

# **Report of the Regional Workshop on Youth in Poverty in Southeast Asia**

**Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2-4 August 2004**

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## 1. Background to the Workshop

1. The Workshop on Youth in Poverty in Southeast Asia was held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 2 to 4 August 2004. The Workshop was organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Government of Indonesia through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. The *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, adopted by the General Assembly on 14 December 1995, is the primary set of guidelines towards the implementation of effective and relevant youth policies by member States of the United Nations. As it highlights a number of priority areas for national youth policy, it also provides an effective framework to measure and evaluate achievements since its adoption. Eradicating poverty and hunger among youth is one of the ten priority areas stated in the World Programme of Action.

3. Eradicating poverty and hunger is the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by 189 countries at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. Young people from all over the world also identified hunger and poverty as one of their major concerns at the World Youth Forum in Dakar in 2001. They recommended the promotion of self-employment schemes, in order to empower young people in rural and urban areas to combat hunger and poverty. They further emphasized the importance of education, training and capacity-building of young women and men.

4. The Workshop is a partial follow up to the Expert Group Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth in Helsinki (2002) and the *World Youth Report 2003* that was drafted on the basis of that meeting. (The *Report* is available at [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth)).

5. The sixtieth session of the General Assembly in 2005 will review the situation of youth, and the 15 priorities (which include youth in hunger and poverty). This Workshop serves as an important input to that process. The Workshop report, together with the final working papers drafted by two resource persons, will be collated into a chapter on youth in poverty for the *World Youth Report 2005*, for submission to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

6. Indonesia is one of the nine “champion countries” that have volunteered for activities aimed at increasing youth employment under the Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network.

7. The objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Discuss and define indicators and evaluation tools that measure global poverty amongst young people 15-24 years old, on the basis of Chapter 3 of the *World Youth Report 2003*.
- Discuss and define special characteristics of young people in poverty in Southeast Asia.
- Discuss and define possible pro-poor growth interventions to reduce the number of young people in poverty.
- Enhance the skills of the participants in implementing these policies and programmes.

8. The Workshop was attended by a number of experts, Government officials and youth organizations from Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam. The meeting was also attended by two resource persons, as well as representatives of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour

Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), and serviced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA). A list of participants is attached to this report as Annex I.

## **2. Opening of the Workshop**

9. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Surdyadjo, Special Assistant to the Governor of Yogyakarta Special Provincial Authority, expressed his appreciation to UN-DESA for accepting the invitation to have Yogyakarta as the venue of the Workshop. He emphasized the importance of youth development for the future development of the province, and introduced the implementation of a District Development Program as an example of the commitment of the Yogyakarta Special Provincial Authority to rural community empowerment.

10. In his message to the opening session, Mr. Johan Schölvinnck, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, UN-DESA, drew attention to the fact that youth between 15 and 24 years of age comprise 18 percent of the world's population. Despite their great potential, they faced major challenges. In the Asia-Pacific region 17 per cent of the youth population earned less than \$ 1 a day and around 59 million young people in South Asia were under-nourished. In order to prepare young people to be the caretakers of the future, it was necessary to ensure that they would have the knowledge and skills for development. He invited all participants to identify the determining factors and strategies on youth poverty that integrated a Southeast Asian perspective. On behalf of the United Nations Secretariat, he expressed his appreciation to the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Yogyakarta Special Provincial Authority for hosting and co-sponsoring the Workshop.

11. In his opening statement, H.E. Ambassador Makmur Widodo, Director-General for Multilateral Cooperation on Political, Social and Security Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all participants for attending the Workshop and welcomed them to Yogyakarta. As poverty is one of the root causes of social and human disasters and a violation of fundamental human rights, reducing poverty is an ultimate desire of the international community that requires serious commitments and concrete actions at all levels. He emphasized the importance of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, indicating the commitment of the international community to promote human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries. In order to achieve the goal of reducing poverty by half in 2015, it was necessary to ensure that the goals and commitments were translated into concrete and concerted actions and implementation. He elaborated on the comprehensive equitable growth and poverty reduction strategy, which was being designed in Indonesia, and which was based on the four pillars of creating opportunities, social institutional empowerment, capacity building and social protection. In this respect, youth were an important target group for whom economic and social problems should be addressed adequately.

