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The Landscape of Asia’s Youth

Vidar Ekehaug

Democratic Governance
UNDP
Asia Pacific Regional Centre
Asian Barometer
A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

Working Paper Series
Jointly Published by
Globalbarometer

The Asian Barometer (ABS) is an applied research program on public opinion on political values, democracy, and governance around the region. The regional network encompasses research teams from thirteen East Asian political systems (Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia), and five South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal). Together, this regional survey network covers virtually all major political systems in the region, systems that have experienced different trajectories of regime evolution and are currently at different stages of political transition.

The ABS Working Paper Series is intended to make research result within the ABS network available to the academic community and other interested readers in preliminary form to encourage discussion and suggestions for revision before final publication. Scholars in the ABS network also devote their work to the Series with the hope that a timely dissemination of the findings of their surveys to the general public as well as the policy makers would help illuminate the public discourse on democratic reform and good governance.

The topics covered in the Series range from country-specific assessment of values change and democratic development, region-wide comparative analysis of citizen participation, popular orientation toward democracy and evaluation of quality of governance, and discussion of survey methodology and data analysis strategies.

The ABS Working Paper Series supercedes the existing East Asia Barometer Working Paper Series as the network is expanding to cover more countries in East and South Asia. Maintaining the same high standard of research methodology, the new series both incorporates the existing papers in the old series and offers newly written papers with a broader scope and more penetrating analyses.

The ABS Working Paper Series is issued by the Asian Barometer Project Office, which is jointly sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences of National Taiwan University and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica.

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The Landscape of Asia’s Youth

September 20, 2012

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Outline of Presentation

• Global and Regional Context

• Country-Level Entry Points

• Review of Current UNDP and UN Activities

• Policy and Programme Implications
Global Context

- Views of young people in development tend to be either positive or negative
- Address young people as a homogenous group
- Policy and programmes do not reflect young people’s needs
Examining Recent Events

• ‘Arab Spring’ - Excitement about role of young people in bringing about democratic changes

• ‘London Summer’ – Young people looting for quick material gain

• ‘Chilean Winter’ and other student protests
What do they tell us?

- Youth and student protests are not a new phenomenon.
- Surveys with young people reveal frustrations over social injustice and growing inequality.
- Financial crisis and high unemployment intensified the frustrations.
Are young people prone to violence?

- Youth bulges and high unemployment considered risky factors
- Surveys of young people point to political exclusion and lack of participation channels
- Vast majority of young people do not engage in violence and can be a force for peace
An Asian Spring?

- Governments in Asia Pacific took steps to stifle dissent following Arab Spring

- Low unemployment, not same frustration with government

- Important to explore how young people experience injustice and exclusion
Entry Points

• **Citizenship education** – ensure that democratic norms and values are sufficiently integrated in formal and non-formal education activities.

• **Civic engagement** – provide a range of opportunities for young people to volunteer and be engaged in their communities.
Entry Points

• **Youth leadership** – provide support to youth-led organizations and develop the capacity of young people to lead and manage organizations and projects.

• **Youth involvement in decision-making** – institutionalize channels for youth participation in national decision-making
Entry Points

• **National youth policy** – anchor the rights of young people in national legislation and set out policies that address the specific needs of young people

• **Government capacity** – provide sufficient human and financial resources to government ministries responsible for youth.
UNDP Activities

• Youth strategy and organizational focal point on youth

• Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund

• Country Office projects
UN activities

• Special Advisor and Inter-Agency Network

• Regional - emphasis on activities that are short-term in nature, such as events, forums, competitions and awards

• Less focus on working with governments and regional institutions
Policy Implications

• Youth as a key variable that is intertwined with other demographic characteristics

• Political exclusion among youth should be a key factor in the analysis

• Assess the political environment and the political will among key partner institutions
Programmatic Implications

• Solid assessment of context

• Integrate youth components in existing programmes

• Special focus on young people in 20-24 age bracket, and on gender and marginalized groups
Role of UNDP

• Utilize its convening power to improve the dialogue between governments and young people

• Identify key legislative, judicial, and political barriers to genuine and effective youth participation.