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# The future of work we want

THE VOICE OF YOUTH AND  
DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES  
FROM LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

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# Foreword

In 2015, the ILO Director-General launched the Future of Work Centenary Initiative to respond to the questions and challenges arising from the rapid, continuous transformation of the world of work: technological, demographic, environmental, and in the fragmentation and globalization of production and employment and in business models, among others.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ILO, together with its constituents, is promoting research and national dialogues on the future of work in over two-thirds of Member States. The feature article of the *2016 Labour Overview* provided a preliminary analysis of some of the trends mentioned and discussed their possible impact on the volume and composition of employment, employment relationships, skills supply and demand, as well as on governance, institutions and social dialogue in the region.

Considering that it will be youth who will experience the future of work and that the region has a very young population, the Regional Office has been implementing activities to learn about the vision and perspectives of Latin American and Caribbean youth to answer questions such as: What do Latin American youth think about education and employment? How do they view their present and future? How do they envisage the future of the world of work and their future in it?

The process was developed in three stages. First, the Regional Office, in coordination with the National Youth Secretariat, organized an event in Lima, Peru (Conversations: Youth and the Future of Work). Renowned national experts in several disciplines and youth leaders (18-29 years old) participated in this activity.<sup>1</sup> Participating youth were given a test questionnaire to learn about their opinions, perspectives and expectations with respect to the future of work.

With the information collected, the Regional Office designed a survey in Peru during the last quarter of 2016, in collaboration with the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*. Four hundred youth aged 18-29 in three Peruvian cities answered the face-to-face questionnaire.

At the same time, the Regional Office implemented an online survey of 1,544 youth (aged 15 to 29) in 26 countries of the region. The goal of both surveys was to collect

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<sup>1</sup> The expositions were related to three topics: (1) economic, employment and demographic changes, (2) labour relations changes, and (3) the future of education and training, and technology.

the opinions and perceptions of Latin American and Caribbean youth with respect to their employment future and expectations to 2030.

The report included in this publication is a first look at the perspectives and expectations of Latin American youth regarding the future of work. The report offers some conclusions based on the key results of both surveys, which we hope will nourish and expand the discussion on the future of work.

Both surveys generated new evidence on youth's expectations with respect to their jobs, working conditions and education in the future. They also provided information on young people's opinions regarding the effects of technology on education and work, changes that will occur in education and training for work, as well as the expected impact of these changes on their well-being and how much information they have about the discussion on the future of work. Finally, youth were asked about the strategies they will use to respond to these changes and how much confidence they have in the future, among other key issues.

The results reveal an optimistic outlook of youth in terms of employment opportunities and conditions the future will offer them, especially among the youngest group. Most young people believe that the penetration of new technologies, robotization and automation of processes will have a positive impact on their employment future. They have considerable confidence in the future. One hopeful result was that many young people are aware that they need to make a personal effort to acquire education and training to take advantage of the benefits of future opportunities. Despite evidence of mismatch in the labour market, most youth consulted believe that their studies will be useful in the future.

This report is complemented by individual contributions of officials, experts and young people from the United Nations system, academia and representative youth organizations. We would like to express our gratitude to all of them for their collaboration and commitment to achieving a better present and future for the youth of Latin America and the Caribbean. Their input and ideas have undoubtedly enriched this report.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs

ILO Regional Director  
for Latin America and the Caribbean

# I. What do youth from Latin America and the Caribbean think about the future of work? Results of recent surveys

Juan Chacaltana  
Guillermo Dema  
Claudia Ruiz<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Changes in the world of work are noteworthy both for the pace at which they are occurring and the magnitude of their impact. These changes include technological advances, demographic shifts, climate change and the fragmentation and globalization of production and employment.

Technological change is a complex, non-linear and evolutionary process driven by different forces. Technological progress in the past had positive results – in net terms – on employment, but there are signs that this revolution will be on an even greater scale given that changes in information technology and automation will produce an exponential growth of productivity and will define other aspects of our lives beyond work. This can have different types of impact, including the displacement of labour (in an extensive or intensive manner), the reconfiguration of occupations or job duties, relocation and fragmentation of production, among others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization (2016a). *Technological Changes and Work in the Future: Making Technology Work for All*. The Future of Work Centenary Initiative. Issue Note N°1. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_534201.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_534201.pdf)





Demographic changes mainly entail the widespread aging of the population, the progressive reduction of the share of youth in the population and the increase in labour migration.<sup>4</sup> The new forms of organizing work can alter employment relationships: it is increasingly common for workers to engage in atypical employment (temporary employment, triangular employment, ambiguous work relationships and part-time employment). This can present a challenge for applying regulatory frameworks in protection or representation.<sup>5</sup> All the above combines with a growing inequality and poor income security to threaten the legitimacy and effectiveness of the social contract in terms of the achievement of the objectives to which we aspire as a society, such as equality, justice, liberty and security.<sup>6</sup>

In 2015, the importance of this issue led ILO Director-General Guy Ryder to launch the *Future of Work Centenary Initiative* during the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference. The initiative focuses on four “centenary conversations” to further social justice<sup>7</sup>: work and society, decent jobs for all, the organization of work and production, and the governance of work. In the framework of this initiative, and to prepare for the ILO’s 100th anniversary, ILO member states are conducting research studies and engaging in intensive discussions. This phase is expected to lead to a report for the ILO Centenary Conference in 2019, prepared by a high-level commission on the future of work. This activity will help define how the ILO will fulfill its mandate on social justice as it begins its second century of existence.

The discussion on the future of work has centred on analyzing factors of change associated with demographics, technology, climate and globalization, among others.<sup>8</sup>

4 International Labour Organization. (2016b). *The Future of Labour Supply: Demographics, Migration and Unpaid Work*. The Future of Work Centenary Initiative. Issue Note N°2. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_534204.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_534204.pdf)

5 International Labour Organization. (2016c). *A Challenging Future for the Employment Relationship: Time for Affirmation or Alternatives?* The Future of Work Centenary Initiative. Issue Note N°3. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_534115.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_534115.pdf)

6 International Labour Organization (2016d). *Social Contract and the Future of Work: Inequality, Income Security, Labour Relations and Social Dialogue*. The Future of Work Centenary Initiative. Issue Note N°4. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_534205.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_534205.pdf)

7 International Labour Organization (2015). *The Future of Work Centenary Initiative*. Report of the Director-General. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_369026.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_369026.pdf)

8 These issues have been discussed in a variety of reports, such as that of the World Bank (2016) *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*. Washington DC: World Bank; IDB (2016) *Jobs in Uncertain Times*. Washington DC: IDB; IDB and the Atlantic Council of the United States (2016); ECLAC (2014). *Las tendencias mundiales y el futuro de América Latina, 2014*. Santiago de Chile: ECLAC; ECLAC (2016), *Horizontes 2030: la igualdad en el centro del desarrollo sostenible*; ECLAC/CAF/Fundación Telefónica (2015). *El ecosistema y la economía digital en América Latina*. Fundación Telefónica; WEF (2016). *The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*; among others.

The actors of future labour markets, in other words, today's children and youth, have received little research attention. At any point in time, the characteristics of young generations help to define the future of at least the following two decades.

This is a priority issue given that the main transitions or changes that will define the future of each generation occur during young adulthood. In youth, people shift from being children to parents, begin to live on their own, complete their basic studies, begin higher education and transition from school to work. When they find a job, they begin careers or enterprises in keeping with their characteristics. These transitions occur in each generation and mark the beginning of future career paths.

The issue is that the current generation of youth –people born during the last decade of the past century – are facing changes that are occurring more rapidly than those of previous generations, at least more recent ones. These changes include the forms of organizing production and work, economic uncertainty and technological and demographic changes, among others.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ILO and its constituents have been promoting research and discussions on this topic. The feature article of the *2016 Labour Overview* offers a preliminary analysis of some regional trends and discusses their possible impact on the volume and composition of employment, employment relationships, skills supply and demand, and on governance, institutions and social dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

Given that youth will participate in the future of work, the ILO developed a strategy to explore the vision and perspectives of Latin American and Caribbean youth and that would help answer questions such as: What do Latin American youth think about education and employment? How do they view their present and their future? How do they envisage the world of work, and their future in the world of work?

As part of this strategy, the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, in coordination with the National Youth Secretariat (SENAJU), organized an event in Lima, Peru in June 2016 called “Conversations: Youth and the future of work.” Experts from different disciplines and youth leaders (18-29 years old) participated.<sup>10</sup> The ILO learned about their opinions, perspectives and expectations regarding the future of work and how young people see themselves in this context. With this input, the Regional Office developed two surveys for youth to collect opinions and perspectives of Latin American and Caribbean youth with respect to their employment future and

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9 International Labour Organization (2016e). *2016 Labour Overview*, Lima: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms\\_545825.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_545825.pdf)

10 The expositions were related to three topics: (1) economic, employment and demographic changes, (2) labour relations changes, and (3) the future of education and training, and technology.

perspectives to 2030. During the last quarter of 2016, the Regional Office conducted a survey in Peru, in collaboration with *Instituto de Opinión Pública* (IOP) of the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú* (PUCP), as well as a regional online survey.

## 2. Perspectives of youth in Latin America and the Caribbean: Results of the online survey

### 2.1 Methodology

To learn about the perspectives of youth from the region regarding the future of work, the ILO Regional Office conducted an online survey of youth aged 15 to 29. Specialists from the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean designed the questionnaire, which had six sections:

- ▶ Profile of the survey respondent: demographic information, membership in organizations (trade unions, volunteer organizations, social or political associations) and occupation.
- ▶ Education and employment: academic and labour situation (level of education completed, level of education desired, course of study and reasons for that choice). It also contained questions about the employment sector and occupation of the survey respondent and the reasons that the young person neither studies nor works, if applicable.
- ▶ The future of work and education: collected perspectives regarding the importance of education in their lives, their expectations with respect to possible changes in education and how they could affect youth, and the link between the education they received and the work they perform.
- ▶ The future of employment relationships: explored the aspects youth value most in a job, their perceptions regarding the importance of job experience and their current employment conditions and future expectations.
- ▶ The future of technology: collected perspectives on how new technologies will affect the future of their work.
- ▶ Future opportunities: identified the factors that contribute to or hinder current and future employment, education or economic activities.

Youth were invited to participate in the survey through the ILO website and e-mails to several youth organizations in the region. A total of 1,544 youth from 26 countries of

the region responded to the questionnaire between 8 September and 11 November 2016. Response rates of men and women were similar.

## 2.2 Results of the online survey in Latin America and the Caribbean

One preliminary result of the survey was expected: Youth who responded to the survey tended to be more educated than the average for the region. This is evident in Table 1, where 80% of youth who responded were studying and 55% were working. Just 4% neither studied nor worked (NEET in several countries; disconnected youth in the USA), in contrast to the real percentage of youth in this situation in the region, which approaches 20%.

**Table 1. Latin America and the Caribbean: Education and Employment Situation of Youth Surveyed (Percentages)**

	Sex		Age			Total
	Men	Women	15 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 29	
Studies and works	45%	37%	12%	38%	47%	40%
Studies only	34%	44%	87%	54%	13%	40%
Works only	17%	14%	0%	5%	34%	15%
Neither studies nor works	4%	5%	1%	3%	7%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

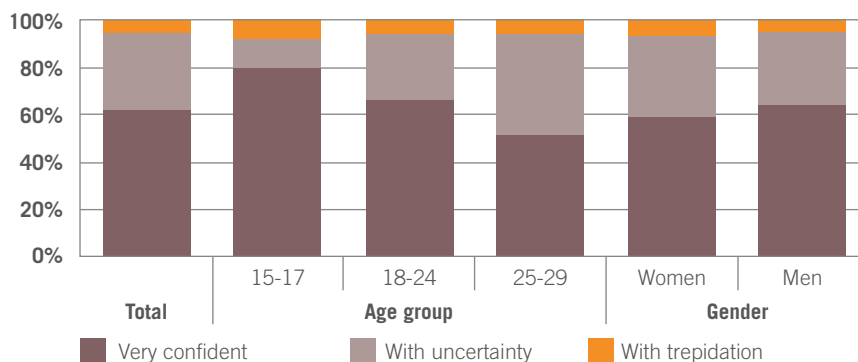
This bias was expected, for which reason the questionnaire included specific questions for youth who study and another group of questions for youth who work. The following results should be taken with caution as they are only indicative of the group of youth who responded to the survey and of each section within each group studied. In general, the analysis that follows disaggregates information by those who study and those who work.

### Overall perspective about the future

Considering this context, an initial interest of the survey was to learn about the overall expectations of youth regarding the future. Interestingly, more than 60% of Latin American youth feel confident about the future (Figure 1). By contrast, nearly 40% view their futures with uncertainty or trepidation.



**Figure 1. Latin America and the Caribbean: Confidence in the Future to 2030 of Youth Surveyed (Percentages)**



**Source:** ILO, based on online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Expectations differ considerably by age groups, with the youngest being the most optimistic about their future. Possible explanations for these findings are that groups of youth may differ structurally and that increased knowledge of the labour market led some youth to feel less optimistic about their future. The expectations of both sexes are similar, with men tending to be slightly more optimistic than women (64% versus 59%).

### Reality and expectations of youth who study

Among youth who study, the survey was mainly interested in identifying what they currently study as this will influence their future. Table 2 lists the fields of study of survey respondents who said they are studying, divided into five groups. More than a third of respondents are studying a field related to business sciences, followed by studies in art and the humanities (including law). It has been well-documented in the literature that the most relevant fields of study for the technological revolution are science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Results of the online survey reveal that only one of every ten respondents study these disciplines, however.

**Table 2. Latin America and the Caribbean: Technical or University Course of Study (Percentages)**

	Sex		Age			Total
	Men	Women	15 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 29	
Business sciences	34%	37%	31%	42%	21%	36%
Social sciences	14%	13%	17%	10%	21%	13%
Art and humanities	23%	27%	25%	21%	37%	26%
STEM	20%	6%	16%	12%	12%	12%
Others	8%	17%	11%	15%	9%	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** STEM: Science, technology, engineering and math. Others: agriculture, gastronomy, medicine and nutrition. Only young students are considered.

**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The distribution of groups of fields of study between men and women is similar, except for STEM disciplines, which are studied by 6% of women versus 20% of men. This gap –which calls for further study– subsequently intensifies in the labour market through the gender-based segregation of occupations. By geographic area, there is also a clear distinction: the preference for business professions is concentrated in urban areas, where 42% of youth study business-related fields, compared with 13% of youth in rural areas. By contrast, rural youth are more likely to study STEM (21%) than urban youth (10%). This result could reflect the rural development of some industries that create demand for this type of professional.

This structure is likely biased by the type of informant responding to the survey; however, the order of importance of fields of study does seem to be consistent. Even more interesting, the survey questioned why respondents had opted for their field of study. Among the reasons cited for choosing a business-related field of study and those associated with science and technology, more youth made this decision because they believed that good opportunities were available. Among those who chose the social sciences, art and humanities, the main reasons cited were associated with altruism or personal interest. Taken together, in this youth sample, there is a similar percentage of youth who seek good opportunities and altruistic youth (Table 3).

