International Labour Organization

Youth not in employment, education or training in Asia and the Pacific:

Trends and policy considerations

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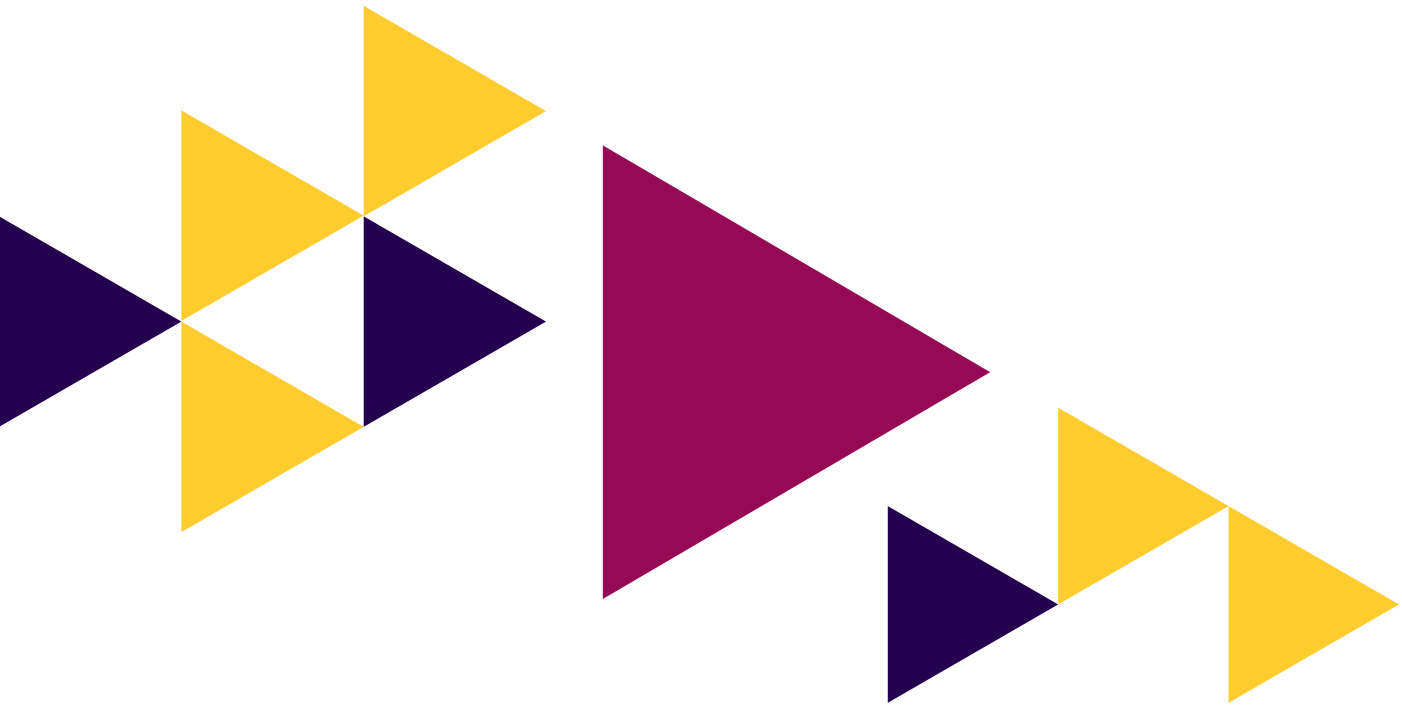

Foreword

The Global Call to Action for a Human-Centred Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2021, reminds us that "[t]he crisis has profoundly disrupted the education, training and employment of young people, making it even harder for them to find a job, successfully transition from education and training to work, continue education or start a business and posing the risk of a reduced trajectory of earnings and advancement over the course of their working lives".

This is true in the Asia-Pacific region where circumstances do not bode well for achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.6 to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). Even before the crisis, around one in every four young persons in the Asia-Pacific region were NEET in 2019. Young women accounted for nearly three quarters of them.

This report, *Youth not in employment, education or training in Asia and the Pacific: Trends and policy considerations,* examines the pre-COVID-19 trends on youth NEET from 2010 to 2019 and the impact of the crisis. It concludes that far too many young people are not succeeding in their labour market transitions, young women particularly. As a region whose economic success hinges on maximizing employment outcomes, with production and services still largely labour intensive, promoting a smooth labour market transition for young people is critical.

Concerted action by governments, employers' and workers' organizations is needed to prioritize youth employment and inclusion as a component of the human-centred recovery in the Asia and Pacific region.

The report offers policy considerations and country-level good practices to address the concerns of youth NEET. It is vital that in the coming years, countries in Asia and the Pacific prioritize actions towards building the human capital of young women and men through education and training. By doing so we will move closer to our target of ensuring productive employment and decent work for all youth. With a view to longer-term priorities, it will also make sense to target public investments in such areas as the care, green and digital economies which will not only create job opportunities but also help promote greater sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience.

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Abbreviations

ALMP	active labour market programmes
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
COVID-19	coronavirus
ICT	information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KOREATECH	Korea University of Technology and Education
MSMEs	micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises
NEET	not in employment, education or training
OLEI	Online Lifelong Education Institute
PES	public employment services
STAR	Skills Training for Advancing Resources
STEAM	sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Philippines)
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
YELP	Youth Entrepreneur Loan Project
YSEI	Youth Social Entrepreneur Initiative

1

Introduction

Being "not in employment, education or training", or NEET, in Asia and the Pacific encompasses a broad array of vulnerabilities among the youth and comes with consequences that include economic and employment disadvantages and limited social mobility. NEET also increases the risk of social exclusion and limits the critical contribution of young women and men to economies and societies. Significant efforts are needed to accelerate progress towards the reduction of the youth NEET rates by 2030, as pledged under Sustainable Development Goal 8 (indicator 8.6.1).

Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, almost one in every four young persons aged 15–24 in the region in 2019 was NEET (ILO and ADB 2020). Young women accounted for nearly three quarters of youth who were NEET at that time. Youth in the region continue to face pressing and persistent labour market challenges, which is reflected in low wages and other decent work deficits.

During the first years of the COVID-19 crisis, the disproportionate labour market impact on youth employment outcomes manifested through three channels: First, young people experienced disproportionate job disruptions in terms of reduced working hours and lay-offs due to their overrepresentation in low-productivity and low-paid jobs and in hard-hit sectors of the economy. Second, the disruptions to education, training and work-based learning hampered their chance to improve employability through upskilling and reskilling. Third, the combination of the sharp reduction in demand during the crisis and the lack of skills development initiatives posed difficulties in the labour market transitions of young jobseekers and new labour market entrants who were also competing with more experienced older workers and peers. The situation for youth was exacerbated by a deterioration in the global labour market recovery due to multiple and interlinked crises, from food to energy crises, as well as increasing inequalities within and between countries (ILO 2022a).

Policy responses to support youth, specifically those who are NEET, require a thorough understanding of the characteristics of youth disadvantages and inequality of opportunities. This report starts by elaborating the

definition, components and measurements of youth NEET. Then it summarizes the NEET trends in the region and highlights areas of concern. Part 3 assesses NEET trends over time and by various characteristics for both the pre-COVID-19 period and assessing the impact of the pandemic. As part of national economic and labour market recovery efforts, governments have implemented an array of policy measures to stimulate their economies, boost employment and support enterprises. Some governments have targeted youth in their recovery efforts, as highlighted in part 4.

Prioritizing youth employment and inclusion as a component of the human-centred recovery can boost productivity and improve the future economic and social prospects in the Asia and Pacific region. Policies geared towards addressing nuanced issues and concerns of youth NEET are also proposed in part 4.

2

Defining and measuring youth not in employment, education or training

This report follows the International Labour Organization's (ILO) definition of NEET and the NEET rate (box 1).

▶ Box 1: Calculating the rate of youth not in employment, education or training

The not in employment, education or training (NEET) indicator is classified as a tier 1 Sustainable Development Goal indicator by the United Nations, which implies that it is conceptually clear and is derives from a "well-established methodology, agreed upon at the international level and for which data are regularly produced and widely available for at least half of the countries and half the population of the relevant regions" (ILO 2018).

The International Labour Organization defines the NEET rate as:

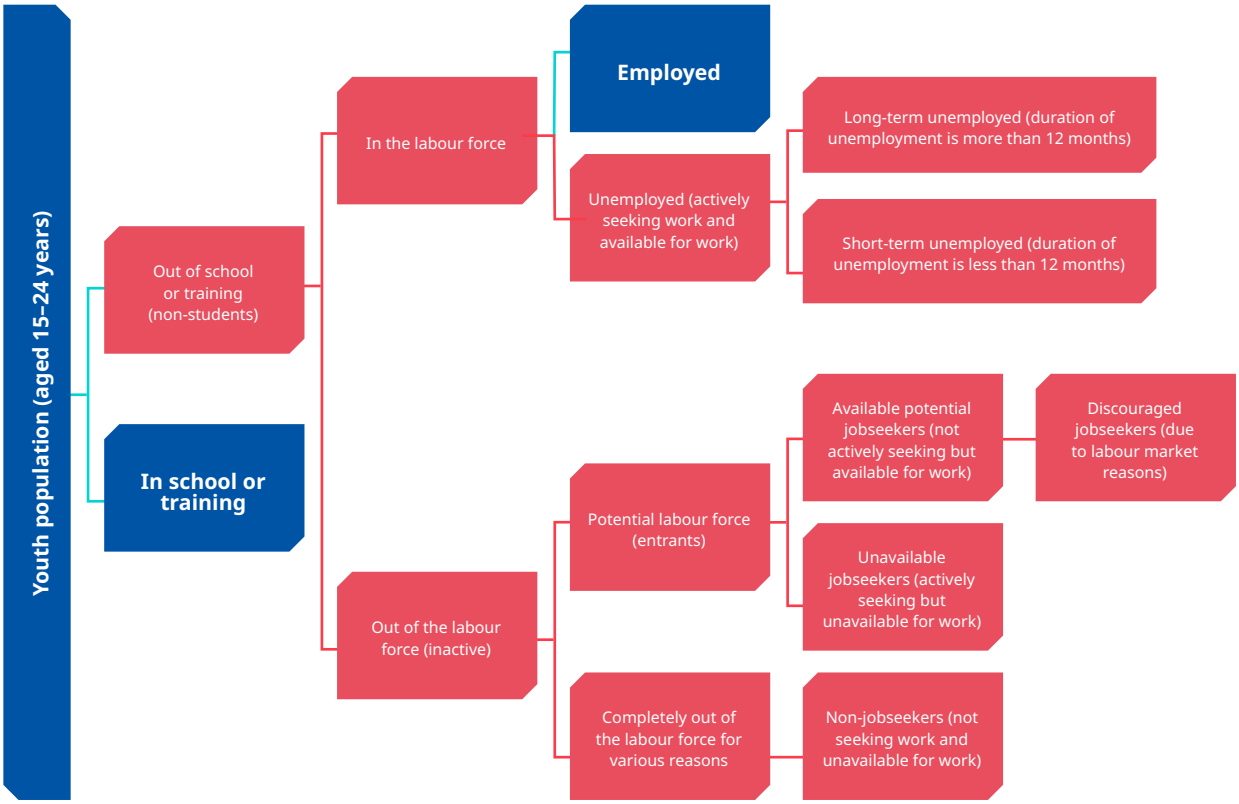
$$\textit{NEET rate (\%)} = \frac{\textit{(Youth-Youth in employment-Youth not in employment but in education or training)}}{\textit{Youth}}$$

While the definition of youth varies by country in Asia and the Pacific, youth are defined as those persons aged 15–24 years. Persons in employment are defined as "all those of working age who, during a short

reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit" (ICLS 2013, para. 27). The numerator above tells us that, for a young person to be classified as NEET, they must satisfy two conditions: (i) not employed (unemployed or inactive) and (ii) did not receive any education or training in the four weeks preceding a survey. In other words, youth NEET is the sum of unemployed non-students and inactive non-students. The challenge in accurately calculating the NEET rates is the availability of reliable information on both the labour market status and the participation in education or training by each respondent to a survey, which is usually absent or unreliable in underdeveloped statistical systems in developing economies. Aside from reliable data collection, the accuracy in computing the NEET rate is heavily dependent on the survey questionnaire design, the sample size and the design and precision of respondents' answers. Thus, this calls for the continued investment in accurate, reliable and comparable labour market statistics in the Asia–Pacific region.

Because youth NEET are not a homogeneous group, figure 1 presents its decomposition. All categories in red and connected by red lines are partially or fully considered youth NEET. The youth NEET indicator, as shown in the figure, aggregates the youth classified as (i) unemployed non-students and (ii) inactive non-students. Unemployed youth are those of working age "who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity (ICLS 2013, para. 47). This group can be further categorized based on the duration of their unemployment as long-term unemployed if the period of unemployment is more than 12 months and short-term.

▶ Figure 1: Decomposition of youth not in employment, education or training



Note: All categories in red and connected by red lines are partially or fully considered youth NEET. Those in the labour force and employed are not classified as NEET.
Source: Author's depiction based on ICLS (2013).

Youth classified as inactive non-students can be further disaggregated into potential labour market entrants and those who are completely out of the labour force and education for various reasons. Potential labour market entrants can be distinguished in terms of marginal labour market attachment and disaggregated into "unavailable jobseekers" and "available potential jobseekers". Unavailable jobseekers are defined as those who are neither in employment nor unemployment and carry out activities to seek employment and are not currently available but would become available within a short subsequent period established in the light of national circumstances. Available potential jobseekers do not carry out activities to seek employment but want employment and are currently available (ICLS 2013, para. 51). Discouraged jobseekers is a subset of available potential jobseekers (ICLS 2013, para. 52). Discouragement is associated with labour market reasons, such as past failure to find a suitable job, lack of experience, qualifications or jobs matching the person's skills, lack of jobs in the area or person is considered too young or too old by prospective employers (ICLS 2013, para. 80b). In other words, unavailable jobseekers are those who are out of the labour force and actively seeking but unavailable for work, while available potential jobseekers include persons who are actively seeking but unavailable for work.

The youth NEET indicator serves as "a broader measure of potential labour market entrants than youth unemployment" and provides "a better measure of the lost potential for human resource development than the youth inactivity rate" because the latter includes youth who are still accumulating human capital through education or training.[1]

To avoid ambiguous interpretations and mis-targeted policy responses, the comprehensive nature of the indicator warrants the need for more detailed analysis of the prevalence and composition of youth NEET across specific cohorts.[2] For instance, it is certainly relevant for policymakers to understand if resulting youth NEET are primarily young women who are outside the labour force due to care responsibilities so they can thus design targeted responses accordingly.

1 Quotes from ILO (2018).
2 ILO (2015a) contains an extensive summary on this subject matter.

3

Trends among youth not in employment, education or training in Asia and the Pacific

3.1. Pre-COVID-19 period

Around one in every four young persons aged 15–24, equivalent to 155 million youths, were NEET in the Asia-Pacific region in 2019.[3]

The region recorded an average youth NEET rate of 23.6 per cent from 2010 to 2019. This was higher than the global average of 21.9 per cent, and the second highest across regions, only behind the Arab States (at 33.2 per cent). The lowest NEET rates were recorded by Europe and Central Asia (15.3 per cent), followed by the Americas (18.2 per cent) and Africa (21.2 per cent) in the same period.

