



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva

The background features several abstract, colorful shapes. In the top left, there is a light blue silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, and a yellow square with a green shape inside. In the top right, there are overlapping squares in yellow, green, and blue. In the bottom left, there is a blue silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, and a green shape with a yellow circle inside. In the bottom right, there is a green silhouette of a person's head and shoulders wearing headphones, and a yellow shape. The text 'Youth Employment' is written in a large, stylized, blue script font, and 'A Global Goal, a National Challenge' is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font below it.

# *Youth Employment*

**A Global Goal, a National Challenge**

# Youth Employment at a glance

- 85 per cent of the world's youth aged 15-24 (about 1 billion) live in developing countries.
- The youth labour force participation rate declined from 59.3 to 54.4 per cent between 1994 and 2004, mainly as a result of young women and men staying in education longer. In 2004, the labour force participation rate of young women (45.7 per cent) continued to be significantly lower than that of young men (62.8 per cent).
- Global youth unemployment rose from 70.8 million in 1994 to 85.7 million in 2004, accounting for 45 per cent of total unemployment.
- Youth accounted for about 20 per cent of the world's estimated 535 million working poor in 2004. Some 106 million youth worked but lived in households that earned less than the equivalent of US\$ 1 per day.
- Young people are over-represented in the informal economy. Approximately two-thirds of new jobs created in Latin America and South-east Asia during the period 1990-2002 were in the informal economy.
- One-third of young people were working under temporary contracts in the European Union in 2004 compared to 11 per cent of adults.

The world is facing a growing youth employment crisis. Latest ILO data indicate that of the world's estimated 191 million unemployed people in 2004, about half – or nearly 86 million – are aged between 15 and 24. In many economies, young people are more than three times as likely as adults to be out of work. Today, both industrialized and developing countries are failing to increase employment opportunities for young people.

***“Creating jobs for youth is not enough. Across the planet, youth are not only finding it difficult if not impossible to find jobs, but also they cannot find decent jobs. ...We are facing not only an economic challenge, but a security threat of monumental proportions.”***

*Juan Somavia -- ILO Director-General.*

More youth are poor or underemployed than ever before. Some 106 million youth work but live in households that earn less than the equivalent of US\$ 1 per day. And millions of young people are trapped in temporary, involuntary part-time or casual work that offers few benefits and limited prospects for advancement. Clearly, something must be done.



*Why  
focus on youth?*



Young people bring energy, talent and creativity to economies that no-one can afford to squander. Around the world, young women and men are making important contributions as productive workers, entrepreneurs, consumers – as members of civil society and agents of change. What our young people do today will create the foundations for what our economies will do tomorrow.

Yet the lack of sufficient or sustainable decent work makes young people – and the societies they live in – extremely vulnerable. The youth employment crisis is not only an integral element of the broader general employment situation, it has specific dimensions.

In industrialized countries, the challenge is finding jobs for millions of youth who are entering the labour market each year.

In developing and transition countries, the challenge is more fundamental – not only creating jobs, but finding decent jobs for young people who are often underemployed and working in the agricultural fields or city alleyways of the informal economy.

Thus, youth are all too often at the vortex of a vicious cycle of poverty, inadequate education and training, and poor jobs.

