

Reversing the brain drain of young people

Some Asian countries have developed reverse brain drain/brain gain programmes. Of course, these programmes are likely to succeed only when the Asian countries become more attractive not only in terms of job and remuneration opportunities but also social and political conditions. Many young Indians and Chinese are returning to their home countries where the economies are booming and their skills are in great demand. Malaysia has also introduced a number of innovative efforts (Box 10).

Box 10:
Building and retaining Malaysian youth talent

TalentCorp Malaysia began operations in January 2011 under the Malaysian Prime Minister's Department to create a sustainable source of talent for the country and to drive forward the National Key Economic Areas sectors of the Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015. In his launching speech, the Prime Minister emphasized "we must ensure our youth are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential, so they can contribute to the nation's development. This requires taking a broad view on ways to optimise their involvement in the broader national interest, be it in the public or private sector". Under the *Nurturing Malaysians* programme, initiatives that will support to nurture Malaysians talents include: upskilling programmes for Malaysians; improving the public scholarship system (such as the recently announced plan to enable Malaysian Government scholars to transfer their bond to Malaysian companies); improving university curricula so graduates are more industry-ready; networking opportunities for top talents to link up with critical industries; and setting up the sectoral working group which will engage both industry and Government agencies in addressing talent requirements. TalentCorp Malaysia also has a *Returning to Malaysia* programme to attract, facilitate and retain aspiring Malaysian returnees. A package of incentives is being developed to bring talented Malaysians who have been working and living abroad to return home.

Educity is another programme of the Government to address potential brain drain. It is building a new "city" for educational institutions. "The country wants to meet strong demand among Asia's new middle classes for English-language schooling. It also worries about its brain drain (over 300,000 university-educated Malaysians work abroad). Having watched Asian children flock west to spend a lot of money on British and American schools, the Government decided a few years ago to try to reverse the trend. It has campaigned to persuade Western schools and colleges to come and set up branch campuses. The Malaysian proposition to Asian parents is simple and beguiling: come to these famous schools and universities in our country and get the same degrees and qualifications as in Britain or America for half the price". World-class educational institutions, such as Monash University, John Hopkins University, MIT, are setting up branch campuses in Educity. The Malaysian Government is bearing the start-up costs for infrastructure and buildings. In return, the Malaysian Government wants universities to set up faculties in subjects that will be most useful to Malaysia.

Sources: *The Economist*, 2011; TalentCorp, 2011.

Active labour market policies can ease the youth jobs crisis....

Active labour market policies (ALMP) have increasingly been used to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market. ALMPs include: public work programmes and community services; subsidized employment in private firms; self-employment and entrepreneurship programmes; labour market training; and job assistance and other employment services. However, it is important to bear in mind that "ALMPs are remedial in nature and more serious discussions of ALMPs for young people should be embedded in the more general issues concerning the school-to-work transition and what the institutional structure in specific countries should look like" (ILO, 2010b).

Labour-intensive public works programmes have been recognized as valuable not only for crisis response but as part of wider employment policy – they can help absorb the large numbers of young unemployed and underemployed and also have a triple win potential for tackling poverty, environment and gender issues. In **India**, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) aims to improve livelihood security of rural households providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Although the MGNREGP does not specifically target youth, it does stipulate the reservation of at least one-third of jobs for women and various reports have all highlighted that young women and men have clearly benefited from the programme. In **Pakistan**, a new public sector scheme called the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) aims to reach out to almost 40 per cent of the population below the poverty line and provide Rs1000 cash assistance to each enrolled family along with employment for one family member. The programme guarantees 100 days of employment for unemployed rural youth.

Public employment programmes have to be specifically, carefully and sensitively targeted to ensure that they benefit the groups who need the programmes the most. Furthermore, concerns have been expressed over the impact of public works programmes beyond the programme duration (World Bank, 2010a, p. 6), and some evaluations have indicated little or no impact on labour market outcomes for youth while cost-benefit analyses show that the benefits were not enough to cover the high costs of the programmes (ILO, 2010c; Kluve, 2006). The lessons learned and recommendations made include:

- Avoiding deadweight losses (the same result would have been reached without the programme); substitution effects (subsidized participants may replace non-participants); displacement (output of subsidized activities may displace that of non-subsidized) and creaming off (they help those who are already better off) (Auer, Efendioglu and Leschke, 2004);
- Investing in innovative approaches to public employment programmes: expanding public employment programmes beyond the traditional idea of public works in infrastructure construction to include employment guarantee programmes and work in the social sector, environmental services and multi-sectoral community-driven programmes (Lieuw-Kie-Song et al., 2010). Youth service, formal or informal, provides an opportunity for youth to “play an active role in community and national development while learning new skills, increasing their employability, and contributing to their overall personal development” (Cunningham et al., 2008). Such youth service programmes may include providing basic health services in public health clinics, building sustainable housing, literacy tutoring, protecting the environment and building small-scale infrastructure (World Bank, 2010a, p. 6).
- Taking into specific consideration the constraints and needs of young women and men, including the socio-cultural norms of “appropriate work” for young women in many countries – such as recruitment and information dissemination strategies to reach young people; care in selecting the intermediary agency; keeping the location of work relatively close to the home for young women and providing additional training to them to catch up with young men in terms of skills needed for a particular job;
- Increasing the impact of public works on post-programme employment of youth – importantly, by adding components to the public employment programme such as mandatory behavioural skills, financial literacy and job search training for young people.

