

The FACTS

More than 1 billion people today are between 15 and 25 years of age and nearly 40% of the world's population is below the age of 20. Eighty five percent of young people live in developing countries where many learn and work in a context of extreme poverty.

The ILO estimates that 74 million young women and men are unemployed throughout the world, accounting for 41 % of the 180 million people globally who are classified as unemployed. Many more people are working long hours for low pay, struggling to eke out a living in the informal economy. Throughout the world, young people are two to three times more likely to find themselves unemployed when compared to adults.

While rapid globalization and technological change offer new opportunities for productive work and incomes for the some, for many working age young people, these trends only increase the vulnerability inherent in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Across the planet, millions of young people are failing to gain entry into the workforce, and discrimination against young women is especially pervasive.

Young people without means or prospects are at greater risk of being attracted into socially destructive behaviour. Their energy, capacity for innovation and aspirations are assets society cannot afford to squander.

The VISION

- Youth are an asset; unemployment is the problem
- Youth are present partners in development as well as potential leaders in the future

- Youth are agents of social and economic change
- National Action Plans are critical to defining priorities and triggering action
- Strategic partnerships are essential to promoting youth employment both locally and globally
- Priority areas of intervention are: Employability, Equal Opportunities, Employment Creation and Entrepreneurship

WHAT WE ARE

The **Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN)** was created under the impetus of the Millennium Declaration where Heads of State and Government resolved to "develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work."

The Network is a partnership under the leadership of the **UN, the World Bank and the ILO** (the later hosting the Secretariat) that aims to tackle the issue of youth employment at the global, national and local level. The mandate for this global alliance for youth employment has been strengthened by a recent UN General Assembly Resolution on Promoting Youth Employment (A/RES/57/165). Countries are encouraged to prepare National Reviews and Action Plans on youth employment by March 2004 with the assistance from the ILO, the UN and the World Bank as well as other specialized agencies - and with the participation of young people

WHO WE ARE

The YEN includes a **High Level Panel** of twelve experts and practitioners that advise the heads of the three Core Partners and advocate for youth

employment both internationally and through their respective networks.

The High Level Panel has produced a set of policy recommendations discussed in the UN General Assembly and furthermore set up four **Working Groups** on these recommendations, which provide guidelines and practical examples helping countries both to prepare their National Reviews and Action Plans and to bring their activities on the ground to scale.

The High Level Panel met in 2001 to launch the initiative and met again in July 2003. At this second meeting, the panel proposed a series of steps to be taken by the YEN during the 2003-2005 timeframe leading up to the 5 year Review of the Millennium Development Goals. These ranged from the encouragement of national governments to translate strategy into national youth employment action plans to the need to establish social dialogue for youth employment.

The Network has involved a number of **partners and collaborating agencies** as a way of responding to this growing social problem by pooling skills, experience and know-how in an attempt to find new and durable solutions. For example, YEN is working with [Youth Business International](#) in the Philippines and with local business leaders to launch the Youth Business Foundation, a seed funding and support programme for young entrepreneurs. Similarly [Rotary International](#) and the ILO are assisting local Rotary Clubs to design and implement projects to provide skills training to young people with disabilities. This and other projects with other partners are helping to showcase successful youth employment practices.

Senegal, Egypt, Indonesia, Hungary, Sri Lanka, Namibia and Azerbaijan have stepped forward to be **Lead Countries**, to showcase successful youth employment practices from which others can learn.

Youth organisations are taking active part in the YEN and will play an essential role in the forthcoming design and implementation of national action programmes. At the recent High Level Panel meeting youth representatives from 13 countries, representing organizations active at the global, regional, national and grassroots levels, and across the political spectrum, proposed to organize themselves into a sustainable advisory group. Their suggestions ranged from the need for reliable indicators and a youth panel vis-à-vis the High-level Panel to a database of national youth organizations working on National Action Plans and a coordinating mechanism between the Youth Employment Network and its youth constituents.

WHAT WE DO

The Network brings together leaders in industry, youth, policymakers and civil society representatives in strategic alliances to explore imaginative approaches to the challenges of youth unemployment. It acts as a catalyst for action at the country level through political, economic and technical interventions. The Network's policy focus rests on four E's:

- Employability
- Equal Opportunities
- Entrepreneurship
- Employment Creation

One Country's experience:

In 2001, the total number of unemployed young people in Indonesia reached 6.1 million, representing 76 percent of the unemployed population. In May 2003, the Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs established an Indonesian Youth Employment Network (I-YEN), involving all major stakeholders in government, the private sector and civil society. The I-YEN is working at the provincial and district levels, among other activities, mobilizing technical and financial resources, monitoring and evaluating action programmes and providing feedback to the government as it develops a National Youth Employment Action Plan.

To support the I-YEN, the ILO is undertaking a series of activities ranging from school to work transition surveys, development of vocational training policy guidelines to provision of support to young workers in the informal sector. The World Bank and UNDP are working with the Ministry of Education focussing on the special needs of marginalized youth and to develop life-skills programmes for in-school and out-of-school youth, especially those who are poor or otherwise marginalized.

For more information on the work of the YEN please contact:

Steve Miller, YEN Secretary,
Employment Strategy Department
International Labour Office

4 route de Morillons

CH-1211 Geneva 22

Tel.: ++41.22.7996434

Fax.: ++41.22.7997678

miller@ilo.org

<http://www.ilo.org/yen>



Youth are the Solution. Unemployment is the Problem

An introduction to the Secretary- General's Youth Employment Network



The Youth Employment Network

