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**B3**

## Jobs for youth key to reducing unemployment

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Creating jobs that pay proper wages to young people aged 15 to 24 is needed to significantly reduce unemployment and income inequality in the country, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

The Manila-based multilateral development institution said despite the sustained economic growth in the country, young people still struggle to find jobs after they leave school as the job market is unable to absorb all new entrants.

The January 2018 Labor Force Survey showed the nationwide unemployment rate falling to 5.3 percent from 6.6 percent in the same period last year. The employment rate grew to 94.7 percent in January from 93.4 percent, translating to 41.8 million Filipinos employed.

The pool of potential workers widened as indicated in the rise of the labor force participation rate to 62.2 percent from 60.7 percent. This was derived from a labor force population of 70.8 million consisting of Filipinos aged 15 and above.

As employment rose, so did those looking for additional hours of work or additional jobs, indicating the need for more quality employment.

The underemployment rate rose to 18 percent from 16.3 percent.

Among the unemployed, almost half (43.2 percent) were young workers aged 15 years to 24 years.

"Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) and slow school-

to-work transition is a challenge in the Philippines and the Southeast Asia and Pacific region," the ADB said.

Among the factors that contribute to the rising number of the so-called NEET youth in the Philippines are job-skills mismatch in the labor market, lack of labor market information available to young people and insufficient employment services.

ADB noted that many of the NEET youth are from low-income households with limited social networks.

There have been efforts to reduce the number of NEET youth in the country, but continuous support is needed to sustain gains, the ADB said.

In 2011, the Department of Labor and Employment, with technical support from the ADB, designed and developed the pilot project known as the JobStart Philippines Program (JSP), aimed at assisting at-risk youth to become job-ready.

This program identified at-risk youth as those who were Filipino citizen 18-24 years of age at the time of registration, at least a high school graduate, not employed, studying, or undergoing training at the time of registration, and with less than one year, or no work, experience.

Beneficiaries were offered career guidance and employment coaching. They were likewise provided life skills training and eventually matched to available training and internship vacancies with private sector employers.

The program was eventually institu-

tionalized with funding from general appropriations. The JobStart cycle has since then been conducted twice a year during April-May and October-November starting with 200 to 300 beneficiaries per local government unit per year.

ADB said active labor market programs (ALMPs) such as the JSP encourage employment creation and narrow the skill gap in the workforce.

✦ YOUTH

\* EMPLOYMENT