UNITED NATIONS

Regional Expert Group Meeting on Development Challenges for Young People

UNCC, Bangkok, 28-30 March 2006

Overview of the meeting

From 28 to 30 March 2006, the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), UNDESA, will organize an Expert Group Meeting, hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok Thailand. The meeting will bring together experts and representatives of universities, United Nations Member States, United Nations Agencies and Programmes, and intergovernmental organizations, to identify and discuss major youth development challenges in Asia in preparation for the World Youth Report 2007.

Background

The World Youth Report is the biennial major publication of the United Nations Programme on Youth, DSPD/DESA. The World Youth Report 2007 will provide a regional overview summarizing the major youth development trends in the fifteen priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Further, for each region, four topics that are highly affecting the lives of young people are identified for an in-depth discussion. The four inter-related topics that have been identified for the Asian region[1] are 1) globalization, 2) urbanization, 3) education, and 4) information and communication technologies.

The largest proportion of the world's poor youth[2] live in Asia. Five of the ten countries with the largest concentrations of young people living on less than US$ 1 a day are found in Asia: India (67.7 million), the People's Republic of China (33.3 million), Bangladesh (9.9 million), Indonesia (3.1 million) and Viet Nam (2.9 million).[3] At the same time, in the last decennium, various Asian countries have made major developmental achievements. Compared to other regions, **globalization** has arguably had the most impact on the rapidly growing Asian economies. While many young people have benefited from new industries that moved to Asia attracted by low-wages and production costs, others have not been able to find employment, or are being exploited by these same industries in the absence of protective labour regulations.

Urbanization, the emergence of mega-cities home to millions of people, is another direct consequence of the economic growth and of the shift from agriculturally to industrially based economies. Today, one in three Asians lives in a city, and this number will have increased to one in two by 2020. Most of this growth will be in

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[1] Asia is defined as including East Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia (Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands are not included).
[2] Youth is defined as people between 15 and 24 years old. Youth and young people are used interchangeably.
[3] UNDESA, 2005, "World Youth Report 2005: Young people now and in 2015", p. 33.

Bangladesh, the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan.[4] It is argued that young people are more likely to move to cities in order to gain economic opportunity, lowering the average age in cities in comparison to rural areas.[5] This massive urbanization increases the pressure on the environment and required infrastructure in cities, calling for proper city planning.

Economic development also places new demands on the **education** system. Curricula need to be adapted to prepare students for new jobs in the labour market, a fit that is not always established yet. As the global economy is increasingly based on technological innovation and information, students need to stay longer in school to receive the amount of education required for a good job.[6] With large numbers of youth who cannot afford to go to or stay in school, the chances for the poor to climb up the social ladder become very small.

Information and communication technologies have contributed to the speed in which the globalization process is taking place. Besides the economic impact of the digital revolution, the influence is found in the increasingly globalizing youth culture. The Internet, instant messaging, cell phones, online gaming, chatting and global television are all products of the last decennium with profound impacts on youth culture and intergenerational relations. The digital divide presents another obstacle for the poor to participate fully in the globalized world.

Objective of the meeting

This Expert Group Meeting tries to unravel some of these youth development challenges. The objective of the meeting is to increase knowledge on the social-economic situation of young people in Asia by identifying and discussing some of the major challenges facing young Asians (15-24 years) and possible policy and programme interventions. The participants will increase their knowledge for use in their daily work and the findings will be used as inputs to the World Youth Report 2007.

Participants

- Academics, experts, resource persons
- Government representatives specialized in youth policies and programmes
- Representatives of various regional UN Agencies and Programmes
- Representatives of regional international and intergovernmental organizations
- Representatives of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- Representatives of the United Nations Programme on Youth, Division for Social Policy and Development / DESA

Around 40 participants are expected to attend the meeting. Participants (academics, experts and Government representatives) from 9 countries will be invited at the cost of DSPD/DESA. Suggested countries: Bangladesh, the People's Republic of China,

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[4] Myoung-Ho Shin, 2000, Presentation at the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit: "Enabling Urbanization: How is Asia Building Effective Megacities?", Asian Development Bank.
[5] Gale, F. & S. Fahey (ed.) 2005, "Youth in Transition: The challenges of generational change in Asia", UNESCO Bangkok, p. 4.
[6] Gale, F. & S. Fahey (ed.) 2005, "Youth in Transition: The challenges of generational change in Asia", UNESCO Bangkok, p. 28.

India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam (subject to change). Representatives of United Nations Agencies and Programmes will be invited to attend at their own cost.

Structure of work

Four consultants will be contracted to prepare a draft paper or detailed presentation on one of the four identified issues. Based on the discussions during the meeting, they will finalize a paper that will serve as input into the World Youth Report 2007.

The meeting will last three days. The first day will be used to set out the objectives of the meeting, to discuss general youth development trends in Asia and for the first in-depth discussion on globalization. The second day urbanization and education will be discussed. The third day will start with the discussion on the influence of information and communication technology on the lives of young people and will finish with a closing session, summarizing the main findings, making agreements for follow-up and evaluating the meeting.

The meeting will be held in English only.

A detailed agenda will be issued separately.