

ESCAP Connecting the Subregion

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China



DPRK



Japan



Mongolia



Republic of
Korea



Russian
Federation

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

YOUTH

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As the "International Year of Youth" (12 August 2010 – 11 August 2011) comes to a close, this third edition of our Newsletter is dedicated to Youth and the various issues young people of today's societies face in an ever more globalizing world.

The United Nations has long recognized that the imagination, ideals and energies of young people are vital for continuing sustainable development of the societies in which they live. Already back in 1965, UN member States endorsed the "Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples". Since then, the United Nations has worked with youth and through youth towards ensuring that national, regional and global development agendas incorporate the vision, ideas and energies of youth, as the generation of the future.

In 1995, member States adopted the "World Programme of Action for Youth" (WPAY), a blueprint for national and international strategies to address more effectively the various issues faced by young people and to increase opportunities for youth participation in all aspects of life in society. WPAY incorporates fifteen interrelated priority areas which were most recently re-affirmed at the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth that took place in New York (25-26 July 2011) on the theme "Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding". Youth participation in decision-making is one of the priority areas of WPAY.

The East and North-East Asian subregion faces challenges that will affect the lives of generations to come: Rapid urbanization and industrialization, widening social and economic disparities, domestic rural-to-urban and international economic migration, high youth unemployment, population ageing, and the need for new growth engines while having to establish sustainable consumer behaviour and lifestyle. While many of these

issues are addressed by today's leaders and citizens to the best of their abilities, many of them will continue to be a challenge in the future, to be resolved by the next generations. Capacity building for youth and advocacy efforts for Governments to work with youth in developing national agendas, will secure continued ability of the society to face these complex and interrelated issues.

Against the above background, the Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (SRO-ENEА) is convening its first Subregional Youth Forum, from 15 to 17 August 2011 in the Republic of Korea, during which youth representatives of the Subregion will explore ways and means to positively influence policy makers in addressing some of the subregional challenges that are of a cross-generational nature. Youth will discuss issues relating to sustainable development, youth unemployment and "Happiness" as an indicator of inclusive and sustainable development. They will share best practices and establish networks across the subregion towards developing a subregional voice in defining regional and global responses to the socio-economic and environmental challenges that will last for generations to come.

The High-Level Meeting held in New York invited member States to promote a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding among and with youth, as agents of development, social inclusion, tolerance and peace. I hope that the Youth Forum will facilitate the creation of such subregional dialogue among youth and that it will contribute to the promotion of Youth as "Agents of Change".



Peter Van Laere
Director, SRO-ENEА

"Towards a people centered sustainable development agenda"



Involving young people in decision-making process that affect their lives directly will not only promote human rights but also will ensure that each young person is self-confident and makes a right decision and lay foundations for them to grow as responsible citizens in their lifetime.

- 22 y.o. Mongolian participant

I really love to talk with friends especially about our dreams and social problems that we have to face.

And I know that sharing thoughts is much beneficial to grow up than just studying by myself. I think that recognizing different views on the same point can truly contribute to making mature understanding capabilities.

- 19 y.o. Korean participant

In follow up to the UN High-Level Meeting on Youth which took place on 25-26 July 2011 at the UN Headquarters in New York, the Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia is organizing the first Subregional Forum on Youth Participation in Policy-Making from 15-17 August 2011 in the Republic of Korea, as part of a 3-year project to promote youth participation in the subregion. Extracted here are selected quotations from application essays submitted by Forum participants.

But the most crucial question I am constantly seeking answer to - how to make our voices heard on the regional, subregional levels? How to make people understand that youth are trying really hard to improve the society and how to find leverages that will help put our ideas into reality?

- 18 y.o. Russian participant

When we talk about a satisfied life, we simply relate it to how much money we have, what kind of job we do, which brand of car we drive and so on that are not really the keys to happiness. However, because the youth, at least most of Chinese youth, have spent so much time to look for those substantial stuffs that we seldom have time to think about what happiness really means to us.

- 21 y.o. Chinese participant

The ideas of listening to youngsters' opinions and encouraging their participation are fairly new in Japan, where the youth is still ignored in a decision-making process. Silence is regarded as a beauty, and the young is supposed to respect the elderly and to be submissive to them. There exists a tendency among Japanese people to dismiss what younger people say.

- 23 y.o. Japanese participant



“Happiness” as an indicator of inclusive and sustainable development.



Eugene Gherman

Senior Economic Affairs Officer, SRO-ENEA

The youth represent a great future and a most valuable asset of society and play a vital role in all aspects of nation-building and socio-economic development in their respective countries. As future generation leaders the youth should have a clear idea of where they want to head and necessary tools once they are getting there. Youth are particularly interested in efforts towards a better sharing progress in wellbeing especially with the most vulnerable ones. Progress cannot be attained if some groups of human beings are left aside. Youth have an opportunity to improve policy and decision making to measure the progress that affects wellbeing rather than economic output.

There is an implicit assumption that economic growth could improve quality of life. However, as development experience of many countries shows, faster economic growth does not necessarily translate into improving living standards or increasing the number of people who are more satisfied or happier than a few years before. In the 1990s, for example, 93% of poor people lived in low-income or less-developed economies and now, 72% live in middle-income or more-developed countries¹. It is clear that a growing economy alone is not sufficient to generate adequate income and employment, provide society's progress and improve people's wellbeing.

Development progress is a broad term that involves such factors as increasing aggregate demand and supply, improving health, education and income, personal and community security, reducing societal inequalities and making the societies more environmentally sustainable. However, the main objective of development is more than economic growth and social development. It is not expected to be served at the cost of environmental destruction, social dislocation and spiritual impoverishment. Development progress calls for a people-centered approach towards inclusive and sustainable development. There is a growing recognition that any development progress requires evidence about people's satisfaction and happiness.

What is happiness and how could it be measured? In order to measure happiness we have to know what it looks like. Happiness means different things to different people and there are many different opinions on what to include among the key components of happiness and how to label them. The question is how we can define indicators that measure happiness in countries with totally different problems and civic expectations so that policy making and decisions are appropriate.

In 2006, Dr. Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, produced the first ever “World Map of Happiness” based on subjective approaches - e.g. surveys - to measure quality of life. The survey assessed how people feel about their lives, their overall levels of happiness, including job satisfaction, family relationships, safety, and sense of community. It was interesting to note that the happiest Asian country was Bhutan, ranked 8th out of 178 countries of the world. 97% of the Bhutanese population said they were happy and contented. Among the 20 happiest nations in the world were other Asian countries - Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia ranked 9th and 17th respectively. Surprisingly, the largest Asian economies in terms of population such as China, Japan and India scored much lower than Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia; China 82nd, Japan 90th, and India 125th.

A nation's level of happiness is most closely associated with

¹ Andy Summer, The New Bottom Billion: What if Most of the World's Poor Live in Middle-Income Countries? Center for Global Development, March 2011, www.cgdev.org.

² University of Leicester (2006, November 14). ScienceDaily. <http://www.sciencedaily.com>.



“The happiest people do not necessarily have the ‘best’ things. They simply appreciate the things they have”.
(Mr. Warren Buffet)



health levels, wealth and provision of education. These three predictor variables are also very closely associated with each other, illustrating the interdependence of these factors. Data indicate that people in Bhutan, the country with relatively good healthcare, low GDP per capita and modest level of education, were happier than those living in the countries with higher socio-economic indicators.

Objective indicators of happiness in selected Asian countries : 2010

Indicators	Bhutan	China	India	Japan
Population (million people)	0.708	1,354.1	1,214.5	127.0
Income GDP per capita (2008 PPP US\$)	5,532	7,206	3,354	33,649
Health				
-Life expectancy at birth (years)	66.8	73.5	64.4	83.2
-Expenditure on health, public (% of GDP)	3.3	1.9	1.1	6.5
Education				
-Combined gross enrolment ratio in education (both sexes) (%)	54.1 (2005)	68.7	61.0	86.6
-Expenditure on education (% of GDP)	3.3	2.3	3.2	3.4

Source : UNDP Human Development Report 2010, The Real Wealth of Nations : Pathways to Human Development. <http://hdr.undp.org>

The high level of “happiness” in Bhutan was a tangible result of the adoption of a development philosophy named “Gross National Happiness” initiated by the King of the country in 1972. Based on the core development philosophy of maximizing Gross National Happiness (GNH), Bhutan has steadfastly pursued a path of sustainable socio-economic development to improve the quality of people’s lives and their wellbeing as a whole. GNH became the main driving force of the country’s development based on four pillars: sustainable and equitable socio-economic

development; conservation of the environment; preservation and promoting of culture, and promotion of good governance. The concept aims to embody both the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals, with happiness as the ultimate goal. GNH combines subjective and objective wellbeing. It includes many components like subjective happiness, mental health, emotional balance, spirituality, culture, human rights, trust, social support, education, health, living standards and economy. While conventional development models stress economic growth as the ultimate objective, GNH is based on the premise that true development takes place when material and spiritual development go hand in hand, complementing and reinforcing each other.

The development model of Bhutan is an example of inclusive and sustainable development which ensures that increases in material prosperity are shared across society and are balanced with preserving cultural traditions, protecting the environment and maintaining a responsive government. The model is divided into nine domains that cover main areas in which people are expected to be happy, collectively or individually: (i) health or physical wellbeing, (ii) educational attainment, (iii) income level and distribution, (iv) environmental resilience, (v) cultural diversity, (vi) community vitality, (vii) time use and balance, (viii) emotional and psychological wellbeing, and (ix) quality of governance. These nine domains are broken down into 72 measurable variables.

On 19 July 2011, the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development” initiated by the delegation of Bhutan and supported by a large number of world economies. The resolution calls for Member States to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing in development with a view to guiding their public policies. It further invites those Member States that have taken initiatives to develop new indicators and other initiatives to share information thereon with the Secretary-General as a contribution to the United Nations development agenda, including the MDGs.

“Towards a people centered sustainable development agenda”



Youth / failure is not a terrible thing



Jasper Kim

The trend among the youth of Asia today is no longer a problem of being undereducated. Rather, the problem is the aspiration of youth (as well as parents and the educational system at large) to strive towards being overeducated. Both in Republic of Korea and greater Asia, education has not become an exception, it has become a regional obsession with typical school days often beginning at 5:00 am and ending at or past midnight.

The reason for this is almost endearing, but with troubling implications. Parents of Asian schoolchildren, almost without exception, want (and often demand) that their children attend a so-called "elite" university for social and economic gain, just as much or more than for educational gain (to become part of an "elite" educated class and thus a higher social class status for the individual as well as the individual's family). Asia's "education and test-taking fever" not only requires a great deal of time, it also requires a great deal of money and effort. If left unfettered, the educational ecosystem in Asia may lead to the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer, which is clearly not good for the Asia Pacific region.

Further, the social system in which such education fever is embedded is often intolerant of failure. In the current system, the youth of Asia must peak academically at age 16 or 17 (so that he or she can achieve the highest results on the college entrance examination), which may explain the 36 million young people unemployed in the Asia Pacific region, according to a 2010 ILO report. Even in an information revolution era, the educational ecosystem and parents of many youth in Asia are almost entirely focused on "rote memorization" (for test-taking optimization) rather than "learning" (for being a responsible citizen of our international community).

If these are the challenges, what are the solutions? Ultimately, according to Malcolm Gladwell's recent book *Outliers* (that discusses the creation of so-called geniuses), those who find something of inherent interest or passion will have a greater

chance of becoming a so-called "genius" in a particular field.

