Chapter III

Social groups in the labour force

The advance of globalization has had important implications for work and employment outcomes in all countries. However, changes in international and national markets for labour have presented different sets of challenges for different groups in society. Some of these social groups are more visible than others and have managed to dominate the debate on work and labour. The lack of visibility of other groups requires vigorous and sustained action to ensure that their particular concerns and challenges are recognized and adequately addressed by policymakers.

The transformation of work and employment can be seen in the changing patterns of the family, of generational groups in the family, and of society at large. These changes translate into the fact that different types of work and employment are being sought by different groups, including children, young people, women and older persons, which have different relationships with the realities of work and labour. Particularly for the first three groups, issues related to education and poverty drive and shape their perspectives of the labour market and their participation in it. Poverty and education will thus be common threads throughout this chapter.

It is also important to understand and address the challenges in respect of a second cluster of social groups. While the needs of each group are distinct from the needs of the others, these groups — persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and migrants — are clearly vulnerable and in dire need of greater policy attention. Although these groups are extremely diverse in the geographical, economic, social and political sense, they all share a common expectation of full and productive participation in the labour market.

Work in a changing family context

Work has traditionally been based on a family division of labour. In every society, rich or poor, each member of a typical family relies on the work contribution of others. The family structure moulds the work pattern, and patterns of work and labour in the economy shape the family.

The family has undergone a significant transformation in all parts of the world, one largely determined by economic development and demographic transition. With globalization, it is becoming increasingly fragile and diverse. Demographic changes have changed the types, characteristics and age structure of the membership of the family. The extended family, which used to be the traditional family model in developing countries and the main support network, is gradually disappearing. At the same time, the nuclear family continues to be the predominant model in developed countries, although its structure no longer represents that of the majority of families.

In addition, there is an increasing globalization phenomenon of household labour "chains", that is to say, the pattern of temporary or long-term migration of household members. As the international labour system takes shape in the twenty-first century, one can anticipate that the dispersed family will take on an increasingly international form, with certain family members temporarily migrating abroad for long periods, and believing they will rejoin their family while in some cases actually never doing so.

The changing family structure as well as increasing numbers of older persons and the erosion of familial support systems has serious implications for the care and well-being of older persons. Most of the burden of caring for older family members falls on women. In some regions, the family remains the most important source of support for the elderly, although there are changes that are undermining this traditional means of support. Increases in population at older ages and in their need for services put the burden on social protection systems and challenge the ability of public, private and community institutions to respond with commitment to equity among social groups. Many countries cannot afford the costly investments in institutional care.

These changes in the family include the continuing feminization of labour, characterized by the fact that many more jobs are being taken by women, by growing precariousness, by a convergence in levels of female labour-force participation with those of men, and by changes in the concept of wages, including the demise of the family wage.

Working patterns are influenced by the changing patterns of marriage, fertility, morbidity and mortality. Fertility has been decreasing in most regions as a result of urbanization, rising level of education, increased age at marriage and the more widespread practice of family planning. Clearly, different parts of the world

are at different stages of demographic transition; on the other hand, the share of the world's population in the older age brackets has been rising very considerably.

In Africa, high fertility rates have led to an increase in the number of potential workers. The working-age population increased from about 281 million in 1985 to 375 million in 1995 and to 489 million in 2005. According to the United Nations, by 2015, the working-age population is projected to reach 616 million people, implying a sharp increase in the supply of labour, which will need to be met by an equivalent increase in income-earning opportunities. Several socioeconomic and cultural factors have contributed to the persistently high fertility rates in Africa, including low levels of education for girls and lack of job opportunities for women, inadequate access to contraceptives, and poor access to health care and education, which hamper skill development and limit employment opportunities. At the same time, HIV/AIDS and the resurgence of malaria and tuberculosis have had an adverse impact on life expectancy and the capabilities of the working-age population.

Africa has been hit hardest by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as all the countries with an adult prevalence rate of 20 per cent or more are in Southern Africa (Joint United Nations Programme on HIVAIDS (UNAIDS), 2004). In this context, not only are a few countries experiencing a negative population growth rate, but some countries have something close to a U-shaped age distribution of their population, with large numbers of children and very large numbers of orphans, alongside a fairly large number of older persons.

This has affected the makeup of family membership and shaped patterns of work and labour, leading to pressure on children and teenagers to find income-earning activity, as well as on many older people to continue to work into old age, both because they lack the income from children who have died in their prime and because they have the added responsibility of looking after orphans. It is believed that there is an ongoing loss of intergenerational transfer of skills and knowledge and household and community solidarity which will make it difficult to implement any conventional employment strategy.

By contrast, in some Western European countries and Japan, where the fertility rates have fallen below the population reproduction rate, two demographic developments have emerged, namely an expanding ageing process and a shrinking population. This has caused concern in some countries, leading to the introduction of pro-natalist policies, including longer maternity leave and financial

assistance for childcare. So far, such policies seem to have had little effect, although they have tended to benefit couples who have children relative to those who do not.

The sustained drop in fertility in Latin America presents challenges, among them, creation of jobs for a growing female labour supply compatible with childrearing and educational options for young people (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2004). In many countries in Asia, the participation of women in the labour force is constrained by factors such as the lack of flexibility in career and child-rearing, the lack of day-care facilities for children, and the lack of home care for older persons (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2005). Policies designed to help meet the demands of family life, as well as policies that provide support for the care of children and older persons, are needed.

Women: greater participation, greater risks

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995, important progress in the promotion of women's economic rights and independence has been made, although deep inequalities remain (United Nations, 2004d) Women represent an increasing share of the world's labour force — ranging from at least a third of the labour force in most countries to close to half in some countries in Europe (International Labour Organization, 2006a).

The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, which is one of the four indicators under Millennium Development Goal 3, is intended to measure the degree to which labour markets are open to women in the industry and services sector. However, to achieve gender equality in the labour market, other factors have to be addressed, including occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, women's disproportionate representation in informal employment and unpaid work and higher unemployment rates.[1] In the present section, we will review four issues that affect the status of women in the world of work: (a) women's participation in the labour force, (b) women's participation in the informal sector, (c) occupational segregation and (d) reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

Women's participation in the labour force

Female labour-force participation rates — the proportion of women recorded as being in the labour force, either working for income or seeking employment —

have risen in most countries of the world, partly as a result of increased access for women to education and to participation in political decision-making. A wide range of gender-sensitive policies and programmes at the country level have focused on creating an enabling environment for women's participation in paid work and self-employment. However, in Eastern Europe, the transition to a market economy in the early 1990s led to some decline in women's share in the labour force from previously high levels (International Labour Organization, 2006a).

Women's participation in the informal sector

Although female employment has increased, this has been paralleled in some countries by a deterioration in the terms and conditions of employment in many areas. The growth of informal work across the world, along with the informalization or casualization of formal employment, has allowed employers to lower labour costs. Women tend to be overrepresented in the informal sector and in self-employment where jobs are lower-paying and less secure. At the same time, they are less likely than men to be covered by social security schemes, another hidden cost of precarious employment.

In many countries, women are disproportionately represented in casual jobs (Campbell and Brosnan, 2005; Fuller and Vosko, 2005; Gootfried, Nishiwara, and Aiba, K, 2006). Women who have casual jobs are often excluded from labour statistics and often overlooked by labour inspection systems. Contractualization is another related global trend that affects women disproportionately and, in this regard, there must be concern that women will have less satisfactory contracts because of their weaker bargaining position and widespread preconceptions about women's degree of attachment to pursuing a labour career.

Occupational segregation

Horizontal segregation and vertical segregation are detrimental to women's participation in the labour market. While horizontal segregation prevents women from entering traditional 'male occupations', vertical segregation impacts on women's career development opportunities preventing them from reaching managerial positions.