**Table 3. Latin America and the Caribbean: Why Did You Choose Your Current Field of Study? (Percentage)**

	Business sciences	Social sciences	Art and humanities	STEM	Others	Total
Good opportunities	53	26	24	48	21	37
Altruism	12	47	54	27	55	35
Personal aptitude	26	37	34	21	15	27
Personal interest	27	45	25	29	12	27
Pioneering field	23	17	17	33	20	21
Parents/environment	8	9	7	11	8	8

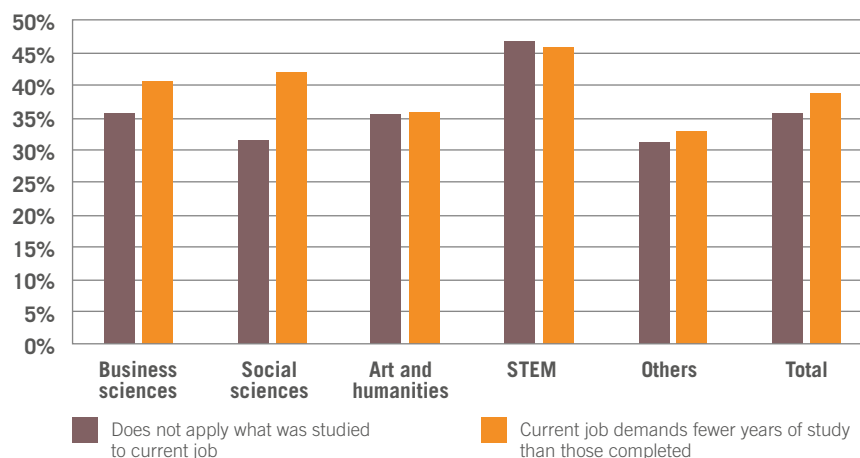
**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** Only young students were considered. This was a multiple-choice question, for which reason the columns do not total 100%.

The question here is whether the expectations of these youth are met in the labour market later. Figure 2 demonstrates two indicators of mismatch (discrepancy between what was studied and what the labour market demands), always from a youth perspective. First, the survey asked whether youth's course of study applied to their work. Some 36% of youth answered in the negative. A related question was whether their jobs demanded fewer years of study than they had completed. The response was 39%. Surprisingly, these percentages are relatively common. Studies using other methods in the region demonstrate cases of mismatch about a third of the time.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Misalignment between the courses of study and the demand of the labor market.

**Figure 2. Latin America and the Caribbean: Perceptions of Mismatch in Employment (Percentage of youth in each category)**



**Source:** ILO, based on online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** STEM: Science, technology, engineering and math. Others: agriculture, gastronomy, medicine and nutrition.

The findings are surprising when this information is disaggregated by fields of study. The highest levels of perceived mismatch occur in fields that should not reflect it; in other words, those associated with STEM. In theory, these are disciplines of the future and many reports and studies are urging youth to study them. A growing number of youth in the region are enrolling in these study programmes.

Whether a perception is a good indication of occupational mismatch is a matter of debate. This matter is clearly of concern, however, because it is based on perspectives and expectations regarding young people's choice of study and work fields. More studies are needed, not only to confirm this perspective but to explore its causes. These may be associated with a variety of factors such as the fact that these are "pioneering fields" and not all training institutes in the region can provide quality programmes. Alternatively, it could result from a regional productive structure – which is not very diversified and is characterized by the existence of small segments of high productivity together with broad segments of low productivity – that has not yet fully adapted to these new fields of study. Mismatch in general is also associated with the rapid expansion of higher education in the region.

Finally, another survey question inquired about the level of education respondents would like to achieve in the future: 18% expect to complete higher education and 78% expect to obtain a graduate degree. More women (81%) than men (73%) expect to earn a graduate degree. By age groups, those over age 18 are more likely to want





a graduate degree, probably because they already have a clearer vision of the labour market and their life project. These views are consistent with the perspectives of young people in terms of the importance of education: 97% believe that the education they received or are receiving influences their daily lives. The only group with a lower percentage of youth who expect to earn a graduate degree is the group of youth who neither study nor work (60%); the remainder have similar levels of expectations for secondary, tertiary and graduate education (approximately 80%).

### Reality and expectations of youth who work

A key discussion associated with the future of work is how forms of work are changing. Employment relationships are rapidly shifting. Typical employment relationships are defined based on subordination to the employer, work in a specific location and a specific form of payment, usually time-based remuneration. It has been reported that worldwide, this type of employment relationship is becoming less common, giving way to atypical or non-standard forms of employment. Non-standard forms of employment include temporary employment, part-time employment or on-call employment, triangular employment and ambiguous employment relationships.<sup>12</sup> Many workers have freely chosen these types of arrangements, with positive results, but for some they may represent job insecurity, limited access to social protection or other benefits, isolation, stress and a lack of distinction between private life and work (Mandl et al 2014; Hwang 2016; Berg and Adams 2016, among others).<sup>13</sup> This is particularly relevant for countries of the region given that many of these non-standard forms of employment, which also intersect with other phenomena such as informal employment, have been present for many years in the region.

The survey sought to identify what working youth value in a job. Table 4 lists the most valued characteristics of employment, ordered by average score. Having a good salary leads the ranking, followed by a good work environment and having the opportunity to grow in the enterprise.

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12 International Labour Organization(2016). *Non-standard employment around the world: understanding challenges, shaping prospects*. Geneva: ILO.[http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_534326/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_534326/lang-en/index.htm)

13 Mandl, I; Curtarelli, M.; Riso, S.; Vargas, O. and Gerogiannis, E. (2015). *New forms of employment*. European Monitoring Centre on Change. In: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2015/working-conditions-labour-market/new-forms-of-employment>. Hwang, D. (2016). *Working conditions of platform workers in Korea*. PowerPoint presentation. Berg, J. and Adams, A. (2016). *Income security for crowdworkers*. PowerPoint presentation.

**Table 4. Latin America and the Caribbean: What Do You Most Value in a Job? (1 to 10 points)**

	Sex		Age			Total
	Men	Women	15-17	18-24	25-29	
A good salary	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.1	7.7	7.3
A warm, friendly work environment (good colleagues, motivating bosses)	6.9	6.9	7.2	7.0	6.7	6.9
The opportunity for me to grow and develop in the enterprise	6.4	6.7	6.2	6.7	6.4	6.6
Ongoing training in my work area	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.3	6.1	6.2
Social security (health insurance and an old-age pension)	5.8	5.8	5.5	5.6	6.3	5.8
Flexible hours tailored to my schedule	5.8	5.4	5.5	5.8	5.3	5.6
Easy access to my workplace	5.5	5.3	6.1	5.3	5.3	5.4
Paid holidays and overtime	5.4	5.2	5.5	5.2	5.5	5.3
Frequent acknowledgment of my achievements	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.7
Trade union representation and collective bargaining	3.8	3.6	2.7	3.4	4.2	3.7

**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** Survey respondents were asked to rate the different characteristics of a job on a scale of 1 (least important) to 10 (most important).

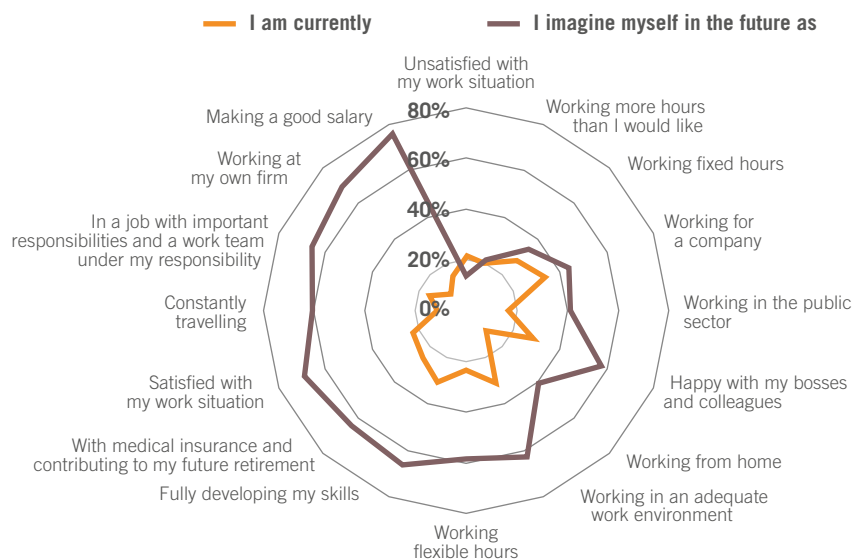
While youth believe all these characteristics are important, they rated some higher than others. When these results are disaggregated by sex, there are no significant variations, except that women gave higher ratings to the opportunity to grow and develop in the enterprise and men favoured flexible hours and easy access to the workplace. When the data are disaggregated by age, there is a marked difference between the employment expectations of the youngest respondents (15-17) and the oldest (25-29) in the survey. Specifically, the importance of social protection and trade union representation increases with age whereas the importance of ease of access to the workplace and of a warm, friendly work environment diminish.

Additionally, the survey sought to identify the youth perspective regarding current employment conditions and a comparison with the future (Figure 3). Respondents prefer to work in their own enterprises in the future (69%), although currently less than 10% of the youth surveyed do so. Moreover, a large percentage of youth would like to work in the public sector (41%) although just 16% do so currently. Respondents are also optimistic with respect to working conditions: 63% expect to work in an adequate work environment; 66% to fully develop their skills; 64% to have health insurance and retirement benefits; 76% to have a good salary; and 69% to be satisfied

with their employment situation. In keeping with the trend toward atypical employment relationships, 40% of respondents expect to work from home and 59% expect to have flexible working hours. Fewer youth expect to work fixed hours in enterprises, although this is currently a reality for most employed youth.

In summary, the data indicate a double-edged reality. On the one hand, it reflects youth's optimism and a positive outlook regarding opportunities that the immediate future can offer them, which increases their expectations for social mobility. All of this is based on the belief that their countries will create the quality jobs they expect. On the other hand, these high expectations regarding the advancement of the middle classes that are reflected in the data suggest that if this –the creation of quality jobs– were not to occur, there would be a waste of talent and a generation that will see their high expectations frustrated. This would have social and political consequences.

**Figure 3. Latin America and the Caribbean: Reality and Expectations with Respect to Working Conditions (Percentages)**



**Source:** ILO, based on online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** The question was multiple-choice.

## Effects of technological changes

The survey also explored youth's perspectives regarding technology (Table 5). Sixty-one percent of respondents believe that in the future, new technologies, robotization and automation of processes will affect their employment future. Twenty percent believe

this will not occur and 19% are uncertain. Consistent with the overall view of technology mentioned, 59% believe that these changes will have a positive effect on them, while 31% did not know how it would affect them and just 10% believed the effect would be negative.

How will it affect them? A majority (73%) reported that they will need continual training in areas or specialties of technology. They also believe they will be able to optimize production processes and therefore be able to work less (33%) and to have access to new labour markets and better methods of exchange with their colleagues (30%). Finally, they believe they will become less important given that technology will be able to replace what they do (29%). Table 5 summarizes these results, disaggregated by sex and age groups.

**Table 5. Latin America and the Caribbean: Perceptions of the Impact of Technology Changes on Work (Percentages)**

	Men	Women	18-24	25-29	Total
<b>In the future, do you believe the incorporation of new technologies, robotization and automation of processes will affect your employment future?</b>					
Yes	63%	59%	61%	62%	61%
No	19%	21%	20%	21%	20%
Don't know	18%	20%	20%	17%	19%
<b>In general, do you believe these changes will have a positive or a negative affect on your work life?</b>					
Positive	63%	57%	59%	60%	59%
Negative	9%	10%	9%	11%	10%
Don't know	27%	33%	32%	29%	31%
<b>How do you think they will affect you?*</b>					
I will need continual training in areas or specialties of technology	74%	73%	76%	70%	73%
I will have more and better methods of exchange and connectivity with colleagues	32%	28%	28%	32%	30%
I will have more and better job opportunities	24%	21%	24%	19%	23%
I will become less important since technology will be able to replace what I do	28%	30%	28%	29%	29%
I will be able to optimize production processes and work less	34%	31%	33%	33%	33%
I will have access to new labour markets	32%	28%	32%	27%	30%

**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** (\*) multiple-choice questions for those who answered that technology will have an effect.



Changes in employment undoubtedly will be accompanied by changes in job training. Seventy-nine percent of respondents believe that potential changes in education would affect them a little or a lot. Table 6 lists the six changes in education that survey respondents most often selected, such as new teaching methods (51%), new classroom technologies (43%), curricula adapted to new environments (37%), new fields of study (35%), the need for more specialized courses (32%) and optimization of students' skills to develop them in specific areas (31%). Other changes mentioned were that certain study programmes will disappear (19%); that there will be a search for younger, more up-to-date teachers (19%); that students will leave the classroom since they will have access to other learning platforms (15%); that the topic of labour rights will be included in the school curriculum (13%); and that robots will teach classes (3%).

**Table 6. Latin America and the Caribbean: Expectations about Changes in Education (Percentages)**

	Sex		Age			Total
	Men	Women	15-17	18-24	25-29	
There will be new teaching methods	56%	47%	64%	51%	49%	51%
New technologies will be incorporated into the classroom	44%	42%	49%	41%	44%	43%
The school and university curricula will adapt to the needs of the environment	37%	36%	22%	35%	42%	37%
New study programmes will be created	39%	32%	34%	36%	35%	35%
There will be an increased number of and need for specialization courses	33%	32%	30%	31%	35%	32%
Student skills will be optimized and developed in specific areas of their interest	32%	30%	35%	31%	31%	31%
Some study programmes will disappear	20%	18%	18%	16%	23%	19%
There will be a search for younger, more up-to-date teachers	20%	17%	21%	19%	18%	18%
Students will leave the classroom since they will have access to other learning platforms	17%	13%	19%	12%	18%	15%
The topic of labour rights will be incorporated into the school curriculum	16%	10%	12%	11%	15%	12%
Robots will teach classes	3%	2%	6%	2%	2%	2%

**Source:** ILO, based on an online survey of youth from Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Note:** the columns do not total 100% because the question was multiple-choice.

## 3. The case of Peru: Results of a face-to-face survey

### 3.1 Methodology of the face-to-face survey in Peru

The second study consisted of a structured survey with a stratified sample applied in urban areas. The goal was to determine whether the results of the online survey would be replicated in a face-to-face survey as well as to explore additional variables.

The survey was designed for youth aged 18 to 29 living in three Peruvian cities: Lima, Arequipa and Trujillo. Respondents completed the questionnaire in approximately 20 minutes. The survey was applied as a personal interview in the selected households. It was designed by the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, in collaboration with *Instituto de Opinión Pública* (IOP) of the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru* (PUCP).

The questionnaire in Peru had four sections that reflected the goals of the study:

- ▶ Profile of the survey respondent: demographic data and employment situation (employed, unemployed, inactive).
- ▶ Education: education level completed and level desired to achieve in the future, the subject studied and desired future study programme, if applicable. Questions also explored the importance of the education received for obtaining a good job.
- ▶ Employment: job search methods, current working conditions and desired conditions for the future (status in employment, occupation, type of contract, contract duration, form of payment and workplace), and the aspects respondents most valued in a job now and that they think they will value more in 10 years. Youth were also asked about the possibility of starting a business, the reasons for doing so, economic sector of the enterprise and the importance of technologies in the business.
- ▶ Changes in work to 2030: future scenarios and the level of information youth had about them, who they believe would be affected and in what way. Questions also explored the strategies respondents planned to follow, education of the future and the role of institutions.