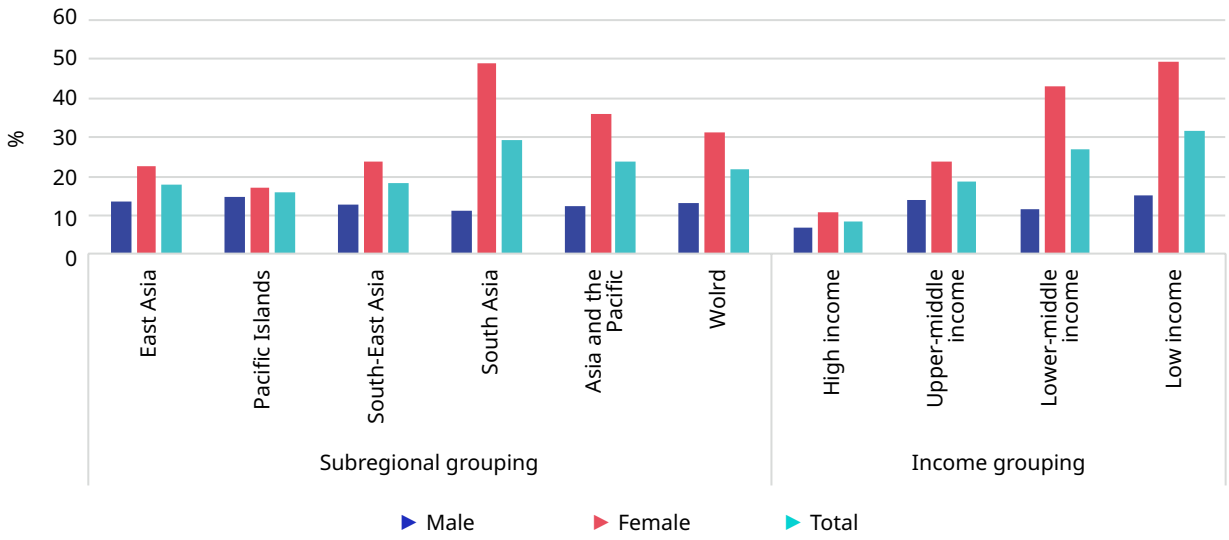
The youth NEET situation in the region has been heterogenous, with significant variation across subregions, income groupings and by sex. South Asia consistently recorded the highest youth NEET rate among subregions prior to the COVID-19 crisis, at 29.2 per cent (average for 2010–19). This was 1.6 times greater than the rate for South-East Asia (at 18.3 per cent) and 1.9 times greater than the Pacific Islands (at 16.2 per cent) for the same period. The high youth NEET rate in South Asia is primarily driven by young women, who tallied the highest (by far) NEET rate across all income, subregional and sex cohorts, at 48.9 per cent. The female NEET rates are

3 Unless otherwise specified, data presented are from ILO modelled estimates, available in ILOSTAT.

persistently high across the region, but the gender gap is highest in South Asia (at 37.7 percentage points), followed by South-East Asia (at 11.1 percentage points) and East Asia (at 9.1 percentage points). The gender gap is the smallest in the Pacific Islands, at 2.3 percentage points (figure 2).

High per capita income of countries tends to be associated with a low youth NEET rate and less pronounced gender gap within the Asia and the Pacific region. This is apparent from figure 2, where tallied youth NEET rates increase as per capita income of countries decreases.

▶ Figure 2: Proportion of youth NEET, by subregional and income grouping, average for 2010–19 (percentage)



Source: Calculations based on ILO modelled estimates available in ILOSTAT.

Significant cross-country differences in youth NEET rates have emerged within the subregions, with the largest variations in South Asia and the Pacific Islands.

All countries with available data in South Asia as of 2019 recorded a youth NEET rate higher than 21 per cent, except Bhutan (at 15.2 per cent).[4] The rate went as high as 42.7 per cent in Afghanistan (figure 3). The gender gap in youth NEET was most pronounced in this subregion, with differences of more than 40 percentage points in Afghanistan (49 percentage points), Pakistan (45 percentage points) and India (41 percentage points). The NEET rate for young women was as high as four to seven times that of young men in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Maldives recorded a reverse pattern, however, with young men having a higher NEET rate than women in 2019.

There were wide variations across countries in the Pacific Islands also as of 2019, with the youth NEET rate ranging from 7 per cent in Solomon Islands to 46.9 per cent in Kiribati. This pattern also exists in terms of the gender gap in youth NEET rates, from almost no gap in Australia (0.1 percentage points) to 29 percentage points in Nauru. Aside from Australia, there are multiple countries in the subregion with gender gaps of 5 percentage points or less, such as Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

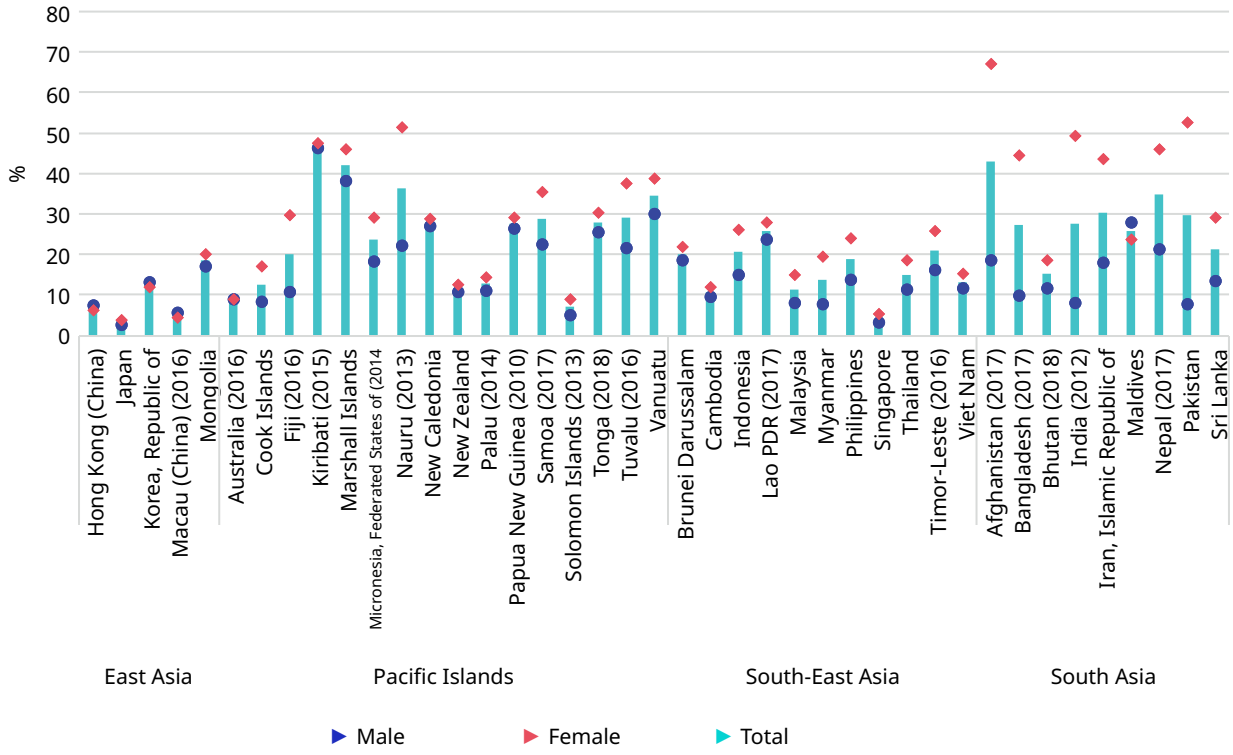
Among economies with available data in East Asia, the Republic of Korea and Mongolia recorded the highest youth NEET rates as of 2019, at 12.5 per cent and 18.5 per cent, respectively. The subregion is characterized by relatively limited gender gaps, with most economies tallying a higher NEET rate for young men than young

4 The analysis in the remainder of the section is based on the microdata files of national Labour Force Surveys available in an ILO repository. Point-in-time estimates are 2019 or latest year available.

women. These are Hong Kong (China), Macau (China) and Republic of Korea, comprising three of the four economies with the same pattern across the subregion.

In South-East Asia, the youth NEET rate was as low as 4.1 per cent in Singapore and rising to 25.8 per cent in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Around one in every five young persons was NEET in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines and Timor-Leste. The majority of countries in the subregion had gender gaps of more than 5 percentage points (up to 11.5 percentage points), with the few remaining at less than 5 percentage points

▶ Figure 3: Youth NEET rates, by sex for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available (percentage)



Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Annual data, where available, are reported in ILOSTAT.

The youth NEET situation can be decomposed into unemployment and inactivity and further disaggregated across demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, marital status, geographical coverage and level of education.

Inactive non-students account for the majority of youth NEET across all subregions and within the region.

Based on calculations for countries with available microdata, there were 87.4 million inactive non-students in the region in 2019, equivalent to 81.7 per cent of all youth NEET. The share of inactive non-students to total youth NEET ranged from 76.4 per cent in East Asia to 93.6 per cent in the Pacific Islands. In South Asia, among countries with available data, at least three quarters of youth NEET were inactive (annex table A1).

For countries with available data on reasons for inactivity,[5] more than six of every ten (62.8 per cent) inactive youth NEET cited personal or family-related reasons as the primary reason for their inactivity. Examples of

5 These include 26 of the 32 countries with available youth NEET data, which can be decomposed into unemployed and inactive non-students. Cook Islands was excluded because it only recorded "other" as the only reason for inactivity.

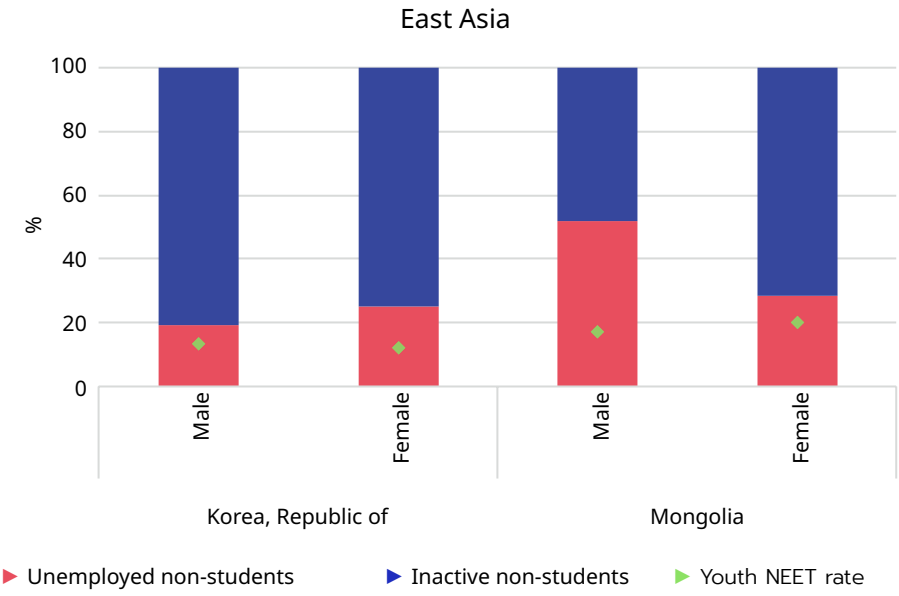
personal reasons were illness, disability and studies, while family-related reasons included pregnancy, presence of small children and refusal by the family (ICLS 2013, para. 80b). The second most common explanation given was "other reasons" (26.7 per cent). Only 5.4 per cent of inactive non-students cited a reason indicating labour market discouragement[6] as the primary reason for their inactivity (annex table A3).

As illustrated in figure 4, the NEET cohort of inactive non-students accounted for a larger share in most countries for both sexes. In almost all countries with available data, the share of inactive non-students among youth NEET was larger for women than men (on average, 86 per cent of female youth NEET and 72 per cent of male youth NEET). The share of inactive non-students across countries ranged from 60.6 to 97.5 per cent.[7] Among female youth NEET in the majority (six of eight) of countries with available data in South Asia, more than 90 per cent were inactive non-students. They were in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal and Pakistan. For context, South Asia comprised 82.9 per cent of the total inactive non-students in the entire Asia and the Pacific region as of 2019, equivalent to 72.5 million young people.

Moreover, among female youth NEET, the share of inactive non-students larger than 90 per cent were recorded in multiple countries in the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia. They were Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Tonga in the Pacific Islands and Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and the Philippines in South-East Asia.

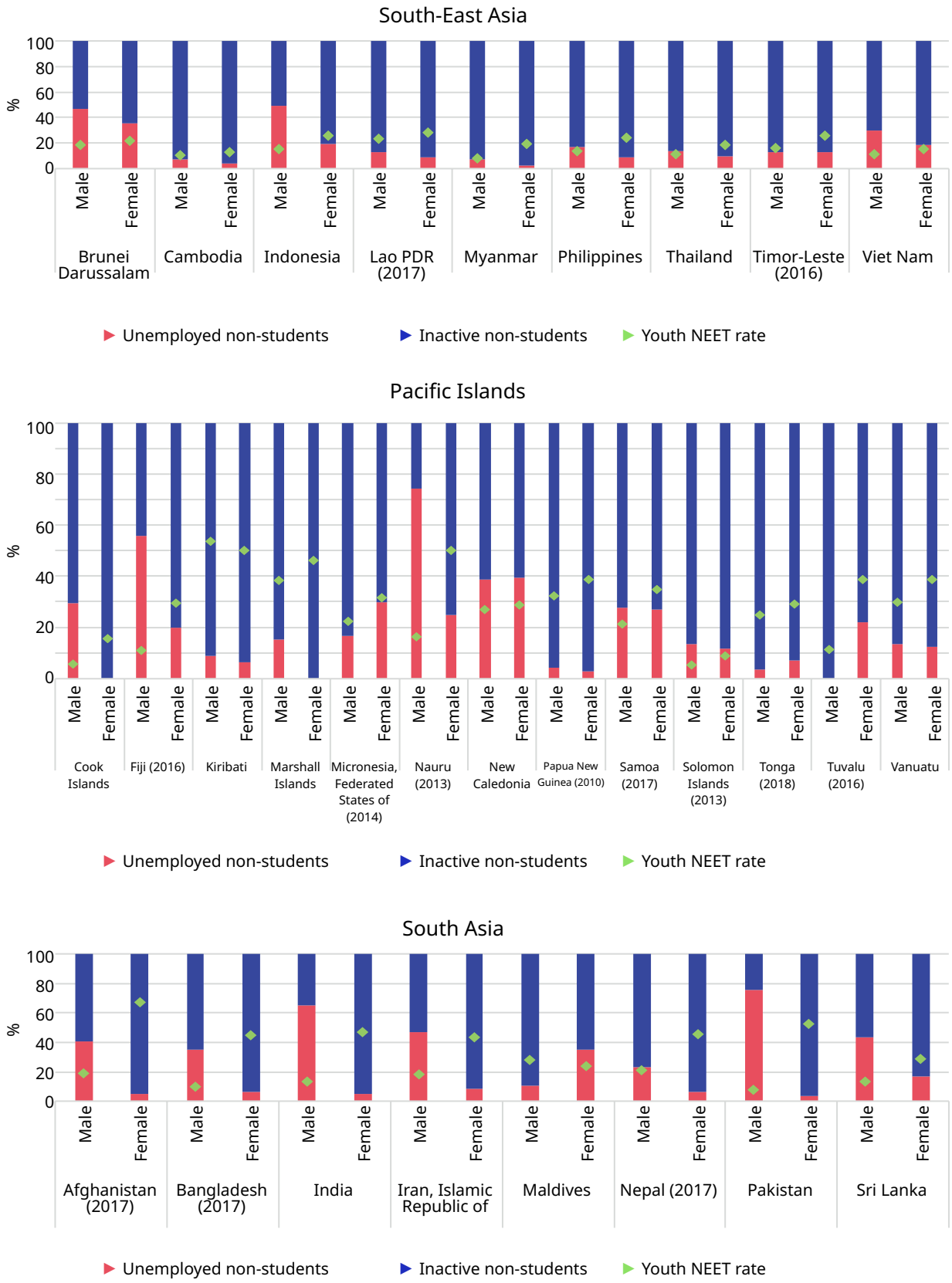
Figure 4 also shows that unemployment was relatively more pronounced among young men in India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Fiji and Nauru, where the share of unemployed non-students ranged from 51.8 per cent (Mongolia) to 75.7 per cent (Pakistan). These findings are supported by annex table A2, which shows that among unemployed non-students in the region as of 2019, young men accounted for 73.5 per cent, equivalent to 14.4 million inactive non-students, while young women comprised 85.6 per cent, or close to 75 million inactive non-students.

▶ Figure 4: Decomposition of youth NEET, by sex and NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available (percentage)



6 These reasons include: past failure to find a suitable job; lack of experience; qualifications or jobs matching the person's skills; lack of jobs in the area; considered too young or too old by prospective employers; does not know how/where to find a job; waiting for an answer after an application; seasonal break; bad weather. See ICLS (2013), para. 80(b).

7 All young women with NEET status are inactive non-students in Cook Islands and Micronesia, which have relatively low youth population and NEET counts.



Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

The primary drivers for youth inactivity differ across the sexes.