Women's opportunities to participate in the labour force have expanded in recent decades; however, the fact remains that the occupations traditionally engaged in by women pay less than jobs requiring similar skill levels but held

predominately by men. In virtually all countries, women are overrepresented in the service sector and men are overrepresented in the industrial sector (Anker, 2006).

Gender segregation by occupation reinforces gender stereotypes in society and a labour-market rigidity that reduces efficiency and growth. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO): "Women continue to face discrimination in recruitment for employment and barriers to occupational mobility. Different values and remuneration continue to be attached to men's and women's jobs, so that labour markets are still characterized by wage differentials and discrimination on the basis of sex."[2]

Gender wage gaps persist in all sectors and throughout the world, largely owing to occupational segregation, both vertical and horizontal, and as a result of women's high rate of participation in part-time work. Studies of the more rapidly growing Asian economies suggest that the growth in exports of labour-intensive manufactured goods and economic growth have been most rapid in those countries that had the widest gender wage gaps. The downward pressure on wages in the jobs concerned, which is a result of global competition, places serious limits on women's bargaining power and wages. Accordingly, it is structurally difficult to raise women's wages and close the gender wage gap.

Reconciliation of work and family responsibilities

There are significant cross-national differences in the rate of female labour-force participation. Since women are considered responsible for caring of children and the elderly, they often face difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities. Countries have taken steps to make available child and elderly care to relieve women of this burden. Policies aimed at women (rather than at parents or caregivers), however, can reinforce the perception that women are responsible for household work.

Evidence suggests that where childcare is readily available and compatible with work schedules, more women work outside the home (van der Lippe and van Dijk, 2002). Where policies support maternity and paternity leave, are flexible for women returning to work after childbearing, and include the availability of part-time work, more women work outside the home. The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) has also created new forms of employment that allow women and men to telework or work from home.

Countries are also increasingly encouraging men to support women by sharing the unpaid work in the family (United Nations, 2004d).

The increase in the number of women working outside the home poses a dilemma for social integration. Often, work outside the home is accompanied by less time spent in traditional roles such as caring for children and preparing meals. Frequently, conflicting pressures, associated with the desire to fulfil domestic roles and pursue work outside the home, result in an internal struggle for many women faced with a trade-off between home and professional life. Men face similar challenges. Both roles are important for different aspects of social integration. On one level, socialization of children and family maintenance are activities essential to ensuring that children and families are integrated. Parental support helps to ensure that children stay in school and complete their homework. Preparing meals is an essential activity supportive of health and nutrition, which allow children and employed family members to engage in their role as student or worker. Often, working parents, especially women, find the two roles rewarding and valuable, but are left with too few hours in the day to fulfil both, especially if circumstances require working long hours or multiple jobs. As more women throughout the world work outside the home, they often continue to do traditional work inside it, creating a "double shift", that is to say, a situation where they work full-time outside the home, then come home and provide essentially full-time care for the family as well. Social policies and measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for both women and men should be the focus of policymakers if they intend to support women's empowerment through participation in the workplace.

In conclusion, during recent decades, labour markets have become increasingly feminized, yet women's employment in many sectors continues to be highly volatile, much more so than men's. As we have seen, the great disadvantage for women, compared with the men, is that they must balance labour-market work with domestic work. A strategy, extending beyond the fostering of greater participation by women, is also needed to address the several layers of discrimination, including horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, in an integrated manner. All policies should be mindful of the need to support both women and men in their multiple roles and to destroy stereotypes of gender roles in order to promote the empowerment of women through equal participation in the labour force.

Ending child labour

Today, as in the past, most children are growing up in a caring family environment, enjoying family bonding, proper health care and nutrition, and enrolment in basic education. Yet, there are still too many for whom this healthy and nourishing environment is not a given. Some 190 million children under age 14 are now engaged in some form of work.

Defining "child labour" is not a straightforward task. Work done by children ranges from domestic and unpaid family work to wage work (both for cash and for in-kind payments) and differs in terms of hours (full-time versus part-time) and intensity (light versus heavy). In view of the negative connotation of the term "child labour", a distinction is often made between harmful "child labour" and the much broader category of (potentially beneficial) child work. However, considering the diversity of children's work, this dichotomy seems simplistic. The establishment of continuum proceeding from the most hazardous to the most beneficial forms of child labour may constitute a more useful approach (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998).

Estimates of child labour

The incidence of child labour varies considerably across regions, sectors and age groups. Almost two thirds of working children live in Asia and the Pacific. However, the proportion is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 25 per cent of children work (International Labour Organization, 2006b, para. 30). Child labour is more prevalent in rural than in urban areas. The vast majority of working children are engaged in agricultural work or work in the informal sector, and less than 5 per cent work in export industries. Everywhere, older children and adolescents are more likely to work than younger children, and the majority of children do not work full-time (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998).

The participation rates of boys and girls in economic activities are roughly equal (International Labour Organization, 2002b; International Labour Organization, 2006b). However, girls usually have fewer work options than boys and thus fewer possibilities to escape oppressive work situations (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998). Boys typically participate more in wage work and in household enterprises; girls tend to be involved in domestic activities (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995; Ilahi, 2001). Girls begin working at an earlier age, particularly in rural areas. Their outside work is often of low status, and they frequently earn

less than boys and have less control over their earnings. Combining outside work with domestic chores and school imposes a triple burden on girls, affecting their school attendance and performance. Although girls seem to be more concerned about the dangerous conditions of their work, it is boys who are more often engaged in hazardous activities, particularly with increasing age (Haspels, Romeijn and Schroth, 2000; Swaminathan, 1998; Woodhead, 1998; International Labour Organization, 2002b; 2006b).

Recent ILO estimates (2006b, table I.1) point to a rapid reduction in child labour, in particular of its worst forms: the total number of child labourers aged 5-17 fell by 11 per cent worldwide (from 245 million to 218 million) in the period 2000 - 2004. It is noteworthy that the largest decrease is occurring in the area of hazardous work. In general, the more harmful the work and the more vulnerable the children involved, the faster has been the decline in child labour in recent years. The incidence of hazardous child labour declined by 26 per cent (from 170 million to 126 million) for children aged 5-17 and by 33 per cent (from 111 million to 74 million) among those aged 5-14. In light of the encouraging global trend, ILO (ibid., para. 33) claims that the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in the next 10 years is feasible.[3]

Stark regional differences prevail in terms of progress. The decline has largely been driven by a rapid decrease in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the number of economically active children decreased by two thirds, leaving only 5 per cent of children engaged in work, according to ILO estimates. In sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, the absolute number of working children actually increased, partly owing to high rates of population growth and the economic hardships resulting from the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Determinants of child labour

The root causes of child labour are complex. They can be divided into factors affecting labour supply and those affecting labour demand. One of the main determinants of children's labour supply is poverty.[4] At the national level, a negative relationship exists between a country's income per capita and children's labour-force participation. This relationship is strongest for the least developed countries and becomes less marked for middle-income countries. The structure of production — and thus the level of economic development — also plays a role, with shares of agriculture in gross domestic product (GDP) being positively

correlated with the incidence of child labour (Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998).[5] At the household level, low income is the single most important predictor of child labour (Dehejia and Gatti, 2002). Working children's contributions typically account for 10-30 per cent of total household income (Bhalotra, 2000)[6]. Since poor families spend, on average, 80 per cent of their income on food, these contributions to family income are often essential for survival (Anker, 2000).