Wage and/or training subsidies create incentives for firms to hire youth during times of low labour demand....

Another ALMP is the provision of wage subsidies or other incentives (for example, tax or social security exemptions for a limited period) by the government to employers upon hiring or training an entitled young worker during a specified period of time. Such a measure has been suggested as a particularly relevant scheme for youth whose marginal productivity may be below market wages and may encourage hiring by lowering the cost of new workers for firms that face employment inhibiting budget constraints. “Overall, in advanced and emerging economies, wage subsidies have in general had positive effects on the employment outcomes of youth. Existing evaluations of wage subsidies show that wage subsidies work best when they are designed and targeted to address specific labour market disadvantages faced by young people and when they are provided for a limited period of time. Therefore, generalised subsidies that target young people mainly on the basis of their age are unlikely to have a long-term impact on their employment and earnings. If not targeted, these subsidies often result in labour market distortions in terms of deadweight and substitution effects, with employment lasting only as long as the subsidy is perceived. Evaluation results also stress the benefit of combining subsidies with on-the-job training and other measures in the form of comprehensive service packages offered to young workers. An efficient monitoring system is also essential to avoid abuses associated with wage subsidies and to achieve the policy objective of improving the employability of young workers, rather than turning them into a cheap source of labour” (OECD and ILO, 2011, p. 24).

Labour legislation and regulations should be reviewed in terms of how they impact on youth employment....

The global economic crisis has revived interest in minimum wage policy as a means of protecting the purchasing power of low-paid workers, strengthening aggregate demand, promoting stability and avoiding sections of society feeling left behind during periods of economic recovery (ILO, 2009b). Minimum wages are fixed in Asia-Pacific countries at the national level or by sector, locality, age or occupation. There is no clear evidence or general agreement about the impact of minimum wages on youth employment, as highlighted in Box 11. Without serious monitoring and evaluation, there appear to be few grounds for reducing minimum wages of young people as a means of cutting youth unemployment or increasing the demand for youth labour. Certainly, any wage policy must respect the labour rights of young workers and ensure that they receive fair and adequate incomes.

Box 11: The impact of minimum wages on youth employment in New Zealand

Two studies by the same authors at different points in time in **New Zealand** revealed different results:

In 2001, New Zealand reformed its youth minimum wage to lower the eligible age for the adult minimum wage from 20 to 18 years (which resulted in raising the minimum wage for 18 and 19 year-olds); and also to raise the youth minimum wage in two annual steps from 60 per cent to 80 per cent of the adult minimum (which resulted in a 41 per cent increase in the minimum wage for 16 and 17 year-olds over a two-year period). A study of the impact of these changes found “no robust evidence of adverse effects on youth employment or hours worked. In fact, we find stronger evidence of positive employment responses to the changes for both groups of teenagers, and that 16-17 year-olds increased their hours worked by 10-15 per cent following the minimum wage changes”.

In 2008, another reform replaced the youth minimum wage for 16 and 17 year old workers (set at 80 per cent of the adult minimum wage) with a New Entrants (NE) minimum wage (also set at 80 per cent of the adult minimum) applicable for the first three months or 200 hours of employment, after which the adult minimum applies. “Although we find no evidence of adverse employment effects immediately following the policy change in 2008, we conclude that it lowered the employment rate of 16-17 year-olds by 3-6 percentage points in the subsequent two years. Most of this employment loss was borne by students: in fact, the employment rate among non-students increased; there is no evidence of an increase in the percentage of 16-17 year-olds who were unemployed, and the overall inactivity rate of this age-group decreased following 2008. We also find evidence of employment substitution towards 18-19 year-olds, again largely among students. The stronger fall in employment in 2008 can be attributed to a larger proportion of 16 and 17 year olds being impacted by the minimum wage increase and that the 2008 reform occurred immediately prior to a downturn in the economy. In addition, the 2008 reform moved 16 and 17 year olds onto the same minimum wage as adults, which could have encouraged employers to replace them with older more mature workers”.

Source: Hyslop and Stillman, 2004; Hyslop and Stillman, 2011

Striking the balance between flexibility, security and jobs for young people....

