



Discussions on the World Development Report 2007: An Urgent Call for Investment in Youth

Brussels, 12 September 2006

The World Bank Brussels Office organized a series of discussions with stakeholders (Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), youth organizations, policy makers and young professionals) on the occasion of the Brussels Pre-Launch of its World Development Report (WDR) 2007: Development & the Next Generation.

The WDR, the World Bank's major analytical publication has one of the highest circulations of any international economic report in the world. This year's 2007 edition centers on Development and the Next Generation, and addresses five crucial issues and transitions in a young person's life: education, health, work, forming families, and exercising citizenship.

In a public presentation of the WDR, Ms. Mamta Murthi, a Lead Economist at the World Bank and a lead author of the report, informed participants that there has never been a better time than now to invest in the human capital of young people. At 1.3 billion in developing countries, the number of young people (12-24 year olds) is the largest ever. This number is not expected to grow by much in the next 20 years due to falling fertility. This situation presents an enormous opportunity for the developing world: a youth bulge would mean that many young people would enter the work force at a time when there will be relatively few non-working dependents. However, there are risks concerning rises in unemployment.

The report calls for donors to work on:

- Investing more in human capital, but focus on quality and relevance to labor market
- Improving the capacity of youth to decide among opportunities
- Help young people recover from initial poor outcomes

Dr. Lieve Fransen, Head of the Human and Social Development Unit at the Development Directorate of the European Commission (EC), whilst welcoming the report, stated that donors would have to better examine the relationship between education and employment. She informed the meeting's audience of the EC's current efforts on children and youth in development by giving greater attention to child rights, child labor and sexual and reproductive health.

Mr. Renaldas Vaisbrodas, President of the European Youth Forum, acknowledged the importance of the report for the work of the World Bank. However, he expressed concern that the report had not given adequate emphasis to the contribution that young people themselves can provide to development. He also called for a stronger emphasis on non-formal education in the work of the World Bank.

In a separate meeting with UNICEF and civil society organizations (CSOs) including Save the Children, Plan International, ICFTU, the Platform for Disability and Development Action, and the Institute of Social Studies, discussions focused on taking the conclusions on the WDR forward.

Participants asked, amongst other issues, that the World Bank give greater focus in its follow-up work on the WDR on:

- The special needs of young girls and women
- Non-formal education
- An inclusive approach to youth that takes account of problems faced by youth with disabilities in areas such as productivity, education and sexual and reproductive health,
- The problems of the global economy in generating quality jobs for young people
- The problems youth face in fragile states, refugee camps or as Internally Displaced People
- The MDGs that relate to youth and children.

A number of the CSOs also informed the audience on how their activities could contribute to addressing youth and development issues such as:

- Providing a platform for young people to exchange ideas in both developed and developing,
- Lobbying governments to do more on youth and development,
- Awareness raising on youth and disability
- Supporting microfinance programmes for youth

Mrs. Mamta Murthi stated that the World Bank's WDR team would ensure that all conclusions of the WDR would be well communicated to the World Bank's Country Directors in developing countries, who they themselves are responsible for implementing World Bank policy at country level.

Also attempts would be made to ensure that the report impacts on relevant sector strategies of the World Bank such as its new health strategy. The World Bank also hopes to maintain and develop the numerous channels for dialogue with young people around the world that have been opened through the consultations on the WDR.

[Click here for more information and the full report of the World Development Report](#)