The field survey was implemented between 6 and 16 October 2016. The survey was applied to four hundred youth divided by geographic area, age and sex. Geographic zones included marginal urban areas but few rural areas.



## 3.2 Results

Unlike the regional online survey, the stratified sample results are more representative of the reality of the country. This is apparent in Table 7, where the situation in employment of survey respondents is identified. Forty-two percent work only, 28% study only, 13% study and work, and 17% neither study nor work (NEET in several countries; disconnected youth in the USA). These percentages are similar to the results of urban household surveys applied in the same year in Peru.

This survey also provided detailed information on the composition of NEET. In reality, NEET reflects a situation of exclusion. The survey attempted to identify individuals who are outside of the education and employment systems. The idea was to determine whether the youth involuntarily neither studies nor works, which implies knowing whether he is looking for employment or wants to study but cannot. This survey included a question on the desire to work. Of the 17% of NEET, at least 11% (nearly two of every three) are not looking for work. Here women are in the clear majority. They are often in a situation of exclusion because they tend to be isolated from education and work due to their reproductive role in society. This should be considered in inclusive development policies.

**Table 7. Peru: Study and Work Situation of Youth (Percentages)**

	Total	Men	Women	18 to 24	25 to 29
Study and work	13%	17%	9%	14%	11%
Study only	28%	25%	31%	41%	8%
Work only	42%	48%	36%	27%	64%
Neither study nor work (NEET)	17%	10%	24%	17%	18%
NEET seeking work	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%
NEET (who are not looking for work)	11%	4%	17%	10%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

## Youth and the future of work

Youth were asked about their labour market behaviour with a view to linking this behaviour with the discussions on the future of work. They were first asked how they search for jobs to determine whether they are increasingly using online job searches. The findings indicate that this is indeed the case among unemployed youth (who are seeking employment). Searches on online job placement sites was ranked similarly to

job searches through personal contacts. In other words, youth are increasingly using these methods. A different question is how effective these methods are, however. To explore this issue, currently employed youth were asked what strategies they used to find a job. Here job searches through personal contacts or directly with the employer were more common. Institutionalized searches (online or in-person job placement services) play a less important role. Curiously, online searches were more effective than searches through in-person job placement services since a larger percentage of employed youth found their current job using this method (11%) compared with an in-person job placement service (6%). Employment services, particularly public ones, should take note of these findings (Table 8).

**Table 8. Peru: Job Search Methods (Percentages)**

	Unemployed	Employed
Personal contacts	26%	54%
Online job placement service	26%	11%
In-person job placement service	20%	6%
Other	13%	9%
Firm/employer locale	10%	18%
Social media	5%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

The survey then asked employed youth to compare a series of dimensions in their current jobs versus their situation in 10 years. Figure 4 demonstrates the results of this comparison. Questions focused on youth's preferences in terms of key aspects of employment relationships.

The first issue is associated with the situation of subordination. In panel (a), youth were asked about their current status in employment and the status they would like to have in the future. Currently, a large percentage are employees in medium-sized and large enterprises, as well as in microenterprises. This situation changes when asked about future preferences. There is a clear desire for own-account work or to be an employer. The desire to work in microenterprises practically disappears. The percentage of youth who want to work in large enterprises also diminished while those who want to be employed in the public sector increased.



**Figure 4. Peru: Employment Aspirations of Youth (Percentages)**

Source: ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

A second question explored the type of work by skill set (panel b). Currently, most of the employed youth are working in trades of low or medium skill levels, for example, as operators, sales people or service providers, or in administrative work. Most respondents stated that they hope to hold a professional position in the future, although in the same line of work in sales or services.

With respect to the workplace (panel c), there are two options. Currently, the majority work in the locale of a firm. In the future, this option exists but the percentage declines in favour mainly of working at the locale of the youth's own business. Note that the option to work without an established workplace – which is closely associated with the discussion on the future of work – decreases almost to zero in the future aspirations, although it currently has a higher percentage.

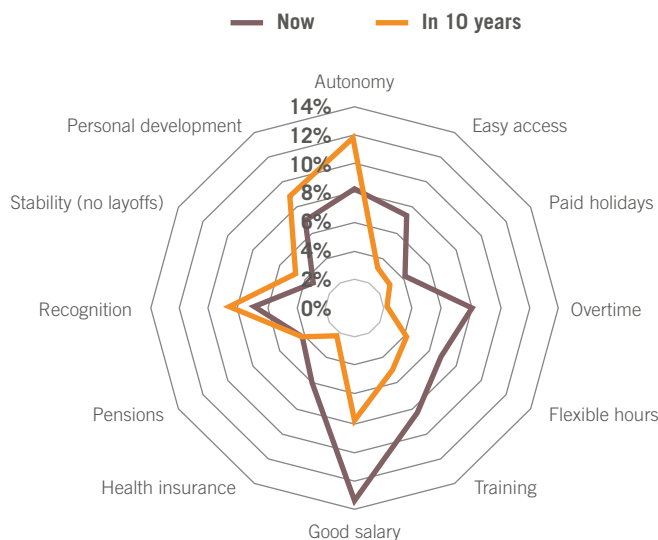
Finally, with respect to the form of payment (panel d), time rates currently predominate – consistent with the situation of current wage employees – which declines in the future while piece rates increase.

To summarize, with respect to the employment relationship, Peruvian youth are mainly employees but hope to become own-account workers, work in their own business and be paid piece rates in the future. Additionally, they aspire to occupations that require professional skills.

## Youth who want to start a business

Several studies have reported on young people's desire to start a business and to be autonomous.<sup>14</sup> This survey confirms this trend. In response to the question, "What do you look for in a job?", most respondents wanted a good salary. Although this desire does not change in the future, the desire to work independently increases.

**Figure 5. Peru: What Do You Look for in a Job? (Percentages)**



**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

**Note:** The question was multiple-choice.

For this reason, the survey explored this option in detail. Youth were asked if they wanted to start a business in the future. Eighty-six percent responded in the affirmative. They were then asked if they planned to start that business in the next 12 months to determine whether they had a business idea. Here the percentage fell sharply, to

<sup>14</sup> Chacaltana (2012). *Transiciones juveniles y trayectoria laboral: el caso peruano*. Lima: ILO. [http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM\\_ESTUDIOS\\_Peru\\_Transiciones%20juveniles%20y%20trayectoria%20laboral.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM_ESTUDIOS_Peru_Transiciones%20juveniles%20y%20trayectoria%20laboral.pdf); Chacaltana and Ruiz (2013). "El empleo juvenil en el Perú: diagnóstico y políticas," in Garavito and Muñoz (eds.). *Empleo y Protección Social*. Lima: Department of Economics, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. <http://files.pucp.edu.pe/departamento/economia/LDE-2012-01-10.pdf>



14%. It declined even further in response to the question of how many youth already had a business: just 3% responded that they did. Among those who already had a business idea, the most frequent areas were retail or wholesale trade and restaurants and foods. Businesses in information, communications and technology (ICT) were intentionally included, but just 3% chose that option (Table 9).

**Table 9. Peru: Transition to Entrepreneurship (Percentages)**

	Men	Women	18 to 24	25 to 29	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Plan to start a business</b>	86%	86%	85%	88%	86%
<b>Are you going to start that business in the next 12 months?</b>	13%	15%	10%	19%	14%
Retail or wholesale trade	27%	31%	21%	35%	29%
Restaurants / foods	18%	22%	21%	19%	20%
Foreign trade	16%	3%	12%	7%	9%
ICT or online businesses	0%	5%	0%	5%	3%
Preparation of natural products	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Already have a business</b>	5%	1%	2%	4%	3%

Source: ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

Survey respondents were also explicitly asked whether new technologies would be useful for their planned business. Most answered that they would help in marketing (sales) more than in production (26%) or advertising of the business (26%). These percentages were similar for the trade and restaurant/food sectors (Table 10).

**Table 10. Peru: How Would ICTs be Useful for Your Business Idea? (Percentages)**

	Wholesale and retail trade	Restaurants / food	ICT or online business	Preparation of natural products	Total
They would help in production (automation)	16%	14%	0%	100%	26%
I would use them for marketing (sales)	61%	62%	0%	0%	43%
I would use them for advertising (webpages, Facebook)	20%	22%	100%	0%	26%
They would help with management (projects, accounting)	3%	2%	0%	0%	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

## Expectations for the future of work

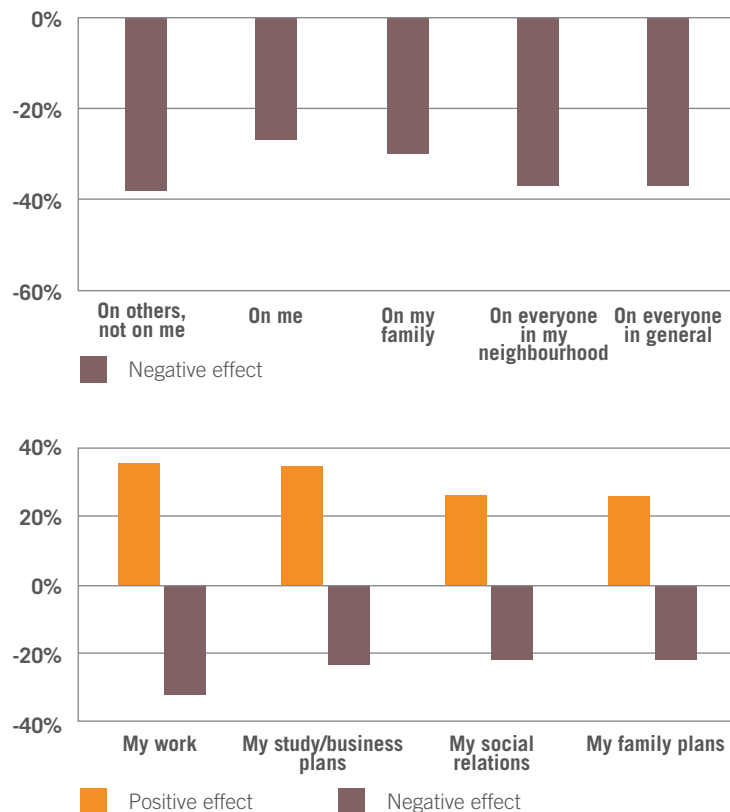
One assumption of the survey was that youth had little knowledge of the discussion on the future of work. This was confirmed in the survey. Overall, 63% of respondents indicated that they had little or no information on the subject, a percentage that was higher among women, the less educated and NEET.

**Table 11. Peru: Level of Information Concerning the Discussion on the Future of Work (Percentages)**

	Very informed or informed	Not very or not informed
<b>Sex</b>		
Men	45%	55%
Women	30%	70%
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 24	37%	63%
25 to 29	37%	63%
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary	25%	75%
Secondary	26%	74%
Tertiary, technical	29%	71%
Tertiary, university	61%	39%
<b>Work/education status</b>		
Study and work	55%	45%
Study only	42%	58%
Work only	35%	65%
Neither study nor work (NEET)	21%	79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>63%</b>

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

The youth were then asked whether they believed that these changes would affect them, and, if so, in what ways. Most believed that effects will be negative, but not necessarily on a personal level; rather, they will affect others, everyone in their neighbourhood, everyone in general or in their family (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Peru: What Effects Will the Changes Have on the Future of Work? (Percentages)**

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

A survey conducted by Pew (2016) for the United States <sup>15</sup> found a similar result. In that study, 65% of respondents expected that in 50 years, robots would do much of the work that humans do today. Nevertheless, 80% of them believed that their occupations would not be changed or replaced.

In light of this, the survey asked respondents which areas of their lives would be most affected. Respondents believe technology would most positively affect study and/or

<sup>15</sup> Pew Research Center. (10 March 2016). *Public Predictions for the Future of Workforce Automation*. Obtained from Pew Internet: <http://www.pewInternet.org/2016/03/10/public-predictions-for-the-future-of-workforce-automation>

business plans. It would also positively influence family plans, social relations, and work, to a lesser extent.

Youth were also asked about strategies in response to these changes. Most respondents believed that the best strategy was to study more or specialize in an area (63%) while 26% planned to start their own business (Table 12). What type of education is required? In the specific case of education needed for the future, respondents cited the need for more technology and information courses (46%), more and better emphasis on entrepreneurship (16%), more and better language courses (15%), more technology-based courses (11%) and more math or science courses (8%).

**Table 12. Peru: What Should You Do to Mitigate the Effects of the Future of Work?**

	Study and Work	Study only	Work only	Neither study nor work (NEET)	Total
<b>What do you plan to do in response?</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Study more (specialize)	66%	75%	58%	51%	63%
Start my own business	25%	12%	33%	36%	26%
Study something else	6%	5%	2%	6%	4%
Emigrate	3%	5%	3%	0%	3%
Nothing	0%	3%	4%	8%	4%
<b>What type of education will you need?</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Technology courses	44%	55%	43%	41%	46%
Emphasis on entrepreneurship	12%	6%	22%	19%	16%
Language courses	16%	17%	17%	7%	15%
Technology-based courses	8%	9%	10%	22%	11%
Math/science courses	17%	10%	4%	9%	8%

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

Youth were also asked about the role institutions play now and in the future in response to these changes. Respondents were asked to rank the answers from the least important (1) to the most important (5) institutions for employment opportunities (Table 13). Government institutions were rated most important currently and in the future. Interestingly, there were few changes in the ranking when asked about the future.

**Table 13. Peru: Confidence in Institutions (Ranking from 1 to 5)**

	Currently	Future (in 10 years)
Government	3.6	3.8
Ministry of Labour	3.7	3.7
Communication media	3.4	3.5
Business associations	3.4	3.4
Congress	3.0	3.1
Public Ombudsman's Office	3.0	3.0
Catholic church	2.9	2.9
Judiciary	2.7	2.8
Trade unions	2.4	2.5
Political parties	2.3	2.4

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

**Note:** Respondents were asked to rate the choices from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum).

Finally, youth were asked whether they viewed their overall employment future with confidence, trepidation or uncertainty. Seventy-nine percent of respondents viewed their employment future with confidence, 14% with uncertainty and 7% with trepidation. These results were similar across sex and age groups.

**Table 14. Perú: expectativa general sobre el futuro (porcentajes)**

	How do you think your situation will differ compared with that of your parents?			How do you view your employment future?		
	Worse	Better	Same	Confidence	Uncertainty	Trepidation
Men	1%	94%	4%	79%	14%	7%
Women	5%	88%	7%	79%	15%	6%
18 to 24	0%	95%	5%	76%	17%	7%
25 to 29	8%	85%	7%	83%	11%	6%
Primary	0%	100%	0%	94%	0%	6%
Secondary	5%	88%	7%	79%	15%	6%
Tertiary, technical	1%	93%	6%	79%	13%	8%
Tertiary, university	1%	96%	3%	78%	16%	6%
Study and work	0%	96%	4%	85%	8%	7%

(continues...)

