

*Symposium on Globalisation and the  
Future of Youth in Asia  
2 – 3 December 2004, Tokyo*

# **Globalisation and Youth Employment**

*By: Mdm Halimah Yacob  
Assistant Secretary-General  
Singapore National Trades Union Congress*

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **1 out of every 6 person in the world today is between 15 and 24 years old**
  - 1 billion young people between 15 and 24 years old
  - This is 18% of total world population
- **World youth unemployment rate has increased from 11.7% in 1993 to 14.4% in 2003**
  - 14.4% rate is more than twice overall unemployment rate of 6.2%
  - 88 mil unemployed youth = 47% of 186 mil unemployed globally
  - Youth unemployment can be as high as 25% in some countries

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Major policy priority for trade unions**
  - Integrating youth and youth employment
  - Must be placed high on agenda of government's macroeconomic policies and effective implementation programme
  - Investment in education and training
  - Assist least developed countries to raise literacy and education levels

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **ILO Recommendation on Human Resources Development, Education, Training and Lifelong Learning**
  - Employers must behave responsibly and provide opportunities to young people through training, career development and a safe and healthy work environment
  - ILO HRD Recommendation provides good framework for human resource development
  - Social partners, through social dialogue, should explore this Recommendation as a basis for promoting employment and decent work

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **General trend of youth employment in Singapore**
  - Decline in labour force participation rate of young people between 15 and 24 years old
  - Labour force participation rate declined from 25.3% in 1993 to 13% in 2003 for those aged 15 – 19; and declined from 80.2% to 71.6% for aged 20 – 24
  - One key reason: Longer period that young people stay in the education system which has been steadily increasing over the years with better educational opportunities and economic growth

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **General trend of youth employment in Singapore**
  - Unemployment among young people rose from 7% in June 1998 to 7.8% in June 2003
  - However, pace of increase was slower compared to overall average unemployment figure, which rose from 3.2% to 5.4% over same period
  - Generally, the young do not face a serious unemployment problem in Singapore

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **General trend of youth employment in Singapore**
  - On average, younger workers who are retrenched take a shorter time to find another job compared to older workers as they have better skills and qualifications

Age, years old	No. of weeks taken to find another job
20 – 29	7.8
30 – 39	12.3
40 – 49	14.1
50 – 59	15.8

*Figures as at June 2003*

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **General trend of youth employment in Singapore**
  - While number of unemployed youth rose from 17,000 in 1998 to 20,000 in 2003, their share of total unemployed shrank sharply from 27% to 17% over same period
  - This partly reflects the ageing workforce and the delayed entry of youth into the labour market



# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **General trend of youth employment in Singapore**
  - Global trend of using more contract work becoming more discernible in Singapore
  - Viewed as an opportunity to gain as much experience as possible from different employers to enhance employability
  - Also some are concerned with the lack of certainty and stability
  - As economy matures, there may be a mismatch in expectations and realities among the young

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Educational opportunities**

- With effect from Jan 2003, primary education is compulsory in Singapore (about 10 – 11 years of basic education)
- Channelled into either technical or academic education where employment prospects are good

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Unions' role in promoting Lifelong Learning and Employability**
  - Job creation and skills upgrading
  - Enhancing wages and employability through skills training/upgrading, employment assistance programme, job re-design and proactive review of employment policies
  - Advocating portable medical and skills training benefits
  - Strengthening social safety net

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Unions' role in promoting Lifelong Learning and Employability**
  - Skills Redevelopment Programme which was started in 1998
  - Total training places to date: 187,316
  - Survey shows SRP achieved its target in reaching out to older workers and lower educated workers to go for training and skills upgrading to stay employable
  - Skills Development Fund

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Employment Assistance Programme**
  - SNTUC Joblink Centre was set up on Feb 2002 – one-stop job placement centre
  - Pre-counselling and training for job seekers
  - “Train and place” programmes
  - To date, 6,656 job interviews have been arranged
  - About 30% of job seekers at the Joblink Centre are unemployed and below age of 30 years

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Union membership**

- A current challenge for trade unions in Singapore to stay relevant to changing and increasingly diverse profile of workers in knowledge-based economy
- Increasing job churn and industry restructuring
- Seamless Membership Scheme
- Organising strategies must be adapted; recruitment campaigns etc

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Union leadership**

- Trade unions must create opportunities for young people to achieve their aspirations, contribute ideas and participate actively in making decisions to shape the future
- Induct more young men and women to serve in labour movement
- Establish Youth Chapters in unions
- Strengthen bonding and networking among young and senior union leaders through regular dialogue sessions and forums; engage the young at various levels and foster a greater sense of belonging

# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Union leadership**

- Training courses for young union leaders
- Ong Teng Cheong Institute of Labour Studies
- Structured leadership training programmes
- National Level:
  - Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
  - National Youth Council; Singapore Youth Awards, Outstanding Youth in Education Award etc



# Globalisation and Youth Employment

- **Conclusion**

- The young is our future
- Integration into society through creation of employment and opportunities
- Youth development and employment must be placed high on governments' agendas
- Employers must provide opportunities to the young to acquire experience and skills in a decent work environment
- Unions need to re-strategise to attract more young members
- Strengthen social dialogue at all levels

Thank You