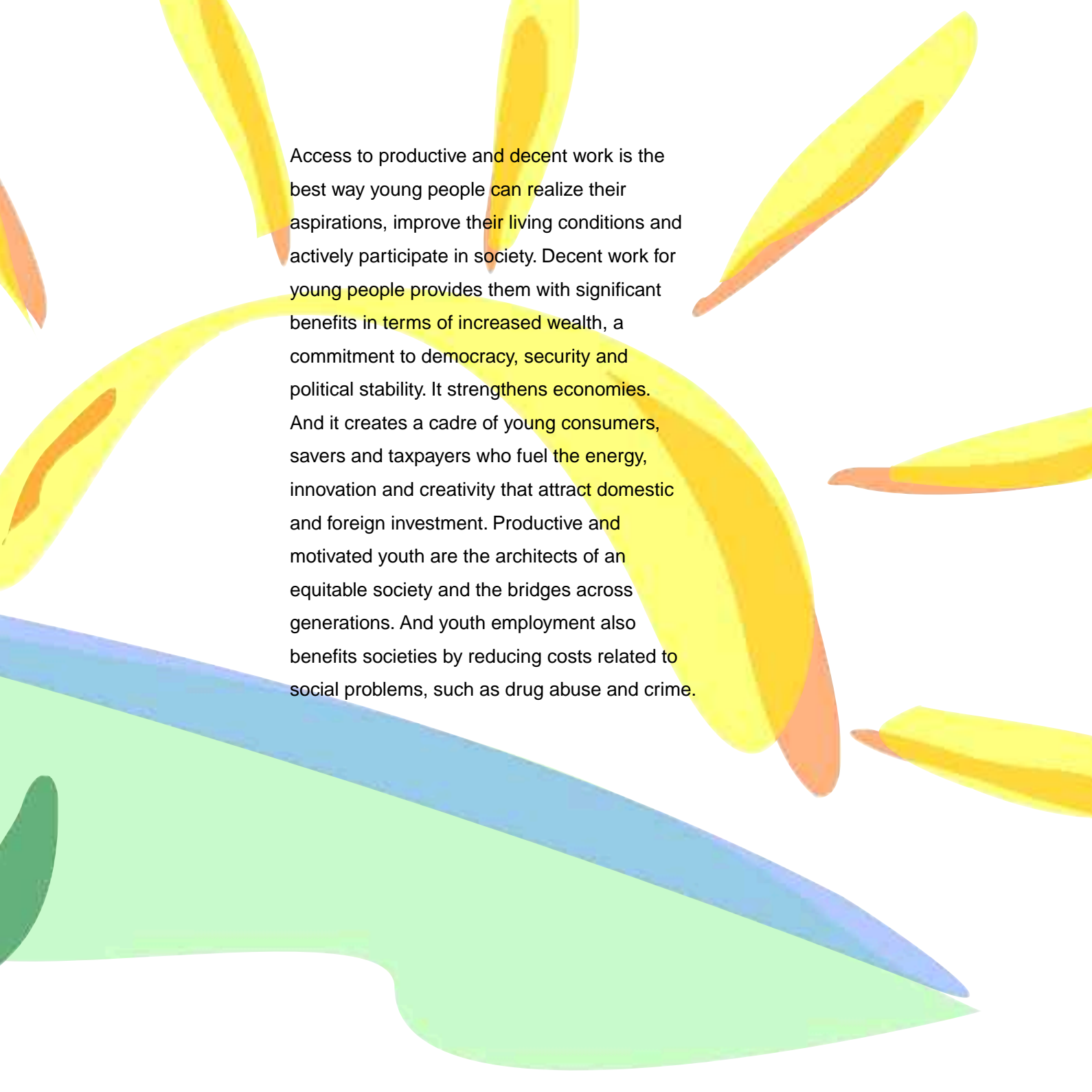
This creates an endless trail of poverty linking one generation to another.

This “poverty trail”, from youth to adulthood, is fraught with danger for today's societies.

The costs are enormous – for individuals as well as economies – and the prospects are grim. Reduced self-esteem, discouragement and diminished levels of well-being can lead to anti-social behaviour, violence and juvenile delinquency that put democracies at risk.

*What are  
the benefits of  
creating jobs  
for youth?*






Access to productive and decent work is the best way young people can realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and actively participate in society. Decent work for young people provides them with significant benefits in terms of increased wealth, a commitment to democracy, security and political stability. It strengthens economies. And it creates a cadre of young consumers, savers and taxpayers who fuel the energy, innovation and creativity that attract domestic and foreign investment. Productive and motivated youth are the architects of an equitable society and the bridges across generations. And youth employment also benefits societies by reducing costs related to social problems, such as drug abuse and crime.

*Starting night:  
A critical  
departure*







Starting right in the labour market is crucial not only to success at work but to the personal lives of individuals, their families and their societies. Starting right is the key to getting and keeping decent jobs later in life. Without the right foothold, people are less able to make choices that will improve the job prospects of their dependants. Thus, the impact of youth employment reaches well beyond the world of work and becomes a key factor in the transition to adulthood. And starting right at work can open the gates to the fulfilment of young peoples' responsibilities and aspirations, not only as workers, but also as citizens.

*What works best?*



Nearly every country in the world has worked to address the youth employment challenge. Yet many of these efforts have been limited to specific programmes that are narrow in scope and limited in time. What's more, efforts have often focused on youth unemployment, neglecting the poor working conditions of many young workers.