	How do you think your situation will differ compared with that of your parents?			How do you view your employment future?		
	Worse	Better	Same	Confidence	Uncertainty	Trepidation
<b>Study only</b>	0%	96%	4%	78%	19%	3%
<b>Work only</b>	4%	89%	7%	80%	12%	8%
<b>Neither study nor work (NEET)</b>	7%	86%	7%	73%	17%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>7%</b>

**Source:** ILO, based on a survey of Peruvian youth.

Overall, Peruvian youth are clearly optimistic about the future: 91% believe they will be in a better position than their parents in the future. These findings differ somewhat by age and sex: men and the youngest respondents (18-24) are the most optimistic. This result is consistent with findings of the regional section.

## 4. Conclusions

This report explores the perceptions and expectations of youth with respect to the future of work. That future will be defined by a variety of changes such as technological progress, the productive development and diversification of countries, demographic changes, climate change and the fragmentation and globalization of production and employment. Quantitative studies, whose key findings were shared in the previous sections, as well as recent ILO studies in Latin America,<sup>16</sup> enable the ILO to extrapolate the following preliminary conclusions:

1. Despite important strides in several areas, youth of Latin America and the Caribbean continue to face obstacles for their full inclusion in society. They continue to face greater labour market gaps than adults in the region. Advances and gaps vary across countries. Some groups of youth are particularly vulnerable: female youth, unemployed youth who do not study or receive training, youth with limited training or who work in the informal sector, and youth living in rural areas.

<sup>16</sup> International Labour Organization. (2014). *Trabajo Decente y Jóvenes en América Latina: políticas para la acción*. Lima: OIT. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms\\_235577.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_235577.pdf); and International Labour Organization. (2015). *¿Qué sabemos sobre los programas y políticas del Primer Empleo en América Latina?* Lima: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/WCMS\\_369021/lang-es/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/WCMS_369021/lang-es/index.htm)



2. It is common and natural for youth to think about the future. It is an exercise they probably should do, for example, when they decide what to study, in which sector they want to specialize or even when beginning life with a partner. A unique characteristic of the current generation of youth is that they are not only the most educated generation, but they are also experiencing substantive changes in the world associated with changes in the ways production and work are organized and in the advancement of technology, among other factors. For example, there is now more job turnover, and lifelong learning has become mandatory. This will affect the career paths of youth, which will also be longer given increasing life expectancy.
3. Youth who responded to the surveys (online and face-to-face) have an urban bias and higher education levels than the average for the region. More than 60% of youth who responded to the survey view their employment future with confidence, a percentage that declines as age increases. Although there were no significant differences between women and men, men tended to be slightly more optimistic than women (64% versus 59%). Expectations by age group varied considerably, with the youngest group being the most optimistic about their future. By contrast, 38% view their future with uncertainty (33%) or trepidation (5%). Possible explanations for these findings are that groups of youth may differ structurally and that greater knowledge of the labour market led some respondents to feel less optimistic about their future.
4. In the case of Peru, youth demonstrate a clear optimism about the future: 91% believe that they will be in a better situation than their parents in the future. These findings reveal minor differences by age and sex: the youngest (18-24) are the most optimistic (95%) and men (95%) are more so than women (88%). The results are consistent with the findings of the regional online survey.
5. In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite inauspicious economic and labour forecasts for the next few years, youth believe they may improve their living and employment conditions with respect to their parents' generation. Although they recognize that the changes produce winners and losers, most of the youth see themselves on the side of those who will take advantage of the opportunities generated by the change. The data contrast with the perceptions in more advanced

countries, where the economic and employment crisis has led to the idea that the generation of youth that begin their working lives in the new millennium, “for the first time in history, will live worse than their parents” (IFS 2013)<sup>17</sup>. In Latin America, most of the youth interviewed were optimistic. This perspective sends two messages: on the one hand, optimism is a natural or intrinsic attitude of youth. It reflects youth’s positive view of quality job opportunities in their countries and their expectations that this will lead them to be better off than their parents and to climb the socioeconomic ladder. On the other hand, if the countries do not manage to create the infrastructure of employment opportunities necessary to satisfy these high expectations, the results of the survey indicate that not only will talent be wasted, but that there will be a generation, or part of one, that will see its expectations frustrated. This may have social and political consequences.

6. The different study and training options (groups of fields of study) between young men and women who responded to the questionnaires are similar, except for STEM disciplines,<sup>18</sup> which are studied by 6% of women versus 20% of men. This gap –which requires further study– intensifies later in the labour market, leading to the gender segregation of occupations. There is also a clear distinction by geographic area: the preference for a business career is concentrated in urban areas, where 42% of youth study a business-related field, compared with 13% of youth in rural areas. By contrast, rural youth are more likely to study STEM subjects (21%) than urban youth (10%). This result, which also merits further study, may reflect the development of some industries in rural areas that demand this type of professional, and/or may be influenced by the supply of training and education currently available.
7. When youth were asked why they chose their current field of study, in the group of respondents who chose business sciences and study programmes associated with science and technology, more youth cited better opportunities. Among those who chose social sciences, art and humanities, the main reasons were associated with altruism or

<sup>17</sup> IFS – Institute for Fiscal Studies (2013). *The economic circumstances of cohorts born between the 1940s and the 1970s*. Report N° 89. London: IFS.

<sup>18</sup> STEM: science, technology, engineering and math. Others: agriculture, gastronomy, medicine and nutrition.

personal interest. This raises important questions regarding the importance for youth's employment prospects of having more information and training regarding current and future labour market trends and to what extent the decision of study choice is influenced by productive development trends and opportunities created by labour demand. The answer has both cultural and practical elements in terms of better aligning school and vocational training systems with policies and trends in technology, productive development and employment in the countries.

8. The above is strengthened by the finding that there is a mismatch between what youth have studied and what the labour market demands. Thirty-six percent of youth reported that they did not apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their training to their work. When asked whether their work would require less study than they completed, 39% answered in the affirmative. Surprisingly, these are not unusual findings. Studies in the region that used other methodologies identified a mismatch in a third of cases.
9. Nevertheless, 94% of youth believe that what they studied or are studying will be useful for obtaining a good job and 91% consider that their work experience will crucially or significantly influence their personal success.
10. For youth, modern online job search mechanisms are becoming increasingly important. This was the case for unemployed youth (seeking employment). For survey respondents, job searches through online job placement services are as important as searches through personal contacts. In other words, youth are increasingly using these methods. The effectiveness of these methods is another matter. Among employed youth (those who found a job), personal contacts or direct searches with the employer predominated. Institutionalized searches (online or face-to-face job placement services) played a less important role in this case. Curiously, online searches were more effective than face-to-face job placement searches given that more employed youth reported having found their current job online. This is a message for job placement services, particularly public ones.
11. When choosing or thinking about a job/employment, Latin American youth value: i) a good salary (ranked first); ii) a good work environment;

and iii) having the opportunity to grow in the firm. These considerations are all important for youth. When these results are disaggregated by sex, there are no major variations, except that women valued the opportunity to grow and develop in the firm more and men valued flexible hours and easy access to the workplace more. Nevertheless, when the data were disaggregated by age, there was a considerable difference between the employment expectations of the youngest (15-17) and the oldest (25-29) study cohorts. Social protection and trade union representation become increasingly important as age increases whereas ease of access to the workplace and a warm, friendly work environment becomes less important.

12. Regarding employment expectations, youth expressed a preference for working in their own businesses in the future (69%), although a large percentage (41%) wanted to work in the public sector. Optimism is also observed in terms of how youth perceive their future working conditions: 63% expect to work in an adequate work environment; 66% to fully develop their skills; 64% to have health insurance and a retirement pension; 76% to have a good salary; and 69% to find job satisfaction.
13. In keeping with the trend toward atypical employment relationships, a large percentage of youth hope to work from home (40%) and to have flexible working hours (59%). With respect to status in employment, the results seem to indicate that while youth currently work mainly as employees, they aspire to become own-account workers, to work in their own business locale and to have their pay more closely associated with what they produce. They also want to have occupations that require professional training.
14. In the specific case of Peru, 86% chose the response that they would like to start a business in the future. This percentage declined sharply (14%) when asked if they would start a business in the next 12 months, a question designed to determine whether they had an idea for a business. An even smaller percentage of youth reported currently having a business: just 3% responded that they did. Among the different types of business options offered, only 3% selected a ICT-based business. Youth tended to select options of low productivity and innovation. The data suggest that the limitations of having a formal, well-paid job largely

explain these findings, affecting real aspirations to become entrepreneurs for reasons of vocation and opportunity.

15. New technologies (in the case of Peru) have a limited role in respondents' business ideas. They view them as useful in commercialization and marketing (46% and 23%, respectively) more than in production and automation (23%).
16. With respect to perceptions in terms of the impact of technological changes on employment, 61% of the youth surveyed believe that in the future, the incorporation of new technologies, robotization and automation of processes will affect their employment future. Twenty percent do not think they will affect them while 19% responded that they do not know. Consistent with the overall view mentioned above, 59% believe that these changes will affect them positively. Thirty-one percent are not certain how they will affect them and just 10% believe the effects will be negative.
17. How will it affect? Youth see a clear need for ongoing training in areas or specialities associated with technology (73%). Thirty-three percent of youth believe that the new technologies and automation will enable them to optimize productive processes and work less. Additionally, 29% of youth believe they will become less important because technology may be able to replace what they do. No significant age or gender differences were identified in these findings.
18. Changes in employment will be accompanied by changes in vocational training. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents believe that potential changes in education will affect them to some degree. The six most important changes youth expect are: new teaching methods (51%), new technologies in the classroom (43%), school curricula adapted to new environments (37%), new study programs (35%), a need for more specialization courses (32%) and optimization of students' skills to develop them in specific areas (31%). Additionally, 19% of youth believe that some study programmes will disappear, that there will be younger, more up-to-date teachers (19%), that they will leave the classroom since there will be other learning platforms available (15%), that labour rights will be included in the school curriculum (13%) and even that robots will teach classes.

To summarize, the surveys found that youth of the region were quite optimistic about technological changes and future employment prospects. They also have a high level of awareness that they must make a personal effort to become more educated and better trained to take advantage of future opportunities. A large percentage of respondents, however, decide what to study based on altruism or personal taste rather than on job opportunities and future earnings.

For the high expectations of young men and women to become reality, economies of the region must build a solid base of opportunities in employment, education and social mobility for youth. This requires actions in at least three areas: (1) from the demand side, an environment conducive to investments and businesses is needed to promote entrepreneurship, and policies are essential for development and productive diversification; (2) on the supply side, efforts are needed to raise the quality and relevance of education and vocational training with a view to increasing the employability of youth; and (3) with respect to institutional and labour market infrastructure, it is crucial to strengthen institutional and policy frameworks for youth that analyze prospects (demographic, technological and productive) and put them at the service of youth so that they can make informed career decisions considering the changes in the economy, businesses and society.

Joint efforts in these three areas are the only way to create the structure of opportunities necessary to help young generations improve their economic, political and social participation and to achieve the better future of work to which they aspire while making these young people the indispensable drivers of socioeconomic and policy progress in the region.



## II. Perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean

### 1. Agenda 2030, Youth and Inclusion

Jessica Faieta<sup>19</sup>

The current generation of youth is the largest in history. In many developing countries, over 60% of the population is aged 15 to 24. A third of youth live in countries affected by conflict and many –such as those in our region– are affected by high levels of insecurity and violence. Seventy-five million youth are unemployed. Young political representatives are a small minority. Youth have limited access to public institutional mechanisms and have difficulty finding and keeping a job. In the consultations for designing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, youth clearly expressed their aspirations for the future. They want quality education, decent work, honest, transparent governments and more active participation in decision-making. Their opinions should be taken into account.

Latin American and Caribbean countries currently have a young population, for which reason they still enjoy a “demographic dividend,” which should be strengthened. Youth are a positive source of transformative change and key actors in sustainable, inclusive development. Their opportunities to communicate, act or influence are unprecedented but so are the challenges they face. Challenges range from climate change to unemployment and multiple forms of inequality and exclusion, particularly for those belonging to vulnerable or disenfranchised groups such as indigenous and Afro-descendant youth. Of the total population of 156 million aged 15 to 29 in the region, 39% live in poverty; youth unemployment is approximately 17%; and 20% of youth aged 15 to 24 neither study nor work. Additionally, education systems in the region have limited inclusiveness. The challenge of employability of youth in a world of profound technological change must be addressed.

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<sup>19</sup> Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme of (UNDP).

It is crucial, then, to use a comprehensive approach to address the challenges and problems of youth. In framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNDP (UNDP)<sup>20</sup> stresses the growing need for more integrated policy actions and a multidimensional approach for action. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the notion of multidimensional progress helps address development problems that transcend income thresholds, basic needs or deprivations. It means guaranteeing social protection systems throughout the life cycle, raising employment standards, improving the quality of social services, expanding access to care systems, ensuring gender parity, recognizing the multicultural and plurinational rights of peoples and communities, improving public safety, protecting the environment, ensuring access to renewable energies and strengthening resilience to natural disasters.

In keeping with the priorities of the United Nations system, the UNDP has recognized youth as a key group for advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for generating effective inclusion processes. To this end, it has developed a youth strategy with three pillars: 1) increased economic empowerment of youth; 2) increased civic commitment and participation of youth in decision-making, political life and public institutions; and 3) strengthening of the participation of youth in building resilience.

For youth's socioeconomic empowerment, decent work and the creation of livelihoods are key factors. This means increasing the number of jobs for youth –with a focus on those who face the most difficulties with inclusion: young women, indigenous and Afro-descendent youth and youth living in rural and marginal-urban areas. It also requires raising the quality of employment and increasing access to social protection. Support for entrepreneurial initiatives through access to financing and markets is also needed – with training for young entrepreneurs, especially young women – as is support for social enterprises and public-private job opportunities.

Entrepreneurship emerges as a clear alternative to improve opportunities for youth, particularly in a context of high unemployment. To take advantage of this potential, there is an urgent need to rethink policies designed to facilitate youth's entry into the work force, as the UNDP and the ILO stated in a joint report presented at the XXV Ibero-American Summit last October.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> UNDP (2016). *Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean: Multidimensional Progress: Human Resilience Beyond Income*. [http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human\\_development/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-para-america-latina-y-e.html](http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human_development/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-para-america-latina-y-e.html)

<sup>21</sup> ILO and UNDP (2016). *Promoting Entrepreneurship and Youth Social Innovation in Latin America*. Lima: ILO and PNUD.





Socioeconomic inclusion should be accompanied by more and better political participation, however. Empowered, committed youth should be encouraged to become involved in civic life and participate in political processes. When youth understand and assume the defense of their rights, they can become empowered to participate in civil society, the public administration and political life at all levels. They should strengthen their ability to express their demands through existing channels –and new and innovative participatory mechanisms should be created– to exercise their political and civil rights and contribute to decision-making processes that influence their lives and that of their societies.

Youth are also agents for community resilience. Early measures to stabilize their livelihoods build resilience and support social cohesion. They also provide alternatives such as prevention of conflicts for high-risk youth. Youth can also mobilize around disaster-preparedness, educational and post-disaster activities, for example, by administering natural resources, mobilizing communities via new technologies, acquiring peacebuilding skills or supporting efforts to reduce sexual violence.