A low health and education status, vulnerability and voicelessness are additional dimensions of poverty contributing to child labour. First, illness (such as HIV/AIDS) or death of household members can draw children into wage work in order that they may provide a substitute for lost income and can raise the domestic workload of girls in particular (Moore, 2000; Ilahi, 2001). Second, children may be driven to work by the inaccessibility of schools, the low quality of education (which makes it rational to work), the cost of schooling, or violence and humiliation experienced from teachers and classmates (Woodhead, 1998). Third, vulnerability is a key determinant of child labour. Children's employment is frequently a livelihood strategy which serves to minimize the risk of income losses, for example, through adult unemployment or crop failure. Children affected by crises such as economic shocks, natural disasters or conflict are also at high risk of being required to begin to work. A final dimension of poverty contributing to child labour is voicelessness and powerlessness. Poor workers typically must accept the wages that they are offered, even if, these are insufficient to support a family, thereby making child labour necessary for family survival. Moreover, they may not be able to organize into trade unions or other types of workers' organizations, which have been crucial in effecting a reduction in child labour (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1997; Tabusa, 2000).

Child labour is not only a consequence but also a cause of poverty. A vicious circle of poverty can be created when poor parents send their children to work, thereby jeopardizing school attendance and performance and thus their children's future earnings. Child labour may also exacerbate the youth employment problem if it prevents children from obtaining education and skills required to compete on the labour market as young adults.[7]

Poverty, although a decisive factor, is insufficient to explain the existence of the child labour supply: the poorest regions are not always those with the highest incidence of child labour. Other factors include social norms, household size and mother's labour-force participation, imperfect credit markets and economic

incentives. Finally, it is important not to disregard children's own motivations. Children's responses to studies that attempted to capture children's perspectives of their working lives show that they often perceive work as a natural and necessary aspect of childhood and as part of their identity. Most children work only part-time. Their income helps them make an economic contribution to their family and gives them recognition, self-esteem and increased bargaining power. Children also value the friendships and fun experienced during work (Woodhead, 1998). While experience, in terms of years worked, does not seem to raise future earnings (Grimsrud, 2003; Swaminathan, 1998), work can teach children skills that are of importance in their future lives.

Although less researched than the determinants of labour supply, the factors affecting labour demand are also important. The main factors influencing demand for child labour are the belief that children are more docile or better able to perform certain tasks than adults (the "nimble fingers" argument), the relative importance of the informal versus the formal sector, and the prevailing production technology (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995). Low wages paid to children also influence the demand for their labour.

Action against child labour

Policy choices crucially affect some of the determinants of child labour described above. Lack of political commitment on the part of the government has repeatedly been identified as one of the main obstacles to reducing child labour (see, for example, Boyden and Myers, 1995). In recent years, however, political consensus on the need to eliminate child labour has increased. This is illustrated by the rapidly growing number of ratifications of international instruments calling for an end to child labour such as International Labour Conventions, No. 138; concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment; and No. 182, concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The issue of child labour also received significant attention at the 2002 twenty-seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children and was mentioned in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.[8] Despite the strong political commitment at the international level to eliminating the worst forms of child labour, effective mobilization within relevant ministries, departments and agencies at national and local levels has yet to occur in many countries (International Labour Organization, 2006b).

Owing to the multiple determinants of child labour, any strategy to eliminate child labour must address a wide range of causes. A comprehensive approach combining complementary actions on the legal, educational, economic and cultural fronts is needed.

In addition to efforts to reduce poverty, two government interventions frequently used in the fight against child labour include minimum age legislation and compulsory education. A ban on child labour acts as a deterrent and a basis for preventive and punitive measures (Jankanish, 2000). Legislation can have a lasting effect on perceptions: by changing what people are used to, bans affect what is considered "natural" and moral. However, they are difficult to enforce and could harm the welfare of poor households relying on child labour as part of a livelihood strategy. By driving the problem underground, regulation may hinder the provision of support and protection to working children (Woodhead, 1998).

Minimum age legislation and compulsory education can be mutually reinforcing. By making education an obligation, rather than a right, legislation can significantly contribute to changing parents' attitudes towards child labour (Boyden and Myers, 1995). Nevertheless, it is frequently not enforced, particularly in rural areas which often lack schools; and if family survival depends on children's earnings, compulsory education may result in an excessive workload for children who have to combine school and work. Flexible arrangements that will allow working children to continue education would be more constructive, and should be implemented to supplement compulsory education.

In addition to adopting legislative approaches, national Governments can contribute to reducing child labour through public expenditures on social services. By improving children's survival chances, expenditures on health and sanitation may reduce fertility and thus the potential supply of child workers (Cigno, Rosati and Guarcello, 2002). Expenditures on education are crucial in that quality education not only increases the alternatives available to children (both now and in the future), but also raises children's awareness of their rights and of the dangers of work.

To reduce the direct and indirect costs associated with education, some countries have developed innovative incentives for schooling, such as cash transfers dependent on children's school attendance, scholarships, food-for-school programmes[9] and the provision to schoolchildren of school supplies, uniforms,

meals and essential health services. Other incentives include improved school quality (including curricula, accessibility and staffing), childcare facilities and separate toilets for girls so as to facilitate girls' attendance. The measure of offering practical skills and vocational training at school may be a means to increase the relevance of education and to ensure parents' support.

In addition to reducing the costs, Governments can stimulate children's school attendance by making it easier to combine work and school, for example, by offering a choice between day and evening classes.[10] Such approaches are problematic, however, if they excessively reduce the total number of hours spent at school. Since child workers may be too old or may have trouble adapting to the routine of school life, non-formal education is crucial to facilitating working children's entry into the normal school system and may be the only form of education available to older children (Haspels, de los Angeles-Bautista and Rialp, 2000).

Policies focusing on poverty reduction, legislation and universal education should be complemented by policies to encourage changes in technology and improve the adult labour market (International Labour Organization, 2006b). The protection of workers' rights is an important component of comprehensive approaches to tackling child labour. Although a narrow focus on child labour helps obtain commitment from a range of actors, a wider approach focusing on general labour standards (in particular adult wage rates) may have a larger impact and ultimately reach more children.

A crucial component of interventions to eliminate child labour is access to far-reaching social programmes that help turn around the vicious circle of poverty. In addition to free and quality education (including non-formal education), these should include safety nets, access to health services, pre-vocational and technical training, in-kind assistance to children removed from work, and income-generating measures for family members (including credit and savings programmes). Since perceptions of child labour as "natural" perpetuate its existence, measures to tackle it must also address societal preconceptions through awareness-raising among children, parents, teachers, employers, religious figures and community leaders.

For interventions to be effective, they must be well-sequenced and time frames must be of sufficient length. In particular, programmes monitoring the removal of child labour from certain industries should not begin before social

protection components have been introduced and become effective (as was the case in some past interventions to eliminate child labour).

Considering the economic reality faced by working children and their families, short- and long-term goals of interventions must differ. In the short run, children involved in the hazardous and worst forms of child labour need to be the focus of removal and rehabilitation measures, whereas children engaged in non-harmful work will benefit most from interventions designed to improve their work situation. In the long run, interventions must provide households with viable alternatives to child labour.

Youth: unemployment, inactivity and education

Young people constitute about one fifth of the world's population, and half of the total unemployed global workforce. It is estimated that those aged 15-24 accounted for some 89 million of the total 192 million people out of work in 2005 (International Labour Organization, 2006c). Youth are the first generation to feel the full effects of globalization on their choices in respect of education, training and work and, indeed, on their full transition into society.

Some 1.1 billion people worldwide are young people. The vast majority of them, some 85 per cent, live in developing countries (United Nations, 2006c). Tremendous progress has been achieved in improving the well-being of the current generation of youth compared with previous ones. Owing to better maternal and child health care and improvements in nutrition, child survival rates in developing countries have steadily increased over the past decades and have contributed to the presence of an ever-larger number of young people in developing countries. The demographic growth of the youth cohort in those countries has been partly offset by stabilizing or declining fertility in many developed countries. Still, the number of youth had almost doubled from 560 million in 1965 to 1,020 million in 1995. In the past 10 years, 133 million people were added which today comprises to a total of 1,158 million young people.