12. Mr. Joop Theunissen, Focal Point on Youth, Division for Social Policy and Development, UN-DESA, presented the priority areas for youth as had been identified by the General Assembly in 1995 in the World Programme of Action: education, employment, poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure, issues related to girls and young women, and youth participation in decision-making. He further discussed five emerging issues that had been noted by the General Assembly in 2003: globalization, information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS, young people in conflict, and intergenerational relations. He described the global situation of youth, being defined of all persons of 15 to 24 years of age, regarding all 15 areas, as a summary of the World Youth Report 2003. For the review of the WPAY by the General Assembly in 2005, UN-DESA was to prepare the World Youth Report 2005 for which this Workshop served as an important

input. He further explored the linkages between the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

13. Ms. Charlotte van Hees, Associate Expert on Youth Policies and Programmes, UN-DESA, presented four central questions to be addressed in the Workshop, namely: what had been the key to successful poverty reduction strategies in the region; what had been the characteristics of young people in poverty in Southeast Asia; what good interventions had reduced the number of young people living in poverty; and how well had young people done compared to other generations.

### **3. Election of officers**

14. The following members of the Bureau were elected:
- Mr. Deibel Effendi, who was elected as Chairperson
  - Mr. Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, who was elected as Rapporteur.

### **4. Adoption of the agenda**

15. The Workshop adopted the agenda and corresponding time table which is attached to this report as Annex II.

16. All available papers and presentations that were presented during the Workshop will be made available via the website of the United Nations Programme on Youth, UN-DESA: [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth).

### **5. Summary of deliberations**

17. Mr. Djauhari Oratmangun of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented the work undertaken by the Government of Indonesia in reaching the MDGs nationally. He underlined the commitment of the Government in achieving the Goals, and also the multiple dimensions of addressing the problem of poverty in Indonesia. By its most recent estimates, 18.2 per cent of the population of Indonesia lived below the national poverty line. Whereas this had been an improvement of the high and sudden incidence of poverty of 23.4 per cent that had emerged as a result of the economic crisis in 1999, there was still a considerable challenge to be taken to achieve the goal of reducing poverty to half of the 1990 levels by 2015, as called for in the MDGs.

18. Mr. Richard Curtain of the National Institute for Governance, Canberra, Australia, presented a paper on youth in extreme poverty, with a focus on Southeast Asia. It was estimated that on the basis of the most recent available data, 160 million young people aged 15-24 are undernourished globally, of which 46.5 million are in East Asia and the Pacific. In addition, his research indicated that an estimated 208 million young people are living on less than \$1 a day, and 515 million young people are living on less than \$2 a day. For the East Asia and the Pacific region, these estimates are 46 million and 150 million young people respectively. It was stressed that in order to achieve the MDGs and its targets, more focus needed to be given to national public policies aimed directly at poverty reduction. There was a discussion on whether economic growth would lead to the reduction of poverty across all sectors of the population. Also discussed was whether targeted interventions aimed at reducing poverty among young people and also other vulnerable groups in society requires substantial and scaled-up resources. There was a need to identify specific vulnerabilities of subgroups of young people, in order to devise better ways to improve levels of social protection of youth at risk.

19. Ms. Nhean Sochetra of the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs, and Ms. Srey Sras Panhas jointly presented some characteristics of youth in poverty in Cambodia. Being one of the poorest countries in Asia, Cambodia ranked 130<sup>th</sup> in UNDP's global ranking of the human development index, and had the highest proportion of economically active people between 10 and 14. It also had a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection. Young people living in poverty included those vulnerable to food insecurity, natural disasters and street children. Cambodia's priorities for addressing youth poverty included the promotion of job opportunities, strengthening of institutions, strengthening social inclusion and promoting gender equity. Successful programmes aimed at reducing both poverty and the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic included those that involved Buddhist monks in providing food, knowledge and skills to young people at risk.

20. In their presentation on youth in poverty in Indonesia, Mr. Ridwan Arshad of the Ministry of National Education and Mr. Khairul Mahalli of the Indonesian Youth Exchange Organization explained that currently, approximately one-third of the Indonesian population, or 75 million people, were in the age group of 15 to 35, which had been defined as youth in its current national plans and programmes. On the long term, Indonesia had been successful in reducing poverty in the country. As a result of the recent economic crisis however, there had been an upsurge in poverty between 1997 and 2001. While the general unemployment rate in 2002 was estimated at 9.1 per cent, the figure for those between 15 and 35 years of age was over 24 per cent. Mr. Arsyad highlighted three ongoing Government programmes aimed at young people, dealing with university graduates to work on rural development activities; a life skills programme for unemployed youth; and a business-related programme for young people.