Bringing innovation and youth together contributes to identifying solutions to development problems and transforming our societies. “Youth should be seen as one of the most valuable parts of the current human and social capital in the region, as subjects and relevant stakeholders, as a strategic and essential factor for sustainable development and for progress towards a more just and inclusive Latin America and Caribbean, in which *no one is left behind*.”<sup>22</sup>

April 2017

## 2. Youth and the Future of Work

Jorge Sequeira<sup>23</sup>

### 2.1 Introduction

Structural youth unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean is having repercussions on demographics, society, the economy, the environment, health and policies. This phenomenon is even more acute in some countries given the growing

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Regional Director of Education of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) for Latin America and the Caribbean.

number of workers with limited skills. At the same time, climate change, natural and manmade disasters and problems associated with biodiversity, together with the increased digitalization of society and the economy, are having a major impact on the region. These processes are creating new opportunities for youth and the future of work –including green, low-carbon jobs and products and services associated with information and communication technologies (ICTs) – generating a need for new skills and training opportunities.

## 2.2 Youth in education, training and the world of work in Latin America and the Caribbean: key challenges

While figures vary considerably among countries, in general, the region has experienced a gradual increase in education levels since the 1980s. The current generation of youth (15-24) is the most highly educated in history: young people today have spent more years in formal education and are likely to be more literate than their parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, these positive trends cannot hide the existence of pockets of youth whose access to secondary education and training remain limited, especially for people living in poverty, those in rural areas and those belonging to minority ethnic groups. Thus, the official figure of 74.1% of net enrolment in secondary education –compared with 62.7% in 2000– hides important differences within and between countries.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, many youths receive a poor-quality education that neither prepares them for life as full, equal citizens nor gives them access to decent work.

This unequal access to education and pertinent learning occurs in a context of growing levels of youth unemployment, which began to increase in 2013 and is three times higher, on average, than the adult unemployment rate of 15.3% in 2015.<sup>25</sup> Nearly 30 million youth in the region neither study nor work, 15% of whom have no clear reason for being in that situation. Much of this “hard core” of excluded youth are urban men aged 15 to 19 and low-income groups.<sup>26</sup> Within the group of youth who are not studying, working or in training, girls and women are the most affected: many are excluded from school and the labour market by their family responsibilities and socio-cultural expectations.

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<sup>24</sup> OREACL and UNESCO (2014). *Revisión Regional 2015 de Educación para Todos*.

<sup>25</sup> OREALC and UNESCO (2017). *La Enseñanza y Formación Técnico Profesional en América Latina y El Caribe: una perspectiva regional hasta 2030*.

<sup>26</sup> Trucco D. and Ullmann H. (2015). *Jóvenes: realidades y retos para un desarrollo con igualdad*, Santiago de Chile: ECLAC.



## 2.3 What is being done?

Many countries of the region have fallen into the “middle-income country trap.” In other words, their relatively high wages impede them from competing with the low-cost labour force of developing countries, yet their workers cannot compete with the highly specialized human resources of more developed countries. To address this problem, countries need to structurally transform their economies, diversify their production models, transition to knowledge- and skills-based economic models, and, most importantly, increase their capacity for innovation. These changes could be a key opportunity for youth of Latin America and the Caribbean, whose overall education level and immersion in a “connected” world would put them in a favourable position to participate in the building of new and dynamic societies and economies. Two sectors –which in many cases overlap– have especially high potential: the industries of sustainability and the digital economy.

The green economy breaks the link between economic growth and the unsustainable use of natural resources by using inclusive, integrated production models that consider social and environmental variables. This forward-looking paradigm has significant strategic importance in the medium and long term for the Latin America and Caribbean region. Industries such as extraction, which are heavily dependent on natural resources, have dominated the economies of many countries of the region. Green jobs can range from recycling, renewable energy, organic farming and conservation to the environmentally-friendly production of goods and services. Support to the region should focus on reducing disaster risk, a related sector with growing opportunities. In a region that is vulnerable to earthquakes, floods, tidal waves and fires, youth are increasingly called upon to use their knowledge and skills to help mitigate those risks.

Digital technologies such as cellphones, the Internet and other technologies that compile, store, analyze and share information are transforming our lives. The digital economy has been defined as focused on “supporting infrastructure, electronic business processes (how business is conducted) and electronic commerce transactions (selling of goods and services online),”<sup>27</sup> and the “digital society” as a “modern, progressive society formed as a result of the adoption and integration of information and communication technologies at home, work, education and recreation” (definition of the Information Technology Authority of the Sultanate of Oman). The Digital Economy and Society Index of the European Commission identifies five dimensions

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27 Mesenbourg, T. (undated). *Measuring the Digital Economy*. US Census Bureau.

of competitiveness<sup>28</sup>: connectivity, human capital, Internet usage, digital technology and digital public services. Clearly, investing in “digitalizing” the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean can potentially stimulate innovation, promote efficiency and improve the quality of services in a wide range of economic sectors, in many cases with added benefits for sustainability. As pioneering users of technology, young people as a group are at the forefront of the digital revolution and have a key role in the production and consumption of digital goods and services.

## 2.4 What needs to be done?

Ensuring that the opportunities for green jobs and the digital economy are equitably distributed and benefit all youth in Latin America and the Caribbean regardless of their sex, socioeconomic status, residence or ethnic group, will require education and training systems to promote the development of relevant, pertinent skills. These include analytical skills, as well as the capacity to innovate and apply information to new contexts. The skills of the future –for whose development the youth of today need support– include not only generic ICT skills for using the technologies in their daily work, but also specialized skills for sustainable, technology-based products and services, in addition to a wide range of complementary skills: information processing, problem-solving, communication and strategic planning. Youth should also be motivated to develop the skills to actively participate in the creation of sustainable societies based on equality and respect for oneself, others and the environment.

Finally, this new skill set for the labour market of the twenty-first century should be accompanied by certification systems that support the recognition and validation of learning, including digital credit systems such as open, online “credentials.” These systems should enable employers to recognize the skills that youth have acquired through formal and informal means. The goal is to stimulate youth’s participation in multiple forms of life-long learning, which will have positive effects on their capacity for innovation.

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<sup>28</sup> European Commission (2017). The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi>

### 3. Youth and The Future: A Populational Perspective

Esteban Caballero<sup>29</sup>

Between 1970 and 2015, the Latin American and Caribbean region experienced major changes, with consequences for the future of the region. We are referring to contraceptives, whose use rose from 35.8% in 1970 to 72.7% in 2015. This change led to a decline in the global fertility rate, from 5.1 children per woman in 1970 to 2.2 in 2015, which eventually had an impact on the age distribution of the population.

The global fertility rate has declined, reducing the growth rate of the population. This has led demographers to focus on the key question of how to respond to the growing importance of cohorts of adolescents, youth and young adults. Planners are exploring ways to take advantage of the demographic dividend.

Today, however, while this window of opportunity continues to be open for several countries, the argument in favour of investing in adolescents and youth should consider the different realities in the region. For many countries, the demographic dividend period is closing or will close by 2025, at the latest; others have an open window until 2035; and a small group will have an open window until 2065. Exploiting the demographic dividend will be more important in some cases than in others. In the future, however, the concern about youth will be in a “post-dividend” context.

When we reach 2030 and attempt to evaluate the achievements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the percentage of individuals over age 60 will have increased from 11% to 17% of the total population. The group aged 15-59 will account for 62% of the total population, while that of individuals under age 15 will have declined to 21%. During the 2030 Agenda period, youth will have to become more aware of the dependence of older adults. Youth will ask themselves: “What are the jobs that will enable us to maintain this new cohort of dependents? How should we spend our earnings? What type of social protection will we need to avoid expanding the ranks of older, dependent adults without protection, such as the case of large groups of elderly adults today?”

The region is also reaching a crossroads in terms of both important public achievements and key pending issues. Achievements include the overall improvement in the

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<sup>29</sup> Political scientist. Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

population's health. Between 1950 and 1955, life expectancy for women rose from 35 to 70 years, depending on the country; for 2015-2020, the rate is expected to range from 65 to 85 years. This reflects a series of improvements in basic health and other factors of well-being. Another important stride is the increase in the average years of education and the fact that education rates are similar for both sexes. Gender equality is associated with the increase in women's participation in the labour market given that it has strengthened the contribution of women to the labour force. This has generated the so-called gender dividend, in other words, the additional household income produced by women, which has helped reduce poverty.

The main problem the region has faced in the past –can currently faces– is inequality. All the trends mentioned here are segmented and reveal important gaps, whether by quintile of poverty, area of residence, ethnicity, race, age or sex, among others. Adolescents and youth in rural areas do not have the same opportunities in terms of quality secondary education. Education in public schools is much less effective for low-income adolescents. Women living in poverty, those in rural areas, indigenous women, adolescents, etc. have not had equal access to contraceptives and the consequent reduction in fertility rates. Additionally, informal, low-income, low-productivity employment has impeded many young people from being able to formally enter the labour force and to truly generate social mobility or access to a social protection system. This problem affects women disproportionately. The result is the limited capacity of the system to absorb young people.

A pending issue that cannot be ignored is youth who neither study nor work (NEETs). There is a major gender gap in this group given that 71.4% of female NEETs perform housework whereas just 15% of male NEETs do so. Within the NEET group, 44% are involved in “other” activities. Adolescent pregnancy is another problem in the region given that fertility rates among women aged 15 to 19 are the highest in the world after those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Violence is also an issue since homicide rates in the region are considerably above global rates, disproportionately affecting men, with a growing incidence among adolescents and youth. This phenomenon is associated with the difficulties in identifying suitable channels for obtaining a first job or starting a business, the existence of gangs, organized crime, poverty and poor education quality, among other causes.

There is considerable consensus that many of these phenomena drive migratory flows. In general, youth who do not see a future in their countries of origin are the ones who decide to try their luck someplace else. Some 28 million people from the region live in countries other than their own. Today, these migrants help generate income

by sending remittances. The concern here is the sustainability of this escape valve in these times of low growth and increasing xenophobia in wealthier nations.

Based on the above discussion, we can make some recommendations with respect to youth and their future. We must focus on the basics, in other words, education, health and employment as core components of social inclusion. It may seem like hackneyed rhetoric, but only a healthy, educated young population that is employed or otherwise generating income can bring well-being and prosperity to society. In this new age, young people's capacity to care for others will be determined by the income they have available to care for their elders, parents and grandparents, who should be considered in their life plans and public policy options. Clearly, those youth will depend on diversified economic and social structures for employment opportunities that are not dependent on one or a restricted set of commodities and their economic cycles.

Households and gender relations also must become more equitable. Today there is an imbalance with respect to women's participation in the labour market and the division of unpaid work. Currently, the bias favours men. The new generations, households, couples and families should strive to share roles and ensure more equitable responsibilities than currently. This equality will help family units or households progress much more effectively, thereby guaranteeing the well-being of their members.

Education reform is an indispensable pillar for change. We should consider education for work, problem-solving and research capacity, life skills, bargaining and conflict resolution skills, a high level of math and reading skills in more than one language not as ideals but as necessary targets.

Finally, we should clarify that when discussing youth, we are talking about adolescents, those 112 million young people aged 11 to 19 who represent 18% of the total population.<sup>30</sup> This is a life stage of great policy importance. There is no future for youth if we do not design a policy packet specifically for this age group. Currently, adolescence as a life stage has not garnered enough interest among decision-makers, which is apparent in the social policies of the region. While the importance of guaranteeing strategic protection in early childhood, such as access to micronutrients, vaccines, early stimulation and others is undeniable, the problem is that the achievements obtained in this first stage can be lost in the next. If we manage to save a child from malnutrition in early childhood, why do we deny him, as an adolescent, access

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30 United Nations (2015). World Population Prospects, the 2015 Revision. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/world-population-prospects-2015-revision.html>

to a quality secondary education? The question seems obvious, but unfortunately it is valid.

We need to include this discussion in the framework of the 2030 Agenda because adolescents play a secondary role within the youth population since older youth tend to lead youth movements, leaving adolescents in the background. As a result, youth policies have tended to prioritize university students, youth over age 20, who have more voice than their younger peers.

March 2017

## 4. Youth and The Future of Work in Latin America and The Caribbean: The Challenge of Inequality

Laís Abramo

Heidi Ullmann<sup>31</sup>

Latin America and the Caribbean currently have 162 million youth aged 15 to 29, representing more than a quarter of the total population. The discussions on the demographic transition that the region is experiencing frequently focus on the economic and social impact and pressures associated with the aging of the population. While the percentage of youth will continue to decline, youth will have higher levels of education than previous generations and more familiarity with digital technologies. How can that education and those skills be adapted to the new realities and demands generated by the rapid changes of the fourth Industrial Revolution? Will youth have the necessary tools to become agents of productive change and protagonists of sustainable development?

Technological changes have dramatically transformed our societies and economies: from the way in which we communicate and how we access and transmit information to the growing inclusion of technology in production and the automation of work. It is difficult to predict the magnitude of the impact of these technological advances, but this new scenario will require a new skill set as well as the continual acquisition of new skills. In effect, the capacity for response and adaptation to technological advances will characterize the future of work for youth in the region. This panorama should

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<sup>31</sup> Laís Abramo is Director of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Heidi Ullmann is Social Affairs Officer at ECLAC.





consider the specific economic and social characteristics of Latin America and the Caribbean, which include a highly segmented structure, low levels of investment in innovation, high levels of informality in the labour market and profound social inequalities that affect the opportunities of individuals throughout the life cycle.

As ECLAC<sup>32</sup> has pointed out, persistently high levels of inequality and poverty incur not only personal costs for the individual, but also social and economic costs for society. In recent years, inequality has declined in the region, but high levels persist. This threatens development and is a major obstacle to universal access of youth to a quality education, opportunities for building career paths and successfully entering the labour force with decent work— in quality productive jobs, with higher earnings, access to rights and social protection. Additionally, an analysis of ECLAC's (2016a)<sup>33</sup> social inequality matrix demonstrates that the inequalities that youth face combine with socioeconomic, gender, ethnic-racial and geographic inequalities, strengthening and locking them into the life cycle. That analytical perspective reveals the multiple factors of inequality and discrimination that interact in a simultaneous, cumulative manner in the lives of youth in areas that are crucial for their full economic and social inclusion.

Although Latin America has recorded significant advances in education access and coverage, particularly in primary education, gaps persist in attendance and completion of secondary school by socioeconomic level of the household, ethnicity-race and area of residence. The figures speak for themselves: while 80% of youth from households in the fifth income quintile will complete secondary school, just 34% of youth in the first income quintile will do so (ECLAC, 2016b).<sup>34</sup> A quarter of rural indigenous adolescents aged 12 to 17 have already dropped out of school while the figure for non-indigenous adolescents living in urban areas is one in 10.<sup>35</sup> These gaps are even more pronounced at the level of tertiary education. Universal education has little purpose if nothing is done to reverse the gaps in education quality and students' academic performance. There is a strong socioeconomic stratification in academic results for math and reading, and a large percentage of students from the lower socioeconomic levels have not developed the most basic skills in those areas.<sup>36</sup> With respect

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32 ECLAC (2015). *Inclusive Social Development. The Next Generation of Policies for Overcoming Poverty and Reducing Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

33 ECLAC (2016a). *The Social Inequality Matrix in Latin America*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

34 ECLAC (2016b). *2015 Social Panorama of Latin America*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

35 ECLAC (2016a).

36 Trucco, D. (2014). *Educación y desigualdad en América Latina*. Serie Políticas Sociales, June. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

to information and communication technologies (ICTs), while recent generations have reversed gender gaps, and young women now lead in Internet usage, gaps persist in terms of place of residence, education level and quintile of household income.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, inequalities exist in the type of Internet usage, thus affecting the skills that youth can develop. Throughout the school-age years, gender gaps persist: women are much less likely than men to study engineering, math and other areas associated with technology, which will be important in the labour market of the future.