Youth in the globalized world of work

The general environment in which young people are making their transition into society at the beginning of the twenty-first century is characterized by a number of features, some emerging and some persisting. The latter category includes poverty and education; the former, globalization and migration as well as the use of media and technology.

Many of the world's youth live in poverty. It is estimated that one fifth of the total global youth population (over 200 million) live on less than $1 per day and that roughly one in every two young men and women (515 million) live on below $2 per day (United Nations, 2004c). The plight of the working poor among young people is an issue that has only recently started to gain attention (International Labour Organization, 2006c).

Many young people apply individual strategies to cope with poverty. The informal sector is where most seek income, often through self-employment or through informal networks of peers or elders, and increasingly in large urban settings with little support from the family networks existing in rural areas. Another approach to addressing poverty, namely, entry or re-entry into the education system, is often not an option. Indeed, the stereotypic connotation of "youth unemployment" — as referring to youth that are leisurely seeking jobs after having completed their formal education — does not apply to these groups: young people living in poverty can generally not afford to be unemployed.

There have been very notable achievements in the area of education over the past decades and new generations have, logically, benefited most from those. More children than before are completing a full course of primary schooling; and in most regions, four out of five eligible young people are currently enrolled in some form of secondary education. In addition, the number of young people who are entering tertiary education has grown beyond the 100 million mark (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2006). This has had substantive effects on their employment situation.

However, the educational success of the current generation of youth is incomplete. A total of 130 million young people, (roughly 1 in every 10 young persons) are illiterate, having missed out on, or been forced to drop out of, primary education during their childhood. Young women are overrepresented in this group. Also, some 100 million eligible children are currently not in school, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia (United Nations Children's Fund, 2004). It is likely that a majority of those children will, in the coming years, replace the current group of illiterate youth. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education will be of direct benefit in enabling future generations of young people to be prepared for negotiating their individual transitions successfully.

Achievements in both basic and higher education for young men, and increasingly for young women, have created a larger, better-educated generation. This has directly resulted in higher expectations among young people when they enter the world of work. Unfortunately, in many cases, the economies in which they live have been unable to provide opportunities that match these expectations. The inability of those economies to absorb the large group of well-educated students has led to many instances of friction among students who feel increased pressure to stand out among a tight pack of talented achievers.

In this environment, countries that have been able to benefit from globalization have witnessed an occupational shift in employment from rural and small-scale occupations towards jobs in export-oriented manufacturing of goods and services in, or close to, urban centres. Young people, with their flexibility and mobility, have particularly benefited from this trend. The global shift of manufacturing from developed to developing countries has allowed many young people in developing countries to benefit from these job opportunities.

One could argue that young people are winners in the globalization game, particularly those able to use their competitive advantage in technology-related employment. Yet, for every manufacturing position created for a young person in a rapidly growing economy, another opportunity for a manufacturing job is oftentimes lost elsewhere. At the same time, there are many young people that have not benefited from the economic globalization process. For many young people in Africa, South Asia and Latin America, few real opportunities exist as a result of globalization and the spread of information and communication technologies. Yet, global media make young people increasingly aware of their place in society — not only of their economic status and position, but also of their own political participation — and have further contributed to their high expectations (United Nations, 2002b).

Thus poverty, educational achievement, inability to find jobs at home, and political dissatisfaction all push young people to migrate in search of opportunities. A survey of young people in the Arab world in 2004 indicated that some 75 per cent would emigrate to Europe or the United States of America if given the opportunity (United Nations Development Programme, 2005a). Yet, the international climate for young job-seekers is not too favourable. Recipient Governments are keen to cherry-pick only those with elite educational qualifications, mostly from Western universities; select only those with proved skills that

are in short supply locally; or position immigrants towards short-term employment contracts with no options for extended stays. Hence, in terms of economic development and self-realization, much talent is lost when it cannot be steered towards a willing employer or a self-entrepreneurial activity.

Youth inactivity and youth unemployment

Over the past decades, youth inactivity, defined as not being in the labour force, has increased. The education sector has been able to absorb and retain more young people outside the labour force, increasingly beyond the upper age limit of youth, namely, age 24. As a result, between 1995 and 2005, while the total youth population grew by some 13 per cent, the youth labour force grew by only 5 per cent. Worldwide, the number of young people employed declined from 52 per cent of all youth in 1995 to 47 per cent 2005 (table III.1). The fact that, globally, youth unemployment is growing ant that unemployment rose from 74 million in 1995 to 89 million at present (International Labour Organization, 2006c) indicates an unsettling trend.

There is, however, a large discrepancy between regions. While there were declines in the youth labour force in both the developed countries and the countries of East Asia, the youth labour force has grown by about 30 per cent since 1995 in the Middle East and Northern African region, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa where the youth labour force grew almost as rapidly as the youth population. In regions where unemployment among the educated is high, higher education contributes to increased inactivity in two ways. First, as pointed out earlier, students attending higher educational institutions full-time are counted as economically inactive. Second, because youth economic inactivity includes young people who are neither in employment nor in education, university graduates unable to find suitable jobs are added to their ranks. Young people who are neither in employment nor in education also include “inactive non-students”, namely, those who are engaged in household duties or care for other household members, live with a disability or are ill, or do not know how to look for work or believe that there is no work (discouraged workers). Some of the data available are presented in table III.1.

A main conclusion to be drawn from the table is that whereas it is important to study unemployment rates, normally indicating those youth in the labour force who are without work, it is also necessary to consider the very large

group of young people outside the labour force who are also inactive (as shown in line 8 of the table). The size of this group is not known exactly, as only some regional estimates are available. From the available data, it could be estimated that in 2005 some 170 million youth were economically inactive worldwide, although this group might well have been active in the informal sector.

The policy response

Globally, the level of youth unemployment and inactivity should be a matter for serious concern. For individuals, long-term unemployment can lead to margin-

Table III.1.
Estimates of youth inactivity, 2005
(Millions)

		World	*Ded/ EU*	*CEE*	*EA*	*SEA/P*	*SA*	*LAC*	*MENA*	*SSA*
1	Total youth population	1158	124	71	230	109	289	105	83	147
2	In the labour force	633	65	30	155	62	137	57	33	96
3	Employed	548	56	24	142	52	123	48	25	79
4	Unemployed	85	9	6	12	10	14	3	9	17
5	Not in the labour force	525	60	41	75	47	153	48	50	51
6	- In education	440	52	23	..	..	..	30	..	28
7	- Not in education	85	8	18	…	...	..	19	..	22
8	NEET = lines 4 plus line 7	170	17	24	…	..	..	22	..	39
9	NEET percentage	15	13	34	..	..	..	21	..	27

Source: International Labour Organization, 2006c, tables 2.2 and 2.4; and sources quoted in figure 4.3. See ILO for details on specific countries in regions.

Note: Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available. Figures in italics are estimates made on the basis of existing data.

Abbreviations: NEET, neither in employment nor in education; Ded/Eu, developed countries and European Union; CEE , Central and Eastern Europe; EA, East Asia; SEA/P, South-eastern Asia and the Pacific; SA, South Asia; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and Northern Africa; SSA, sub-Saharan Africa.

alization, frustration, low self- esteem and, sometimes, acts that burden society (United Nations, 2004a). In the long term, longitudinal data in the United States suggest that young men who had experienced long periods of unemployment suffered from lower wages in the jobs that they eventually found, experienced increased chances of repeated unemployment in the future and had a higher likelihood of longer unemployment spells in their adult careers (Mroz and Savage, 2001). Evidence from South-eastern Europe suggests that long-term unemployment also increases the risk of income poverty (Kolev and Saget, 2005). Because long-term unemployed youth will be a burden on public budgets, it is important to offer "second chances", both in education and in employment, for those unable to secure a successful transition the first time around (World Bank, 2006a).