Another controversial issue is the impact of employment protection legislation (EPL) on youth employment. Deregulating labour markets, for example making it easier for firms to hire and fire employees, is at the heart of the employment debate in many countries. Laws on firing or layoffs and other EPL are seen by some as generating labour market rigidity as well as one reason for differences in labour market performance among countries. But “since EPL tends to reduce both dismissals and hiring, its overall impact on aggregate unemployment is unclear, both in economic theory and empirical evidence. This notwithstanding, the effects of EPL are different for different groups. For instance, first-time entrants (mainly young people) and re-entrants (mainly women who are more likely than men to move between employment and inactivity, in particular when seeking to balance the competing demands of work and family life) are more likely to be affected by reduced hiring opportunities while being less in a position to benefit from fewer dismissals. And indeed, empirical evidence suggests that strict EPL may

reduce the employment rate of both youth and prime-age women. Overall, those already in the core labour market, mainly men aged 25-54, appear to benefit from the job stability induced by EPL, both in terms of employment prospects and the likelihood of holding a permanent job” (OECD, 2004, p. 3).

In sum, there is reason to review EPL to minimize the dualism it creates between protected workers with permanent contracts and job seekers and temporary workers and to ensure that young women and men seeking their first jobs are not unjustly penalized by overly strict EPL. The challenge is to strike the right balance between flexibility for employers to adjust to economic conditions and remain competitive and security and dignity at work for all workers, irrespective of age. The aim should be to:

- Do away with overly strict and uncertain procedures concerning the firing of permanent workers along with high severance payments, which tend to make employers reluctant to hire youth on an open-ended contract.
- Rebalance the protection offered by different types of contracts. Strictly regulated permanent contracts combined with easy-to-use temporary ones tend to encourage employers to hire young people on short-term contractual arrangements, such as fixed and temporary work agency contracts. Temporary contracts may represent a stepping stone into the labour market or they may become traps whereby short-term work and unemployment periods alternate through one’s working life.
- Review the duration of the trial period (the initial period during which regulations protecting workers against unfair dismissal are not applicable). Overly long trial periods might be used by employers to rotate new hires, reduce firing costs and have access to cheap labour; while very short trial periods might discourage employers from hiring youth without experience for fear of incurring high firing costs should the young person turn out to be unsuitable.
- Strengthen labour inspection to ensure that the laws and regulations are being properly observed and implemented. At the same time, it is also important to raise awareness of young workers of the laws and regulations affecting them.

6.4. Policies and programmes for marginalized and at-risk youth

Since certain groups of youth are more at risk of unemployment or find themselves at a disadvantage in the labour market, many countries have responded by introducing policies and programmes that focus on vulnerable groups of young women and men facing social risk and exclusion. In the first place, the need for gender sensitivity cannot be over-emphasized – the socio-cultural norms that seriously constrain many young Asian women must be taken into account in all policies and programmes. The groups of young women and men who tend to be particularly disadvantaged include ethnic minorities, those living in remote rural areas, those with disabilities, those with migrant or refugee status and those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

A holistic approach is critical for addressing the multifaceted disadvantages that such groups face. It is important to fight overt discriminatory practices directly by rigorous implementation of existing anti-discrimination legislation in a country. But other supports are also essential – for example, the weak labour market position of youth from ethnic minorities can normally be traced to social exclusion on many fronts so measures such as income support for their families may be needed before the young people themselves can benefit from direct support programmes. An example of a programme that has proved most beneficial in OECD countries for youth with an immigrant background is mentorship – mentors could provide young from immigrant backgrounds with information about the “rules of the game” and about the way to behave during interviews and on the job, and should reassure employers (Scarpetta, Sonnett and Manfredi, 2010, p. 30).

In the context of the global economic crisis, a particularly important at-risk group comprises “inactive youth” who are neither in school nor in the labour market. “Traditional employment policy instruments may be ill-suited to assisting young persons who are far removed from the labour force or who have only

limited work experience. The longer young persons remain out of touch with the labour market, the more difficult – and costly – it is to encourage a return to productive employment” (ILO, 2010d, p. 14). Specific policy measures to reintegrate long-term unemployed and inactive youth into the labour market include measures to expanded social safety nets to cover these young persons and measures to combine education or training with a financial stipend.²³

7. The way forward: An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition

The review of policies and programmes in the sections above suggests several bases for cooperation and concerted action by countries in Asia and the Pacific to promote youth employment. An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition could be a major initiative for governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, the international organizations and young people themselves to jointly and effectively tackle the youth jobs crisis – and provide a model for a wider, global effort.

A successful Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition requires:

- effective action starting at the national level;
- a strong foundation of practical measures to promote youth employment – based on recognition of country differences while also making the most of shared goals, experiences and knowledge;
- a commitment to decent work, focusing on not just the quantity but the quality of employment
- linkages with other regional/international cooperation activities;
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each coalition partner; and
- active involvement on the part of young women and men.

Successful cooperation at regional level rests on successful action at national level by each country....