These gaps hinder the ability of many youth to acquire the skills the labour market of the future will require and constitute an obstacle for exploiting their potential to benefit society. Additionally, the potential impact of these technological changes on the labour market may deepen social inequalities. Thus, decisive action must be taken to reduce inequalities that youth face to respond to the challenges and uncertainties of the future labour market.

First, we should discuss how education systems, which in many cases are based on 20th-century models, can prepare youth for the new labour market realities *without leaving anyone behind*, as established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These systems should also serve as a mechanism for equalizing opportunities. To this end, the quality of education and vocational training must be improved, as well as their relevance to address the mismatch between the skills and knowledge youth acquire and what the labour market needs and values. This demands increased ties between education and professional and technical education and job training programmes with production sectors. It does not mean that the education system should be solely at the service of the labour market. Beyond the specific skills the labour market of the future requires, education systems should emphasize skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and democratic co-existence, as well as soft skills such as leadership, communication, management and negotiation.<sup>38</sup>

Changes in the education system should be accompanied by modifications in the productive structure and the expansion of decent work opportunities given that, despite their higher levels of education, today's youth have high rates of unemployment, job instability and informality. Beyond ethical considerations, a rights-based or economic perspective, the fact that there will be fewer workers in the future makes it

<sup>37</sup> Pavez, I. (2016). *Niñas y mujeres de América Latina en el mapa tecnológico: una mirada de género en el marco de políticas públicas de inclusión digital*. Cuaderno SITEAL. <http://eduteka.icesi.edu.co/pdfdir/siteal-wom-en-mapa-tecnologico.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Sevilla, MP. (2017). *Panorama de educación técnica profesional en América Latina y el Caribe*. Serie Políticas Sociales, January. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.



imperative that there is increased openness and possibilities for access to high quality employment for youth who have traditionally experienced discrimination and exclusion in the labour market, such as young women, indigenous and Afro-descendent youth, disabled youth and those living in rural areas. With respect to young women, it is important to adopt measures to ensure that their educational achievements are reflected in their entry into the work force.

The policies and institutions regulating the labour market, as well as social dialogue mechanisms, play a key role in overcoming these challenges. Some examples include policies to set the minimum wage and to equalize wages for men and women; strategies to formalize work; job placement services capable of responding to the specific characteristics and needs of youth; programmes to create direct employment and business subsidies designed to create jobs for youth; affirmative action measures for hiring youth, especially those who are vulnerable to multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination; and the promotion of respect for labour rights – including the right to unionization and collective bargaining. Moreover, policies are needed to support conciliation of paid employment with domestic and care responsibilities as part of social protection systems.

Finally, the future of work for many youth in the region will continue to include migration, both to countries that have historically received high levels of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants as well as to new destination countries. In an uncertain geopolitical context, it is especially critical to safeguard the rights of young immigrants, regardless of their legal status, particularly their right to decent work and social protection.

Many of the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development prioritize the full incorporation of youth into the labour market as a necessary condition for transitioning to more equitable societies on the path toward sustainable development. Reducing inequality is not only an explicit target, but also a prerequisite for achieving all other targets. We must invest now to be able to address the challenges that the labour market of the future will present and to guarantee that youth can sustain our economies and our future societies.

April 2017

## 5. Young People and the Future of Work

Senator Esther Byer-Suckoo<sup>39</sup>

The full and decent employment of youth is a critical issue facing the entire Latin American and Caribbean region. Today's youth are intelligent, well-informed and attuned to their environment. They want social inclusion as well as participation in the decision-making process and policy makers must be prepared to engage them in any meaningful sustainable developmental strategy that charts the future of their countries.

Young persons, particularly millennials, are growing up in the fourth industrial revolution, with the most far-reaching technological advancements. Their world is the Internet which has revolutionized the way goods and services are bought and sold and where social media platforms connect billions of people across the globe even when mobile. A technologically savvy generation, they have 24-hour access to information on any subject matter.

This rapid on-going technological advancement offers prospects for new and emerging jobs in an array of disciplines such as Biotechnology, Green Energy, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence. At the same time, the smartphone has redefined the workplace and work conditions, offering a flexibility previously unimagined. As in the developed world, the “bricks-and-mortar” workplace may eventually become redundant in this region. An employee's work place might literally be anywhere. From a bus or the centre of a shopping mall or halfway around the world, the modern worker can send and receive e-mails, participate in online meetings and collaborate on company reports in real time, at any time.

These advances are also impacting business processes in many sectors because of the need to improve efficiencies and save money, time and energy. Businesses are encouraged to adopt green technologies and develop adaptive and mitigative responses to climate change. In the Caribbean, new techniques are being adopted in sectors such as agriculture and tourism which are vulnerable to natural disasters resulting from climate change. The renewable energy sector is also developing in the region. These create new jobs and offer opportunities for young people with the appropriate training and skills.

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<sup>39</sup> Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development of Barbados.

It is therefore essential for governments to make significant investment in training in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Green Technologies. The possibilities are diverse and include areas such as Animation, Mobile App Development, Social Media Management, Data Security, Photovoltaics, Greenhouse Management, Solar Energy and Ecotourism. Already there is a premium on hiring employees with such skills.

Yet, in spite of these opportunities, there still exists some sobering challenges that prevent youth reaching their full potential through decent and productive employment. Throughout the region, the youth unemployment rate is high compared to the global figure and is more than double that of the general population. Several reasons are advanced by social and economic planners for this. They include:

- ▶ Lack of qualifications and skills demanded by employers;
- ▶ Lack of adequate work experience;
- ▶ Poor work attitudes and other soft skills;
- ▶ Poor guidance on labour demands and availability; and
- ▶ Macroeconomic factors associated with high general unemployment

The consequences of high levels of youth unemployment are serious at the individual, household and national level. Some young persons may be compelled to accept non-standard employment or employment in the informal sector where social protection and the regulation of working conditions is either limited or non-existent. Unemployed or underemployed youth may become frustrated, hopeless and depressed. Low self-esteem may result in them disengaging from the labour market and even resorting to deviant behaviours that can result in bodily harm, high crime rates and the decline of communities, all with an economic impact.

It is therefore critical that at the national and regional levels, all practical measures are taken to tackle youth unemployment. Caribbean youth surveyed concluded that the education system did not prepare them adequately for the world of work, including soft skills, and that having a qualification did not guarantee a job. Therefore, the relationship between the education system and the preparation of youth for the world of work should be strengthened. The quality of the education must be improved and the needs of employers in industry must be incorporated into the design of relevant curricula, especially in technical and vocational areas of study. From supplying information on skills needs and job vacancies, to providing internships or apprenticeships, employers are integral in transforming education and training systems from being

supply-driven to being demand-driven. While governments focus on economic growth which will prepare jobs for youth, the youth must also be prepared for jobs.

As employers require youth to have work experience, internships and apprenticeships are invaluable. Through such systems, youth would be exposed to the discipline of being held accountable for their actions, meeting deadlines and commitments and working in teams. These are the attributes today's employers seek, and persons possessing only technical know-how will find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when compared to their well-rounded colleagues. This issue therefore needs to be emphasized by all agencies that bear some responsibility for youth development, whether Government department, training institution, public employment service or social organization.

The employment needs of at-risk youth is a special area that must be actively addressed. Employment initiatives must target such youth and provide them with skills that they could use to either obtain employment or become an entrepreneur. Such initiatives should expose them to practical workforce skills and life skills such as conflict resolution, problem solving, time management and budgeting. Youth with disabilities also require special considerations if they are to be fully integrated into the workforce and the society.

Microenterprises offer an avenue for reducing youth unemployment and must be supported. In addition to structured employment opportunities, young risk-takers and innovators can reap significant economic rewards by dedicating their talents towards business ventures, particularly utilizing ICT and social media. This has not however been widely successful in this region. Our youth identify that this is because school does not teach them business skills or even help them to hone the entrepreneurial spirit. They also say that it is difficult to access any funds earmarked for microenterprise development. Policy makers must first hear and acknowledge these concerns because these can be easily remedied by policy intervention. Youth must therefore be taken seriously, engaged in dialogue with policy-makers and their views and opinions sought. Guidance counsellors, teachers, parents and public employment officials must not only apprise them of labour market needs, but also listen to their aspirations and needs to give better advice.

Harnessing the skills, talents and abilities of young persons for the benefit of the Latin American and Caribbean region is a challenge from which we cannot afford to resile. Our youth are the ones who would have to carry forward the agenda to tackle the problems of poverty, hunger and inequality. Theirs is the generation to utilize new technologies to solve our national and regional problems and to take advantage of ICT and



globalization in order to increase the market share of their countries and the region. Whether through employment or entrepreneurship, we must work with youth to find ways to include them in the society and have them contribute to the economy. Then they will prove to be a force for greater efficiency, enhanced productivity, competitiveness and economic development for the region.

## 6. Holding the Reins of Change: Ibero-American Youth and the Future of Work

Max Trejo Cervantes<sup>40</sup>

Ibero-American youth live in a region facing serious problems with inclusion and social cohesion. Resolving these difficulties requires the sustained integration of the principles of solidarity, plurality and participation. Youth are called upon to carry out this task but they need the conditions to do so. Heterogenous, interconnected and global youth are needed to drive global changes at the same time they influence their local environments. These are youth who demand and develop permanent mechanisms of participation from which they can exercise a leading role in the collective construction of the present and future.

To address this issue and acknowledge the influence of youth in decision-making processes, the National Youth Forums were held in 2016 as part of an open process of constructing the Ibero-American Youth Pact. Eight thousand youth actively participated in these forums to identify the problems that affect them and define concrete actions to address them. One demand shared by youth at these events was the optimal development of youth employment in today's rapidly-changing environment.

To respond to this and other challenges prioritized by youth, during the XXV Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, the Ibero-American Youth Pact was adopted as a roadmap to guide policies, programmes and initiatives designed to improve the living conditions of youth and to promote a more just future for the region. This policy-institutional agreement is based on a social pact that recognizes and promotes the importance of decent work in inclusive, sustainable development, and especially in the autonomous realization of identities and life projects.

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40 Secretary-General of the International Organization for Ibero-American Youth (OIJ, in Spanish).

To discuss this issue, we must ask the following questions: How can we take advantage of young people's skills to transform the obstacles that impede their inclusion in the world of work into opportunities? How can we strengthen the key role of youth in development from a standpoint of diversity, connectivity and *globalization* that underlies their ability to drive change? How can we promote social dialogue and inter-sector, multi-actor alliances to help guarantee decent work for youth? These questions are based on the agreements of the Ibero-American Youth Pact and serve as a guide for the discussion below.

## 6.1 Maximizing opportunities to confront the challenges of change

Employment is a right recognized in different international instruments ratified by Latin American countries. Specifically, the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth urges Member States to guarantee the special protection of youth, implementing the measures necessary to achieve equal opportunities and treatment with respect to labour force entry, remuneration, promotion, working conditions and options for job creation.<sup>41</sup>

The region faces many challenges in making the goal of equality a reality, however. These include: a high rate of youth unemployment (18.3%),<sup>42</sup> which triples that of adults and especially affects disadvantaged youth; informality; insecurity; a lack of social protection and the low quality of jobs available to youth; inadequate conditions for the development of innovation and entrepreneurship; and a marked gender gap, which places young women at a disadvantage.<sup>43</sup>

In a global context characterized by the digital economy, Latin America faces the challenge of transitioning to an inclusive, knowledge-based development model conducive to innovation, which reduces the gap between available and needed skills, as well as the abundance of skills susceptible to automation. This means that policies should be implemented to train human capital in accordance with global demands, placing the youth population at the centre. It means acknowledging the current paradox reflected in the existence of 70% of youth who are underqualified for quality jobs even though they belong to the most educated generation in history.

<sup>41</sup> OIJ (2005). *Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth*.

<sup>42</sup> ILO (2016). *2016 Labour Overview*. Lima: ILO.

<sup>43</sup> OECD, ECLAC and CAF (2016). *2017 Latin American Economic Outlook: Youth, Skills and Entrepreneurship*. Paris: OECD. ILO and UNDP (2016). *Promoting Entrepreneurship and Youth Social Innovation in Latin America*. Panama: ILO and UNDP.



The above, as mentioned in 30% of the agreements of the Ibero-American Youth Pact, requires activities that facilitate the school-work transition; promote all phases of entrepreneurship to increase youth's possibilities for success; stimulate innovation through on-the-job training; encourage scientific thought, experimenting with and applying the knowledge produced; and contribute to increasing the influence of disadvantaged groups such as young women and disabled youth.

Above all, the potential of the region should be maximized by considering youth a major agent of change. This means taking advantage of the current demographic dividend represented by the 160 million youth who make up a quarter of the total population of the region. It also means strengthening this generation that embodies and experiences with greater intensity the changes occurring in the world, being, at the same time, their most important implementer. Youth need to participate in initiatives designed to prepare for the future. They should be acknowledged as active participants rather than as passive subjects and recipients of policies.

## **6.2 The Latin American youth population: diverse, interconnected, transformative**

Youth of the region represent an exceptional opportunity to successfully address the changes occurring in the world of work and the challenges they present since young people are more interconnected and trained in the use of digital technologies than their elders. They are curious, critical and continually learning. They demand autonomy, the power to make decisions and the freedom to create. They also participate in many decentralized projects, simultaneously linking local and global issues and actors.<sup>44</sup>

One experience that takes on this challenge is the OIJ Programme, “Learn by Doing. Youth and Computer Sciences,” which invites youth with leadership skills to strengthen their digital skills through practice and exchange. This strengthens their experience so they can subsequently replicate what they have learned in their communities. This programme, which is part of a larger initiative to promote the active participation of digital youth leaders, prioritizes young women and disabled youth to work for change from a perspective of diversity.

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<sup>44</sup> Deloitte (2017), *The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2017. Apprehensive millennials seeking stability and opportunities in an uncertain world.*

### 6.3 Social dialogue that puts youth on centre stage

To effectively address these challenges requires enabling youth to realize their full potential to benefit social transformation. To achieve this, the youth focus must first be mainstreamed in policies, programmes and initiatives relevant to young lives, linking the different sectors in integrated activities with a view to the future.

This requires strengthening social dialogue which, in the framework of the principle of co-responsibility, contributes to the efforts of governments, civil society, academia and the private sector to multiply results from a platform that promotes communication and favours collective commitments. Today, this strategy (the OIJ's International Co-operative Alliance for Youth) is essential for promoting well-being and collaborative development using 21st-century policy tools.

The world needs dynamic, up-to-date frameworks of understanding to address challenges, identify trends and act firmly to ensure that the advances made by the digital revolution favour inclusion and social cohesion. Discouraging statistics and formulas that have failed in the past cannot be repeated. To hold the reins of change together with youth, the realities and skills of young people must be considered when taking a step towards the future.

April 2017

## 7. The Future is Today: Challenges for Labour and Employment Policies for Youth in Mexico

José Manuel Romero Coello<sup>45</sup>

### 7.1 One. The challenge of putting youth on centre stage

For decades now, experts of different disciplines have discussed and developed conceptual definitions and methodologies for the population aged 12 to 29. Although we are still trying to determine whether these years are simply a biological phase before adulthood or a period during which people diversely and dynamically construct certain moments of the lifecycle, we cannot deny the recognition of youth as agents and actors of social change. Thus, they must be incorporated into the world of work

<sup>45</sup> President of the Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE, in Spanish). Written in collaboration with Juan Carlos Narváez, Gabriela Medina, Luis Fernando Cervantes and Mónica Valdez, officers of IMJUVE.

considering their full creative and productive potential and integrating their skills as drivers of generational change.<sup>46</sup>

Today people often speak about recognizing youth, their right to participate and to be considered, respecting their diversity, complexity, autonomy, gender, cultural identity and generational interests. This was the fruit of a historical struggle with a world built from the perspective of adults.

Not only have youth as subjects and social actors joined this integrating vision, but international organizations and civil society, together with governments and their institutions, have built consensus around the focus on the development and future of the young population.<sup>47</sup>

A noteworthy example of recent efforts to achieve integrated development on a global scale is the Sustainable Development Summit, where the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted. For the first time, these goals focus on youth in terms of inclusion and their role in economic development.

Specifically, SDG 8 seeks to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. To this end, the agenda recommends developing public policies to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all individuals, including young people and the disabled, and equal pay for work of equal value. The challenge is to substantially reduce the numbers of youth who are not employed, in school or in training and to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and guarantee the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, protecting the labour rights of all workers.

Youth should be at the centre of public policies to develop effective responses and alternatives to promote stability through formalization and the transition to dignified jobs and to redesign study programmes and skills training based on innovative labour demand. The initiatives of international organizations and other actors call upon each country to make decisions in this area. It is the role of governments to build strategic partnerships to benefit youth, to “de-objectify” young people and to make them

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<sup>46</sup> Vázquez Díaz, P. (2012). *¿Qué es la perspectiva de juventud? Guía para el Debate*. <http://www.espolea.org/juventud/gpd-qu-es-la-perspectiva-de-juventud>

<sup>47</sup> Alaimo, V., Bosch, M., Kaplan, D. K., Pagés, C., & Ripaní, L. (2015). *Jobs for Growth*. Inter-American Development Bank. ILO and ECLAC (2012). *The Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*. *Youth Employment: Crisis and Recovery*. Bulletin ECLAC-ILO N° 7. Santiago de Chile: ILO and ECLAC.

agents, authors and participants of their public policies, as well as to reassess youth in the present rather than simply create expectations for so-called adulthood.

Two years ago, the Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE, in Spanish) asked us to design public policies for youth that would respond to questions such as: Where are youth and what do they do? What should we do to ensure that youth develop their full potential? What challenges and opportunities do youth have in terms of entering the world of work? How do they view their present and future? How can we work together to build the path toward sustainable, inclusive growth for future generations?

In this context, we designed plans, programmes and public policies that break with uni-directional, static or inflexible paradigms. Although progress has been made in terms of defining a public policy from a crosscutting youth perspective (Projuventud 2014-2018),<sup>48</sup> innovation is urgently needed to address the needs of the 29.9 million Mexican youth of working age in an integrated, regional manner and with respect for human rights. Through the design and implementation of “Youth Employment: Strategic Alliance for Work and Employment for Youth,” the Mexican government is establishing a precedent to implement a paradigm shift in the concept of work and its pivotal role in empowering Mexican youth.

## 7.2 Two: Current scenario: youth and employment in Mexico

Access to employment is necessary for individuals to satisfy their basic needs and to realize their full personal and professional potential. Today, Mexican youth face a highly precarious employment scenario and the future looks discouraging. While youth unemployment rates in Mexico are relatively low by international standards, these figures hide serious problems that should be prioritized in public policies.

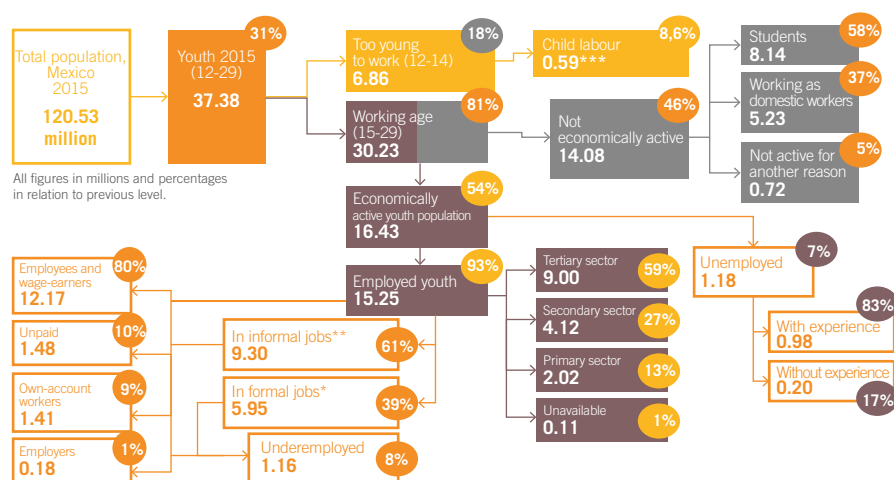
Informality is also rampant as a result of insufficient creation of formal jobs to satisfy the economic needs of youth, where the lack of opportunity combines with poverty to force youth to take the first available job. Their employment does not guarantee them social security benefits, retirement savings or the training and skills required for a successful employment future.

Additionally, youth tend to work in jobs of low productivity and low added-value. This hinders social mobility, trapping them in a vicious cycle of subsistence.

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<sup>48</sup> Projuventud (2014-2018) *Programa Nacional de juventud 2014 – 2018*, Mexican Youth Institute. Government of the Republic of Mexico.

**Figure 7. Overview of Employment of Mexican Youth**



\* Responses calculated based on the expanded survey of the first quarter 2015 ENOE.

\*\* Includes informal employment in the formal sector.

\*\*\* 2013 child labour module for the population aged 10-13.

Source: IMJUVE.

The Mexican labour market reflects a situation of sluggish economic growth with a growing trend toward labour flexibilization, producing a deficit in the creation of formal jobs that limits the possibilities of youth entering the labour force. In response, youth aged 15 to 29 frequently opt for informal employment over unemployment.

In the best of cases, most youth quickly find a job (81% of youth do not remain unemployed for more than three months), which demonstrates that remaining unemployed until they find a better option is not a viable alternative in the unfavourable context in which they live and develop. Most of these jobs come at the expense of quality: they may be informal or formal without social protection and with precarious working conditions.

### 7.3 Three: The need to build an alliance among labour market actors and sectors

Industrial work established analytical dimensions to explain employment relationships. Employment thus became a historic category for studying the changes in the world of work over time. The emergence of concepts such as sub-contracting, flexibilization and informality refer to some of these changes in relationships, which in turn have

called attention to other forms of employment such as domestic work, entrepreneurship, voluntary work and service provision.<sup>49</sup>

In the world of work, we have observed the diverse activities to produce goods or services with social utility that may or may not have economic implications, which are the source of subjective relationships of social integration, construction of identity and/or experience, and that constitute the new range of employment opportunities for youth (15 to 29) on which innovative, non-linear or intermittent career paths can be built.

Accordingly, public policy should prioritize youth as agents with the ability to define how to build their future and to interact with the world of work. All market actors should be incorporated through the promotion and correspondence of skills of individuals and the necessary standards of employment and work. In other words, activities to promote employability must be linked and responses and alternatives developed that facilitate and improve the conditions of youth entering the labour market, as well as their permanence and employment reinsertion in conditions of dignity. Dignified, quality employment means work that allows for skills development in keeping with the principles and rights at work, as well as a fair income proportional to the effort made, with a protection system for employment, promoting social dialogue and non-discrimination.

The initiative “Youth Employment: A Strategic Alliance for Work and Employment for Youth,” recognizes ongoing changes and works to adapt them in terms of both skills and interests of youth and the national, regional and global labour market. This vision is guided by both demand and supply, with youth and firms as actors. It supports the development of labour and employment policies for youth around three core areas or processes identified in the career paths of youth: 1) school-work transition; 2) insertion, reinsertion and permanence; 3) entrepreneurship. Crosscutting themes include social dialogue, inclusion of the youth perspective, the development of job skills, ongoing training and the different scenarios of vulnerability that affect the different career paths and lives of these youth.

1. *Core area 1: school-work transition:* The current economic reality places youth in a vulnerable situation, leading them to accept jobs that do not guarantee their economic stability and have little relation to their

<sup>49</sup> For further information on the conceptualization of work and employment, see De la Garza, E. (2009). *Hacia un concepto ampliado de trabajo*. In J. C. (coords.), Trabajo, empleo, calificaciones profesionales, relaciones de trabajo e identidades laborales (pp. 111-140). CLACSO. Fouquet, A. (1998). *Travail, emploi ou activité?* Université of Paris, Paris. Neffa, J. C. (1999). *Actividad, trabajo y empleo: algunas reflexiones sobre un tema en debate*. Revista Orientación and Sociedad, Vol. 1, 127-162.

experience for subjective jobs or that do not contribute to their professional development. We must revise and strengthen the school-work transition. Linking youth at different points of their life cycle to both worlds (school and work) contributes to improving their employability. Strengthening the school-work transition process involves addressing the following: school abandonment; the lack of work experience; the lack of certifications of work experience; the incompatibility between education supply and labour market demand; the mismatch between young people's skills and the skills their jobs demand; the lack of employees in new employment niches; and inadequate vocational guidance. In response, the Alliance seeks to facilitate and strengthen linkages between school and the labour market to benefit young people's career paths from a diverse, multi-directional perspective that acknowledges the accumulation of knowledge and experience.

2. *Core area 2: insertion, reinsertion and permanence of employment:* Access to paid employment is a livelihood and a means to satisfy personal and/or family needs. It is also an effective strategy for fighting inequality, exclusion and poverty. In Mexico, like in much of the world, youth unemployment rates double those of adults and youth who do find work often have poor quality jobs and a high rate of job insecurity. The ways in which unemployment and precariousness are manifested call for mechanisms that guarantee employment or work differentiated by three dimensions: a) insertion, which refers to the initial job experience of youth; b) reinsertion, which refers to intermittence as a period of inactivity within career paths; and c) permanence in employment, which refers to strategies and mechanisms for ongoing training that provide access to better jobs and more assertive career paths. To this end, the Alliance seeks to coordinate with actors to expand mechanisms of insertion, reinsertion and permanence in work and employment that contribute to the life plans of youth, as well as to the development of dignified, quality career paths.
3. *Core area 3: Entrepreneurship:* Entrepreneurship emerges as a self-employment alternative that give youth the possibility of entering the work force in a way that develops their skills. Self-employment is a trend in many countries around the world as an alternative for the groups most affected by unemployment, especially youth. Entrepreneurship is attractive since it promotes an entrepreneurial culture as

a mechanism for achieving independence, flexibility and innovation for youth who are up-to-date on global and emerging trends. Unfortunately, programmes centred on promoting entrepreneurship to fight poverty often have poor results. This is because youth generally do not have enough investment funds to maintain project viability in highly competitive environments or the experience necessary to ensure their continuity, for which reason their enterprises often fail (Barra, 2015).<sup>50</sup> In response, favourable ecosystems should be established for the creation, development and consolidation of enterprises, which enable youth to build innovative, sustainable career paths.

## 7.4 Four. The future of youth begins today

The design of the Alliance considers the diverse career paths of today's Mexican youth, and breaks with the linear, static approach. It recognizes that youth are involved in discontinuous processes in education and the insertion in formal or informal activities, that they may quit their jobs to return to school and/or training, start a business, combine study and work and thus intermittently explore all their possibilities, exhausting their available resources.

Thus, identifying the work of the future as part of a multi-directional process where youth can join the labour market in different ways and take breaks and subsequently rejoin the labour force, the initiative "Youth Employment: A Strategic Alliance for Work and Employment for Youth," is a labour policy proposal that focuses not only on market operation but also on understanding emerging labour trends to promote quality employment and improve the social well-being of youth, incorporating them as social agents in public policy development. It seeks to consolidate and reassess school and work to strengthen and create synergies between them. It builds a structural framework of actions and actors (employers, government, academia, trade unions, international organizations, experts, civil society and youth) that creates possibilities for career development in the short-, medium- and long term.

Finally, the Alliance is aligned with the objectives and agendas of international organizations to improve employment opportunities of youth in the country and the region. It promotes the increased involvement and commitment of actors of the labour market and society.

April 2007

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<sup>50</sup> Barra, A. (2015). Derechos de las juventudes y políticas públicas. Cuaderno de Investigación. Mexico: Senate/Belisario Domínguez Institute.





## 8. NEET: Neither are Their Skills Recognized nor Are They Given Opportunities

Ernesto Rodríguez<sup>51</sup>

Perceptions concerning the world of work vary significantly if key dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, residence or generation are considered. Men are more concerned about the material conditions of work (remuneration, hours, etc.) while women are mainly interested in the symbolic dimensions (gender discrimination, harassment, etc.) while indigenous or Afro-descendent groups and rural populations have their own characteristics and differences with respect to the white or mestiza population and those living in urban areas, particularly areas with better services and living conditions.

At any rate, what concerns us here is the different perspectives about the future (and the present) of the world of work, of youth and adults, two increasingly distant worlds in almost every respect, especially in terms of employment. In this framework, the adult world is (relatively) concerned about high rates of youth unemployment and under-employment, as well as precarious working conditions of employed individuals. Among youth, there is a prevalence of critical views about the meaning of work in their lives. Work is a much more vital part of the lives of adults and much more relative among youth.

This would not be a cause for concern if there were channels for dialogue and exchange of perspectives to improve generational co-existence in the world of work. However, the reality is that these mechanisms do not exist or are infrequent and precarious. Additionally, stereotyped, even discriminatory visions often predominate, which hinder more than they help. This is the case, for example, of so-called NEETs (youth who neither study nor work). Adults may view them as “slackers,” “good-for-nothings,” and even “guilty until proven innocent,” inverting the basic criteria under which democratic societies operate and where justice rules. In the world of youth, this “category” is viewed from a radically different standpoint: “neither do they recognize our skills nor do they give us opportunities,” shifting responsibility to society and the adult world. While the prevailing stereotypes in the adult world demonstrate consider-

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<sup>51</sup> Uruguayan sociologist, Director of the Latin American Centre on Youth, ([www.celaju.net](http://www.celaju.net)), government advisor and United Nations consultant in public policies for youth and social development.

able irresponsibility, the dominant views among youth reveal maturity and even good judgement.

