

WHO 717 million young women and men aged 15 to 24 live in the Asian and Pacific region.

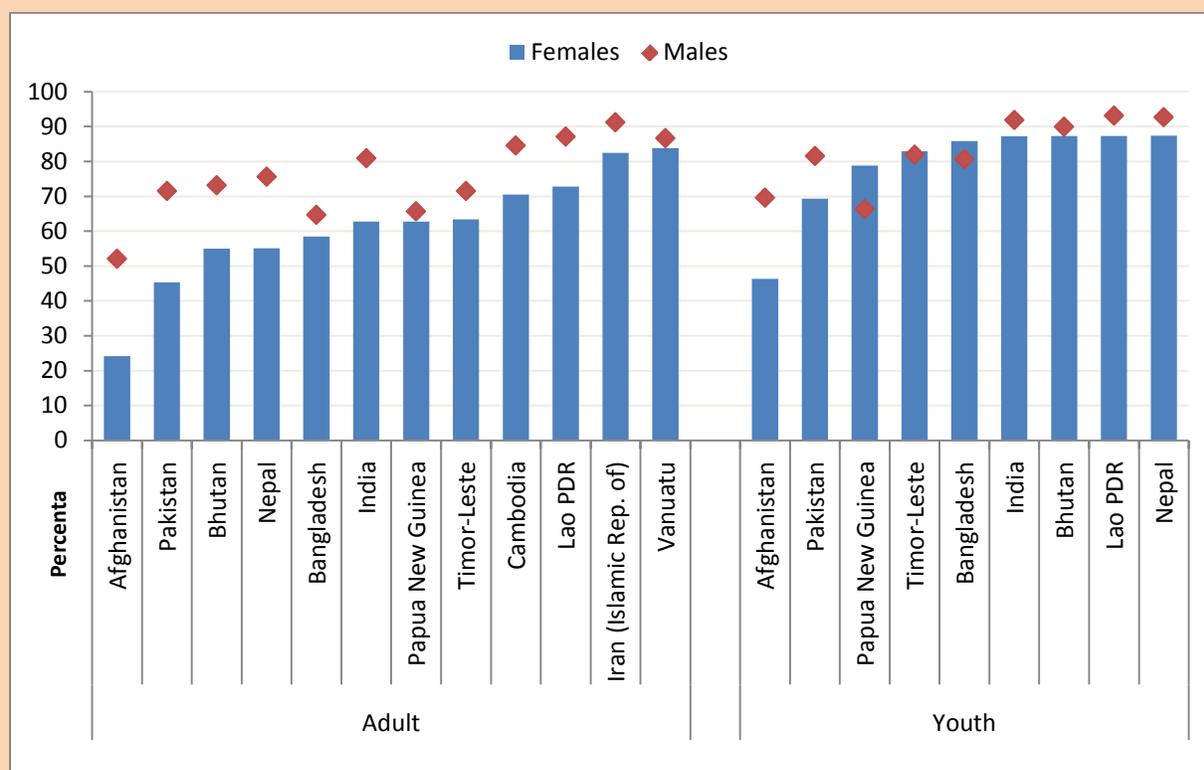
WHERE The region’s youth population peaked in 2010. In the coming years it is expected to drop due to falling fertility, but significant subregional variations exist. In South and South-West Asia, where almost half of the region’s youth live, numbers are still growing, while in East and North-East Asia they have been declining for almost a decade. These demographic changes will profoundly impact socioeconomic development in the region.

WHY Following the adoption of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries in the ESCAP region

are in a prime position to harness the full potential of their youth populations and promote inclusive and sustainable development. Success depends on better engaging youth in all aspects of development by acknowledging that they can play much greater roles in decisions that influence the challenges and opportunities they face and the environments they live in. The youth bulge in South and South-West Asia has the potential to spur growth if well-placed policies that empower youth are implemented. In other parts of the region, often characterized by population ageing, youth are also of vital importance. They should experience smooth school-to-work transitions, characterized by quality and relevant education, and decent jobs, while increasingly being employed in green jobs with scope for enhanced innovation and productivity.