Young women accounted for around nine in every ten youth NEET (88.3 per cent) as of 2019, citing personal or family-related concerns as the primary reason for their inactivity (annex table A3). More than three quarters of young inactive non-student women cited personal or family-related reasons in eight countries, mostly countries in South Asia, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka. Other countries included Indonesia, Palau and Philippines (annex table A4).

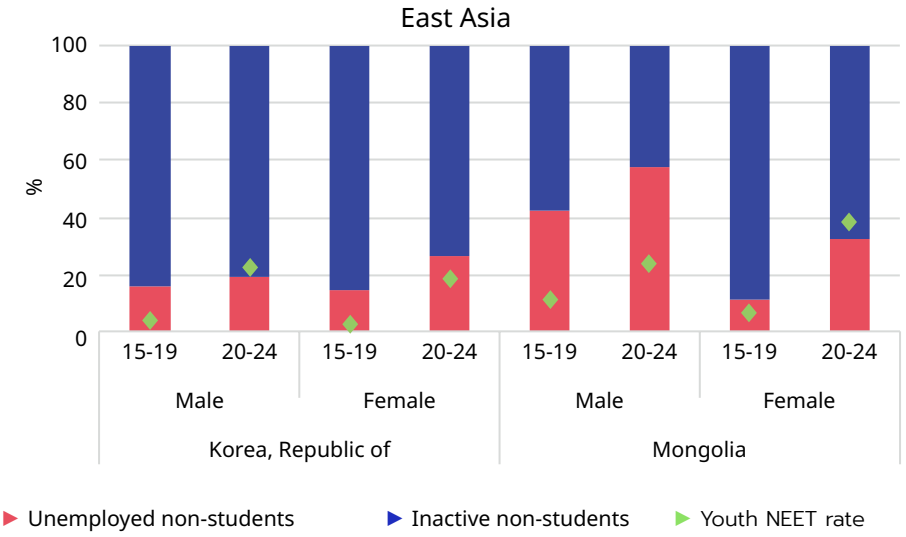
The continuing large shares of inactivity among young women are indicative of the labour market constraints imposed by socio-cultural norms on women. Young women are still disproportionately burdened with unpaid household and care work duties. But one in five inactive young women (20.7 per cent) cited other reasons for inactivity, although other labour market reasons, lack of need or want to work and discouragement only accounted for 6.1 per cent. Among inactive non-students who indicated a sense of labour market discouragement, young men accounted for the majority (56.8 per cent). This was the same case among those who cited other labour market reasons,[8] wherein more than six in every ten (63 per cent) inactive non-students were young men.

The older the youth, the higher the NEET rate, regardless of sex.

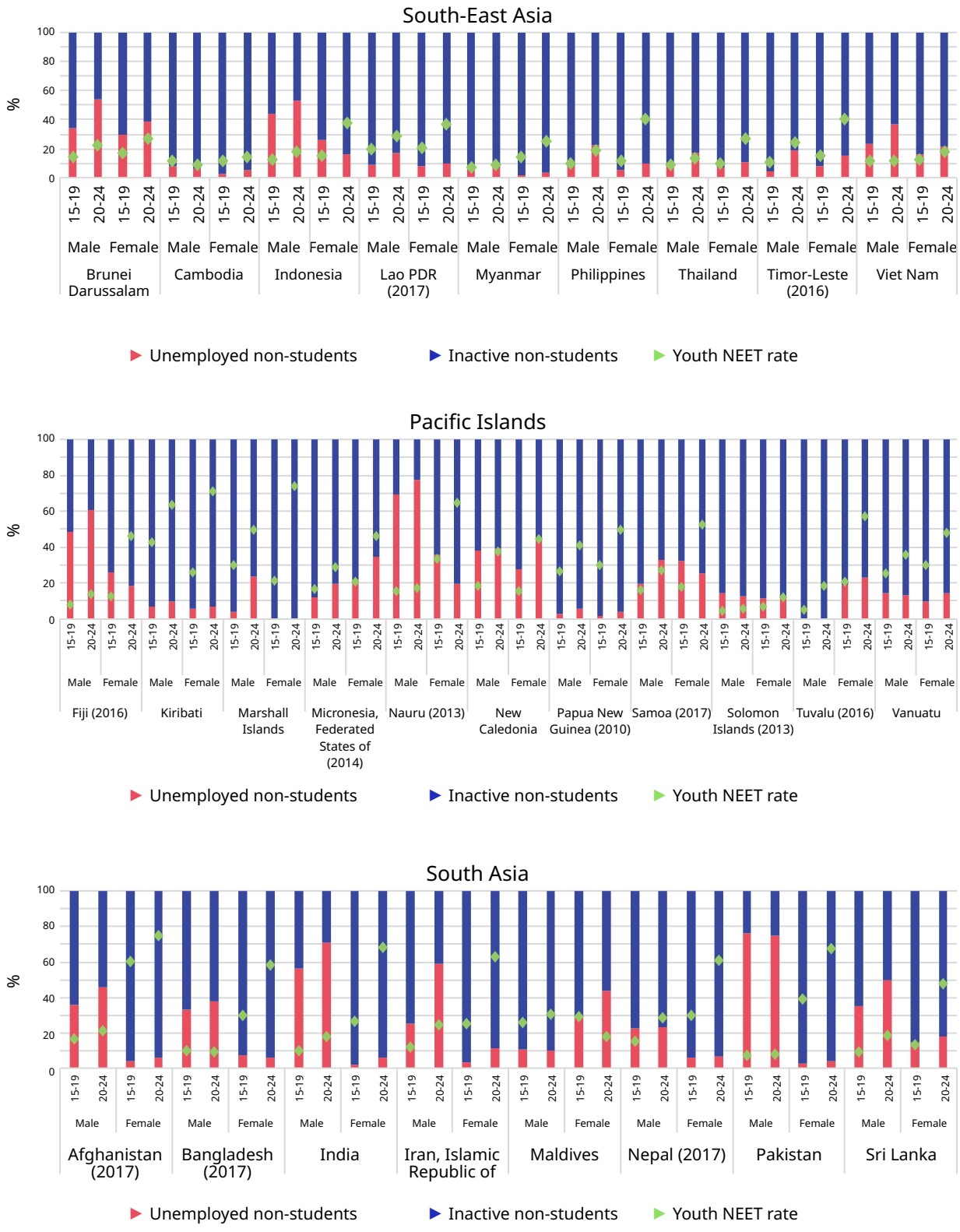
The observed pattern was consistent in all countries, with the exceptions of young men in Bangladesh and Cambodia (figure 5). The reason behind the pattern is that 15- to 19-year-olds have a greater chance to be in school or training than the older youth NEET cohorts. Older (20- to 24-year-olds) youth NEET have a higher likelihood to be unemployed than inactive when compared with the younger cohort. This is true in 24 and 25 of the 30 countries with available data, respectively, for both young women and men.

When 25- to 29-year-olds are included in the analysis of NEET, an interesting pattern emerges among women in most South Asian countries: The share of female youth NEET who are inactive decreases from the 15–19 to 20–24 age cohorts but then increases among the aged 25–29 group. It seems that young women tend to drop out of the labour force once they reach young adulthood, which can be described as a typical period for starting a family. This pattern is examined in the next section's discussion on marital status.

▶ Figure 5: Decomposition of youth NEET, by sex and age cohort for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available



8 These include reasons other than those associated with labour market discouragement, such as past failure to find a suitable job; lack of experience; qualifications or jobs matching a person's skills; lack of jobs in the area; considered too young or too old by prospective employers; does not know how or where to find a job; waiting for an answer after an application; seasonal break; and bad weather.

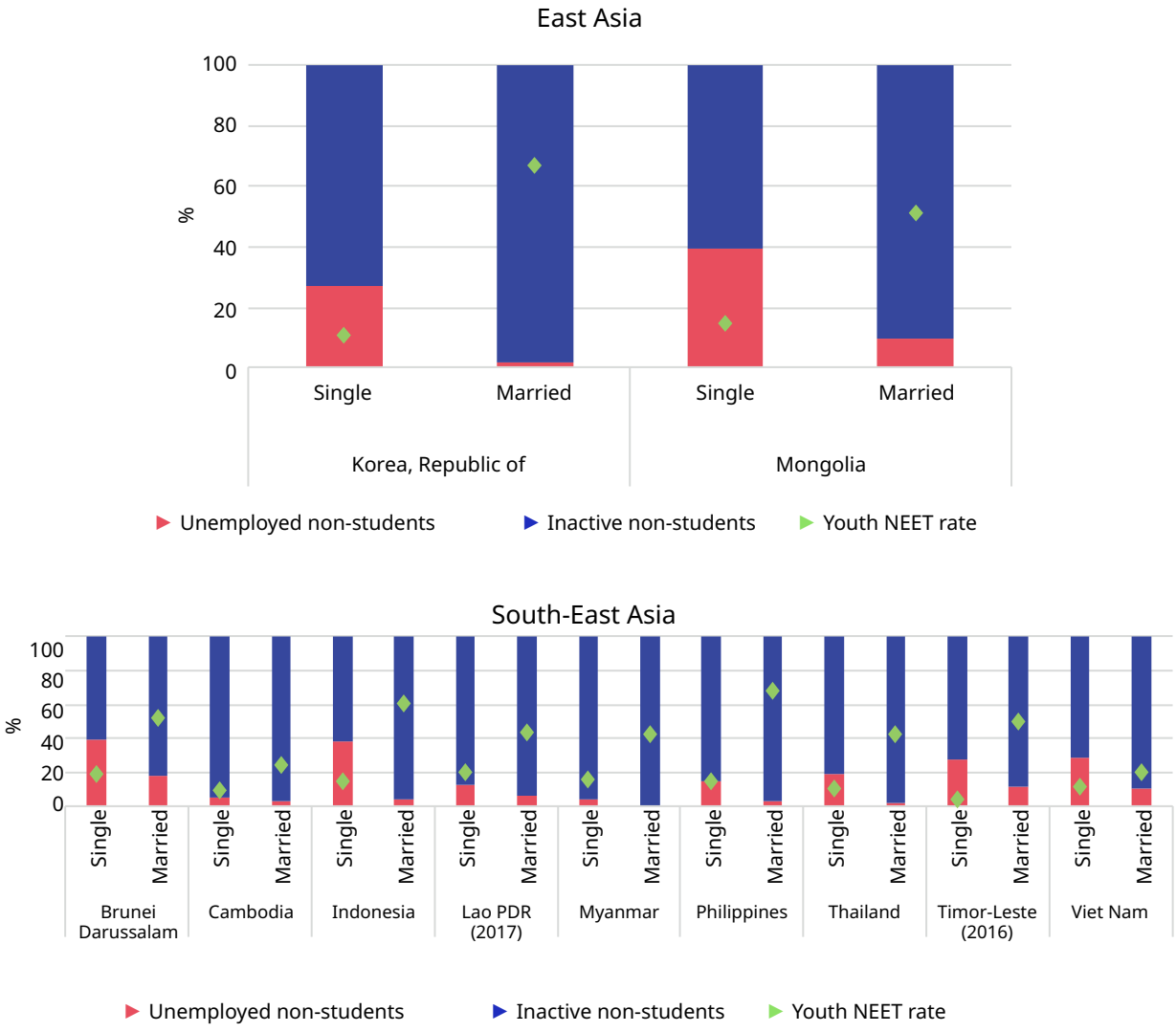


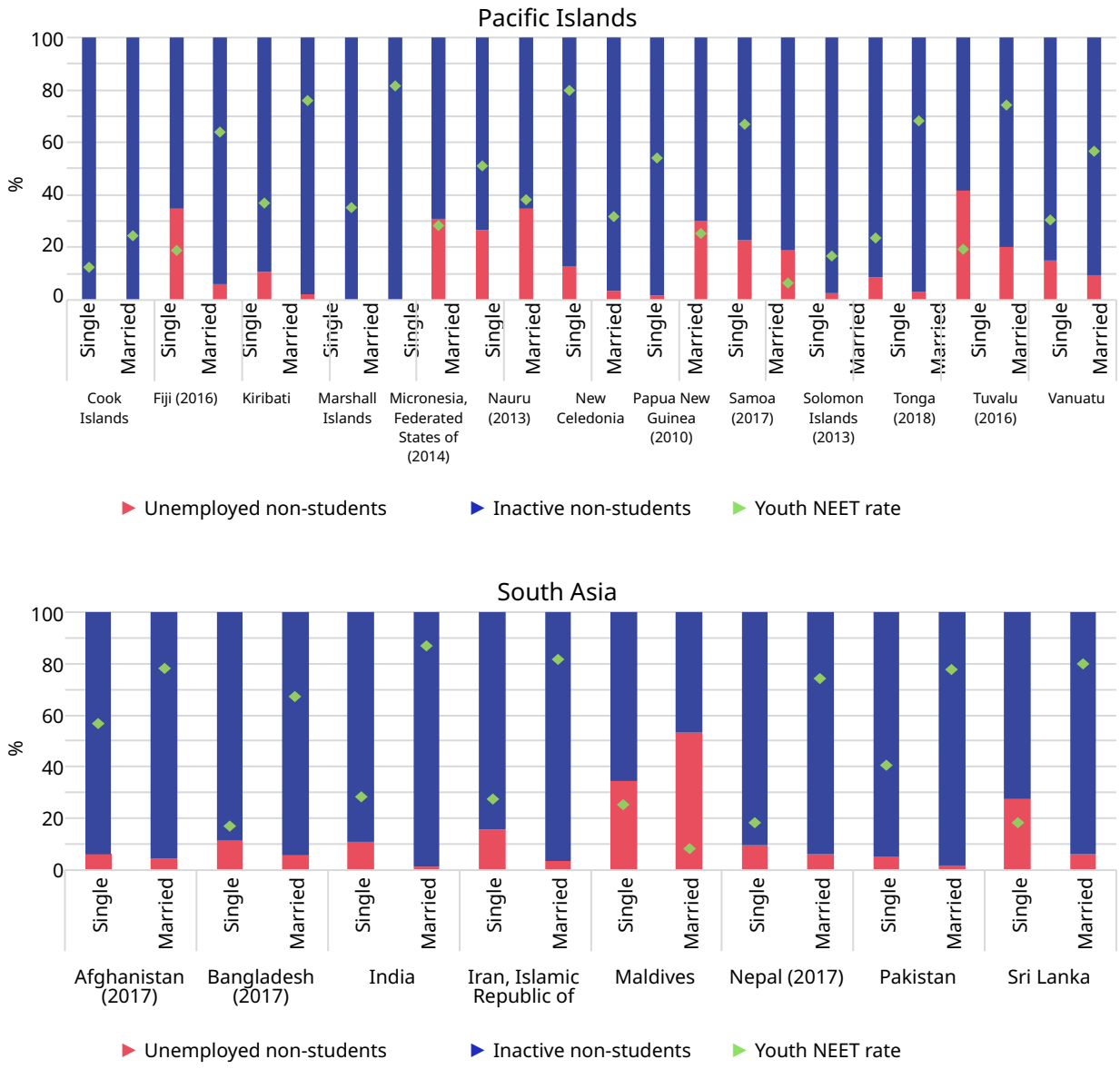
Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

There are stark differences between single and married youth NEET, especially among young women.

Being married or cohabiting is firmly associated with higher youth NEET rates for young men and young women. The greater likelihood of being NEET following marriage or cohabitation is more pronounced among young women and translates to a transition towards inactivity rather than unemployment. The differences between single and married young women in terms of NEET rates and their relative share of inactive non-students is especially stark among the South Asian countries (figure 6). This supports the notion that marital status significantly affects the labour force participation of women. Young women with societal expectations placed on them as primary caregivers face immense labour market barriers as they transition into adulthood and often lack the adequate care infrastructure to facilitate their re-entry into the labour market.

▶ Figure 6: Decomposition of young female NEET, by marital status and NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available (percentage)





Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

Youth in rural areas are more likely to be NEET, relative to youth in urban areas.

This pattern occurs in all countries in South Asia and the Pacific Islands. Specifically, the geographical (rural–urban) gap in terms of the youth NEET rate was more than 5 percentage points in 2019 in Afghanistan, India, Marshall Islands, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Samoa (annex table A5).

The geographical gap is more noticeable among young women. This is most apparent in countries in South Asia, where differences in 2019 ranged from 5.9 percentage points in Sri Lanka to 12.4 percentage points in Afghanistan. Other countries where this wide gap among young urban and rural women is observed include Fiji, Indonesia and Vanuatu.

