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## Youth, Education & Employment: A regional perspective

### Asia

- » 55.7 per cent of the global youth labour force lives in Asia. (The global labour youth force was estimated at 633 million in 2005)
- » Access to education has expanded in many parts of Asia, with the gains most noticeable at the primary level. Girls are increasingly benefiting from primary education. In India, for example, the proportion of girls enrolled in primary education rose from 84 to 96 per cent between 1998 and 2002.
- » Asia is a major receiving and sending region of migrants, as job opportunities outside home communities and countries have encouraged millions of young Asians to become mobile on both a permanent and non-permanent basis.
- » Opportunities for migration to OECD countries have increased for highly skilled Asian youth, resulting in considerable outflows of the most qualified and brightest young people in many countries.
- » With 29 per cent of the global total of those studying outside their home country, East Asia and the Pacific contribute the largest group of students studying abroad.
- » China accounts for 14 per cent of all mobile students.

### Latin America

- » The net enrolment ratio for primary school in Latin America is 95 per cent --higher than the developing world average of 85 per cent.
- » Gender disparity in literacy and educational attainment is relatively small compared with other regions in the world. For most countries, the literacy gap is less than two percentage points.
- » In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela, literacy rates are higher for young females than for young males.
- » Argentina has the highest gross tertiary enrolment ratio in the region. with more than three quarters of its young women and slightly over half of its young men pursuing higher studies (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007).
- » But in regard to employment and income levels Latin American youth are worse off today than they were 15 years ago.
- » In 2002, about 18 per cent of those between the ages of 15 and 19 were neither studying nor working, and about 27 per cent of those between 20 and 24 were in a similar situation.
- » Young peoples aged 15-19 are the second highest proportion of those living in poverty, after children under 14 years (the poorest segment of society).

## Sub-Saharan Africa

- » Great progress has been achieved in education. Net primary school enrolment has increased from 57 per cent in 1999 to 70 per cent in 2005.
- » Tertiary enrolment in the region nearly doubled between 1991 and 2004. However, secondary school enrolment rates continue to remain very low, with little change recorded in recent years.
- » Youth in sub-Saharan Africa are the fastest growing labour force in the world, yet the number of unemployed youth in all of Africa grew by about 34 per cent between 1995 and 2005.
- » Many young people are forced to undertake jobs that are characterized by poor conditions in the informal sector and agriculture.
- » The percentage of youth living in poverty is extremely high. More than 90 per cent of Nigerian and Zambian youth (almost 40 million) live on less than \$2 per day.

## Middle East and North Africa

- » Literacy and average years of schooling have increased significantly across the region since the 1970s. The gender gap in average years of schooling has been closing rapidly.
- » The region is the only one in the world in which the share of youth who are employed has increased over the past decade.
- » Unemployment is primarily a youth issue rather than a generalized population issue. Young people represent only about one third of the total working age population while they account for almost half of all unemployed people in the region
- » The region has the highest rate of youth unemployment in the world, and the lowest rate of youth labour force participation (40 per cent). The Middle East and North Africa region also has the lowest youth employment-to-population rate (29.7 per cent) in the world. This means that only one in three young people in the region has a job.
- » The average labour force participation rate for female youth remained at 25.1 per cent in 2005. This is the lowest in the world and well below the rate of 54.3 per cent for young men in the region.

## Small island developing countries

- » Most small island developing States have high primary enrolment rates but the rate of those who make it to the last grade of primary school varies widely.
- » In Barbados, for example, 99.5 per cent of girls and 95.7 per cent of boys complete primary school while only 55.9 per cent of children in the Comoros stay in primary school until the last grade.
- » Gross secondary enrolment rates have generally increased since the late 1990s, and the great majority of Small Island developing States has achieved gender parity in secondary education or have even more girls enrolled than boys.
- » Youth unemployment continues to be high in most Small Island developing States; one in five youth is unemployed in the Caribbean.
- » Young women's higher attainments in education do not seem to translate into gains in their employment prospects; they are still much more likely to be unemployed than young men. In Saint Lucia, almost half of all young women in the labour market are unemployed.

## Countries with economies in transition

- » Primary and secondary school enrolment decreased in some countries of the region, but higher education enrolment has continuously increased in most transition economies.
- » The share of young women in tertiary education has grown in many countries and now exceeds that of young men.
- » However, the socio-economic transformation that has taken place in this region over the past two decades has given rise to significant changes in labour market prospects for youth.
- » In Central and Eastern Europe, 33.6% of youth are not in school and not employed.

## Developed market countries

- » The opportunities available to youth living in developed market economies are unmatched in other parts of the world.
- » Enrolment and completion rates are high at all levels of education.
- » The total number of unemployed youth in these economies has declined over the past decade, and young men and women are almost equally likely to participate in the labour market.
- » Despite fairly good labour market conditions, many young people have difficulty obtaining stable, decent and long-term employment corresponding to their skill levels.
- » Internships appear to have become a waiting stage for those who are unable to find suitable immediate employment or for those who seek to improve the chances of finding good jobs.
- » The inability of youth to secure well-paid employment has been a major factor in slowing the transition of youth to independent adulthood in the developed market economies. Between 1985 and 2000, young adults' abilities to form independent households in the developed market economies declined.
- » With the influx of young migrants, youth populations in developed countries are becoming increasingly diverse. Migrants now constitute 9.5 per cent of the developed countries' populations.

**Sources:** *World Youth Report 2007 - Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges*