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Realizing Youth Inclusion for a More Sustainable Asia-Pacific



The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the United Nations' regional hub promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 Member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP has emerged as a strong regional think-tank offering countries sound analytical products that shed insight into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region. The Commission's strategic focus is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which it does by reinforcing and deepening regional cooperation and integration to advance connectivity, financial cooperation and market integration. ESCAP's research and analysis coupled with its policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to governments aims to support countries' sustainable and inclusive development ambitions.

Realizing Youth Inclusion for a More Sustainable Asia and the Pacific

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Preface



Despite the tremendous impact young people have on society, they often face a multitude of institutional and sociocultural barriers in realizing their potential. Overcoming these challenges and barriers requires a deeper understanding of the complex situation youth are facing in becoming healthy, happy and productive citizens that actively participate in all aspects of the development process.

This report aims to broaden the understanding of these complexities by studying the findings revealed by a primary research project in six countries in the Asia-Pacific region, covering over 10,000 youth aged 18–24. The research provides a unique wealth of information directly received from youth talking first-hand about their situation, their concerns and their hopes. Motivated by requests of ESCAP member States, the report aims to provide insight into some of the most pressing issues that impact youth inclusion in social, economic and civic domains. The findings are derived from analysing data collected through a comprehensive questionnaire and a series of focus group discussions in 12 cities in the six countries. However, relevance of the findings extends beyond the context of the areas surveyed.

Throughout Asia and the Pacific significant numbers of young people are excluded from the impressive socioeconomic advances that have been made in recent decades. This report sheds light on these young people and how they differ from those who are more privileged. The findings reveal that gender remains a large contributor to inequality, often restricting access to education and employment, and participation in political activities. However, those of low wealth, ethnic minorities, certain castes or religious groups are in many cases even more excluded from such spheres, while also receiving fewer opportunities to increase social and human capital, including limited access to associations and the Internet.

The report considers the options many developing countries face as they seek to more effectively tap into the potential of youth and progress along the pathways delineated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It further calls upon policymakers as well as other stakeholders to pay more attention to the evolving needs and aspirations of youth and work closely with them, for a more prosperous, inclusive and shared future.

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Contents



Foreword	5
Preface	7
Acknowledgements	8
Contents	9
Figures	10
Tables	11
Acronyms	12
Executive Summary	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	14
Chapter 2: Data and research methodology	20
Chapter 3: Challenges and consequences of limited access to education and employment	23
Chapter 4: Life outside school and the workplace matters	39
Chapter 5: Promoting social inclusion requires a better understanding of the causes and consequences of marginalization	48
Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations	58

Figures



Figure 1	Youth share (%) of total population, focus countries	16
Figure 2	GDP per capita (US\$ PPP), selected countries, 2014	16
Figure 3	HDI, selected countries, 2014	17
Figure 4	GINI coefficient, selected countries, most recent year	17
Figure 5	Youth unemployment rates (%) and rates relative to adult unemployment, selected Asia-Pacific countries and territories, latest year	19
Figure 6	Share of youth in education, employment and NEET (%), by focus country	25
Figure 7	Impact of years of education on satisfaction with the education system, aggregates of focus countries	27
Figure 8	Monthly income (USD) per year of education, total and by gender, aggregates of focus countries	28
Figure 9	Monthly income (USD) per year of education, by gender and wealth category, aggregates of focus countries	29
Figure 10	Youth labour force breakdown by gender and employment status (%)	30
Figure 11	Share of unemployed youth (%), by gender and focus country, where available	31
Figure 12	Impact of education on satisfaction with employment opportunities, aggregate data	31
Figure 13	Migrant composition (%) by gender and wealth category	35
Figure 14	Main reason for moving to the city, by focus country	35
Figure 15	Primary reasons for migrating (%) by wealth category	35
Figure 16	NEET rates across Asia and the Pacific (%), by country, most recent year	36
Figure 17	NEET rates (%) by migrant status, gender and wealth category	36
Figure 18	NEET rates (%) by age and gender	37
Figure 19	Type of media accessed at least once per week (%)	42
Figure 20	Youth stating other people thought their religion was dangerous or radical (%), focus countries	44
Figure 21	Youth who want to affect change in their country in the name of their religion (%), focus countries	45
Figure 22	Activity thought to make the world a better place (%) by gender, focus countries	45
Figure 23	Youth voter registration (%), focus countries	49
Figure 24	Average electoral turnout of youth and adults (%), selected countries	51

Tables



Table 1	Geographic breakdown of where the Survey was administered	22
Table 2	Average years of education by gender and wealth category, focus countries	26
Table 3	Mean monthly income (USD) by gender, focus countries	32

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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