Youth in rural areas in South Asia and in some countries in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam) and the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea) are more likely to be inactive than youth in urban areas (annex table A6).

Less educated youth are more susceptible to inactivity rather than unemployment.

Focusing on older youth cohorts (aged 20–24), this trend is observed in most countries but most noticeably in South Asia. Also, youth NEET patterns in almost all countries in the Pacific Islands and South Asia suggest that the higher the educational level of youths, the lower the probability is of their being NEET. There is no clear pattern for South-East Asia, except for older youth with the lowest level of education having the highest NEET rate in the majority of countries (annex table A7).

3.2. COVID-19 crisis impact and recovery

The dual adverse impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on labour markets and education and skills development institutions resulted in unprecedented job losses, working hour reductions, labour force exits and learning losses among youth in 2020. Most of the youth employment losses translated into inactivity in this period. As stringent containment measures slowly relaxed, economic activity picked up, leading to some signs of employment recovery in the latter part of 2020 and in 2021. But the share of youth NEET in many countries has not yet returned to the pre-crisis level. This suggests that the rise in youth inactivity during 2020 has not yet diminished despite the return to education of young people upon the gradual resumption of face-to-face schooling and training (ILO 2021a).

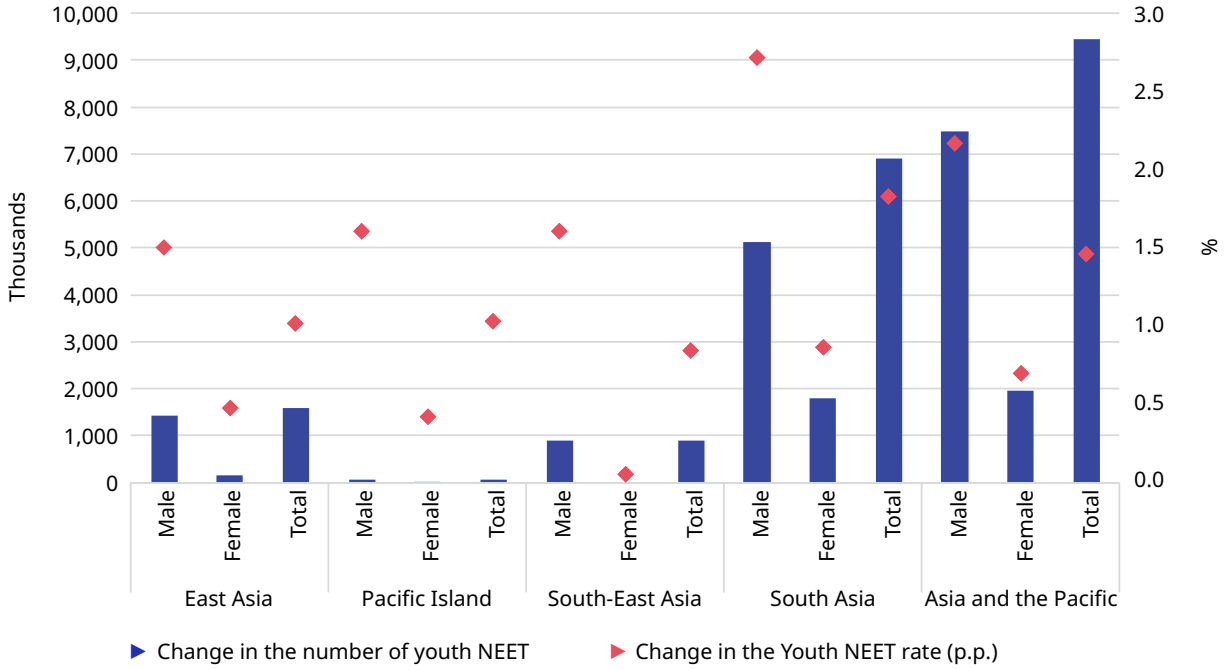
The COVID-19 crisis pushed an additional 9.5 million young persons into NEET status in 2020, resulting in around 165 million youth NEET.

This trend accounted for around half (48.3 per cent) of the additional youth NEET globally in 2020. At the global level, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis reversed 15 years of progress in reducing youth NEET rates since 2005 within one year (2020) (ILO 2022b). In Asia and the Pacific, four in every five young persons who transitioned into NEET status in 2020, equivalent to 7.5 million persons, were young men. However, young women still comprised 69 per cent of all youth NEET in the same year (down from 72 per cent in 2019).

South Asia accounted for about three quarters of the NEET increase, with an added 7 million youth NEET in 2020. East Asia saw an additional 1.6 million youth NEET, and youth NEET in South-East Asia grew by 900,000. Around 70,000 young people in the Pacific Islands transitioned into NEET status in 2020. These numbers added up to an additional 9.5 million young persons with NEET status in the region as a whole in 2020.

All subregions in Asia and the Pacific recorded a larger proportion of male and female youth NEET in 2020 than in 2019 (figure 7). The increase in the youth NEET rate in the Pacific Islands was higher than in East Asia and South-East Asia. South Asia recorded the largest increase in the youth NEET rate across subregions, at 1.8 percentage points.

▶ Figure 7: Change in youth NEET, by subregion in the Asia and the Pacific region, 2019–20 (thousands and percentage points)



Note: Young women in South-East Asia had a net decrease of 2,500 young persons.
Source: Calculations based on ILO modelled estimates available in ILOSTAT.

Youths newly NEET in 2020 were mainly inactive.

As the COVID-19 crisis devasted mobility and labour market access, few young people opted to look for work in 2020. The circumstances of the crisis thus reinforced the previous composition of youth NEET, as NEETs shifted away from unemployment and into inactivity. The significant increase in numbers of inactive non-students is also a reflection of school closure.

Table 1 shows the decrease in the number of male unemployed non-students coupled with a massive increase of inactive non-students (11-country aggregate). This was mainly due to the marked increases in young male inactive non-students in India, Indonesia and Philippines. In the 11-country aggregate, the numbers of both inactive and unemployed non-students increased for young women in 2020.

Young people have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis in terms of job losses, particularly in South-East Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. Comprising only 10–15 per cent of total employment prior to the crisis (in fourth quarter 2019), youth accounted for 22–28 per cent of total job losses in the second quarter of 2020 in these countries (ILO 2020a). Their susceptibility to being let go during the crisis can be attributed to their limited experience and the temporary nature of their jobs. Another reason for the heavy hit on young workers was their overrepresentation in hard-hit sectors, which likely resulted in an even larger share of sectoral job losses (ADB 2021a). For instance, the employment share of youth in Indonesia's manufacturing sector was 18 per cent in August 2019, but they accounted for an even larger share in total job losses in the sector, at 38 per cent in February–August 2020. Similarly, the youth comprised one in every three jobs lost in the Philippines' accommodation and food service sector in Q1–Q2 of 2020, wherein they accounted for 25 per cent of total sectoral employment in Q4 of 2019 (ADB 2021a).

Of the 11 countries with available data, only the Islamic Republic of Iran recorded low youth NEET numbers, with the decrease in unemployed non-students more than offsetting the number of inactive non-students in 2020, relative to 2019. Other countries with no significant change in their overall NEET number were Brunei Darussalam, Mongolia, New Caledonia and Thailand.

▶ Table 1: Change in youth NEET, by sex and NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019–20 (thousands)

Country	Total		Men		Women		Net change in NEET count
	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students	
Brunei Darussalam	0.3	-0.1	0.9	-0.6	1.3	-0.7	**0.5**
India	-592.3	3 669.7	350.6	200.0	-241.7	3 869.7	**3 627.9**
Indonesia	78.0	325.9	21.3	130.4	99.3	456.2	**555.6**
Islamic Republic of Iran	-63.5	91.2	-67.1	-47.5	-130.6	43.7	**-86.8**
Mongolia	-5.4	4.4	-1.5	5.9	-6.9	10.3	**3.4**
Myanmar	57.3	-7.8	71.3	-3.3	128.5	-11.1	**117.5**
New Caledonia	1.4	-0.1	1.1	-0.4	2.5	-0.5	**2.0**
Philippines	-20.5	681.3	-17.6	435.1	-38.2	1 116.4	**1 078.2**
Republic of Korea	-2.7	14.0	-5.5	9.2	-8.2	23.2	**15.0**
Thailand	26.2	-4.6	8.8	-23.3	35.0	-28.0	**7.0**
Viet Nam	-31.1	48.6	48.1	-35.7	17.0	12.9	**29.9**
11-country total	**-552.3**	**4 822.4**	**410.4**	**669.6**	**-141.9**	**5 492.1**	**5 350.2**

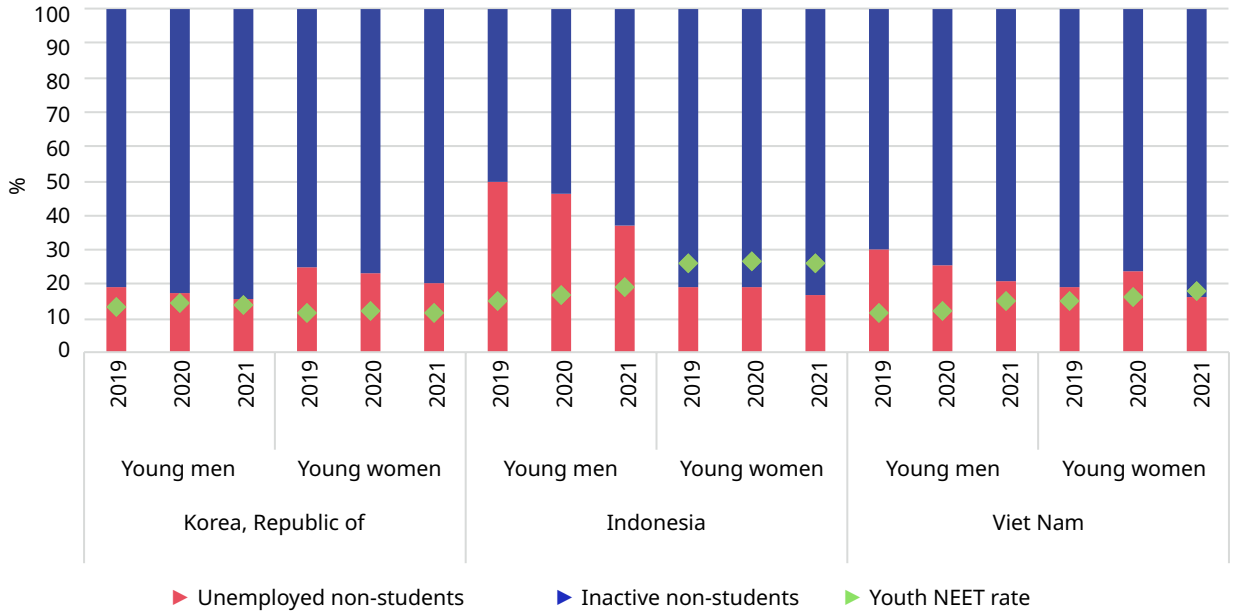
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

The youth NEET situation continued to worsen in 2021 in two of the three countries with available data.

Figure 8 shows that NEET rates for both young men and women continued to rise in Viet Nam in 2021. This was the same for Indonesia, but only for male youth, which also showed some slight elevations in the relative share of inactivity among the sub-population. The increase in both countries is attributed to their stricter containment measures as a result of the spike in COVID-19 cases.[9] Although the youth NEET rate of the Republic of Korea remained relatively stable for both sexes, the relative share of inactive non-students increased from 2019 to 2021.

9 New cases per million increased from 0.04 to 48.3 for Viet Nam and from 8.8 to 34.9 for Indonesia from 2020 to 2021. This resulted in stricter containment measures for the same reference periods in both countries, according to Our World in Data.

▶ Figure 8: Decomposition of youth NEET, by sex for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019–21 (percentage)



Note: Unlike the rest of the countries in this sample, data collection through the Labour Force Survey in Indonesia is conducted biannually, every February and August of the year.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

The strict and economy-wide workplace closures had phased out in most countries as of 2022. However, the continuing food and energy crises and disrupted global supply chains, primarily due to the conflict in Ukraine, coupled with the financial turbulence and monetary policy tightening, have stalled and even threaten to reverse the positive gains in hours worked and increase uncertainty throughout 2022 (ILO 2022a). In Asia and the Pacific, the number of hours worked in the first quarter of 2022 remained 4.3 per cent below what they were in the fourth quarter of 2019 (the pre-crisis benchmark), which translates to a deficit of 77.3 million full-time jobs (48 hours per week). These developments, together with the tightening of the labour market, further limit the labour market recovery for youth.

4

Policy measures and considerations for youth not in employment, education or training

Governments throughout the region have responded to the crisis with comprehensive economic and labour market measures (ILO 2022c). Nonetheless, despite the massive spending, the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on young people are likely to persist for quite some time in the form of deteriorating labour markets and mental health outcomes (ILO 2020a). Thus, in addition to broader economic policy support, governments, social and development partners and other multilateral organizations will need to work hand in hand in designing and implementing youth-inclusive and youth-targeted policies towards a human-centred recovery, also considering the links with other critical dimensions, such as gender (ILO and IZA 2022).

4.1. Lessons from youth policy responses in Asia and the Pacific

4.1.1. Youth-relevant policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Improving the youth NEET situation requires integrated and multilevel policy design and implementation.

Addressing the challenges of youth NEET goes beyond the issue of providing employment opportunities because it touches on education, training and skills development as well as the economic and social integration of young people. Remaining in NEET status for a prolonged period has important ramifications on the labour market opportunities, outlook, mobility and mental health of youth, ultimately risking economic and social exclusion. Recent labour market trends clearly show that the COVID-19 crisis has heightened the risks. Thus, local, regional and national government agencies, in coordination with and support from social and development partners and other multilateral organizations, have a pivotal role in offsetting the socio-economic impact of the crisis on young people and towards a sustainable and human-centred recovery.

Broad-based policy support that boosts job growth and expands decent and productive labour market opportunities for young people continues to be critical.

To counteract the unprecedented economic shock brought about by the COVID-19 crisis and continuing multiple crises in 2022, such as natural disasters, food and energy crises, many governments have intervened at the macroeconomic level by stimulating the economy and employment[10] through active fiscal policy, accommodative monetary policy and sector-specific support (ILO 2020b; ILO 2022c; ILO and IZA 2022). These measures can potentially benefit young people in the medium to long run but do not guarantee protection from the worsening of inequalities. Specific support to sectors that were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis in Asia and the Pacific through net job losses in 2020, such as accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing and construction, continues to be crucial because they employ more than 100 million young people in the region (ILO 2021b; ILO and ADB 2020). One large-scale sectoral support implemented thus far in the region is India's Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, providing liquidity assistance in the form of collateral-free and 100 per cent guarantee loans in 26 hard-hit sectors of the economy (KPMG 2020).

Strengthening the structural and institutional preparedness of government entities and other stakeholders to design, adapt and deliver youth-targeted policy measures is needed.

Government responses commonly adopt a one-size-fits-all approach that can be characterized by the implementation of universal and broad-based policies aimed to support entire populations (ILO 2022c). This can potentially overlook specific vulnerable groups, such as young people, whose needs uniquely vary from other cohorts. Countries with pre-existing youth-targeted labour market interventions and support systems have been better positioned to leverage their structural and institutional preparedness to quickly respond to the needs of youth (ILO and IZA 2022). Crafting youth NEET-specific policies requires nuanced analyses – dissecting each NEET subcomponent, understanding their situations and challenges and accounting for variations across demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, marital status, geographical location and educational attainment.

10 This was one of the pillars of ILO's Resolution at the 101st International Labour Conference in June 2012 in dealing with the youth employment crisis and of the Policy Framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

4.1.2. Lessons from implementation of active labour market programmes for youth

Governments and development partners have taken a more active role in supporting young people through active labour market programmes.