Yet, skepticism persists about the negative effects of youth unemployment and youth inactivity on the well-being and employment outcomes of young people. Some of the arguments are generational in nature. Many policymakers (and parents) who have argued that in the previous generations, a young individual working through the educational system would eventually find a decent job opportunity, ignore the fact that current generations in their country enjoy almost universal secondary education, yet are required to compete for far fewer jobs. It is, for example, often noted that young people tend to need some time in navigating their transitions into adulthood and that a short period of unemployment is a fairly harmless and even helpful part of that transition. A related argument is that it is only those youth that can afford to be unemployed who are in fact formally unemployed.

There are other doubts expressed about the seriousness of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is strongly correlated with the cyclic nature of the labour market in any country. As less experienced entrants into the labour market, youth have a disadvantage when compared with older workers with higher productivity during an economic downturn. While youth unemployment can thus be viewed as merely an indicator of the economy's temporary downturn, it does not diminish the negative effects of long-term inactivity experienced by young people.

In their policy responses, rather than concentrate on pro-poor economic growth or job creation, Governments tend to focus on the supply side of the labour market, addressing perceived weaknesses of youth in terms of their lack

of skills or their attitudes (United Nations, 2002b). These measures perceive young people as a vulnerable group in need of support, rather than as an asset (Curtain, 2006). Yet there are other measures that can be taken whereby young people are perceived as an asset. For those living in poverty, actions should be taken to strengthen their entrepreneurial and innovative skills, and assist them by providing microcredit services for self-employment. For those with a track record in the formal education system and high expectations, domestic job creation and job placement should be encouraged, complemented by more large-scale overseas temporary work opportunities. While the cost of these interventions and their benefits are not easily measured and appreciated (World Bank, 2006a), they will help unleash some of the untapped potential of the current generation.

Implications for education, schooling and work

The centrality of education and training for young people warrants some reflections on their merits in the era of globalization. In societies where there is an overwhelming urge to make more people competitive, productive and able to obtain and retain jobs, the educational system is at risk of preparing people to become job holders without attention to the issue of greater individual fulfilment. Yet, schooling is about more than just preparing people for jobs: it is about exposing them to a broad education and culture. Expressions of the understandable desire to ensure that young people emerge equipped to engage in available income-earning activities have long been subject to the objection that too narrow a focus on that objective can result in an excessively utilitarian approach, stultifying human development rather than liberating the creativity and innovative capacities of the young. Indeed, it may well be necessary for there to be a trade-off between cultural aims of education and the need for young people to be equipped to survive and prosper amid the realities of their local and national labour markets.

Distinctions between schooling and training are becoming blurred; and training is itself in crisis to the extent that it has focused largely on the needs of formal enterprises (International Labour Organization, 2003a). The challenge here is to reposition the ideas of skill training within a context of capability development. That what today's employers want may differ considerably from what today's young citizens want is a matter for concern. Some analysts argue that national educational and training schemes should be integrated and delib-

erately tailored to the wishes and needs of local or multinational employers. This harks back to the old and now-discredited manpower planning models that were in vogue in the later stages of the pre-globalization era. Any such approach would be hard enough to implement efficiently and equitably in a closed economy; it would be much harder to sustain in the emerging circumstances of highly open economies where future structures of demand are so much more unpredictable. Moreover, there is a more important moral dimension. Such an approach leads to a narrow functionalism, in which broad cultural education would be reserved for elites while job-preparation courses would be left to the masses, limiting social mobility and entrenching on education-based social dualism.

Other ideas are gaining ground. One popular idea is that of lifelong learning which is attractive if seen as offering the opportunity to learn and refine one's capabilities as and when one wishes. The idea becomes less attractive if, however, what is implied is having, at the whim of others and in a state of constant insecurity, to learn new skills that become obsolescent at regular intervals of a few months. The tendency within the globalization and flexibility model is to exert pressure on behalf of the latter aspect as when policymakers who speak of human resources development focus exclusively on making people more employable. More attention could perhaps be given to ensuring employment structures that allow workers to use and develop their capabilities, thereby retooling jobs rather than just retooling workers.

Finally, what has been called community-based training has gained support in the international donor and technical assistance community, primarily as a means of boosting basic skills of workers in the informal economy in developing countries. Although such training does seem attractive, it should be carefully evaluated: insofar as it is government- or donor-led, the administrative costs may be larger than envisaged. The real question, however, for those advocating this route is whether such schemes are filling a real need or are substituting for what would be provided anyway. Subsidized schemes also raise questions regarding the appropriateness of the selection of those skills on which the community-based training schemes choose to concentrate as well as the appropriateness of the displacement of others. They could also end up helping the less vulnerable in the local community rather than the most vulnerable, reflecting a tendency for such schemes to take the best possible trainees so as to maximize success.

Training is an area of work that is easily captured by interest-based rhetoric. Employers, who obviously benefit from having a pool of workers with skills that they can utilize are inclined to claim that the government is not investing enough in training and to demand subsidies so as to provide training themselves. Those claims and demands are perfectly understandable, since they would tend to lower employers' cost and raise their net profits. However, what is preferable, or of higher priority, is a regulatory framework that would enable firms and workers, young and no longer young, to benefit from employer training schemes. This should include measures to ensure proper standards and certification, including a legitimate system of national qualifications, and institutional respect for apprenticeship schemes.

Active ageing and work

The world population is ageing rapidly, and this trend is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. A major factor contributing to this change is the decline in fertility rates and increases in life expectancy. In the 1950s, older persons[11] represented 8 per cent of the population and in 2000, 10 per cent. Projections for the population of older persons globally in the year 2050 are expected to reach 21 per cent. By that time, the number of older persons in the world will have surpassed the youth population for the first time in history (United Nations, 2002a).

There are significant differences between the developed world and the less developed world in terms of the numbers and proportions of older persons. Rising longevity is taking place mainly in developing countries. A substantial majority of older persons — over 60 per cent — are living in developing countries, where the growth in the numbers of older persons has come at lower levels of income and lower levels of institutional capacity than in developed countries (Eberstadt, 2005). In less developed regions, 50 per cent of older males and 19 per cent of older females are economically active, as compared with 21 per cent of older males and 10 per cent of older females in developed regions. Increased wealth and urbanization in member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have led to longer education, shorter working lives and longer retirement periods (Auer and Fortuny, 2000). The greater labour participation rates of older persons in developing countries are largely due to lack of financial support for older per-

sons, making retirement a luxury difficult to attain (United Nations, 2002a). While people in less developed countries must remain employed out of necessity, industrialization and the adoption of new technologies along with labour-market mobility threaten much of the traditional work of older people. Development projects must ensure the participation of older people in income-generating opportunities and their eligibility for credit schemes (World Health Organization, 2002).

In developed countries, older workers are also facing challenges. During the 1980s and the 1990s, companies restructuring in OECD countries were much more likely to downsize than to expand employment and many sought to reduce the number of workers through early retirement for workers. In both public and private workplaces, downsizing, accompanied by early retirement, designed to give companies adjustment flexibility, has been common practice (Auer and Fortuny, 2000).