In a broader sense, these generation “gaps” are associated with public policy design. While for many public institutions (especially those related to social development), youth are simply a “risk group” to assist, there are others (fewer) where youth are –above all– “subjects of rights” and even “strategic actors of development,” where the development and implementation of policies and programmes to promote the inclusion of new generations (among others) differs depending on the approaches used. If they are considered simply a risk group, public policies should prevent these risks (early pregnancy, drug consumption, situations of violence, etc.) and assist them with the resulting consequences. If they are considered subjects of rights, these policies should both guarantee their rights and prevent risks. The risk focus obviously concentrates only on at-risk youth while the rights focus is designed to serve all youth.

All of this becomes even more complex if we consider that youth can (and should) be *strategic actors of development* to the extent that they are a large populational group (in the framework of the demographic dividend) and that they are more and better prepared than adults to lead with the two key characteristics of present-day and future society: ongoing change and the importance of knowledge. If this is the case, the successful entry of youth into the work force (and society) should be based not only on the appropriateness of ensuring the exercise of a right, but also and fundamentally on the pertinence (and relevance) of having generations of youth to drive development in all its dimensions.

Clearly, a key challenge in Latin American development in the coming decades will be the need of our societies to discourage the stereotyped, discriminatory views of youth and to expand and deepen visions that recognize them as *our main source of wealth*, assuming that the inequalities between generations are a central component of the social inequalities existing in the most unequal region in the world, together with income, ethnic and gender inequalities (among others). These inequalities between generations should be at the centre of public policies designed to build more egalitarian societies in the future.

In this context, in the future, these dimensions of development will have to be expanded and improved in the design, implementation and evaluation of employment policies that have clear, solid generational dimensions (in accordance with the gender dimensions that are being constructed in different countries of the region), thereby going beyond the mere existence of pilot programmes for youth employment focusing on the creation of the “first job,” which function in parallel but largely independently



of major labour policies. Nor do they make effective use of the key tools of our ministries of labour (job placement services, vocational guidance services, professional training institutes, etc.). This clearly poses a challenge, which should be addressed from a modern perspective free of the prejudices of key social actors (employers and workers). These actors have addressed these issues (only partially) through politically correct discourse.

How can we operationalize these general criteria in more concrete, effective policies and plans for youth's insertion in the labour force and society? By integrating plans to fight child labour and to promote youth employment and effectively include them in national employment strategies. These policies and plans should establish pertinent objectives and specific targets around three key components: (i) employment, (ii) employability, and (iii) entrepreneurship. This path is defined in the national policy for *Youth Employment, Employability and Entrepreneurship of El Salvador*, as one of five specific priorities of the country's Five-Year Development Plan. Is it possible? Of course, with political will, technical rigour, institutional efficiency and efficacy and the corresponding budget allocation (as is occurring – with much effort – in El Salvador) to address the many operational difficulties that these initiatives inevitably entail. Social dialogue among the main actors in these efforts also must be strengthened and youth should be encouraged to become actively involved, prioritizing their perspectives and proposals.

March 2017

## 9. Youth and the Future of Work

Mónica Quesada Gómez<sup>52</sup>

Discussing youth as a population and a production sector linked to the future of work in the Americas requires some clarifications to understand the scope of this social, anthropological and economic reality.

From the late 19th century to the present, the countries of Southeast Asia and China took advantage of the demographic dividend by linking it to the process of industrialization and urbanization. They implemented a structural change in every sector,

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<sup>52</sup> Head of the Youth Area of the Trade Union Confederation of Workers of the Americas (TUCA, CSA) (Union Congress of the Americas).

from agriculture to manufacturing (Adolfo Acevedo Volg) and established a linkage between the working age population and economic development.

At the time, many people urged countries such as those of Latin America to take advantage of the demographic dividend to drive development. However, objective data indicate that when we relate youth to the future of work, demographics is a key factor that reveals that the young population (15 to 29) in Latin America and the Caribbean has been declining since the late 1990s. According to José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ILO Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, this reduction became more pronounced beginning in 2010. Currently, he says, youth represent 29 percent of the total population, which means that the demographic dividend will decline to 22 percent in 2050.<sup>53</sup> Experts agree that the region must urgently invest in its youth given that this dividend is coming to an end and the opportunity for linkage to the development process of our countries will have been lost.

Today's Latin American youth face major challenges with respect to their immediate and future work, however. We live in a region where political crises generate considerable instability, slowing economic growth. Despite globalization, the technology gap continues and our communities struggle with social decay, corruption, drug trafficking, natural disasters and many other problems. These phenomena limit governments' ability to resolve problems such as unemployment and poverty and, in some cases, the practically slave-like working conditions affecting some youth.

The impact of the current neoliberal model as expressed in the financial crisis, among others, had an immediate negative impact on GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth in Latin American countries. As discussed at the 3rd Trade Union Congress of the Americas, the region's rapid recovery suggested that there was a "disconnection" between more developed and emerging and peripheral countries. This illusion was dispelled in 2012-2013, however. We are now faced with forecasts of low economic growth or recessions in most of the countries of the region. This scenario presents even greater challenges for promoting genuine, equitable development that responds to the environmental needs of current and future generations, with social justice and the increased share of wages in national income.

According to the ILO's *World Employment and Social Outlook– Trends 2015*, nearly eight years after the global crisis, recovery of labour markets continues to be fragile and uneven. Millions of people in the region joined the ranks of the unemployed in

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**53** José M. Salazar-Xirinachs (2016) "El futuro de trabajo, empleo y las Competencias en América Latina y el Caribe", *Pensamiento Iberoamericano*, Revista de la Secretaría General Iberoamericana, 3ª Época, 02.

2015. Women and youth suffered the brunt of these regressive trends. One of the main effects on labour is the increased precariousness of employment, characterized by the worsening of working conditions of workers and the gender wage gap. Youth entering the labour force are forced to accept even more precarious and discriminatory conditions to find a job.

Although it is claimed that today's youth are the best educated in history, after years of sacrifice to prepare for a professional career or to obtain adequate technical certification, they face long periods of unemployment and are forced to accept more precarious or undignified working conditions. They may be punished when they are required to have experience to obtain a first job: since they cannot fulfill this requirement, they are hired under irregular conditions, with excessive working hours and workloads, frequently in the informal sector or through labour outsourcing.

Despite this discouraging assessment, youth have a less negative perspective. The more than 1,500 youth in the region who participated in the 2016 ILO survey on the future of work largely do not fear major challenges; to the contrary, most believe that their conditions will improve.

Unionized youth also express this optimism given that they believe we play a leading role in the building of a better society; that we can transform the challenges and disadvantages we face today into opportunities. We are willing to promote social dialogue mechanisms and the scenarios necessary to implement a new model of sustainable development. In this model, we form alliances with all social movements and organizations that want to promote our proposals, expressed in the congresses of the TUCA-CSA and the Development Platform of the Americas (PLADA). We will advance the goals of the 2030 Agenda, secure in the knowledge that the future of work depends on individuals, youth and our strength, rather than on the capitalistic "wave," assuming that this cannot be changed. We understand that socioeconomic transformation depends on human beings who know how to take advantage of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

## **How can we overcome challenges?**

No single recipe exists for overcoming the challenges of the future of work; however, we need to exert influence through PLADA and other proposals resulting from our discussions on government policies. We must insist that our region invest more in research, technology and comprehensive education for all people, especially young workers.

We should redefine the arrival of technology as an extremely advantageous factor that saves time and distance and brings many benefits. We must learn to change along with technology so that we can put it at our service and prevent it from becoming a threat.

During this age of knowledge, one key is in quality comprehensive education, with an emphasis on technical and professional education and training accompanied by training in the socio-emotional and psychological skills that people need to improve their performance. Professional training should be humanistic and ideological in response to the neoliberal model and should be tailored to the needs and demands of the labour market, securing the specialization of the working class in all new areas being developed, and adapting traditional contents for today and for preparing for the changes the future will bring.

In many countries, the working classes fear being replaced by robots. In response, we should work to close the technology gap and gradually prepare the population for work of the future, assuming the new phase of technological development as an advantage where technology does the dirty work and resolves occupational health problems so that we can gradually achieve a better quality of life with future jobs that are more intellectual, creative and scientific.

In 2050, the demographic pyramid will likely consist of a large base of elderly adults. For this reason, we must promote a different development model that considers the importance of solidarity and social concerns and responsibility for these issues. In this effort, technology, information and resources to improve health can play a key role, as long as decent work –including dignified working conditions, social protection and fair wages– is defended and promoted in the new modes of contracting. They should promote a more equitable distribution of wealth for all members of society and ensure that no child is forced to work because of a shortage of workers. We need to guarantee a situation where men and women can do equal work for equal pay.

We have included these and many other proposals in the PLADA as the trade union movement's position on neoliberalism, in an effort to create a new sustainable development model that guarantees the positive transformation of society to address the challenges of the future of work.

March 2017



## 10. The Present and Future of Work, and Some Relevant Stories

Malena Famá<sup>54</sup>

It was around two o'clock on a steamy afternoon in Buenos Aires.

The stuffy classroom was too small for the nearly 60 people who arrived punctually to the meeting. We began our introduction to the world of work workshops for extremely vulnerable youth. After the presentations, we distributed pieces of paper to participants and asked them to write down the reason they were there and what they committed to.

When we were finished, four-year-old Luna, the daughter of one of the male participants, who came with him to the workshop because he had no place to leave her, shyly raised her hand and asked if she could also talk about why she was there and what she was committed to. We hid our surprise and told her she could, that of course she could, and she offered to write what she was saying on a coloured sheet of paper of her choosing so that “she alone” could put it on the bulletin board.

*“I’m here with my dad so that he can learn how to find a job so he can give my mom and me food. I promise to be good and not to make noise during the class so that he can understand well.”*

We were stunned. Several things happened:

First, we once again realized that we underestimate children.

Second, we wondered if that level of understanding was normal for a four-year-old girl living in poverty with unmet basic needs, the daughter of adolescents who struggled daily, without the knowledge that they had a right to work.

Third, we assumed the challenge of approaching the workshop on decent work in a way that would appeal to the senses of the participants rather than to an unattainable, unreal ideal appearing only in books or publications. How can we talk about decent work to people who cannot manage to eat three meals a day or support their families?

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<sup>54</sup> President of the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Forum.

I could begin this article by citing statistics that surely everyone reading this has read, but I do not think that would be the best way for my views to contribute to the discussion.

We all know it: youth –especially young women– are the group most affected by unemployment worldwide.

In a world in which jobs are eliminated everyday, limiting the possibilities for building a good life, reading about the distorted discussions on youth employment that classify us with letters (whether we are generation X or Y) or labels such as millennials or digital nomads feels illogical and unreal.

This is why socially active youth are trying to shift the discussion to points we consider essential:

We are talking about rights: As young people, we are subjects of rights, in this case the right to work, and to decent work, as the ILO states.

We are not referring here to workplaces that have video games or free fruit to eat during breaks. That is the reality of a small minority and does not reflect the tensions existing in the world of work of young people.

Here we are focusing on the conditions under which we are hired, if we have the opportunity. We are talking about the amount of informal, unregistered work that continues to exist and that directly affects us. About the exploitation that hides behind internships and volunteer work that they offer us “to gain work experience” –often promoted, ironically, by youth organizations– and supported by some international organizations.

Here we are talking about the fact that no matter how young we are, we cannot discuss employment without the presence of youth areas of trade unions, which continue to champion young people’s right to strike, to collective bargaining and to adequate training from a young age, which will swell the ranks of youth trained to recognize and demand their rights and those of the collectives and sectors they represent.

Here we continue to demand that the domestic work so many women perform be recognized. That they stop including in the category of youth who “do not want to work” those who CANNOT do so because they are caring for others, their own children or people in their family circle. To say NOT ONE WOMAN LESS is to commit to gender equality. To achieve this, we first need to recognize that the work environment is one of the most unfair, excluding and unequitable places for women.





We young people want to be acknowledged for who we are and what we do, not the contrary: We are not NEETs (that we NEITHER study NOR work). I stated this at one event and was urged to find a new name for this phenomenon. My response was that if they insist on classifying us with a short, catchy name, they should call us NO-NOs. Youth who have Not been Offered any Opportunity (in Spanish, Ninguna Oportunidad Nos Ofrecieron).

Work will have a future if those of us who are considered the future are taken into account in the discussions and decisions of the present. From the Sustainable Development Goals (SDS) to their monitoring and evaluation, there cannot be policy for us without us, which is why we ask to continue being considered in an important, genuine way.

We ask that youth employment programmes consist not only of training. Programmes should include actions and an enabling environment that demands the skills we have learned through training. Training and studying are major sacrifices for the most socially vulnerable groups. We cannot simply continue to offer training that no one wants. That only creates frustration, hurts self-esteem and causes young people to question the usefulness of that effort. Summarizing: a comprehensive youth employment policy should not only strengthen the “supply” of youth to fill jobs but also guarantee demand for quality jobs.

Much is being said about social or triple-impact enterprises, most of which are led by youth. These businesses foster a different economy, one that is more just, equitable and respectful of the environment. Most social enterprises promote decent work and fair trade. We must strengthen real support for these businesses, not only with trips and contests, but with investments that can have a significant impact on social enterprises even when they do not seek to maximize revenue as their main goal.

Clearly, the work of the future will continue to need strong, committed governments that guarantee our right to work. This is because governments are the only entities capable of guaranteeing this right, although they may also violate it.

I began this article with a story and would like to end it with another because, as I mentioned at a recent ILO seminar, I believe stories put names to the statistics and encourage us to think about the real meaning of our work.

I have the privilege of being able to tell them because I hear them every day: Although I’m the president of the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Forum, I have the self-imposed duty of continuing my work in the field because I do not believe that current challenges are resolved in symposiums and conferences alone.

I have mentioned the word “opportunity” throughout this article as it relates to work, and there is a reason for this.

Last year, during an honest conversation with Aldo, a youth from one of the 20 villas<sup>55</sup> that participate in our job placement programmes for individuals who have recovered from drug abuse (paco<sup>56</sup>, in this case), I received a good response/reflection. This occurred when I asked him what more we could do to help these people change their reality.

### ***“Give us a chance, lady”***

*“You’re not going to change the reality of the villa. You should stop thinking that you, who live here, who are not from the neighbourhood, who don’t understand the logic, can change our reality there.*

*But what you can do is to give us a chance to do things. You can help us find work, even if it’s just a changa.<sup>57</sup>*

*And if you help us, and we get work, we can eat.*

*And if we can eat, we can think.*

*And if we can think, we can continue to struggle to survive.*

*That’s it. So please, give us a chance.”*

Aldo was murdered by a neighbour for playing music too loud, so that was our last conversation, although I did not know it at the time. I still remember him at our headquarters, painting a wall, participating in the talks.

And then I face another day with the belief that the future of work may have something to do with just that: of focusing all our effort on “creating chances.” To me, that seems very much like supporting the creation of other possible realities.

April 2017

<sup>55</sup> Shantytowns in Argentina are known as *villas*.

<sup>56</sup> *Paco*, also known as crack or pasta base, is a “drug of the poor.” It is produced from the residue of the cocaine-production process and is “cut” or “mixed” with highly dangerous substances to increase its volume: rate poison, fluorescent light dust, etc.

<sup>57</sup> Short-term, sometimes one-day jobs, frequently in the construction industry.





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