Striving to be a genius may seem daunting as well. But the good news is that the youth of Asia are all geniuses, just in different areas, with some genius tapped, but with a great many more yet to be tapped. A "one-size-fits-all" Asian approach that all youth must attend a narrow bandwidth of schools and job occupations--even with good intentions--can lead to social; economic, and educational negative effects in the region.

Thus, the end result should not be trying to become the best test-taker in one's class or country. Rather, the end product should be a more holistic and broad-viewed approach of creating future leaders and citizens to create a better global society in the twenty-first century--even if this means failing at certain ventures during life--to eventually create a model for long-term success.

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"And finally, sir, would you like your burger flipped by a Ph. D. in Philosophy, History or English Literature?"



Strengthening Youth Participation



Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as education about and access to their civil rights.

Young people have opportunities to participate in civic life through volunteerism, community service and service-learning. In some countries they serve as members of youth committees in local Governments offering their views on community issues or participating in student governments and influencing youth policy. In some countries National Youth Councils, umbrella organizations for youth organizations, are key stakeholders in decision-making on youth issues. They have purely symbolic status in others.

At the community level, young people can establish university or school clubs aimed at educating each other on youth rights and civic education. They often set up internet fora and discussion groups to exchange ideas and inspire each other to take action in their respective communities. One example is Never Again Rwanda (NAR), a human rights and peace-building organization that aims to engage creative and critical-thinking youth in building a peaceful, democratic, and economically prosperous Rwanda. Since 2004, NAR youth members (ages 14-27) have organized themselves into clubs and associations. These clubs and associations are youth-led. Youth are empowered through activities they choose, that engage their intellect and ideas, develop their capacities as leaders, and positively contribute to building sustainable peace. Currently, NAR has over 27 Youth Clubs in secondary schools and universities and 5 Youth Associations of non-schooling youth that operate in Kigali and in each of Rwanda's provinces. Within Kigali, NAR has 18 clubs and associations and more than 500 youth members.

At the international level, there are a number of youth fora and conferences organized by young people like the World Youth Congress series. They may also participate in international and UN policy processes by becoming youth delegates to the General

Assembly, the Commission on Sustainable Development or the Commission for Social Development and the recently concluded High-Level Meeting on Youth.

Efforts can be aimed at achieving appropriate representation and participation of youth in decision-making bodies, as young women and men entitled to the same rights. When drafting laws that affect young people, facilitate their participation through consultation processes ensuring their contributions to debates on policy- and law-making, resource allocation and parliament's efforts to hold Government to account. Youth should also be encouraged to participate in issue-based programmes that affect them, such as education, social protection, reproductive health, environment, etc. Another approach is to invest in youth participation by supporting programmes for young people's civic engagement initiatives, networks and organizations.

Finally, to ensure that youth participation is inclusive, equitable and gender sensitive, social, economic and cultural barriers affecting young women must be removed. They should have equal access to education and vocational training to be properly equipped for full participation in society, especially political involvement. Adopt a special inclusive measure for enabling participation of young people from marginalised and excluded groups such as young people with disabilities, indigenous young people, etc.

Ravi Karkara

Specialist, Child & Adolescent Participation
Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP)
Gender, Rights and Civic Engagement Section (GRACE)
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The third annual Global Model United Nations (GMUN) conference was organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information on 10-14 August 2011 and hosted by Incheon City, Republic of Korea. University students, ages 18-26 from every region of the world, gathered together and role played as foreign diplomats and UN officials in simulated sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011

UNESCAP's flagship publication, *the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011*, was launched in Seoul on 6 May 2011. The launch was attended by government officials from the Republic of Korea and member States as well as media, academia and research institutions. During the launch, a panel of experts were invited to discuss, in depth, some of the issues that the Survey examined, with particular focus on the Republic of Korea and the subregional economies.