Before countries can look to regional cooperation to solve the youth jobs crisis they need to improve their own youth employment policies and programmes. Highlighting the overall lessons learned from the review sections above:

- First and foremost, the youth jobs crisis cannot be solved without promoting strong and sustainable growth and putting employment and decent work at the core of national economic and social policies. The Global Jobs Pact, which was unanimously adopted by the 2009 International Labour Conference and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of the UN (UNECOSOC) and G20 world leaders, offers a set of balanced and realistic policy measures that countries can adopt to promote jobs and sustainable enterprises and protect people. The Pact is both a crisis response framework and “an employment-oriented framework for future economic growth” (ILO, 2009a).
- To effectively develop a national youth employment strategy, the following steps have been identified: “...integrate the important step of undertaking an in-depth diagnosis of youth labour market issues at the country level, identifying the most prominent barriers that restrict the integration of youth into employment. The subsequent step in the strategy is to set national priorities and explore best matches in terms of the available scope of labour market interventions to address the identified barriers. The selection of the proper intervention requires consultation and analysis to ensure a suitable design, relevant to the needs and means of the country. The

²³ See examples, mainly in western countries, described in ILO, 2010c, pp.14-15.

process for the subsequent design of interventions can then benefit from the lessons learned from programmes undertaken in other countries and the identification of best practices... Lastly, a strategy for investing in youth employment should ideally build in the important step of evaluation of interventions to learn what works and what does not in counteracting labour market barriers for youth” (ILO, 2010c, p. 53).

- A national youth employment strategy should be holistic – supportive policies should integrate growth and job creation, reform the education and training system, provide an enabling environment for enterprise, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, give attention to the informal economy and help young people overcome the specific barriers and disadvantages they face in entering and remaining in the labour market. Successful job creation for youth will not come from education and labour market policies alone; job-focused macroeconomic and financial policies are crucial.
- Multi-pronged programmes that integrate an array of services are likely to have greater and sustainable impact on creating jobs for young people than single interventions. The various examples provided above highlight, for example, the importance of combining training with access to labour market information and support services and of embedding youth targeted interventions in an enabling regulatory framework.
- Good targeting of the programmes is necessary. Youth is not a homogenous group. It is important to distinguish between teenagers and young adults, to give particular attention to marginalized and at-risk groups of young persons and to be gender-responsive.
- Coordination and synergy is essential among the many institutions and partners that play a role in youth employment policy and programme development and implementation. Fragmentation of policies and programmes should be avoided. Often youth employment interventions are carried out by different government departments with limited or no coordination and resulting in wasted resources and reduced impact. A range of other actors – private companies, employers’ and workers’ organizations, youth NGOs and international organizations – also have youth-targeted programmes.

The way forward is through collaborative or joint action in an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition....

While youth employment issues should be tackled taking into account the particular circumstances, needs and resources of a country and the specific situations of young people, collaborative or joint action at a regional level can have added and enhanced benefits. An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition can provide a platform for countries in the region to work together to:

- Strengthen the knowledge base on youth employment policies and programmes relevant and effective for the region. The Asia-Pacific Knowledge Sharing Network on Youth Employment (APYouthNet) was established by the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in 2008 as a regional Community of Practice focused on creating better opportunities for young people through the Asian Decent Work Decade Knowledge Network. So far, more than 800 members have joined the community to compare strategies and to share good practices and more than 350 youth-employment related resources. In 2009 and 2010 respectively, the founding and core members of the APYouthNet met in two regional meetings and decided on a roadmap for 2009-2011. As part of this roadmap, six online-discussions have been held on the portal and APYouthNet produced its first regional discussion podcast (as part of a new monthly series) in October 2011 (ILO, 2011a). An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition can build upon the APYouthNet to extend the knowledge network, to expand the gathering and dissemination of useful information for evidence-based policy formulation and to further develop the APYouthNet towards an influential regional association of youth and youth employment practitioners. Another useful example is the European Employment Observatory (EEO), which contributes to the development of the European Employment Strategy through the

provision of information, comparative research and evaluation on employment policies and labour market trends in the countries covered by the EEO (EU, 2011).