To support youth who are excluded in the labour market and not engaged in any learning activity and to prevent them from transitioning into NEET status, governments and development partners have implemented policies and initiatives primarily through active labour market programmes (ALMPs). These are geared towards the improvement of employment and income prospects of the targeted beneficiaries and include "spending on public employment services and administration, labour market training, special programmes for youth when in transition from school to work, labour market programmes to provide or promote employment for unemployed and other persons (excluding young and disabled persons) and special programmes" for youths living with a disability.[11] These interventions can be clustered into four categories: training and skills development; entrepreneurship promotion; employment services; and subsidized employment.[12] As young people face heightened risks and vulnerabilities due to the COVID-19 crisis, existing youth-sensitive labour market policies and programmes have been scaled up or adapted. Some programmes have widened their scope and coverage and introduced new youth-targeted initiatives.

Despite the expanding evidence base on ALMPs in the region, there has been limited available information on the impact of youth NEET-specific policies on labour market outcomes during the COVID-19 crisis.

Results from recent meta-analyses reveal unemployment as the most common target indicator of ALMPs. But such targets thus exclude the bulk of youth NEET who remain inactive. The findings from these systematic reviews of youth policies reveal that ALMPs typically adopt a universal approach, with broad-based interventions for the general population of the unemployed. However, as mentioned, the set of labour market constraints and socio-cultural barriers faced by youth significantly differ from other cohorts. This can be reflected by the mixed long-term impacts on youth employment outcomes of ALMPs (Kluve et al. 2017; Mawn et al. 2017). Beyond the economic welfare of the young people, there is growing evidence from other regions on the positive effects of ALMPs on the mental health and well-being of unemployed persons and other beneficiaries (Coutts et al 2014; Stuckler et al. 2009).

The effectiveness of youth-specific policy interventions primarily depends on programme components, mechanisms, design and other various contextual factors.

The implementation and the effectiveness of ALMPs largely depend on various contextual factors, such as the interaction among macroeconomic conditions and the local labour markets. These economic and social contexts shape the overall programme impact and the changes in labour market outcomes (job entry, for example) of the beneficiaries (Kluve et al. 2017). Results of the NEET trends by educational level show that the youth with low levels of education are more likely to be NEET, particularly inactive non-students.

The programme components, design and mechanisms primarily determine the duration and level of impact of a policy intervention. Effective interventions include long and intensive social support, with hands-on (classroom

11 OECD, "Active Labour Market Programmes – Glossary of Statistical Terms", OECD Statistics Portal, accessed 22 May 2022.

12 Training and skills development primarily involve activities which promote gaining of technical (trade, business, literacy and numeracy) and non-technical skills while entrepreneurship promotion initiatives include access to credit and entrepreneurial skills and other financial and technical mechanisms for businesses. On the other hand, employment services include job counselling, job search and mentoring services with placements and others forms of assistance. Subsidized employment programmes include wage subsidies and labour-intensive public employment programmes. See Kluve et al. (2017).

and work) experience (Mawn et al. 2017). Among the available impact evaluations of ALMPs for youth in Asia and the Pacific, there is limited evidence of the mechanisms or "active elements"[13] and "transmission channels" responsible for the changes in participants' labour market outcomes, job search behaviour and other indicators, such as mental health. Combined with the socio-economic and psychosocial characteristics of participants, the active elements, such as the nature of the learning materials, the quality of the facilitator and the interactive aspect of the course, have considerable influence on the targeted intervention outcomes (such as health, well-being and job search behaviour). Other active elements found to be effective in training interventions[14] are vocational, business (managerial) and financial skills training; support for financing, such as microcredit loans and grants; mentoring; and advisory services to post-programme consulting.

Group Work, or JOBS II,[15] is one relevant and comprehensive design of ALMPs that can inform future programming in the region, even though it does not target only youth. By targeting disadvantaged and jobseeking individuals, multiple trials of JOBS II in several countries have generated evidence of promising impacts on labour market outcomes and the well-being of participants (Government of the United Kingdom, Department for Work and Pensions 2020). Its recent application to the labour market in the United Kingdom, for instance, reveals that the programme equipped participants with attributes and behaviours (job search self-efficacy) that increased their likelihood of gaining future employment and short-run (after six months) improvements in well-being (such as life satisfaction, happiness and less loneliness), despite the lack of significant and direct employment impact after 12 months. Participant observation research also identified three important elements of that programme that can translate to positive intervention outcomes. These are active participation in a group context, replication of the time structure and routine of employment and the effectiveness and credibility of the group leader.[16]

What most likely will have positive labour market impacts, specifically in low- and middle-income countries, are multiple interventions and services integrated into a programme that addresses the needs of the target group. One example is the Vision Plan Programme of the Republic of Korea (box 2). A comprehensive assessment study of the Vision Plan (Kluve et al. 2017) found two important integrated design features in the effective youth policies: profiling beneficiaries and individualized follow-up and monitoring systems. Another model is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC) Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) project (box 4).

The findings of another systematic review revealed that there is "no evidence that certain types of programs, or combinations of programs, systematically outperform others …" (Kluve et al. 2019). This strongly suggests that interventions need to be contextualized, informed by labour market analysis and responsive to the evolving needs of youth and the labour market.

13 These are defined as components embedded within an intervention or course, such as the nature of the learning materials, the quality of the group leader and whether a course offers or facilitates social support and interaction with other participants.
14 These were also found to be more effective than specialized finance programmes. See Cho and Honorati (2014).
15 This is a 20-hour job search skills workshop comprising five four-hour sessions delivered over the course of a working week designed to also enhance self-efficacy, self-esteem and social assertiveness.
16 This references and other details in section 4.1.2 are drawn from Barford et al. (unpublished).

▶ Box 2: Vision Plan Programme of the Republic of Korea: A multifaceted and multilevel approach to youth NEET

Identifying the lack of a youth NEET-specific programme from the public sector, the Community Chest of Korea (United Way of Korea) introduced a pilot youth employment support programme in the Republic of Korea from 2016 to 2018. It was a nationwide initiative implemented by 11 community social welfare centres that targeted disadvantaged youth in low-income households who were recipients under the National Basic Living Security (a public assistance programme), single-parent family support recipients or people living in poor households. The participants were recruited through local community children's centres, social work offices in schools and youth counselling and welfare centres. The primary goal was to support the effective transition of youth (aged 14–24) to adulthood.

The programme had two main components: prevention and employment support. The former addressed the prevention of youths' (aged 14–19) transition into NEET status, while the latter centred on improving youths' (aged 20–24) labour market outcomes through employment and training support services. The programme recognized the varied and minimal effectiveness of active labour market programmes in improving youth labour market outcomes, which are usually fragmentary and short term, and employment-focused and thus developed and adopted a multifaceted integrated approach to the youth NEET problem. It had interventions at three levels:

- Individual level: The participants were provided with vocational education and training, psychological services and emotional support, using case management and individual service plans as the basis. For those at the latter stage of the transition (20–24 years of age), more specific career-oriented measures were provided, such as advanced school enrolment or vocational training completion.
- Family level: With a focus on improving parenting skills and enhancing family functions, activities included coaching and training methods, financial support (resource contacts and job support) and social activities (family camps).
- Community level: To engage the community and establish strong partnerships, the programme built up networks of various institutions, such as local welfare agencies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and youth organizations, through joint events.

Throughout the three-year pilot programme, 1,780 young people participated, with 866 of them aged 20–24 years. The average duration of participation was around 21.5 months. A recent impact evaluation study collected survey data on programme participants and non-participants in all communities for all three years. Using a difference-in-difference method, it examined the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the participants' jobseeking behaviour and probability of being NEET. It found that the intention to find a job increased to 8.3 per cent, relative to non-participants over the course of the programme. Moreover, participants were less likely to become NEET, lower by 6.6 per cent than non-participants in the same reference period.

Source: Park et al. 2020.

4.2. Considerations for a human-centred recovery inclusive of young people

When young people transition into or remain in NEET status, they are undermining their future employment and earning prospects and heightening the risk of economic and social exclusion. The COVID-19 crisis hit labour markets hard and resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of youth NEET, with most of the increase due to inactivity. Even prior to the crisis, the youth NEET situation in the region was largely driven by female youth who were outside the labour market due to personal or family-related reasons. The glaring differences in the NEET trends across cohorts disaggregated by sex, age, marital status, geographical location and education indicate the need to account for these distinctions in the design and implementation of youth NEET-specific policy interventions. In other words, youth-specific policy measures, particularly in the labour market recovery phase, need to be carefully crafted and targeted to offset specific constraints.

In the remainder of this section, policy considerations that can influence youth NEET outcomes are offered. Each policy area is supported with examples of practices applied by countries in the region that can influence NEET outcomes. In alignment with the ILO global call to action for a human-centred recovery (ILO 2021c), the youth NEET policy responses of national governments should include:

- tackling the barriers to gender equality;
- boosting skills development and alignment with labour market demand;
- advancing youth entrepreneurship and enterprise development;
- strengthening labour market information systems and employment services for youth; and
- ensuring meaningful youth engagement.

4.2.1. Tackling barriers to gender equality

Labour market constraints of young women need to be addressed by breaking cultural barriers through economic and social empowerment. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the fiscal and economic measures to stimulate economies have generally lacked gender sensitivity (ILO 2022c), as documented by a recent United Nations report (UN Women and UNDP 2021). This is alarming because young women accounted for 85.6 per cent of the inactive non-students in Asia and the Pacific in 2019 (or latest year available; see annex table A2). This trend was even higher in South Asia, where nine in every ten inactive non-students were young women. They also comprised 88.1 per cent of young women who cited personal or family-related reasons for inactivity. Their reasons included burden of household and care work, unwanted or early pregnancy, gender-based violence and social exclusion. Trend analysis provides guidance on whom to target in the design of youth employment policies. For instance, young women aged 20–24 and married, who are more likely to be NEET, along with other cohorts, require dedicated interventions to improve the overall youth NEET outcomes.

The COVID-19 crisis also heavily affected young women because they are overrepresented in occupations in the hardest-hit sectors. Beyond economic factors, the containment measures compounded the labour market risks of women, which include unpaid care work, domestic violence and unwanted pregnancy. Thus, gender-sensitive youth policies are critical to avoid the further economic and social exclusion of young women.

Break social and cultural barriers against young women by addressing gender-specific issues

Even prior to the crisis, young women faced additional labour market constraints, such as unpaid household and care work (ILO 2021b), gender-based violence (UNFPA 2019) and unwanted pregnancy. These were compounded by the containment measures at the peak of the crisis, which reinforced the importance of care and the notion that the care economy and economic and social inequalities are deeply intertwined. There are multiple interventions that can address these causes.

Despite some progress in care leave policies and care services over the past decade, significant gaps remain in terms of availability, access, adequacy and quality of leave policies and care services (ILO 2022d), as reflected by the continuous reliance on domestic workers to cover household and care work. Thus, considerable investments in transformative care policy packages, aligned with the ILO 5R Framework for Decent Care Work and the Global Alliance for Care and other national and international initiatives, are crucial to alleviate the increased care burden, particularly on young and married women. Adopting a lifelong approach, these care policy packages can include care leave, breastfeeding entitlements, childcare and long-term care services for all workers with family responsibilities.

Acknowledging that care leave is a universal human and labour right and that maternity and parental protection are public goods and collective responsibilities, a comprehensive review of laws and policy measures on care leave is warranted to ensure its adherence to the requirements of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) in terms of duration and adequacy, among others. Similarly, using the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) as a guide, countries can review their existing care policy measures and laws and implement interventions that enable the provision of adequate, appropriate, flexible and affordable care services.

Developing these policy measures requires national extensive social dialogue with government agencies, employers and workers and their representative organizations and multistakeholder consultations with the private sector, civil society, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders (such as academia and philanthropy). There are massive economic benefits estimated from these transformative and nationally designed care policy packages. For instance, 299 million jobs can potentially be created globally by 2035, wherein 96 million will be direct jobs in childcare, 136 million in long-term care and 67 million indirect jobs in non-care sectors. An estimated 84 per cent of these new jobs could be formal, and 78 per cent could be held by women (ILO 2022d).

The recent ILO *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in Transforming Futures for Young People* (ILO 2022b) report highlights that investments in the care sectors support youth in four aspects: "(a) by creating decent work opportunities, they improve young people's employment prospects, particularly those of young women, since care sectors are heavily feminized; (b) by providing care services, particularly for young children, they make it easier for young women and men with family responsibilities to enter and remain in the labour force; (c) by expanding education and training opportunities, and by catering to young people's healthcare needs, they promote the well-being of young people; and (d) as a result of all the above, they help to lower youth NEET rates, especially among young women".

Gender-based violence against women refers to any act of violence "that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".[17] Within Asia and the Pacific, there is significant variation across countries in terms of the average proportion of women who report having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, from as low as 15 per cent in Bhutan, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines, to 68 per cent in Kiribati and Papua New Guinea (UNFPA 2019). There are also direct economic costs from violence against women in terms of loss of income, children missing school and absenteeism across countries in the region.[18] The effects of domestic violence can extend to workplaces, which have adverse impacts not only on victims' health and well-being but also on work attendance, productivity and security. This has been revealed by multiple surveys carried out in Australia, Canada and the Philippines under the Australian Safe at Home, Safe at Work project.[19] Thus, there is a need to strengthen the implementation of legislative and social measures addressing violence against women. Governments are called on to ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)[20] and craft laws and policy measures geared towards preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work.

17 UN, "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women", 1993.
18 UN Women Asia and the Pacific, "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls".
19 ILO, "Introduction to Gender-based Violence in the World of Work", Briefing 3.1, undated.
20 The Convention was adopted in June 2019 and became effective 25 June 2021. It is the first international treaty to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Unwanted or early pregnancy also deters the labour market participation of young women. Thus, provision of reproductive health services to young women can contribute to increasing the engagement of women not only in the labour market but also in learning activities.

Promote economic empowerment of women through skills development and labour market programmes

Economic empowerment of women can be defined as "a fundamental aspect of promoting gender equality" and "vital to enhancing business competitiveness, fuelling inclusive economic growth and building equitable societies".[21] Policies that are carefully targeted towards promoting women's economic empowerment can increase the labour market participation of young women. One relevant intervention is the influential role of recruitment services in rural areas in India (box 3).

▶ Box 3: Role of recruitment services in employment: Experimental evidence from rural India

In India, around half (50.6 per cent) of all young women in rural areas were out of school or training and with no work in 2019. In comparison, young women and young men in urban areas had a youth NEET rate of 39.1 per cent and 14.2 per cent, respectively. Among female youth NEET, almost all (96.4 per cent) were inactive or outside of the labour force, which is primarily attributed to personal or family-related reasons, such as early pregnancy, marriage and care burdens. The rapid growth in the business process outsourcing industry, in the context of rapid technological changes and regulatory reforms in India, is providing labour market opportunities for rural women because it boosts demand for educated female workers.

Using a randomized field evaluation, Jensen (2012) randomly selected 160 villages from a list of rural districts located 50–150 kilometres outside of Delhi (in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh states) that have relatively low awareness and access to business process outsourcing jobs due to high recruitment costs. These villages were equally assigned to a treatment group or those with the presence of a recruiter (eight in total), and a control group without a recruiter. In each of the 160 villages in 2003 and 2006, 20 households were interviewed using a baseline survey and follow-up survey, respectively, for a total of 3,200 households. The analysis focused on women aged 15–21 at the baseline.

The study found that improved employment opportunities translated to better employment outcomes, increased enrolment in training courses and delays in marriage and pregnancy among young women. Young women (aged 18–24) from villages with a recruiter were more likely to work in a business process outsourcing job (4.6 percentage points higher) or outside the home (2.4 percentage points higher) than young women in villages without a recruiter present. Their willingness to work before marriage (13 percentage points higher) also increased. Also, they had a better likelihood of increasing their stock of human capital through enrolment in computer or English language courses or in formal school (5.5 percentage points higher) and access to better nutrition. They also were less likely to marry or give birth at an early age than young women in the non-recruiter villages.

21 Investing in Women, "About Us", undated.

There has been widespread conscious and unconscious bias against women's employment and career progression in traditionally male-dominated occupations. This is also reflected by young women's high take-up of sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) courses that does not translate to careers in the same fields (Dahlquist 2018). Thus, similar to BRAC's STAR project in Bangladesh (box 4), which led to breaking the stigma against non-traditional jobs (such as graphic design) for women, increasing the engagement of women in higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes can be pursued, particularly in non-traditional trades and in STEM-related occupations or professions. One example is the Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Programme in the Philippines. The programme provides "critical soft and technical STEM-related skills, employability and leadership trainings coupled with targeted mentorship to help women gain quality employment and advancement opportunities in STEM-related jobs".[22] With a focus on the information technology and business process management sector, the programme established partnerships with sectoral business associations, private sector firms, TVET institutions, social partners and public ministries and agencies.