ISSUE: Education

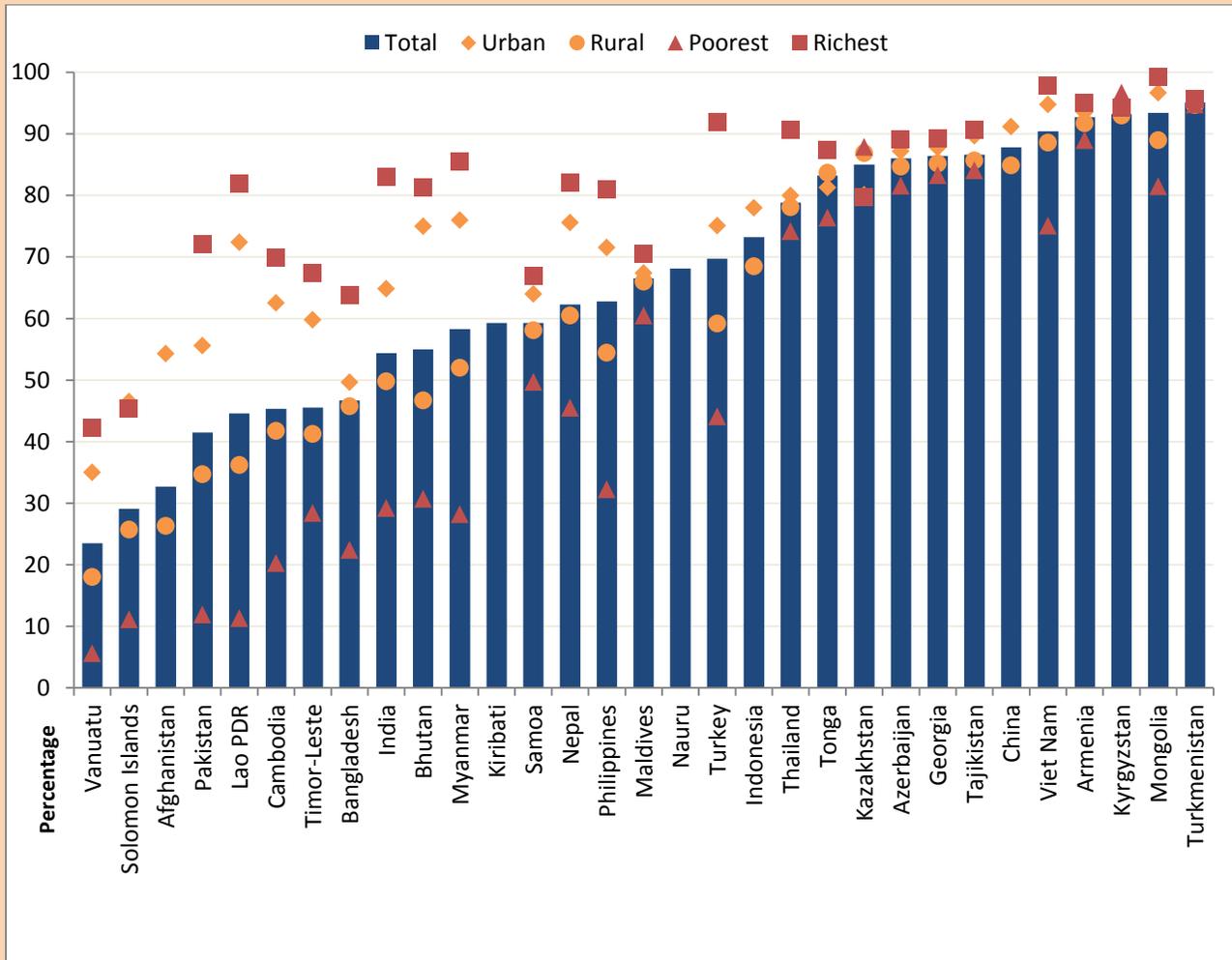
FACT 1: Literacy rates have improved but disparities often persist. Progress in school enrolment rates over the past decades have led to youth literacy rates which are considerably higher than adult ones. The significant gender gaps in literacy for adults have also largely been eliminated and in a few instances even reversed. South and South-West Asian countries stand out from the rest in the region for their low adult literacy rates and strong gender inequalities, with such characteristics remaining prevalent among youth in some countries.