21. Ms. Karen Moore, Research Associate at the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, International Network of Universities, Research Institutes and Non-Governmental Organizations, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, explained the linkages between childhood, household and youth poverty. She gave an overview of the understanding of chronic poverty, the intergenerational transmission of poverty and on childhood deprivation and the position of youth in Southeast Asia. Chronic poverty was distinguished by its extended duration and is not necessarily the same as extreme poverty. In many countries, the chronically poor were most likely to be members of ethnic groups, migrants, disabled people, people with ill health, people dependent on subsistence agriculture in rural areas, or wage laborers in urban areas. Others lived in remote areas, with few resources, and were often politically and/or economically disadvantaged. Factors that helped explain poverty could be divided into two groups; 'maintainers', being factors that keep people in poverty, and 'drivers,' factors that would cause a slide into a poverty trap. Chronic poverty reduction required new priorities, such as prioritizing livelihood security, enhancing opportunities and foster empowerment. The concept of intergenerational transmission of poverty was used to signify the transfer of poverty between generations and between the public spheres of community, state and market. A poverty framework was presented that identified three groups of capital that were transmitted, namely financial, material, and environmental capital; human capital; and social, cultural, and political capital, and showed how these forms of capital were transmitted between different generations, affecting the transmission of poverty.

22. Mr. Alan Boulton, Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Indonesia, expressed his appreciation, also on behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Indonesia, to the Government of Indonesia and UN-DESA for organizing the Workshop. He presented an overview of the general employment challenge of the United Nations and elaborated on the work of ILO on youth employment in Indonesia. The global unemployment rate of youth had been 14.4 per cent in 2002, which was over twice as high as the world total unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent. Related problems included gender inequalities, underemployment, child labour, rural-urban migration and brain drain. In response to this situation, the Secretary General had established a Youth Employment Network (YEN),

administered by the ILO and jointly managed by the United Nations, World Bank and the ILO. The Network viewed young people as assets to, and as partners in development. Its strategy had evolved around employability, employment creation, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities for men and women. Indonesia was one of the nine lead countries in the Network and had been working on developing a national youth employment plan. In Indonesia, the labour force participation rate of youth was 53.9 per cent, with 27.9 per cent unemployed. Approximately 36 per cent of the working youth were considered to be underemployed. Most employed young people worked in the informal economy.

23. Mr. Bhakta Gubhaju of UNESCAP presented some characteristics of youth in Asia regarding demographic, social and health issues. Topics discussed included demographic dimensions of adolescent reproductive health, knowledge and use of contraceptives, consequences of adolescent sexuality and childbearing on young people, and presented some conclusions and policy recommendations. He noted that there had been a general increase in age at marriage in the region, while at the same time, some countries still had high incidences of marriage and childbearing during adolescence. While the general knowledge of contraception among adolescents had been quite high in Asia, the use of contraceptives had been comparatively low. In Asia, a total of 7.4 million people were living with HIV/AIDS, many of them youth. It was noted that although information about reproductive health was extremely important for young people, there was a critical need for Governments, NGOs and the private sector to move beyond information to provide essential reproductive health services to young people.

24. Mr. Thongdeng Sanepaseuth and Mr. Bounthavy Sinhradsavong of the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union jointly presented some characteristics of youth in poverty in Lao PDR. They explained the structure of their youth organization, consisting of a central executive committee, with decentralized committees at the provincial, municipal, district and village level. There was also a Ministerial Youth Committee that was in charge of the grassroots youth committees, and a youth newspaper was distributed throughout the country. A report on the activities implemented over the last two years towards the eradication of poverty in Vientiane Capital was presented, including planned activities towards 2005. Various steps were undertaken to assess the poverty situation in the country, including a household survey. It was estimated that the number of poor families in the project area had been reduced in the last two years by 67.8%. Towards 2005, it was aimed to eradicate poverty amongst the remaining 750 households in the area, by stimulating contributions to a development fund, improving the infrastructure for education and health services, and by creating employment.

25. Mr. Myint Thein of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and Mr. Win Myint of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development presented the priorities, policies and programmes towards poverty reduction in Myanmar. 34.2% of the total population are young people (15-24 years old). Urban poverty is slightly higher than rural poverty. The country had a multi-sectoral approach towards eradication of poverty amongst youth, administered by the ministries concerned with cooperation with Government agencies, NGOs, international NGOs and United Nations agencies. Myanmar's poverty reduction policies focused on rural development, broader area development, education, life skills, infrastructure and health issues. Ms. Khin May Kyi of UNDP Myanmar, presented the projects her office was implementing in the townships of remote areas in Myanmar. Its objective was to empower and improve both the social and productive situation of poor families in townships, by focusing on health, education, water and sanitation and community infrastructure, and other productive sectors. The projects had an effective approach to improve the sustainable livelihood of the poor. They had developed a household indicator to measure the rate of poverty within households.