Countries in the region can also establish partnerships with development partners and build initiatives similar to Australia's Investing in Women programme, which promotes women's economic empowerment in South-East Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines and Viet Nam. The programme aims to establish workplace gender equality, impact investment for female-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and influence gender norms through innovative approaches.[23] In the context of limited fiscal space across economies, conducting an assessment of fiscal stabilization and stimulus packages from a gender-equality perspective through the use of the ILO and UN Women tool, How to Assess Fiscal Stimulus Packages from a Gender Equality Perspective, is a prudent approach to inform further policymaking (ILO and UN Women 2021).

4.2.2. Boosting skills development and alignment with labour market demand

To address high levels of inactivity, youth employability and engagement can be fostered by integrating supply- and demand-side interventions through effective and innovative education, training and skills development initiatives.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, as previously noted, inactive non-students accounted for a substantial share of youth NEET across all countries and subregions in Asia and the Pacific, with young women comprising the majority. The crisis further pushed millions of young people into NEET status, particularly into inactivity in 2020 and continuing into 2021. Disaggregated youth NEET data allow us to understand the drivers of this inactivity and highlight two types of reasons, namely labour market and personal or family related. These reasons have important gender-sensitive components that need to be highlighted.

In general, discouragement and other labour market reasons (skills mismatch, limited work opportunities and lack of infrastructure) are usually cited by young men for inactivity, while young women attribute personal or family-related reasons. Skills gaps can be bridged by improving the national and local education and skills development systems. This can be supported by shifting to a lifelong learning approach in TVET, transforming TVET content and delivery that leverages the use of technologies, moving towards a demand-driven TVET model and introducing dynamic, up-to-date and inclusive digital training programmes. Various recommendations to encourage labour force participation among young people that reflect these nuances are discussed here.

22 ILO, "Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Program in the Philippines: Fact Sheet", 2019.
23 Investing in Women, "About Us".

Shift to a lifelong learning approach in TVET and enhance work-based training.

To effectively facilitate the transition of young people in a rapidly changing world of work, including through the various technological transformations (such as digitalization) and changes in work structures (such as teleworking and platform work), TVET systems can adopt a lifelong learning approach through agile, flexible and responsive skills provision. Modularization of designs can address the usual constraint of young people in terms of the length and rigidity of training programmes. It will allow for flexibility in acquiring skills (such as technical and entrepreneurial) that are in demand in the market and eventually encourage young people to acquire further training and continue to accumulate human capital. Aside from technical skills, integrating core social and emotional skills, cognitive and metacognitive skills, basic digital skills and basic skills for green jobs, adhering to the ILO global framework on core skills for life and work in the twenty-first century in training curriculums is crucial for youth to adapt to the dynamic labour market environment (ILO 2021d). Integrating these skills in enterprise-based training or apprenticeships, which are associated with higher employability when compared with other modalities, can further improve labour market outcomes.

Various technical skills interventions conducted and rigorously evaluated throughout the region, specifically in Afghanistan (Lyall et al. 2020), Bangladesh (Das 2021; Raihan and Shonchoy 2016), Cambodia (Chandarany 2019), India (Maitra and Mani 2017; Chakravorty and Bedi 2019), Republic of Korea (Park et al. 2020), Mongolia (Alzúa et al. 2021), Nepal (Chakravarty et al. 2016), New Zealand (Dixon and Crichton 2016) and Thailand (Chongcharoentanawat et al. 2022), show mixed results. Most of the evaluated short-term training programmes in these countries led to limited improvements in labour market outcomes. One exception is BRAC's on-the-job STAR training project in Bangladesh, which targets disadvantaged youth and was found to have positive short-term impacts in terms of increased labour market participation, hours worked and earnings (box 4).

Lessons also can be drawn from Australia's Transition to Work programme, implemented since 2016 and updated in 2018 and 2020, which delivers employment services and other forms of work-readiness initiatives, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, to youth aged 15–24. The programme has translated to positive labour market outcomes among participants and a high level of satisfaction for employers, which is attributed to multiple features. The programme settings, such as smaller caseloads, foster full engagement of caseworkers with participants and lead to participant-centred service delivery based on their feedback and participant-led servicing. Demand-side features, such as upfront payment to service providers, allow for financing of young participants' course access and licenses, interview clothing and work uniforms and supplemental travel costs.

Another intervention element is the strategic use of rewards and recognition to engage participants and to pursue collaboration rather than competition among providers. Finally, the consistent and widespread use of a broad range of assessment tools and dedicated case managers, coupled with increases in the hiring of specialist staff, sustained the gains from the pilot implementation of the programme (Government of Australia, Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021). To facilitate sustained economic and labour market recovery, Australia also introduced a wage subsidy programme in 2020, called Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements, which supports businesses and group training organizations to take on new apprentices and trainees and build a pipeline of skilled workers for sustained economic recovery.[24]

24 Victoria State Government, "Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements", undated.

▶ Box 4: BRAC's Skills Training for Advancing Resources in Bangladesh: A socially inclusive apprenticeship model

The Bangladesh labour market has been characterized by low levels of labour market participation, high youth NEET rates, mostly inactive female non-students and high levels of informality. To tackle these challenges, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) implemented the Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) project. It was piloted in 63 branches of seven divisions of Bangladesh in 2012–14 and then expanded to 93 branches in 2015.[a]

The targeted beneficiaries of STAR are young people (aged 14–18) who are school drop-outs or part of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities (aged 15–21 and usually comprising 10 per cent of total trainees), orphans, children of sex workers and the Hijra transgender community who suffer from discrimination in and out of the workplace. Participants are paired together and undergo hands-on-training five days a week for six months under a master craftsperson (such as experienced shop owner or specialized trade worker) for learning a trade based on the needs of the local economy. The project also combines practical training with classroom-based soft-skills training once a week on financial literacy, market assessment, English language skills and knowledge on health-related issues, such as HIV and the negative impacts of substance abuse. It takes a gender-responsive approach that promotes equal access to training for young men and women for jobs in stigmatized or non-traditional sectors or occupations.

The findings from a recent impact evaluation study (Das 2021) revealed that the project has generated positive short-term labour market outcomes among participants. In particular, the on-the-job training increased labour market participation (by 16 percentage points), hours worked (by 34 per cent) and earnings (by 23 percent) after six months. In the long run, the sustained effect of the programme only applies to higher earnings primarily due to the shift from low-quality to more secure and sustainable forms of employment. This impact varies across sex cohorts, wherein young women have tended to shift from casual work to self-employment and young men to wage employment. One important design feature of the STAR project is its direct transition from internship to employment in the same firm, similar to apprenticeship models, as reflected by significant increases in wage employment. This has resulted in the prolonged impact on earnings of participants.

Aside from the economic benefits of the programme, the intervention also has raised household welfare, enhanced empowerment, improved self-confidence and prevented substance abuse (Rahman et al. 2017). Household welfare is proxied by food expenditures and durable asset holdings. Youth empowerment was measured in terms of their decision-making on household issues, their own lives and travelling outside of the country and city for work. Self-confidence is measured in terms of their willingness to start a new business, manage a business and bargain with buyers and sellers. Also, there is evidence that women have been employed in non-traditional jobs or those that are usually stigmatized against Bangladeshi girls, such as graphic design.[b]

a BRAC, BRAC Skills Development Programme's (SDP) Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) Project, 2016.
b BRAC's contribution to the Expert Group Meeting on Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All, hosted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development (8–11 May 2017), United Nations, New York.

Harness technologies to digitally transform TVET design and delivery

The COVID-19 crisis abruptly disrupted education and training systems across the region and throughout the world due to the widespread closure of education and training institutions (ADB 2021b; EIAP and ILO 2021; ILO 2021e). This increased the number of young people not engaged in any form of education, training or skills development programmes and resulted in significant learning losses, which can lead to lower productivity of the future workforce (Hanushek and Woessmann 2020). At the same time, new opportunities and challenges arose for the TVET sector, in particular, to harness advanced technologies[25] to digitalize training systems and support inclusive remote learning (ILO 2021f).

With the increased adoption of technology, artificial intelligence, automation and cyber-based business operations, ICT-enhanced training and skills provision can promote inclusiveness and improve the quality of training content and delivery (Yian and Park 2018). For instance, the application of virtual reality and augmented reality to provide authentic and simulated learning in courses and programmes enables practical learning in a simulated workplace context while eliminating the need for expensive equipment that can be damaged as well as the physical risk to trainees. The Online Lifelong Education Institute in the Republic of Korea is one example of this innovation (box 5). Another is the Institute of Technical Education in Singapore, which offers two types of immersive technologies: 3D virtual reality and 3D augmented reality. One application of the 3D virtual reality system is a marine and offshore technology course that uses iCube technology and enables students to practise their skills on a simulated oil rig platform without the dangerous weather conditions (Yian and Park 2018).

▶ Box 5: Online Lifelong Education Institute of KOREATECH: A model of authentic and simulated learning

The Korea University of Technology and Education (KOREATECH) has revised its education model to respond to Industry 4.0 advanced technologies and promote (i) competency innovation in its curriculum reform; (ii) TVET innovations via online lifelong education and offline lifelong education through its Human Resources Development Institute; and (iii) innovation activities for university-industry cooperation (Park 2018). Its curriculum reform has centred on incorporating two core competencies: problem-solving and lifelong learning. It has introduced topics in the fields of smart factories, smart vehicles, drones, smart energy, the Internet of Things, big data, smart-city design and IT service design. Innovations via online lifelong education have been carried out by the Online Lifelong Education Institute (OLEI).

OLEI, within KOREATECH, developed into a hub for online vocational training with specializations in technology and engineering, adopting new technologies to implement interactive and experiential e-learning practices. Funded by the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labour and in collaboration with around 230 small and medium-sized enterprises, OLEI has developed and offered more than 200 online courses for free to industrial workers and jobseekers on mechanics, electronics, mechatronics, ICT, design, materials, architecture and chemistry (Yian and Park 2018). The OLEI administrators developed virtual training content using simulators, emulators and virtual reality (and augmented reality) software. Specialized ICT allows students to learn how to handle the different types of equipment (such as macro-sized and ultra-mini tools and other expensive equipment) and how to react to various emergency situations at work while remaining safe from dangerous work situations. One example is the safety accident prevention training for plastic moulding test injection, which allows participants to learn from case studies about accidents that can occur during injection moulding (An 2016).

Launched in April 2015, the online platform offers students flexible access to certificate and non-certificate courses for lifelong education and a market for small and medium-sized enterprises to share online content and an academic credit bank.

25 These include ubiquitous computing, collaboration technologies, extended reality, artificial intelligence and blockchain.

Another potential of ICT-aided learning is its ability to make flexible lifelong learning more accessible to a wider community and also individualize learning to support trainees with learning difficulties. This is exemplified by the Challenger Institute of Technology in Australia, which created an online version of its Certificate II in General Education for Adults. The training institution applied constructivist pedagogies and individualized learning outputs and products in the design of the programme, with critical and reflective practices as part of the core (Yian and Park 2018).

Despite their potential for promoting inclusivity, these initiatives are challenged by the persistent digital divide. Thus, investments in ICT infrastructure coupled with strong partnerships between training institutions and employers, and ensuring access for disadvantaged youth are crucial to fully harness the benefits from these transformational initiatives.

Introduce up-to-date digital skills training programmes and support job creation in the digital economy through strategic partnerships with private and public institutions

The COVID-19 crisis accelerated the demand for technology adoption and digital skills. Moving forward, participation of young people in up-to-date, inclusive digital skills training can improve their employability and help them navigate the future of work. For instance, the Republic of Korea has implemented policies geared towards the digital transformation of young people. The Government plans to foster future-oriented individuals in the field of new digital technologies during 2021–25. Part of the Korean New Deal strategy, known as K-Digital Training, is a training course for new digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data and application technologies (fintech, cloud and smart manufacturing), that started in November 2020. Targeting vulnerable youth, such as jobseekers with limited access to ICT services, the K-Digital Credit is a training programme that provides online remote education in elementary, intermediate digital and new technologies, such as programming languages, data analysis and the digital economy. In addition to a training subsidy from the Government, trainees receive an allowance.[26] On the demand side, the implementation of the Digital Jobs Programme for the Youth (in July 2020) subsidized labour costs of up to 1.8 million Korean won and indirect labour costs of 100,000 won per month for six months to SMEs that hire young people in IT-related positions, such as content planning and big data analysis.[27]

While the focus of these interventions centres on subsidizing and implementing digital skills and jobs programmes, national governments can build partnerships with the private sector by leveraging existing and open learning platforms and resources. In an effort to upskill and reskill displaced Filipino workers to prepare them for in-demand jobs in the fields of customer service, project management and data analysis, for example, the private sector organizations Microsoft, LinkedIn and GitHub joined forces in the Philippines to provide access to digital skills training courses.[28]

Transition towards an industry-led and demand-driven TVET model through revamped industry engagement and participation

Obtaining a higher and formal qualification creates better labour market opportunities for young people, particularly in low-income and lower-middle-income countries in the region where there is significant oversupply of low-skilled workers with a primary education or persisting skill shortages for medium- to high-skill occupations (Matsumoto and Bhula 2018). Thus, developing and implementing enhanced mechanisms for effective employer and industry participation is important for involving the private sector in anticipating labour demand and skills needs and in designing higher education and training curriculums. Building strong and sustainable partnerships can take on various forms depending on what is most suitable in the national context, such as the creation of an industry advisory board for training institutions or forming a sector skills council. The TVET model of Australia,

26 Ministry of Employment and Labor, "Vocational Competency Development". See also Inclusive Korea.
27 Youth Job Creation Support project.
28 Microsoft, "Over 150,000 People in the Philippines Acquire Digital Skills During COVID-19", 21 April 2021.

SkillsFuture Singapore and the National Skills Development Corporation of India provide relevant lessons on private sector engagement that countries can leverage.

The implementation of TVET in Australia is primarily driven by strong partnerships among government agencies, TVET institutions and industry representatives (NSDC 2020). A council composed of Australian provincial and territory ministers for industry and skills, the Council of Australian Governments and the Australian Industry and Skills Committee spearheads the sector. The Future Economy Council, which is an important stakeholder in the SkillsFuture initiative of Singapore, comprises members from the Government, industry, unions and educational and training institutions.

Finally, a public–private partnership model can be pursued to strengthen links between industry and training, following that of India's National Skill Development Council, which builds relevant models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives. Sectoral road maps can be developed as part of a national skills and strategic framework by using the best practices from these global benchmarks.

4.2.3. Strengthening labour market information systems and employment services for youth

Lack of information on current and future labour market opportunities and on the skill set of the labour force are key barriers to labour market participation and employment. This is especially critical for young jobseekers and new labour market entrants in the context of rapidly evolving labour market situations in times of crises because they compete with more experienced older workers and peers for limited work opportunities. This is more pronounced among inactive young men who cite more of these constraints for their inactivity than young women. Regardless of age and sex cohorts, these challenges have led to high levels of skills mismatch among the youth, particularly in digital and technical skills, and may have further implications for them in occupations that are at risk of being disrupted or transformed by advanced technologies amid evolving labour market. Thus, well-functioning labour market information systems and effective employment facilitation services have important roles in the uncertain labour market recovery because they provide the necessary reliable, timely and accurate data to make informed decisions and adapt policy directions.

Enhance labour market information systems for effective diagnostics and forecasting

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated global data inequalities. But countries with a strong labour market information system and support structures were better positioned to conduct timely and quality diagnostics (ILO 2022e). Specifically, a recent ILO global survey (Discenza and Walsh 2021) revealed that countries with regularly conducted Labour Force Surveys and those that already used a combination of face-to-face and remote surveying methods were less likely to suffer from disruptions in data collection. Another identified gap is the ability of national statistical offices to work from home and to sustain new data collection approaches (such as rapid phone surveys) during a crisis (UNDESA and World Bank 2020). Technical and financial support are needed to facilitate the integration of electronic and remote data collection and modernization of related processes and infrastructure. This puts low- and lower-middle-income countries in the region and those with underdeveloped statistical systems at a disadvantage in terms of important labour market assessments in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collaboration efforts of development partners with national statistical offices provide relevant lessons in maximizing the technical and financial resources available in collecting data and performing diagnostics amid issues in data collection during a crisis. One example is the World Bank's COVID-19 High-Frequency Household Monitoring Survey[29] with modules on labour and income, developed by working with national statistical offices. Both sides benefit from the collaboration: Researchers gain local knowledge of existing national structures and data collection while national statistical offices gain exposure to novel data collection and modalities that can be integrated into their system (ILO 2022e).