Source: UNESCAP online statistical database. All data from the year 2015.

Note: Only countries where female literacy rates (adult and youth) were lower than 90% are included.

FACT 2: Net secondary education attendance ratios show dramatic gaps between rural and urban areas as well as between those of the richest and poorest wealth quintiles. Generally, the higher the country's overall attendance rate, the lower is the rural-urban divide, but also the gap between rich and poor. Affordability of education is often an even larger challenge than accessibility, with poor households facing relatively high costs and potential loss of income associated with sending their children to school.



Source: UNICEF online statistical database. Secondary net attendance ratio data were disaggregated by wealth quintiles and location of residence.

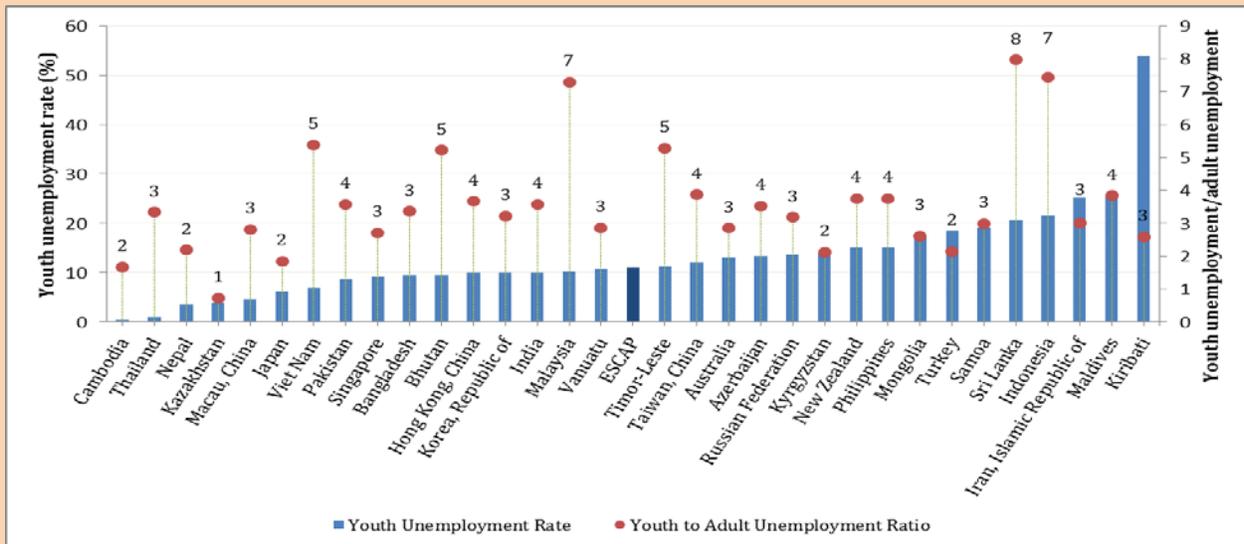
SDGs and TARGETS: Goal 4. Quality education:

Target 4.1 Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; **Target 4.3** Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; **Target 4.4** Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for

employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; **Target 4.5** Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable; **Target 4.6** Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy; **Target 4.7** Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