- Gather and analyse evidence-based information and data to assist policy-makers address key dilemmas in promoting youth employment. For instance, the impact of employment protection legislation and minimum wages on youth employment remain controversial issues. Also, with the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship development, it is important to assess the actual potential and role of youth entrepreneurship in employment creation and sustainable enterprise development. Evidence on what has worked and what has not worked in the response to global economic crisis is still limited for efficient planning purposes. A regional coalition should enable countries to more effectively pool information resources and conduct comparative studies on whether and how key policies and programmes have impacted on youth employment.
- Enhance regional capacity for evaluation of policies and programmes. YEN has identified the lack of rigorous evaluation as a serious knowledge gap and a reason for ineffective youth employment policies and programmes. Findings of the YEI concluded that “the level of programme evaluation has been weak, especially in developing countries. A strong conclusion is the need for major improvements in the quality of evidence available for youth employment interventions” (Betcherman et al., 2007, p. ii). Therefore, YEN has spearheaded several initiatives and sought funding support for rigorous monitoring and impact assessment of youth employment interventions so as to assist policy-makers and development practitioners to make the right choices in programme design and delivery. For instance, the Taqueem Fund for Evaluation in Youth Employment has been established for the Arab States. An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition could promote collaboration and help provide financial and technical resources to enable organizations in the region to design and test appropriate, efficient and innovative monitoring and evaluation of youth employment initiatives; widely disseminate the results of such evaluation; and apply the evaluation results to programme design and implementation.
- Encourage and support regional cooperation on the reform of education and training systems. The countries in the region already have some cooperation arrangements for education and training. For example, the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint has a priority to “establish platforms for networking and sharing of best practices on ASEAN children and youth development strategies and tools”. The specific provisions relating to education and training include: promoting options for university placements in an institution of higher learning in a second ASEAN Member State; establishing an ASEAN University Network and “an ASEAN Credit Transfer system as a common mechanism to facilitate the recognition of qualification and to increase student and academic mobility in ASEAN”. Box 12 provides a useful model for wider cooperation beyond the ASEAN countries:

Box 12:

Regional Cooperation Platform for Vocational Education and Teacher Training in the ASEAN Region

Although there is a long tradition of cross-border cooperation in the field of vocational training in Asia, there is rarely any systematic exchange on reform processes. That is why the Regional Cooperation Platform for Vocational Education and In-Service Training of Teachers and Managers in Vocational Schools in Asia (RCP) was established in 2009. Despite high growth rates, there are shortcomings in the vocational training systems of all the countries involved in the RCP. National reforms and modernisation processes as well as mutual recognition of education systems and teaching qualifications are often still in their infancy. The same goes for training for vocational school teachers and managers.

The RCP is a platform of eight vocational training institutes and ministries of education from five countries – China, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. In preparation for the programme, RCP members receive support in developing and establishing appropriate platforms for mutual exchange as well as working formats, such as working groups, conferences and in-service training courses. They also receive assistance in establishing management structures and constructing websites. Systematic learning, mutual consultancy and in-service training are facilitated.

Conferences, working groups and joint projects permit the exchange of know-how on vocational school teacher training. The advantages and disadvantages of various education systems, focusing more on the needs of the labour market and harmonisation of educational qualifications are discussed in detail and dealt with efficiently.

The RCP was established in March 2009. It closes an important gap in regional cooperation and integration. In the specialist institutions there is now greater awareness of the importance of regional exchanges. To date, four specialist conferences in the ASEAN countries attended by more than 100 participants, as well as a number of workshops and training courses have contributed to more systematic networking, communication and cooperation between institutions in the four countries. The agreed topics and content plus new methods (e.g. Open Space Technology, collegial consulting) are now applied in the work of the specialist institutions. Organisational processes, as well as training material and methods have been improved through cooperation in working groups and using a shared website. The results developed are available to all members and improve performance in training, research and consultancy. Better-trained vocational school teachers and managers increase the quality of teaching and learning processes, making training more practice-oriented. Based on the Thai model, a Master's degree course has been established in Lao PDR.

Source: Regional Co-operation Platform (RCP), 2011.

- Promote the recognition and standardization of competency and skill qualification systems. It would be very useful for an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition to support the development of systems to codify, standardize, assess and certify skills so that levels of competence can be easily recognized in different sectors not only within a country's labour market but also the labour markets of other countries in the region. This would certainly enhance opportunities for young people for recognition of acquired skills, portability of skills and greater mobility between jobs and also between countries. ASEAN already has a system of Mutual Recognition Arrangements "to enable the qualifications of service suppliers that are recognized by the relevant authorities in their home country to be mutually recognized by other signatory Member States" and thereby facilitate the flow of professional service providers.²⁴
- Jointly expand youth training and work experience avenues, including through country exchanges. An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition could play an important role in facilitating or organizing work experience opportunities for young people across the countries of the coalition. In an increasingly globalized world, work experience opportunities abroad would be very valuable in enabling young people to enhance skills, even learn new languages, gain knowledge of different work cultures and improve future job prospects. Some transnational companies are already involved in traineeship/work experience schemes where they bring young Asian men or women to their headquarters for a fixed attachment period. There are also fee-charging private companies that arrange work experience abroad for students to do volunteer work or intern in organizations/businesses.²⁵ The Coalition could gather information on work experience abroad opportunities, help to validate the authenticity of the opportunities,²⁶ establish a single website, and where feasible, arrange exchange programmes for young people.
- More effectively manage regional labour migration and protect migrant workers. Given the significance of youth migration and since the migration is increasingly intra-regional rather than to western countries, an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition could contribute to sound migration policy and good governance and better ensure benefits for the young migrants, their families and

²⁴ The Mutual Recognition Arrangements cover, for example, engineering, nursing, accountancy, architecture and medical and dental practitioners. *Mutual Recognition Arrangements in services: Fact Sheet*, ASEAN, 2009, <http://www.asean.org/Fact%20Sheet/AEC/2009-AEC-022.pdf> (accessed 22 Nov. 2011).