29 See World Bank's interactive COVID-19 Household Monitoring Dashboard.

Even prior to the crisis, information gaps persisted when youth jobseekers continued to lack labour market information on the skills demanded by employers and when employers had limited knowledge on the skillset of jobseekers. Thus, a well-functioning labour market information system that provides accurate and timely information and services is critical for facilitating informed decision-making among stakeholders, especially in the labour market recovery phase.

An integral part of a labour market information system is the collection of youth labour market statistics. However, there are still gaps in data collection in the region. There is a need to collect and integrate youth NEET statistics. For this report, microdata of Labour Force Surveys from 32 countries, available in an ILO repository, form the basis of data and analysis presented.

One broad component of a labour market information system is skills anticipation, which refers to "activities to assess future skills needs in the labour market in a strategic way, using consistent and systematic methods" (ILO 2015b).[30] Focused on providing guidance, preparedness and flexibility to stakeholders, forward-looking approaches can aid in preventing costly skills mismatches (ILO 2008), particularly among young people, and in designing future-oriented training policies. Countries in the region can utilize various ILO tools for skills needs analysis and anticipation and learn from existing applications by other countries, such as the ILO InSIGHT Phase 2 project and Skills for Prosperity project with the Philippines' Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Together, the ILO and TESDA piloted the Skills Needs Anticipation methodology with implementation of a Workplace Skills Survey in the information technology and business process management and the construction sectors.

Strengthen existing employment services and create new and accessible alternatives

Similar to the digital transformation of the TVET system, the COVID-19 crisis presented new opportunities for innovation of and challenges in the content and modalities of public employment services (PES). As PES digitalization accelerated amid the crisis, the transition became relatively easier for those with prior technology adoption and a clear digital transformation strategy. Flexibility in reorganizing operations and partnerships also allows PES to cope with the fluctuating demand for critical services (such as processing of unemployment insurance claims, referrals to welfare support and matching services to sectors) (ILO 2020c).

Harnessing technological advances has significantly improved PES coverage and delivery. Digital technology has enabled the coverage expansion of employment services, specifically in low- and middle-income economies.[31] It also has improved the efficiency of internal operations of employment services by automating routine tasks, such as certain administrative tasks and answering routine questions and using the saved time for enhanced and personalized support (ILO 2021g).

A recent survey of PES in 69 countries found that a third of them were already offering artificial intelligence-driven solutions to jobseekers and employers while all had the capacity to provide basic services online.[32] The delivery of intermediation services and other labour market programmes have been moved online or have been provided remotely (such as by telephone) (ILO 2020c). In 2020, digitalized PES also served various vulnerable groups, which included youth, people with disabilities, workers older than 50, women as single parents, migrant workers, refugees and displaced populations, minorities and Indigenous Peoples.[33] The survey found that young people are at the forefront of accessing PES digitally, even in low-income countries, and nine in every ten PES have youth-friendly services.

A form of PES targeting youth is career guidance services, which seeks out a younger age cohort, often those who are still in school. This is a critical stage in the education and skills development of youth because they will continue to acquire education or training, look for jobs and gain employment or even transition into NEET status.

30 This is often interchanged with such terms as "early identification of skills needs", "skills needs assessment" or "forecasting".
31 Nearly nine in ten surveyed PES in these countries leverage technology investment to increase transparency and make services accessible to more people. See ILO (2020b).
32 ILO, "ILO Maps Out How Public Employment Services (PES) Are Using Technology to Improve Service Delivery" (infographic), 2020.
33 Ibid.

This is more pronounced among young women, who face additional socio-cultural barriers, such as relatively early pregnancy and unpaid care work.

The rapid advancements in communication technologies have paved the way for the delivery of digital career guidance services. It now has the potential to effectively integrate career guidance support in skills development, lifelong learning and employability measures, support real-time and face-to-face work interaction among individuals and groups (ILO 2021c). Also, it can expand the coverage of these services to vulnerable groups, such as those who face mobility restrictions or live in remote areas (including rural youth who have relatively high NEET rates). Australia's MyFuture provides important insights on how to support youths in career planning and development. It is a one-stop shop online platform not only for students, teachers and career practitioners but also for parents and caregivers. Students can learn more about themselves through profiling, explore work opportunities and apply their knowledge while teachers and parents gain access to several resources that will help them guide their students or children in their career paths.

Despite the steady growth and promising aspects of digital PES, there are still prevailing constraints, especially among at-risk groups who lack the financial and technical resources to access these platforms. Access to ICT devices and services remain expensive for disadvantaged youth who also lack the digital skills necessary to use the services and are located in geographically isolated areas with poor ICT infrastructure (ILO 2021g). Thus, to promote labour market inclusion, PES need to innovate on how to extend these services towards target groups, which can include providing free internet access to targeted jobseekers, using the power of social media and developing basic digital skills through training. For instance, with a focus on young women, the PES in India, in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Career Counselling and Gautam Buddha University, conducted the first Virtual Mega Internship and Placement Drive to attract young graduates from different social and economic backgrounds to new and emerging jobs in the tech sector (ILO 2021g).

Another intervention is face-to-face support by a counsellor. Analysis from Mwasikakata (2019) suggests that investments in PES include "adopting a customized and optimal combination of digital and personal counselling and mediation services" and using technologies to improve monitoring and coordination with other service providers. A recent impact evaluation study (Dhia et al. 2022) of the French online platform, Bob Emploi, found that it has had no impact on time spent looking for a job, search scope or self-reported well-being or on any employment outcome in the short or medium term. This strongly suggests that to fully harness the potential of technology as an enabler for service delivery, an in-depth understanding of youth jobseekers' informational and behavioural challenges still has a central role in the effective design of online platforms.[34]

Amid the context of technological advances, physical platforms, such as PES offices and job fairs, are still crucial for facilitating labour market access and transitions among youth who lack access to digital devices and services in far-flung areas. Article 6 of the ILO Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88) mandates that employment services should be well-organized to ensure effective recruitment and placement of workers. Box 3 discusses the impact of recruitment services on the labour market, education and social outcomes in the context of young women in rural India.

Similar to other employment services, job fairs aim to reduce job search costs for jobseekers and employers, encourage better skills matching and provide hands-on experience looking and applying for jobs. Unlike other recruitment services, job fairs expose participants to more general information on labour market opportunities and concrete steps in acquiring formal wage employment. Also, a job fair is usually a low-intensity treatment that only lasts a few days and targets a broad population of potential labour market entrants (various types of jobseekers). A 2015 impact evaluation study (Beam 2015) found that attendance in job fairs by rural youth in the Philippines translated into large increases in formal sector employment and jobseeking behaviour outside the municipality where it took place (box 6). To limit COVID-19 transmission since 2020, virtual job fairs have been organized and conducted across countries and subregions. For instance, the Let's Get To Work campaign

34 A.B. Dhia, "The Sobering Story of the Website That Attempted to Bring Unemployment Down" (blog), Centre for Economic Policy Research, 14 June 2022.

by SEEK Asia[35] launched a virtual job fair wherein both IT employers and candidates from Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Hong Kong (China) interact via mobile and computer-based platforms.[36]

▶ Box 6: Job fairs in a rural setting: Evidence from Bulan Municipality in southern Philippines

In the Philippines, job fairs have been used as a common tool by government agencies, non-government organizations and other stakeholders to improve access to domestic formal employment and overseas employment. Public Employment Service Offices (PESOS) spearhead employment promotion efforts, such as job fairs, across each municipality. A recent study (Villanueva 2020) found that the presence of institutionalized PESOs is significantly associated with lower regional unemployment and critical at the municipal level and in regions outside the capital city.

Through the study, a job fair was conducted in March 2011 in Bulan, the largest municipality in Sorsogon Province. The fair was attended by a domestic business process outsourcing firm and five international recruitment agencies. The firm was looking to recruit call centre agents, search engine optimization assessors and copywriters while the recruitment agencies offered low- and medium-skill job positions, such as domestic helpers, factory workers and service sector workers, which included waiters, food service crew, cashiers, salespersons, construction workers, skilled trades workers, caretakers, office assistants, receptionists, cleaners and security guards (Beam 2015).

The study implemented a randomized encouragement design by randomly giving men and women aged 20–35 modest vouchers, conditional on attending the job fair, which successfully increased attendance by 39.1 percentage points, compared with the control group (no voucher) rate of 13.1 per cent. The study affirmed two intended effects of the job fair: recruitment from participating employers and gaining information about jobseekers' labour market prospects domestically and internationally.

In the medium run (ten months after the fair), the impact evaluation study found that attending a job fair did not necessarily facilitate direct matches with a job fair employer but translated to large increases in reported formal sector employment (from self-employment) and updated labour market perceptions as reflected by jobseeking behaviour outside the rural area and even outside the region. Specifically, fair attendance led to a 10.6 percentage-point increase in reported formal sector employment in the medium run. Similar interventions that have improved the youth transition to formal employment are associated with significant positive labour market outcomes (as compared with other indicators, such as employment, earnings or hours worked) (Escudero et al. 2017) and have resulted in greater chances of gaining formal employment later (Chacaltana et al. 2021; Dema, Chacaltana and Diaz 2015; ILO 2015c).

This suggests the powerful influence of gaining labour market information on prospects and practical application of job seeking efforts. This affirmed the findings of another study (Abebe et al. 2017) on job fairs in Ethiopia, where a field experiment was conducted that revealed that job matches were also limited but participants (employers and attendees) updated their labour market prospects and invested more in formal job search after the job fair.

35 This is an extension of SEEK, which combines two online employment marketplaces in Asia, jobsDB and JobStreet, which aim to facilitate the matching and communication of job opportunities between candidates and hirers, with the aim to improve the lives of millions across Asia through comprehensive platforms.

36 Bloomberg, "SEEK Asia Launches 'Let's Get To Work' to Empower Job Seekers", 8 December 2021.

4.2.4. Advancing youth entrepreneurship and enterprise development

Scaling up enterprise support and expanding the scope of community-based training in rural areas can help address the labour market challenges of youth. Rural youth in the region have had significantly higher rates of being NEET than urban youth, with wider geographical gaps among young women than the young men. Further decomposition of the NEET situation reveals that inactivity is more pronounced than unemployment. Recent studies (Briones 2019; Phillips and Pereznieto 2019) have determined that effective rural youth interventions in Asia and the Pacific and across the world can be broadly grouped into access to finance and enterprise support, education and skills development and access to land.

Improve access to finance and provide enterprise support

Financial instruments, such as access to social funds and microcredit operations, were identified as effective job creators when integrated into community demand-driven interventions (Briones 2019). Examples of youth enterprise assistance include the Youth Entrepreneur Loan Project (YELP) of Grameen Bank and the Youth Social Entrepreneur Initiative (YSEI). YELP provides flexible loans to young borrowers who will start businesses, combined with learning and training activities. It has led to the creation of businesses in trading, computer services and training, clinics and health care, poultry, livestock and fisheries, phone and fax centres and fashion houses. YSEI provides start-up support to youth aged 19–30 in Asia in the form of financial assistance of up to US$15,000; development knowledge; tools for social entrepreneurship; and technical consultancy through mentorship and access to diverse networks. The initiative has been implemented in India, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Timor-Leste.

The COVID-19 crisis disproportionately has affected micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), particularly youth-led businesses. Prior to and even more pronounced in the COVID-19 crisis, youth lacked access to credit opportunities. Thus, in Indonesia, the Government has implemented a subsidy programme under the National Economic Recovery (PEN) plan for MSMEs, which provides financial assistance (loan interest payments and cash flow issues) and a series of subsidy layers based on loan category, from ultra-micro business loans to SMEs to loans among cooperatives, farmers and fishers. For young entrepreneurs, the targeted funding component of the programme has been an integral part of the crisis response, according to a UNICEF survey (Youth Co:Lab 2020). The Republic of Korea also scaled up its support to young people by increasing the budgets of existing youth employment policies, such as Additional Youth Employment Subsidy Programme for SMEs, among others. In May and June 2021, two subsidy programmes, Special Subsidy for Youth Recruitment and the Subsidy for Youth Recruitment by Promising Companies, were introduced to encourage employers in SMEs to hire young workers.

Improve the accessibility of education and training in rural areas through non-formal and informal delivery modes

To widen the scope of and promote training delivery in remote areas, national skills development systems can improve and scale up alternative forms of training delivery, such as mobile training programmes. One example of this modality is the training on wheels programme, or Mobile Training Laboratory, of TESDA in the Philippines. It is a training delivery model designed to implement technology-based training programmes in far-flung communities of the country's ten poorest provinces in terms of poverty incidence through portable boxes containing tolls and equipment, mock-ups and training packages for designated places in the community as a venue of training.[37] However, for this type of programme to have an impact on labour market outcomes, the skills acquired in this non-formal and informal modality should be validated and recognized, with integration into the national skills qualification frameworks of the TVET sector.

37 TESDA, "TESDA to Bring Training Programme Closer to People", 17 July 2017.

4.2.5. Ensuring meaningful youth engagement

Social dialogue[38] is a central component of the ILO Resolutions in resolving the youth employment crisis (ILO 2012), in the ILO COVID-19 policy framework (ILO 2020b) and in the ILO Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery (ILO 2021h). Social dialogue involving young people can lead to more inclusive policymaking with the active inclusion of youth-sensitive issues and concerns and eventually lead to better employment outcomes.[39] One example is the Philippines' National Employment Recovery Strategy Jobs Summit in May 2021, where youth leaders engaged with the national government on such issues as education, agricultural livelihoods, social protection and MSMEs that resulted in youth employability as part of its eight-point employment recovery agenda (Government of the Philippines 2021). Youth themselves also took initiative and led COVID-19 labour market responses across the region. Meaningful engagement of young people in the design and implementation of youth-relevant employment policies and programmes is essential to promote decent work for youth in the recovery process in Asia and the Pacific.

As countries seek to address the multiple immediate challenges confronting youth in the region, it is critical to also take into consideration longer-term priorities. As the analysis of the ILO *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022* (ILO 2022b) demonstrates, targeted investment in the green, blue (ocean), digital, creative and care economies hold great potential to provide decent jobs for young people while setting economies on a path towards greater sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience.

38 Social dialogue is defined as "all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, workers and employers on issues of common interest in the areas of economic, labour and social policy".

