

Even in good times, young people find it hard to get the right foothold in the labour market. Today, young people are two to three times as likely to be unemployed than adult workers. Of the world's total number of unemployed in 2010, nearly 40 per cent – or about 75 million – were between 15 and 24 years of age. The failure to provide more and better jobs for young people is a concern for both industrialized and developing countries. In Spain and Greece the youth unemployment rate doubled between 2007 and 2011, and now stands at 46 and 42 per cent, respectively. In Puerto Rico, the rate of unemployment among youth is nearly 30 per cent, and it is about 20 per cent in Colombia. Young people are generally the first to lose their jobs in times of economic contraction and the last to find jobs when the economy rebounds. Data from Brazil and Chile shows that employment declined much more quickly among young people during economic downturns. Page 15 miles as likely to be unemployed than adult workers.

In many countries the unemployment picture is aggravated by the large numbers of young people engaged in poor quality and low-paid jobs with intermittent and insecure work arrangements, both in the formal and informal economy. About 28 per cent of all young workers in the world – or 152 million – work but live in households that earn daily less than the equivalent of US\$1.25, the so-called working poor. Millions of young people are trapped in temporary, involuntary part-time or casual work that offers few or no benefits and limited prospects for advancement. They also face obstacles to enjoying their rights at work in practice, since it is very difficult to decide to join a trade union when faced with the threat of reprisals and non-renewal of temporary contracts.

Both developed and developing countries must create millions of quality jobs for the young people now entering the labour market. This is particularly true in developing and transition countries, where the challenge is more fundamental – not only creating jobs for young people, but also improving the conditions of work and income of young people who are often underemployed and working without adequate protections in the informal economy. Young people are all too often at the centre of a vicious circle of poverty, inadequate education and training, poor jobs and insufficient income. This "poverty trail", from youth to adulthood, and from one generation to the next, is fraught with danger for today's societies. The costs are enormous – for individuals as well as s

economic and social opportunities "provide the oxygen in which disaffection spreads and extremism flourishes"

No political or security policies can work without economic engagement through employment, the elimination of discrimination and second chance opportunities for young people in disaffected communities

The impact of disaffection, lawlessness and extremism deeply affects businesses, employees, communities and countries ILO,

Geneva, forthcoming.

Recent studies points to serious shortcomings relating to the provision of education and training worldwide<sup>3</sup>. In addition to the 67 million children out of school, hundreds of millions of those who are in school receive poor quality education with little prospect of gaining the skills they need to be productive members of society. There is often a significant mismatch between the education provided and the requirements of employers. This has a direct impact on both businesses and economic growth, by impeding the supply of adequately skilled workers, limiting growth and profit potential and stifling worker productivity.

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Broad-based partnerships that include youth organizations have the potential to address youth employment more effectively than any single actor could alone. As partnerships, they are: i) *efficient* because they pool resources and each partner contributes its expertise and shares the costs and benefits; ii) *effective* because they involve a variety of actors and encourage companies to deliver quality jobs; and iii) *mutually beneficial* because investing in youth contributes to having productive workers, entrepreneurs and consumers, with and benefits for communities at large.

There are many examples of what the private sector can do, together with public institutions and non-State actors, to promote youth employment (see Box 2). For instance, action plans on youth employment can be used to translate national and local youth employment priorities into partnerships for concrete and coordinated action in several areas.<sup>4</sup> Some of these partnerships include: i) training to improve school-to-work transition; ii) job creation and stabilization through promoting youth employment among existing and new companies; iii) youth entrepreneurship development; iv) the promotion of evidence-based policies and interventions; and v) open and participatory discussion and agreement on policy and institutional needs.

## Box 2: Private sector action for youth employment

The private sector can play an important role in promoting decent work for youth. They can participate in the formulation of training policies that meet market needs, provide work experience and mentorships, and facilitate the access of youth to markets, capital and networks. Investing in young people can only result in a win-win situation. It is also a way for enterprises to engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives. Some examples are given below of private sector action for youth employment:

- Connect with schools, training institutions and universities to address skill mismatches and enhance youth employability by ensuring that training meets enterprise requirements, as well as financing the provision of training
- Participate in remedial programmes that provide work experience to young people, including on-the-job training and other programmes targeted at disadvantaged youth, with prospects for career advancement
- Provide entrepreneurship training and mentorship for young entrepreneurs
- Facilitate access to start-up capital, networks and markets, as well as providing business development services
- Establish partnerships with, for example: (i) employment services for the identification of jobseekers; (ii) governments and other partners to achieve sustainable results for youth employment; (iii) members of networks of companies engaged in supporting youth employment programmes and corporate social responsibility initiatives, and improving the access of young women to male-dominated jobs.

Source: Rosas, G., , Background paper for the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs during the 100th

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/165 on "Promoting youth employment"

Fair Globalization <sup>7</sup> as a "governance" Convention – speaks of promoting "full, productive and freely chosen employment". This prospect offers grounds for optimism for countries to implement an active policy that promotes decent work for youth.

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