²⁵ For example, Projects Abroad, a UK-based fee-charging organization arranges work experience abroad in developing countries in areas such as teaching, conservation and environment placements, law and human rights internships, sports placements, healthcare, journalism and business internships (Projects Abroad, 2011).

²⁶ There have been reports of transnational companies using foreign "trainees" in their factories as a form of cheap labour to meet the labour shortages in their home countries. There are also reports of fraud by the fee charging companies arranging placements for young people abroad.

sending and receiving countries. There are already a number of regional platforms for the management of labour migration – such as the 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, the Greater Mekong Subregion’s Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking (COMMIT) and the Mekong Youth Forum. The Coalition could link with, build upon and learn from these platforms. More specifically, the Coalition could promote awareness and application of the ILO’s rights-based multilateral framework for labour migration; contribute to the Migration Information System in Asia (MISA) so that countries have realistic data for planning labour migration; and spread the ILO-initiated “Travel Smart-Work Smart” campaign that targets young migrants and potential migrants to raise their awareness about the risks of trafficking and labour exploitation.²⁷

- Forge linkages with other regional cooperation initiatives and networks to promote synergies and policy coherence and strengthen impacts for young women and men. As described above, there are already several regional and subregional initiatives focusing on young people. It is important that the Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition closely coordinates with the existing platforms to make the most of the established networks; draw upon accumulated knowledge and experiences and promote dissemination to a larger set of countries; extend partnerships so that a wider set of countries and actors are involved in enhancing youth employment; and avoid duplication/conflict of efforts and wastage of valuable resources. Finally, but certainly, importantly, the Coalition must have substance, not just form – practical regional cooperation efforts and demonstrable benefits will help convince countries that the Coalition is not just another “talk show”.

A Coalition of governments, social partners, international organizations and youth....

It is worth recalling the UN General Assembly discussions in 2001 on the recommendations of the YEN High-Level Panel in the framework of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.²⁸ The recommendations comprise three elements: (i) a new approach that presents young people as an asset or a solution, not a problem, hence emphasizing the importance of investing in them; (ii) a new political commitment that calls upon world leaders to take personal responsibility for translating the political commitments made at the Millennium Summit into action, so as to make the next generation of youth the first “decent work generation”; and (iii) a new partnership for full employment, based on a clear recognition of the different responsibilities and different roles of the United Nations system, national governments, social partners and civil society.

These recommendations apply just as well for an Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition.

In terms of the role of *governments*, the review has emphasized the necessity for action to start at national level, but has also highlighted how several inter-governmental organizations in the Asia-Pacific region have addressed youth employment issues. There are also various international frameworks urging “collective action for the benefit of all” and governments have committed to give effect to, importantly, the Millennium Declaration, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Global Jobs Pact and, more recently, the G20 Cannes Summit Final Declaration.

At national level, the key actors in the labour market, *employers’ and workers’ organizations*, have targeted youth employment as a priority concern and been participating in social dialogue frameworks with their governments to promote youth employment. *Social dialogue* is especially important in efforts to address the impacts of the economic crisis. In **Japan**, for instance, a tripartite agreement was reached in 2009 to endeavour to maintain employment through work-sharing arrangements subsidized by the Government. Covering some 13 million workers between April–September 2009, the agreement contributed to employment stability and facilitated access of young people to jobs. Tripartite and bipartite mechanisms

²⁷ The Travel Smart – Work Smart campaign explains employment rights and arms young migrants with the information they need to help prevent their exploitation. It also provides them with advice on where to turn if they get into trouble and need help (ILO, 2008).

²⁸ United Nations General Assembly document A/56/422, 28 Sep. 2001.

of social dialogue are also particularly suited for addressing the youth-employment related issues such as training, apprenticeships and skills matching.

At the international level, the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) are partners in the YEN. IOE and ITUC also have specific collaboration on youth employment.²⁹ The regional networks of employers are the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) and the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers (CAPE), while the regional networks of trade unions are the International Trade Union Confederation-Asia Pacific (ITUC-AP) and the World Federation of Trade Unions-Asia Pacific Region (WFTU-AP). *An Asia-Pacific Youth Employment Coalition will succeed only with the support and close participation of these regional networks of the social partners.* Employers' organizations and trade unions play a critical role in influencing the debate on policy areas affecting youth employment. The lobbying strategies and actions of these organizations at national, regional and international levels can greatly influence decisions, laws and regulations and general attitudes of key policy-makers. Employers' and workers' organizations are also directly involved in various types of activities and initiatives to do their part in promoting youth employment, as described below.