39 For a comprehensive listing of social dialogue efforts across countries, see ILO (2022c).

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Annex

Additional tables

▶ **Table A1: Decomposition of youth NEET, by NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available**

Subregion	Country	Count		% Share	
		Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students
East Asia	Republic of Korea	143 114	508 429	22.0	78.0
	Mongolia	27 309	41 837	39.5	60.5
	Subregion	**170 424**	**550 266**	**23.6**	**76.4**
Pacific Islands	Cook Islands	19	216	8.2	91.8
	Fiji (2016)	8 278	19 487	29.8	70.2
	Kiribati	860	10 414	7.6	92.4
	Marshall Islands	209	2 826	6.9	93.1
	Micronesia (2014)	1 312	4 112	24.2	75.8
	Nauru (2013)	211	357	37.1	62.9
	New Caledonia	4 320	6 751	39.0	61.0
	Papua New Guinea (2010)	15 456	437 739	3.4	96.6

Subregion	Country	Count		% Share	
		Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students
	Samoa (2017)	2 210	5 912	27.2	72.8
	Solomon Islands (2013)	1 150	8 187	12.3	87.7
	Tonga (2018)	258	4 610	5.3	94.7
	Tuvalu (2016)	65	336	16.3	83.7
	Vanuatu	2 333	15 913	12.8	87.2
	Subregion	**34 349**	**500 946**	**6.4**	**93.6**
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	6 282	8 944	41.3	58.7
	Cambodia	16 582	289 921	5.4	94.6
	Indonesia	2 746 495	6 309 198	30.3	69.7
	Lao PDR (2017)	34 744	296 408	10.5	89.5
	Myanmar	46 862	1 162 607	3.9	96.1
	Philippines	443 950	3 296 912	11.9	88.1
	Thailand	154 817	1 237 846	11.1	88.9
	Timor-Leste (2016)	6 537	44 821	12.7	87.3
	Viet Nam	383 757	1 217 800	24.0	76.0
	Subregion	**3 840 025**	**13 864 456**	**21.7**	**78.3**
South Asia	Afghanistan (2017)	310 446	2 122 057	12.8	87.2
	Bangladesh (2017)	867 259	6 647 987	11.5	88.5
	India	11 839 506	48 851 404	19.5	80.5
	Islamic Republic of Iran	647 983	2 531 618	20.4	79.6
	Maldives	3 504	12 684	21.6	78.4
	Nepal (2017)	216 058	1 749 420	11.0	89.0
	Pakistan	1 477 939	10 133 691	12.7	87.3
	Sri Lanka	164 298	483 565	25.4	74.6
	Subregion	**15 526 994**	**72 532 426**	**17.6**	**82.4**
Asia and Pacific	**Total**	**19 571 790**	**87 448 094**	**18.3**	**81.7**

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A2: Decomposition of youth NEET, by sex and by NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Subregion	Country	Unemployed non-students				Inactive non-students			
		Count		% Share		Count		% Share	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
East Asia	Republic of Korea	62 718	80 396	43.8	56.2	268 671	239 758	52.8	47.2
	Mongolia	17 015	10 294	62.3	37.7	15 827	26 010	37.8	62.2
	Subregion	**79 733**	**90 690**	**46.8**	**53.2**	**284 499**	**265 768**	**51.7**	**48.3**
Pacific Islands	Cook Islands	19		100.0	0.0	46	170	21.3	78.7
	Fiji (2016)	4 242	4 037	51.2	48.8	3 341	16 146	17.1	82.9
	Kiribati	526	333	61.2	38.8	5 545	4 869	53.2	46.8
	Marshall Islands	209		100.0	0.0	1 182	1 644	41.8	58.2
	Micronesia (2014)	376	935	28.7	71.3	1 909	2 202	46.4	53.6
	Nauru (2013)	106	105	50.2	49.8	37	321	10.3	89.7
	New Caledonia	2 109	2 211	48.8	51.2	3 343	3 408	49.5	50.5
	Papua New Guinea (2010)	8 756	6 700	56.6	43.4	201 728	236 010	46.1	53.9
	Samoa (2017)	886	1 323	40.1	59.9	2 310	3 602	39.1	60.9
	Solomon Islands (2013)	452	699	39.3	60.7	2 888	5 299	35.3	64.7
	Tonga (2018)	75	183	29.1	70.9	2 112	2 498	45.8	54.2
	Tuvalu (2016)		65	0.0	100.0	104	231	31.1	68.9
	Vanuatu	1 043	1 290	44.7	55.3	6 743	9 170	42.4	57.6
	Subregion	**18 780**	**16 592**	**51.7**	**48.3**	**231 242**	**276 401**	**44.8**	**55.2**
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	3 700	2 582	58.9	41.1	4 175	4 770	46.7	53.3
	Cambodia	9 151	7 432	55.2	44.8	119 195	170 726	41.1	58.9
	Indonesia	1 664 025	1 082 470	60.6	39.4	1 692 045	4 617 153	26.8	73.2
	Lao PDR (2017)	18 516	16 228	53.3	46.7	128 804	167 603	43.5	56.5
	Myanmar	24 512	22 349	52.3	47.7	303 887	858 720	26.1	73.9
	Philippines	241 590	202 360	54.4	45.6	1 172 998	2 123 914	35.6	64.4
	Thailand	74 465	80 352	48.1	51.9	458 303	779 543	37.0	63.0
	Timor-Leste (2016)	2 605	3 932	39.9	60.1	17 345	27 476	38.7	61.3
	Viet Nam	217 872	165 885	56.8	43.2	504 947	712 852	41.5	58.5
	Subregion	**2 256 435**	**1 583 589**	**58.8**	**41.2**	**4 401 699**	**9 462 757**	**31.7**	**68.3**

Subregion	Country	Unemployed non-students				Inactive non-students			
		Count		% Share		Count		% Share	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Bangladesh (2017)	465 207	402 052	53.6	46.4	864 967	5 783 020	13.0	87.0
	India	9 546 486	2 293 020	80.6	19.4	5 051 404	43 800 000	10.3	89.7
	Islamic Republic of Iran	453 449	194 534	70.0	30.0	517 893	2 013 725	20.5	79.5
	Maldives	896	2 608	25.6	74.4	7 783	4 901	61.4	38.6
	Nepal (2017)	122 513	93 545	56.7	43.3	413 696	1 335 724	23.6	76.4
	Pakistan	1 142 362	335 577	77.3	22.7	366 915	9 766 776	3.6	96.4
	Sri Lanka	87 997	76 301	53.6	46.4	114 046	369 519	23.6	76.4
	Subregion	**12 034 681**	**3 492 313**	**77.5**	**22.5**	**7 651 573**	**64 880 853**	**10.5**	**89.5**
Asia and Pacific	**Total**	**14 389 630**	**5 183 184**	**73.5**	**26.5**	**12 569 013**	**74 885 779**	**14.4**	**85.6**

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A3: Disaggregation of reasons for inactivity of youth NEET, by sex for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Reason for inactivity	Relative share (%)			Share (%) of youth sex cohort for each reason	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Personal or family related reasons	30.3	73.2	62.8	11.7	88.3
Discouragement	12.6	3.1	5.4	56.8	43.2
Other labour market reasons	8.8	1.7	3.4	63.0	37.0
Does not need or want to work	2.8	1.4	1.7	39.4	60.6
Others (not elsewhere classified)	45.4	20.7	26.7	41.2	58.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**24.2**	**75.8**

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019. This is the summary for the 26-country aggregate.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A4: Disaggregation of reasons for inactivity of youth NEET, by sex for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Subregion	Country	Male					Female				
		Personal or family-related	Discouragement	Other labour market reasons	Neither need nor want to work	Others	Personal or family-related	Discouragement	Other labour market reasons	Neither need nor want to work	Others
26-country aggregate (latest year available)		**30.3**	**12.6**	**8.8**	**2.8**	**45.4**	**73.2**	**3.1**	**1.7**	**1.4**	**20.7**
East Asia	Republic of Korea	33.5	24.0	39.5	0.0	3.0	40.0	37.2	21.3	0.0	1.5
	Mongolia	7.1	5.7	2.7	80.8	3.7	17.2	1.1	0.1	80.2	1.4
Pacific Islands	Kiribati	7.5	18.1	1.5	0.0	72.9	13.7	12.9	1.7	0.0	71.7
	Marshall Islands	4.7	34.5	4.3	0.0	56.5	10.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	89.7
	Micronesia (2014)	2.0	0.0	8.3	82.7	7.0	4.1	39.3	1.3	51.8	3.5
	Nauru (2013)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	62.5	5.6	0.0	0.0	31.8
	New Caledonia	48.9	16.8	8.1	19.2	6.9	51.6	15.6	3.4	18.6	10.8
	Palau (2014)	73.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.2	77.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6
	Samoa (2017)	8.9	2.9	0.0	0.0	88.2	10.1	2.2	0.8	0.0	87.0
	Solomon Islands (2013)	49.1	17.6	0.0	23.6	9.7	54.1	9.1	0.0	32.2	4.6
	Tonga (2018)	1.7	9.0	0.0	0.0	89.3	3.3	3.0	0.0	0.0	93.6
	Tuvalu (2016)	81.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.4	63.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	36.7
	Vanuatu	11.1	31.0	18.8	28.0	11.0	9.4	28.2	14.2	32.6	15.6
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	10.6	4.7	4.1	0.0	80.6	10.9	5.0	4.9	0.0	79.3
	Cambodia	1.3	3.3	6.7	0.0	88.7	2.8	2.2	3.7	0.0	91.3

Subregion	Country	Male					Female				
		Personal or family-related	Discouragement	Other labour market reasons	Neither need nor want to work	Others	Personal or family-related	Discouragement	Other labour market reasons	Neither need nor want to work	Others
	Indonesia	35.9	8.8	0.0	2.9	52.5	85.3	1.5	0.0	0.6	12.6
	Lao PDR (2017)	9.1	11.9	14.1	0.1	64.8	8.0	7.1	5.8	0.0	79.1
	Myanmar	0.8	2.0	1.1	0.0	96.1	2.6	0.7	0.1	0.0	96.7
	Philippines	37.4	13.2	24.2	0.0	25.2	74.8	2.6	9.3	0.0	13.3
	Viet Nam	2.0	0.7	3.6	0.3	93.5	3.9	0.4	1.4	0.2	94.1
South Asia	Afghanistan (2017)	56.4	16.5	7.1	8.2	11.7	75.0	1.4	0.5	4.7	18.4
	Bangladesh (2017)	45.6	16.4	5.4	8.0	24.6	93.5	2.2	0.2	2.1	2.0
	Islamic Republic of Iran	18.8	16.9	8.4	3.0	52.9	85.6	2.8	0.5	0.9	10.2
	Maldives	75.4	12.7	1.8	5.5	4.6	44.0	21.4	5.6	15.4	13.7
	Nepal (2017)	16.3	27.8	3.4	0.9	51.7	24.6	11.2	1.8	0.1	62.3
	Sri Lanka	44.6	14.8	3.1	0.0	37.5	84.7	4.2	0.7	0.0	10.4

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A5: Youth NEET rates by geographical coverage and by sex for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Subregion	Country	Young male			Young female			Total		
		Urban	Rural	Difference	Urban	Rural	Difference	Urban	Rural	Difference
East Asia	Republic of Korea	12.8	16.1	3.4	11.4	14.0	2.6	12.1	15.1	3.0
	Mongolia	19.2	9.9	-9.2	20.8	17.9	-2.9	20.0	13.7	-6.3
Pacific Islands	Fiji (2016)	12.3	8.8	-3.4	24.6	36.8	12.1	18.5	22.3	3.9
	Marshall Islands	37.5	43.2	5.8			0.0	40.9	49.0	8.2
	Papua New Guinea (2010)	28.5	33.0	4.5	33.0	40.0	7.0	30.7	36.4	5.7
	Samoa (2017)	18.2	21.9	3.7	28.7	36.5	7.8	23.1	29.0	5.8
	Tonga (2018)		25.9	25.9	26.2	30.3	4.0	24.1	28.1	4.0
	Vanuatu	30.3	29.7	-0.6	30.9	41.3	10.4	30.6	35.6	5.0
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	18.2	19.6	1.4	22.2	20.8	-1.4	19.9	20.2	0.2
	Cambodia	11.3	9.5	-1.9	12.8	12.5	-0.3	12.1	11.0	-1.1
	Indonesia	15.3	14.7	-0.6	21.7	32.2	10.6	18.5	23.3	4.9
	Lao PDR (2017)	17.8	25.8	8.0	22.0	30.2	8.2	20.0	28.1	8.1
	Myanmar	7.2	8.0	0.8	16.4	20.4	4.0	12.0	14.4	2.4
	Philippines	14.3	13.3	-0.9	22.8	25.2	2.4	18.5	19.0	0.5
	Thailand	10.3	11.9	1.5	13.9	22.2	8.2	12.2	16.9	4.7
	Timor-Leste (2016)	18.6	15.4	-3.2	30.0	24.2	-5.8	24.2	19.8	-4.4
	Viet Nam	12.2	11.2	-1.0	15.1	15.1	0.0	13.6	13.0	-0.6

Subregion	Country	Young male			Young female			Total		
		Urban	Rural	Difference	Urban	Rural	Difference	Urban	Rural	Difference
South Asia	Afghanistan (2017)	19.3	18.4	-0.9	58.2	70.6	12.4	39.0	44.3	5.3
	Bangladesh (2017)	9.2	10.0	0.8	40.3	46.6	6.3	26.0	28.0	2.0
	India	14.2	13.4	-0.8	39.1	50.6	11.5	26.0	31.2	5.3
	Nepal (2017)	17.8	28.0	10.2	41.8	53.1	11.3	30.8	42.3	11.4
	Pakistan	7.5	7.7	0.2	48.7	54.9	6.2	27.2	31.3	4.1
	Sri Lanka	11.7	13.7	2.0	24.1	30.0	5.9	17.8	21.9	4.1

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A6: Decomposition of youth NEET, by geographical coverage and by NEET category for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Subregion	Country	Geographical coverage	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students
East Asia	Republic of Korea	Urban	22.6	77.4
		Rural	19.1	80.9
	Mongolia	Urban	40.0	60.0
		Rural	37.4	62.6
Pacific Islands	Fiji (2016)	Urban	35.3	64.7
		Rural	23.5	76.5
	Marshall Islands	Urban	7.8	92.2
		Rural	2.9	97.1
	Papua New Guinea (2010)	Urban	7.9	92.1
		Rural	2.7	97.3
	Samoa (2017)	Urban	25.0	75.0
		Rural	27.7	72.3
	Tonga (2018)	Urban	5.1	94.9
		Rural	5.4	94.6
	Vanuatu	Urban	7.0	93.0
		Rural	14.6	85.4
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	Urban	35.6	64.4
		Rural	56.6	43.4
	Cambodia	Urban	6.9	93.1
		Rural	4.7	95.3
	Indonesia	Urban	36.9	63.1
		Rural	23.3	76.7
	Lao PDR (2017)	Urban	16.5	83.5
		Rural	8.8	91.2
	Myanmar	Urban	5.7	94.3
		Rural	3.3	96.7
	Philippines	Urban	14.5	85.5
		Rural	9.8	90.2
	Thailand	Urban	13.6	86.4
		Rural	9.8	90.2
	Timor-Leste (2016)	Urban	17.1	82.9
		Rural	10.8	89.2
	Viet Nam	Urban	31.6	68.4
		Rural	19.4	80.6
South Asia	Afghanistan (2017)	Urban	18.9	81.1
		Rural	10.7	89.3
	Bangladesh (2017)	Urban	12.3	87.7
		Rural	11.2	88.8
	India	Urban	25.3	74.7
		Rural	17.4	82.6
	Nepal (2017)	Urban	12.3	87.7
		Rural	9.1	90.9

Subregion	Country	Geographical coverage	Unemployed non-students	Inactive non-students
	Pakistan	Urban	14.8	85.2
		Rural	11.6	88.4
	Sri Lanka	Urban	26.4	73.6
		Rural	25.2	74.8

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

▶ Table A7: Youth NEET rates, educational attainment for economies in Asia and the Pacific with data, 2019 or latest year available

Subregion	Country	Less than basic	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
East Asia	Republic of Korea	56.0	53.6	35.7	15.7
	Mongolia	27.2	37.0	25.9	36.6
Pacific Islands	Fiji (2016)	71.3	38.8	29.3	24.8
	Kiribati	94.6	77.5	65.4	
	Marshall Islands	100.0	73.0	62.7	37.6
	Micronesia (2014)	63.0	57.8	44.2	29.7
	Papua New Guinea (2010)	51.9	45.2	43.8	33.4
	Samoa (2017)	23.0	44.6	39.8	31.2
	Solomon Islands (2013)	19.0	9.9	12.2	4.6
	Tonga (2018)	100.0	48.0	41.6	13.8
	Vanuatu	62.0	46.1	32.4	6.6
South-East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	15.3	36.4	21.3	38.8
	Cambodia	23.6	12.0	11.7	5.5
	Indonesia	39.8	36.3	22.9	26.5
	Lao PDR (2017)	53.8	35.3	21.9	28.9
	Myanmar	25.6	16.2	20.3	16.0
	Thailand	33.3	23.6	14.8	29.4
	Timor-Leste (2016)	21.4	32.5	42.3	21.1
	Viet Nam	21.5	11.3	10.6	18.4
South Asia	Afghanistan (2017)	61.6	42.4	36.8	25.3
	Bangladesh	44.3	43.8	29.1	26.3
	India	62.1	49.2	27.5	44.3
	Islamic Republic of Iran	73.0	58.0	59.3	21.3
	Maldives	53.3	34.6	12.6	7.6
	Nepal (2017)	77.2	62.5	39.1	14.2
	Pakistan	48.0	38.9	31.6	33.3
	Sri Lanka	66.3	40.5	29.2	28.6

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the year of coverage is 2019.
Source: Calculations based on the micro datasets of national Labour Force Surveys.

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