Productive and long-term youth employment requires sustained, coherent and concerted action on a combination of economic and social policies. Experience across countries shows that youth employment initiatives are more successful if they combine a range of measures

spanning education and training, labour market services, support for gaining work experience and entrepreneurship development. These initiatives work best when designed and implemented together with the social partners.

In June 2005, government, employers' and workers' representatives from 178 countries at the International Labour Conference agreed that the best strategy for tackling youth employment requires an integrated approach that combines supportive macro-economic policies and targeted measures, and addresses labour demand and supply, as well as the quantity and quality of employment.

# *The ILO response*





Decent and productive employment for youth is a major commitment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The ILO has a special role to play in promoting policies and initiatives on youth employment as part of this commitment.

The tripartite constituency and global alliances of the ILO give it the global reach needed to catalyze support and action on youth employment. At the national level, governments, and employer and worker organizations are major players in the development of youth employment policies and

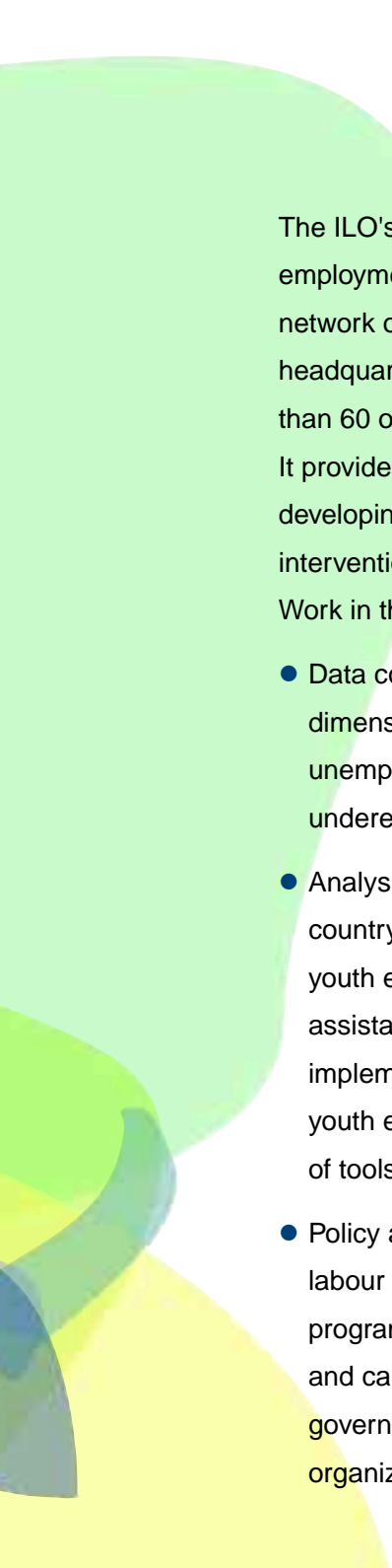
programmes. Dialogue and alliances with civil society, public and private sectors and youth are also important to building support for and developing solutions. At the international level, the ILO's leading role in the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) – a global partnership of the World Bank, the United Nations and the ILO – provides a major opportunity to build international consensus and influence the international agenda with a comprehensive strategy for the employment and social inclusion of young people.





*The ILO response*





The ILO's programme on youth employment operates through a global network of technical specialists at its headquarters in Geneva and in more than 60 offices around the world.

It provides assistance to countries in developing coherent and coordinated interventions on youth employment.

Work in this area includes:

- Data collection on the nature and dimensions of youth employment, unemployment and underemployment;
- Analysis of the effectiveness of country policies and programmes on youth employment, technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of plans of action on youth employment and development of tools and training material;
- Policy advice to strengthen in-country labour market policies and programmes for youth employment and capacity building for governments, employer and worker organizations;
- Advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for youth with a focus on employability, employment and workers' rights;
- Establishment of strategic partnerships on youth employment between private and public sectors at the international, sub-regional and national levels;
- Promotion of cross-country and global peer networks to achieve better performance and share good-practice experiences among ILO constituents and other stakeholders;
- Collaboration with multilateral and other international institutions to ensure policy coherence across national initiatives affecting youth employment.



# *Youth Employment Programme*

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