26. Mr. Garry Lazaro of the National Anti-Poverty Commission and Mr. Paolo Benigno Aquino IV of the Philippine National Youth Commission presented poverty alleviation policies in the Philippines. Since 1992, various initiatives towards poverty alleviation had been undertaken in the Philippines, resulting in 1998 in the enactment of the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act that called for the establishment of the National Anti-Poverty Commission. The mandates of this Commission are to develop the national poverty reduction strategy, coordinate with the government and private sector agencies to implement poverty alleviation programmes, ensure participation of the basic sectors and monitor policies, programmes and resource allocation and management. The Commission consisted of the national and local government and representatives from the marginalized basic sector. There were five 'reform packages' to alleviate poverty: job creation through economic growth, anti corruption through good government, social justice and basic needs, energy independence and savings and education and youth opportunity. The top concerns of youth in the Philippines were education, employment, substance abuse, health and youth values and participation. Besides the National Anti-Poverty Commission there had been many other private, local and grassroots initiatives. The National Youth Commission, the sole youth policy-making body of the Philippine government, had been tasked with coordinating efforts towards youth development. A Medium Term Youth Development Plan 2005-2010 had been developed. Its strategies include employment generation and entrepreneurship programmes. Both presenters emphasized the importance of youth participation in developing and implementing programmes that were aimed at reducing poverty.

27. Mr. Fasli Jalal, Director-General for Out-of-School Education & Chairperson of the Senior Officials Meeting on Youth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), discussed a number of demographic and human development trends in the ASEAN countries. He also highlighted the agreed conclusions of the third and fourth ASEAN Ministerial meetings on youth, which had been held in Yangon and in Manila in 2000 and 2003 respectively. Those two meetings had stressed the importance of youth policy development, promoting ASEAN awareness and civic responsibility among youth, and the promotion of employability of young people, and the promotion of youth NGO involvement in its work. A large number of exchange and learning programmes had been developed, each of them hosted by one of the ASEAN member countries. Those programmes of cooperation had been successful in creating a meaningful exchange of lessons learned in various areas of youth policy amongst its participating countries.

28. Mr. Malcolm Hazelman, Senior Extension, Education and Communications Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, made a presentation on rural youth development in Southeast Asia. The vast majority of youth live in the developing world, and many in rural areas. Globally, many rural youth lack adequate and appropriate education, and rural youth unemployment rates were high. Young people were often exploited in unsafe and unfair occupations and often the victim of sexual exploitation. Globalization had brought about both positive and negative influences on rural youth; it had improved communications but had also led to a reduction of cultural diversity and an increased need to develop new skills. Increasingly, rural young people's ideas and perceptions were shaped by their exposure to modern media. A key to cope with rural poverty among youth is through transformation of the agricultural sector. It was also stressed that rural poverty and environmental degradation were strongly related, and that investment in environmental programmes in rural areas would provide skills and employment for youth, as well as a more prosperous future for them. The importance of education for rural people was emphasized; as they have a major role in securing food security and sustainable development, and investing in youth would be a guide to achieve that goal. The use of case studies on best practices was also advocated, with examples presented and information distributed.

29. Mr. Vu Van Toan, of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs of Vietnam, and Ms. Pham Thi Phuong Chi of the Vietnam Youth Federation presented two papers on

youth living in poverty in Vietnam. There were currently 30 million people between ages 15 and 34 in the country, and on the basis of available reports of poverty reduction of localities, that showed that some 1.5 million households lived below the poverty line, it was estimated that approximately 2 million youth were poor. Young people living in poverty benefited from three different sets of policies, namely those aimed at poor households, those targeted at young people by the Government, and those carried out by the Youth Union of Vietnam. One of these activities included the establishment of employment service centers. The Vietnam Youth Federation had also carried out a large number of workshops aimed at providing new technology skills to young people, and had played a central role in organizing large numbers of young volunteers for rural infrastructure programmes, and to assistance to disadvantaged areas of the country. A recommendation was made to carry out a detailed survey of youth in poverty in six Southeast Asian countries.

30. All participants visited the youth programme on “Handicraft for Eradicating Poverty” at Kreet Village, Bantul, Yogyakarta.

## **6. Recommendations from the participants**

31. After a brief exchange of ideas regarding possible follow-up activities, the participants suggested the following:

- a. For the secretariat to ensure proper information dissemination regarding the different youth poverty strategies of the participants.
- b. Also, updated figures on youth poverty, as well as new studies, should be disseminated as well.
- c. For the UN Secretariat, in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, to have a second more in-depth workshop on a specific poverty reduction action programme (e.g. micro-financing for youth) that all participating countries could adopt in their respective countries.
- d. This programme could be one adopted by another country not part of the current roster of participating countries (e.g. Thailand).
- e. For ASEAN to highlight in the next SOMY best strategies regarding youth poverty and include this in its policy framework.
- f. For the UN Country Offices to consider creating specific offices dealing with youth concerns on a country-specific level.
- g. For the participating countries, when called upon, to cooperate with each other regarding youth poverty strategies.

## **7. Adoption of the report of the Workshop**

32. At its closing session, the Workshop adopted the report on 4 August 2004.



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**Annex I. List of participants**

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**Annex II. Agenda and time table of the workshop**