In recent years, the sustainability of these policies has come into question as concerns a rise over pension liabilities, mounting old-age dependency ratios, skills gaps and potential labour-force shortages (United Nations, 2007). Because people are living much longer, they potentially will be active for many more years than people were in previous generations. Mandatory retirement ages are artificially low considering the increase in lifespans and improvements in health. These changes have major implications for the labour force and the status of older workers (United Nations, 2006d).

Strong economic and social arguments can be made in support of reversing the early retirement trend in OECD countries. In the next 25 years, a further decline in employment rates and an increase in dependency rates will occur, as the number of persons at pensionable age will rise by 70 million while the working-age population will only grow by 5 million. Reversing the early retirement trend will prevent the employment ratio from falling (Auer and Fortuny, 2000). The pressures to eliminate mandatory retirement ages and extend the number of working years are increasing and the elimination of mandatory retirement ages has already occurred in several countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States where workers are allowed to stay in the workforce as long as they are willing and able (United Nations, 2006d). Allowing knowledgeable, experienced and able persons to remain in the workplace will benefit employers and older persons alike. Many employers in these countries have recognized the

value of retaining older workers and offer incentives for employees to remain on the job (Auer and Fortuny, 2000).

As people grow older, active ageing policies are necessary to allow older persons to remain in the labour force in accordance with their capacities and preferences. For individuals to remain productive and engaged in meaningful activity as they grow older, continuous training in the workplace and lifelong learning opportunities in the community are necessary (World Health Organization, 2002). For developing countries in particular, where only 50 per cent of adults over age 60 are literate, access to education and literacy early in life are critical for developing the skills that people will need in order to adapt and remain independent as they grow older (United Nations, 2002a). Low levels of education and illiteracy are associated not only with high rates of unemployment, but also with increased risks of disability and death for people as they age (World Health Organization, 2002).

Making the physical environment more accessible to older persons can mean the difference between dependence and independence. Public transportation must be made available and affordable, as it is critical for enabling older persons to participate in community life. Attention must also be given to environmental hazards such as insufficient lighting, absence of handrails and irregular walkways which can increase the risk of injury for older persons. In the workplace, older persons need training in new technologies, particularly in information technology, electronic communication and agriculture (ibid.). In the International Labour Office *World Employment Report, 1998-99: Employability in the Global Economy — How Training Matters*[12], it was argued that ongoing training was necessary throughout the working life of an individual to prevent the obsolescence of skills as persistent age discrimination had been reinforced by changes in work organization. Employers must ensure that education and training policies are adapted to the specific need of older workers. The better the education provided for older persons, the longer they will remain in employment (Auer and Fortuny, 2000).

In many cases, increased ageing worldwide has had a remarkable impact on family structures and roles as well as on labour patterns of other social groups examined in this chapter. For example, there are a growing number of health professionals migrating from developing countries to fill the increasing demand for long-term care for the ageing population in developed countries. This trend has resulted in the entry of more women into the labour market. While there is

a benefit from the trend for sending countries in the form of increased remittances, there is also a loss of productive workers. Moreover, as population ageing increases in developing countries, older persons could be left without any family members to care for them (United Nations, 2006d).

Opening the world of work to persons with disabilities

The proportion of persons with disabilities in the global population at present is estimated to be at 10 per cent, which amounts to 650 million people (United Nations, 2006e). Given the phenomenon of global ageing and the prevalence of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, the incidence of disability will continue to increase.

Persons with disabilities are much more likely than those without disabilities to live in poverty, and of the 1.3 billion people surviving on less than $1 a day, persons with disabilities are often among the poorest (Albert, 2006). There is a strong correlation between poverty and disability, as people who are living in poverty are more likely to become disabled, and persons with disabilities are more likely to be poor (World Health Organization, 2004).

On 13 December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Assembly resolution 61/106; annex I) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention (annex II). For many people, this represents the promise of a new era, reflecting a significant shift in the discriminatory attitudes and practices that persons with disabilities have had to endure. The Convention will fill a gap in the international legal framework, and foster a paradigm shift leading to deep-rooted social change in the way that the situation of persons with disabilities is addressed.

More importantly, the Convention moves beyond the medical understanding of disabilities, that is to say, the understanding of what is wrong with someone, to a social understanding that recognizes disability as a limitation imposed upon individuals by social, cultural, economic and environmental barriers (Albert, 2006). It reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and it clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities.

Of the 650 million persons with disabilities, about 470 million are of working age. They are much more likely to be unemployed than persons without dis-

abilities (International Labour Organization, 2006d). Workers with disabilities tend to fare less well than workers without disabilities, especially when unemployment rises. While discrimination is often a factor, another key cause is the inability to compete on the basis of relevant skills and qualifications (O'Reilly, 2004). For persons with disabilities to become self-reliant and more socially active, they need greater access to activities that give life meaning, and they must be integrated socially and economically into mainstream society. Institutional support to facilitate inclusion and empowerment requires the provision of access to education, training and recreation, and support for employment and social participation. Strategies must be developed to reduce discrimination against persons with disabilities that prevent access to all types of social opportunities (Metts, 2003).

Data availability on persons with disabilities in many countries is inadequate. However, it is clear that a large number of persons with disabilities who wish to secure employment remain unemployed. Disability significantly affects the participation rate, and low unemployment rates may point to a discouraged-worker effect where people do not enter the labour market because chances of finding employment are perceived to be low. The European Commission (2001) found that 14 per cent of the working-age population, approximately 26 million people, identified themselves as having a disability. Nearly 52 percent of persons with disabilities were economically inactive compared with 28 per cent of those without disability; and only 42 per cent of persons with disabilities were employed, compared with almost 65 per cent of those without disabilities. Other research found that during the 1990s, the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities of working age had been, on average, 80 per cent higher than that of people without disabilities (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003).

Additionally, there is a clear relation between education and disability. In countries where data are available, on average, persons with disabilities have a lower educational level and fewer educational opportunities than persons without disabilities. As a result, persons with disabilities are less likely to attain the necessary qualifications to enter and compete in the labour market (European Commission, 2001).

The rate of employment of persons with disabilities is believed to be far lower in developing countries than in OECD countries. Yet, nearly 7 out of

every 10 persons with disabilities live in developing countries. Ninety per cent of school-age children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, and the labour-market position of job-seekers with disabilities is dire. In most cases, there is no access to disability benefits or rehabilitation services (World Health Organization, 2003; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2004). In Latin America, for example, there are roughly 85 million persons with disabilities, but only 2 per cent were reported as receiving adequate medical care (Pan American Health Organization, 2006). In the Asia-Pacific region, home to about 400 million persons with disabilities, the prevalence rates of disabilities across countries range from 0.7 to 20 per cent, with most living beneath the poverty line (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2006).

Considering the large numbers of persons with disabilities in the world, it will be impossible to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1 of cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015 if they are not brought into the development mainstream. Also, if Millennium Development Goals 2, , aiming to ensure that all children have access to primary education by the same year, is to be achieved then persons living with disabilities must be mainstreamed into the international development agenda.

Approaches to greater inclusion

Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities can be achieved through professional training. Training programmes that lead to recognized certification are essential for persons with disabilities who seek to gain employment. This type of training is going through a transition involving a shift from specialized institutions to mainstream programmes, open to all job-seekers. In many cases where persons with disabilities are being encouraged to enter mainstream training, physical inaccessibility as well as irrelevant courses, inadequate transportation and inflexibility of course design are often cited as reasons for their being unable to do so. Countries that have made progress in the mainstreaming of training are taking steps to deal with the barriers to participation mentioned above (O’Reilly, 2004).

Two approaches to inclusion and employment for workers with disabilities are sheltered employment, entailing a segregated environment for those whose needs do not allow for them to obtain employment in the open market, and

supported employment. Supported employment developed as an alternative to traditional rehabilitation programmes, placing workers in integrated workplaces (ibid., 2004). A number of studies claim that supported employment has produced greater social and psychological benefits for persons with disabilities and have been more cost effective for the workers and taxpayers; however, the findings may be different in other countries (ibid, 2004).