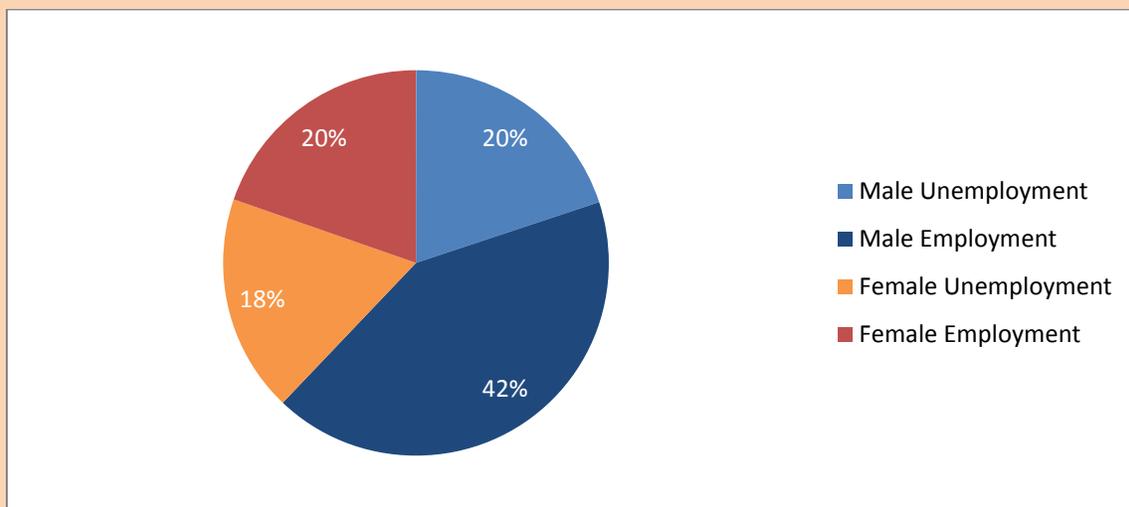
ISSUE: Employment

FACT 1: Finding a job in today's competitive climate is a challenge for many youth. They are often 3 to 5 times, and up to 8 times, more likely to be unemployed than adults. High levels of youth unemployment and disparities relative to adult rates indicate widespread prevalence of unsuccessful school-to-work transitions. These are caused by inequitable access to relevant, decent and high quality education and barriers faced by youth in entering and remaining in employment.



Source: ILOSTAT, "Unemployment rate by sex and age": <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>

FACT 2: Labour force participation rates among young women remain low, especially in South and South-West Asia. Primary research by ESCAP in six countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Cambodia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand), covering over 10,000 youth aged 18-24 from urban areas, shows females at a disadvantage. The data, with equal representation of females and males, reveals that females make up less than 40 per cent of the labour force and almost half of these female youth are unemployed. In contrast, less than a third of male youth who are in the labour force are unemployed. The data reinforce concerns that progress in education for female youth is not being translated into them finding more jobs.



Source: Realizing Youth Inclusion for a More Sustainable Asia-Pacific. ESCAP, forthcoming 2017.

SDGs and TARGETS: Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth: Target 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access

to financial services; **Target 8.5** Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value; **Target 8.6:** Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

ESCAP's Work

ESCAP works to enhance knowledge, capacity and regional cooperation to improve the situation young people face, through assisting Governments to develop comprehensive national youth policies and engaging young people in its programmes. It acts as the Asia-Pacific regional focal point for the World Programme of Action for Youth. It also supports the implementation of the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda, which aims to deepen the youth focus of existing programmes on employment and entrepreneurship; political inclusion; citizenship and protection of rights; and education, including comprehensive sexuality education.

Specifically, ESCAP:

- Undertakes research on the situation of youth in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on identifying trends and good practices on youth participation in development and decision-making to support Governments in promoting evidenced-based policies and programmes.

- Is a former co-Chair of the joint RCM/UNDG Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group on Youth, which functioned until the end of 2015. Since then ESCAP has been an active member of the Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth (APINY), which is part of the UN Asia-Pacific RCM Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Societies. APINY works to enhance the impact of the United Nations youth development work in Asia and the Pacific, especially in the context of achieving the SDGs.

- Over 2014-2017, is leading the implementation of an interregional project to strengthen the capacity of Governments in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Western Asia to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies. By means of developing a toolbox of policy and programme options, knowledge sharing and the provision of technical advice, the project seeks to enhance youth policies, especially in the context of promoting smooth school-to-work transitions, green jobs and active youth engagement.

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