In this year's Survey, youth unemployment was identified as a key concern for the region. Young people are at least three times more likely to be unemployed than adults in the region and 4.7 times in South-East Asia and the Pacific. At the peak of the crisis period, globally, youth unemployment saw its largest annual rise ever recorded. Even during the recovery process, youth employment did not recover in line with output growth because employers generally tend to choose workers with experience rather than those without.

Year	Japan	Republic of Korea	Russian Federation
1995	6.1 (3.2)	6.3 (2.1)	18.7 (9.5)
2000	9.2 (4.8)	10.8 (4.4)	20.5 (10.6)
2009	9.1 (5.0)	9.8 (3.6)	18.3 (8.2)

Youth Unemployment Rate extracted from the Survey.
(No comparable data available for China, DPRK and Mongolia.)
* The figures in the brackets denote Total Unemployment Rate.



During the panel discussion, over-education has also been pointed out as a factor contributing to youth unemployment, particularly in the Republic of Korea. While education has been instrumental to the rapid economic development of the resource-scarce Republic of Korea, it is now becoming a burden to society as a whole. Given that over 80% of high school graduates move on to tertiary education (compared to around 30% in Germany), there are opportunity costs arising from talented youth devoting valuable productive resources to enter into a limited number of 'top' jobs. To alleviate youth unemployment, governments need to put in place proactive measures that promote access to entrepreneurship programmes, make sure that the school curriculum produces more workplace ready youth and provide incentives to employers to hire young people.

On a larger scale, improving labour market conditions in general in the Asia Pacific region is an important aspect to unlocking the potential of young workers. In recent years, employment growth rates have been stagnant even in countries recording very high economic growth rates. This is mainly because growth has been skewed towards capital-rich growth rather than job-rich growth. As the biggest source domestic employment, especially for women and young people, small- and medium- size enterprises remain the backbone of employment growth for the region. A concerted push in supporting SME growth and their competitiveness is therefore imperative in creating a job-rich environment.



The survey was launched on 6 May 2011, at the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club.

SRO-ENEA Past Events & Meetings

12-14 April 2011, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

High-level Asia Pacific Policy Dialogue on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and other Development Gaps faced by the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

19-21 April 2011, Ulaanbaatar and Zamyn-Uud, Mongolia

Inception Meeting for NEASPEC project on Implementing the Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms in North-East Asia

6 May 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Launch of the Economic & Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011

17 May 2011, Incheon, Republic of Korea

1st Anniversary of SRO-ENEA



On 17 May 2011, representatives of member States, Incheon City officials and members of the local community were invited to the first anniversary ceremony. This was followed by a briefing of Incheon City officials on the work and activities of the Subregional Office.

19-26 May 2011, Bangkok, Thailand

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 67th Session of the Commission

31 May -4 June 2011, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Stakeholder Meeting for Subregional Trade and Transit Cooperation in Mongolian Trade Corridors

SRO-ENEA Upcoming Events & Meetings

15-17 August 2011, Gyeonggi, Republic of Korea

Subregional Forum on Youth Participation in Policy-Making for East and North-East Asia

1-2 September 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea

North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) Senior Official Meeting

5-6 September 2011, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Subregional Meeting on Ageing

14-16 September 2011, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Subregional Workshop for LDCs in Achieving MDGs as Part of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

6-7 October 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea

High-level Stakeholder Workshop on Subregional Trade and Transit Cooperation in Mongolian Trade Corridors in connection with the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2011

13-14 October 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea

The First Meeting of Asia-Korea Carbon Footprint Partnership Program (NEASPEC)

17-18 October 2011, Suwon, Republic of Korea

NEASPEC - North-East Asian Forum on Eco-efficiency for Low Carbon, Green Cities



On the occasion of his re-appointment as UN Secretary-General for a second term (1 January 2012–31 December 2016), the Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia congratulated Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. (21 June 2011)



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