Despite the large number of countries that have created employment quotas for persons with disabilities, the rates of compliance are generally low (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003). Quota systems are based on the belief that without legislative intervention, the number of persons with disabilities in the workforce would be far lower than what it is at present. A number of countries that had not introduced quota systems decided instead to promote the voluntary approach to employment through improved vocational training and rehabilitation, and introduced anti-discrimination legislation to promote equal-opportunity employment. More than 40 countries have adopted antidiscrimination legislation, though there are some reports that such legislation has not been particularly useful or effective in promoting employment for persons with disabilities. More studies that examine the implementation and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation in relation to employment are needed (O'Reilly, 2004).

Many Governments have recognized community-based rehabilitation (CBR) as an effective method for increasing community level activity aimed at the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Community-based rehabilitation aims to promote rehabilitation and social inclusion of persons with disabilities by allowing them to actively contribute to the development of their own communities. For these programmes to be successful, individual communities must take responsibility for addressing barriers to participation by all its members with disabilities. Organizations of persons with disabilities are a valuable resource through which to strengthen community-based rehabilitation programmes and should be given meaningful roles in their implementation and evaluation. As the participation of Disabled Persons Organization in community-based rehabilitation programmes increases, the number of persons with disabilities working in community-based rehabilitation programmes also increases, thus strengthening the involvement of persons with disabilities in the development of their own communities. Community-based

rehabilitation programmes thus constitute important precursors of greater integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market (World Health Organization, International Labour Office and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2004).

National Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders also have a critical role to play in community-based rehabilitation programmes. Approaches to implementation vary across countries but all programmes require support at the national level through policies, coordination and resource allocation. They also entail the recognition that all programmes should be based on a human rights approach, should reflect a willingness of the community to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, and should involve motivated community workers who will form the core of community-based rehabilitation programmes (ibid.). There is a need to scale up these programmes which are typically found in communities with access to support services or communities where non-governmental organizations have worked to established them. These programmes need to be expanded to rural areas where access to health and social services is limited, as well as to large urban areas where many persons with disabilities are living in slums (ibid., 2004).

The global movement towards integration and greater participation has been championed by persons with disabilities, who are spurred on by increasing appreciation for the nature of disability as involving the interaction between impairments and the physical, social, and policy environments. Most important to the process of integrating persons with disabilities into mainstream society is combating the stigma and discrimination associated with having a disability. Removing discrimination in labour markets — and in the provision of social programmes such as health and education — is critical to overcoming these barriers.

Indigenous peoples: working from tradition to new challenges

For indigenous peoples, the challenge is not only how to achieve full employment and decent work, but also how to maintain their traditional occupations and lifestyles in a rapidly changing environment. They should be able to define and pursue their own visions of economic development, in the context of the adaptability and innovativeness of their cultures, their traditional knowledge and values, and their ancestral lands and resources.

It is difficult to define the ”traditional occupations” of indigenous peoples accurately. They tend to have a strong collective element but the precise nature of particular occupations has changed significantly over time, adapting to needs, resources and technologies available to particular communities. Also, they have almost always been characterized by occupational pluralism, that is to say, the practising together of several activities in order to meet a community's subsistence needs. It is thus not only the activities themselves, but also the range of activities and their interrelationship characterizing the traditional occupations of indigenous peoples that contrasts with the situation in a "modern economy", which requires specialized labour and skills (Thomas, 2001). The growing inability to pursue their traditional occupations, owing to a changing global environment and the appropriation of ancestral lands, is a crucial contributing factor to the high incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples and is having detrimental effects on their cultures.

As a result, indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented among the poorest of society. Although indigenous peoples make up only 5 per cent of the world's population, they constitute about 15 per cent of the world's poorest (International Labour Organization, 2006e). Moreover, poverty in many Latin American countries tends to be deeper for indigenous people than for non-indigenous people, with the average incomes of indigenous poor people further below the poverty line (Hall and Patrinos, 2006).

The loss of control over traditional resource bases is also impacting on the culture of indigenous peoples. In particular, it has entailed the loss of traditional governance systems and customary laws for managing these resources as well as the loss of traditional knowledge of how to manage specific ecosystems. Whereas indigenous peoples traditionally place great emphasis on collectivism and mutual aid, integration into the mainstream economy, whether voluntary or involuntary, is leading to increased individualism. In addition to being adversely impacted by the reduced access to land, reciprocal ties are being further undermined by differential access to education, urbanization and the privatization of commonly held resources (Thomas, 2001).

The right of indigenous peoples to choose their form of economic development is reflected in article 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2006f). Regrettably, this right is often not recognized. Indigenous peoples face considerable difficulties in finding employ-

ment in the mainstream economy. Although labour statistics are frequently not disaggregated by ethnicity, unemployment rates among indigenous peoples seem to be significantly higher than the national average in many countries.

Indigenous peoples face discrimination in all aspects of their lives: frequently considered to be underdeveloped, their traditions are not respected or they are denied citizenship on the basis of their ethnicity. This often hinders their access to education and employment (International Labour Organization, 2006e). Discrimination in the labour market is both a significant cause and a consequence of their poverty. In several Latin American countries, the portion of the difference in labour earnings between indigenous and non-indigenous people that is not explained by education level and other observable factors influencing productivity ranges from over one quarter to over one half. In addition, the average increase in earnings that derives from each year of additional schooling is slightly lower for indigenous peoples in four out five countries studied in Latin America. This gap between returns to education widens at higher education levels (Hall and Patrinos, 2006).

In addition to discrimination, inadequate education systems are the second key explanatory factor for the difficulties faced by indigenous peoples in obtaining employment. Both the quantity and quality of schooling obtained by indigenous peoples are typically insufficient. Indigenous children tend to have fewer years of schooling than non-indigenous children and their educational attainments are frequently low. Dropout, repetition and failure rates are high in indigenous schools. In some Latin American countries, the average education levels of indigenous people and non-indigenous people were represented by 2.3 and 3.7 years of schooling, respectively (ibid.). Since they frequently live in remote areas with poor infrastructure, indigenous children have difficulties accessing schools. In general, education services in indigenous areas are underfunded and poorly equipped with educational materials. In addition, formal education systems are mostly not well adapted to traditional ways of learning and the curriculum does not address the histories, knowledge, technologies and value systems of indigenous peoples. This type of education not only distances students from their own cultures but may also lead to low self-esteem and the feeling of being incapable of coping in the modern world (Thomas, 2001).

Little access to secondary and higher education is one of the main barriers to higher-skilled employment for indigenous peoples. Indigenous professionals

thus tend to be significantly underrepresented in both the public and the private sectors. Scholarships, affirmative action programmes and distance education can be important means to facilitate access to further education. Those indigenous people who do succeed within the education system and achieve higher levels of education usually have to obtain that education in urban centres far removed from their communities. Returning to their communities is frequently problematic because of the few employment opportunities there that are suited to their skills.

Frequently, the disadvantages created through the schooling system are not offset by specific vocational training. Nevertheless, properly designed vocational training programmes that respond to the needs and priorities of indigenous peoples offer an important tool with which to enable participation on an equal basis in the labour market (International Labour Organization, 2006e).

When indigenous peoples do find employment, it is frequently in low-skilled jobs where the working conditions are often poor. Poor health, linked to malnutrition and inaccessibility of basic health services, frequently reduces their productivity and ability to find decent jobs. The fact that many indigenous peoples are not fluent in the national language and live in isolated and frequently inaccessible areas contributes to the problem. Debt bondage and other forms of forced labour practices frequently affect indigenous peoples (International Labour Organization, 2003b).