Employers' organizations recognize that providing jobs for young people is not just a corporate social responsibility (CSR) but has direct benefits to firms. Some main ways in which employers' organizations and their networks promote youth employment are: education-business partnerships; skills collaboration; labour market information and careers advice; matching workers with jobs; and technical assistance to young entrepreneurs. In skills collaboration arrangements, for example, employers' organizations can: encourage larger employers to share training facilities with SMEs; foster partnerships between employers and education and training institutions; and encourage learning in supply chains. Employers' organizations also support youth organizations, such as through joint activities with the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and programmes such as the Youth Career Initiative (YCI). Box 13 provides some examples of national level efforts by employers' organizations. The commitment of employers to tackle youth employment challenges is also evident in the various tools they have developed to guide their actions and policy considerations (ILO, 2011e).³⁰

Box 13:

Employers' organizations promote youth employment

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII): In the absence of any research into skills shortages by the Indian Government, the CII took on the task of conducting research-based skills gap studies across the country. A research company conducted the relevant research. The resulting skills gap survey reports were circulated to different departments of the Government of India. Using the survey data to back up its campaign for the creation of a skills movement in the country, CII successfully influenced the Government on education and skills issues. Recently, the Prime Minister announced a skills mission to address the problem in a holistic manner. The Government has also set up a task force to make recommendations to address skills and education issues. The task force is chaired by the CII. As a result of CII pressure, skills development issues have been addressed in recent budgets. Following CII recommendations, India has joined WorldSkills International as its 48th member country. This global organization, among other activities, facilitates knowledge sharing and networking between skills and education experts from around the world. CII will represent India in all WorldSkills activities.

Partnering with City & Guilds, a vocational training and awarding body, the CII designed accredited short, intense three month courses that focus on basic vocational skills, which are in demand in the labour market. In the construction sector, for instance, the training courses focus on scaffolding, masonry, fencing, tiling, painting and finishing, plumbing, carpentry, building, sanitation, water, cement mixing, facilities management and back up support. The favourable results of the pilot project, and persistent advocacy by the CII, encouraged the

²⁹ For example, in 2003 the IOE and ICFTU sent a joint declaration on youth employment to the Director-General of the ILO that "...the IOE and ICFTU are committed to working together to unite our efforts to try and arrive at solutions that will provide young people everywhere with opportunities for decent and productive work as stated by the UN Millennium Development Goals. We feel that the combined reach and global networks of our organizations and their role as social partners could greatly enhance the ability of the ILO to make a success of this critical issue".

³⁰ In addition, the ILO has created a website that serves as an electronic resource tool for employers to assist them with guidelines, policy making and advocacy in support of youth employment (ILO, undated).

Government of India to roll out similar training courses at a national level under the government's modular employable skills programme (MES). The CII and other employers' organizations will be project partners, acting as independent assessors to ensure that the training courses are effective and continue to provide in demand skills.

Singapore National Employers' Federation (SNEF): SNEF sits on a number of committees through which it can ensure that the Singapore Government understands the needs of SMEs. If the need arises, SNEF also sets up committees itself to look into particular issues facing SMEs. The SNEF Small Business Panel meets regularly to discuss the obstacles SMEs face. Its purpose is to allow SME representatives and SNEF staff to discuss legislative developments affecting SMEs, from laws on roadside parking to licensing procedures.

Cambodia Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA): CAMFEBA embarked on a project to tackle youth unemployment. The Project is a joint initiative between CAMFEBA and the ILO-Bureau for Employers' Activities under its Social Dialogue programme. To ensure that the social partners play a strategic role in promoting youth employment, CAMFEBA set up a tripartite Project Advisory Committee, whose members are representatives from the Government, employers, trade unions, NGOs, universities and donor agencies. The Youth Employment Project aims mainly to promote better dialogue between all relevant stakeholders so that they can jointly address the youth unemployment issue in Cambodia by promoting income opportunities for youth through matching supply and demand in skills in the labour market.

Source: ILO, 2011e.

The *International Trade Union Confederation* (ITUC), which has some 241 affiliated organizations in 156 countries and a membership of 155 million in all five continents, has a specific policy on youth which aims to: create more decent jobs for young people; ensure the quality of existing and new jobs; enhance skills and qualifications and ensuring access to education for all; and improve the transition from school to work, matching employees with employers, and shortening the time youth might find themselves unemployed. While on their own trade unions cannot create jobs for youth, they have an essential role to play in keeping youth employment issues high on policy agendas and during collective bargaining procedures and at the tripartite level. The Trade Union Statement (prepared by the ITUC Advisory Committee to the OECD) to the G20 High Level Experts' Seminar on Employment Policy in April 2011 has a key section on youth employment which sets out the workers' proposals on the measures that should be taken and emphasizing that "internationally, G20 countries need to establish adequate systems to exchange information and stimulate international co-operation to identify effective methods for maximising youth employment, undertaking quality education and training systems and achieving a better transition from school to work"(ITUC, 2011, p. 6). Box 14 provides a couple of examples from the region of how trade unions are working on youth employment issues.