Although no comprehensive data on the magnitude of the problem exist, a series of cases and examples from all over the world indicate that indigenous children are disproportionately at risk in respect of child labour, particularly its worst forms. In Latin America, indigenous children are twice as likely to work as their non-indigenous peers (International Labour Organization, 2006e). In many indigenous communities, the concept of child labour is not well understood and not regarded as a serious problem. Although some forms of acceptable child work are linked to traditional beliefs and contribute to acquiring skills and knowledge, there is a need to identify the negative practices that contribute to child labour. In most cases, it is clearly not tradition, but a lack of alternatives, that leads indigenous children to undertake harmful and exploitative labour.

Despite the current serious employment situation of indigenous peoples, there is reason for hope. Over the past 10 years, issues affecting indigenous peoples have received increasing attention, owing in no small part to the accom-

plishments of the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) which are being consolidated through the undertakings of the second Decade (2005-2014). Also, discussions at the United Nations continue on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Some Governments have created employment programmes specifically targeted at indigenous peoples, which take their particular needs into account. Others have passed legislation guaranteeing bilingual education or have issued constitutional declarations against discrimination. These policies significantly improve labour-market prospects for indigenous peoples.

In some countries, the schooling gap between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples is narrowing — a prerequisite for indigenous people's having equal employment opportunities. However, discrimination must be overcome if differentials in labour earnings are to be eliminated.

Finally, new forms of employment are also providing opportunities for indigenous peoples. Business-creation initiatives, including tourism, managed by indigenous communities, offer the possibility of generating income and transmitting traditional knowledge while protecting ancestral lands. However, these initiatives should complement the development of existing industries in the community. The increasing awareness regarding the need to protect the intellectual and cultural property rights of indigenous peoples will hopefully also lead to the creation of new sources of income and employment for these people in the near future.

While these recent developments offer reason for hope, they should not be a cause for complacency. As seen above, many indigenous peoples continue to suffer from serious labour-market disadvantages. Providing them with concrete opportunities to pursue their economic development in line with their aspirations and needs constitutes an important step towards respecting indigenous rights, preserving traditional knowledge and promoting sustainable development.

Migrants and social disadvantage

International migration has become a central dimension of the globalization era, with implications for employment and unemployment. Stimulated by economic and social inequalities in the world, people are increasingly moving across borders in search of better opportunities. Legal migrants, with valuable skills,

are generally able to secure attractive salaries and good working conditions, in health care, information technology, education and finance, which are among the fastest-growing industries. Illegal migrants, on the other hand, tend to take on low-skill jobs, even though they may be well educated, and to work under poor working conditions, mostly in agriculture, construction and household services. In certain cases, these working conditions may be in violation of labour laws of the host countries, as employers take advantage of the inability of illegal migrants to seek protection from the law.

The consequences of large-scale migration for social integration can be quite negative, including the separation of families for extended periods of time and the high risk of exploitation and discrimination faced by migrants. While migrants often benefit from the expanded work opportunities and higher remuneration in their destination countries, relative to origin countries, many face poor conditions of work and fill jobs that national workers reject or are not available for. Many migrants work in precarious and unprotected conditions in the growing informal economy. Work insecurity is particularly severe, with occupational accident rates being much higher for migrant workers.

In developed countries, migrant workers, particularly those obliged to seek low-status, lower-skill jobs, typically face a high degree of discrimination (Taran and Geronimi, 2003). Studies of ILO (2004c) suggest that in those countries more than one in three qualified immigrant applicants was unfairly excluded in job selection procedures. Migrants often have little or no means of legal protection against exploitation. They are more likely to be discriminated against in the workplace, as they often lack the language, negotiating and networking skills needed to enable them to fully capitalize on the opportunities offered in their destination countries. The tendency for migrants to be relegated to peripheral, low-skilled and low-paying work regardless of their achieved human capital subjects them and their families to social exclusion.

One of the most significant changes in migration patterns is increasing migration among women. Currently, the 95 million female migrants constitute half the international migrant population worldwide (United Nations, 2006b). Women migrants work mostly in low-status, low-wage production and service jobs and often in gender-segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy, mainly in domestic work. They are exposed to higher degree of exploitation, violence and trafficking.

In developed countries, there is no doubt that in a situation where the number of immigrants is rising, a strain is put on the labour market and social protection system. Even in some countries with a history of social solidarity and welfare protection, resentment towards immigrants has grown, linked to the high level of youth unemployment. Demands for greater assimilation, and for immigrants to learn the local language and history, usually represent coded expressions of hostility to people of other creeds, colour or appearance.

A pressing concern for many Governments is how to enable the growing international migrant streams to become better adapted into their receiving communities and countries. Policies for integrating migrants to the labour market, protecting their rights and preventing their exploitation are essential.

Concluding remarks

In all social groups, there has been a movement towards greater participation in the labour force around the world. Many groups are increasingly ready and able to engage in work, however defined. For the younger cohorts in society, there are indications that they are staying longer in education, and that fewer members of those cohorts are engaged in exploitative forms of child labour. Yet, while young people's entry into the labour force is delayed, their expectations are too often frustrated, paradoxically at a time when they are better prepared than ever before. At the other end of the age spectrum, older workers expect to stay longer within the labour force; sometimes this will be out of necessity, and often by choice.

On the other hand, the prospects for greater participation in the labour force have been much slower in materializing for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, who have traditionally been on the fringes of the labour market. While there are certainly hopeful signs that their rights and needs are being addressed, many challenges to greater participation of these groups remain.

It is in the area of gender where most progress for greater participation can be reported, but where at the same time, the largest inequalities among people have persisted. Too often, progress that allows for full and equal participation of women in the labour force has been set back by discrimination, leading to greater inequalities between women and men. A similarly mixed track record of progress and setbacks can be observed for migrants: while they have become an established (but underappreciated) part of the global workforce, their rights and needs still need much greater attention. These developments have reinforced

inequalities, not only between these social groups and "mainstream society", but also among the groups themselves. This will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

Notes

[1] United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, 1990-2005. Goal: Promote gender equality and empower women", available from *http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Products/Progress2005/goal_3.pdf*.

[2] See International Labour Organization, "Decent work for women: ILO proposal to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action," International Seminar: Gender mainstreaming in Technical Cooperation Projects: for the labour and Social Spheres (St. Petersburg, 2000), available from *www.ilo.ru/other/event/gendsp2k/decwork1.pdf*.

[3] The decline in child labour is questioned by some critics who doubt the validity of the figures. It is argued that much child labour, particularly the hazardous forms, is invisible and that figures on child labour can be politically sensitive. Furthermore, no internationally agreed statistical definition of child labour currently exists and child labour will be in the agenda of the Eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2008.

[4] Despite the close link between poverty and child labour, the issue has received little attention in national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies.

[5] Sixty-nine per cent of working children are engaged in agriculture (International Labour Organization, 2006b, figure I.3).

[6] However, many working children do not receive wages (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1997).

[7] Research on the relationship between child labour and youth employment, however, is scarce (International Labour Organization, 2006b).

[8] See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

[9] Ravallion and Wodon (2000) tested the effect of such an enrolment subsidy in rural Bangladesh and found that it increased schooling by far more than it reduced child labour, that is to say, the time spent at school partly came out of leisure.

[10] Seventy-seven per cent of children in Woodhead's study (1998) found that combining work and school was the best option in their current circumstances, with only 12 per cent preferring "school only".

[11] The United Nations definition of an ageing society is a country or region in which people aged 60 years or over constitute 10 per cent of the total population.

[12] Geneva, International Labour Organization, 1998.