Box 14:

Trade unions promote youth employment

Indonesian Labour Union Confederations: *Youth Rights @ Work: A Facilitator's Guide by and for Indonesian Trade Unions* is part of an initiative that reaches out to youth in the formal and informal economy, to increase awareness of their rights, to empower them to join a labour union and to encourage them to take a stand for their rights. Activities in this guide are designed to target youth between 15 and 29 years who will enter or have just entered the labour market. Representatives from the different confederations worked together on preparing the guide and also trained facilitators to implement the guide.

Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP): A two-day TUCP/ITUC-AP-supported National Youth Conference/Workshop for Decent Work under Global Crisis in March 2010 discussed government and inter-governmental youth employment/training-related programmes and their impact and effectiveness on improving opportunities for youth empowerment and access to decent jobs. The conference reflected on the experiences of young women and men in these programmes and highlighted many areas for improvement – "Work without union rights is never decent"; "Some of our members are beneficiaries of the Department of Labor and Employment's Youth Education-Youth Employability (YEYE) project. But since this is only a two-year project, we worry that they cannot finish schooling when the project ends"; "We do not appreciate programmes that violate our right to organize and collectively bargain. Our organizations have important roles and should be recognized as partners in the implementation of all youth employment programs." The participants insisted on a regular mechanism for

engaging youth and their organizations in youth policy discussions, initiatives and activities. On linkage between youth programmes and decent work, the participants strongly emphasized regard for rights at work as a major component of any youth employment programme. “The TUCP welcomes these youth programmes, and even if mostly temporary, they contribute to efforts in addressing the youth employment challenge. However, we insist that targeted, integrated and sustainable youth programmes that reflect, understand and consider youth needs and realities and designed and carried out locally by youth themselves, with guidance and assistance from support groups and institutions are the ones needed,” concluded the TUCP Youth Director.

Sources: ILO, 2011e, News, 2010.

Active involvement of *youth organizations* will be a key determinant of success for an Asia-Pacific Coalition. “Effective youth participation means that young people are not seen as passive recipients of national resources or the root causes of society’s problems. Instead they are seen as stakeholders who make an important contribution to their countries’ development and whose involvement must therefore be appropriately nurtured and cultivated” (Youth Employment Network Secretariat, 2009, p. 18). The review has already indicated that youth organizations at national and regional levels have been very active and creative (importantly through the use of new technologies and social media) in their efforts to network, to strengthen their own representation and voice, to undertake their own programmes to “help themselves” and to ensure that they are an integral component of efforts to develop and implement youth employment policies and programmes.

Major international and regional youth organizations have mobilized themselves into the Youth Consultative Group (YCG) to work with YEN on how best to support active youth participation in youth employment policy development around the world. By drawing on their extensive networks, the YCG aims to support both their members and other youth groups, through the provision of practical advice, tools and support, and to obtain their rightful place amongst those decision-makers responsible for the drafting and implementation of youth employment policies. In some countries youth organizations have played a major role in getting their governments and the social partners to becoming a YEN Lead Country. For effective partnerships both Coalition structures and youth organizations might wish to consider the important factors highlighted in Box 15.

Box 15:
Good practice in youth advisory structures to support youth employment policy development

Representation

- Draw youth from all regions, educational levels and socio-economic backgrounds including vulnerable youth;
- be accountable and transparent in activities and programmes at the various levels;
- have legitimacy and credibility;
- have constructive, positive common goals in relation to youth employment;
- be able to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency impacts;
- be committed to a sustainable national cooperation in relation to youth issues; and
- respect cultural and ideological diversity and human rights.

Commitments

- Act as a mechanism for including youth perspectives and advice in employment policy processes;
- provide a representative channel for a broad range of youth views from all regions, educational levels and socio-economic backgrounds; and
- promote the role of civil society in tackling youth employment.

Activities

- Prepare a database of youth NGOs working on youth employment and highlight their work to other stakeholders;
- gather data and information on youth and the labour market through surveys and consultations;
- develop communications and awareness raising products (media activities, brochures, posters, website, etc.) and serve as a conduit to passing on media messages to grassroots youth, i.e. social campaigns and vice versa; and

- carry out specific activities in partnership with international and national technical partners including project development, training workshops, support to jobs fairs, etc.

Source: YEN, 2009, p. 28.

Last but not least, the UN family and the international financial institutions are already working together through the YEN. Furthermore, the IMF, OECD, ILO and the World Bank have been tasked by the G20 to jointly report to Finance Ministers on the global employment outlook and suggest how the economic reform agenda under the G20 Framework can contribute to job creation especially for young people. An Asia-Pacific Coalition can galvanize coherent and coordinated efforts by the international organizations among themselves and also in support of regional level policies and programmes by the other actors, and additionally help fulfil the larger international commitments.

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