



# School to Work Transition Monitoring: the Case of Syria

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Expert Group Meeting on Measurement Issues in Labour  
Statistics

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# 1. Rationale for School to Work Monitoring

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1. The school-to-work transitions of many young people today are a long and difficult process
  - Impact on youth as well as societies and economies
2. Smoothing the transition increasingly viewed as policy priority
3. Monitoring the school to work transition among youth is key towards designing adequate youth employment responses

# ILO's School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS)

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1. Syria was among the 10 countries in which the ILO's SWTS was implemented
  - High youth unemployment; high share of young unemployed from total unemployed ...
2. In Middle East: Egypt, Jordan
3. Other countries: Azerbaijan, China, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Iran, and Nepal



# ILO's SWTS Objectives

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1. Objective: Provide in-depth info on the labour market situation of youth & quantify the relative ease or difficulty of labour market entry of young people as they exit school
  
2. Developed to supplement / complement the info provided in labour force surveys, through
  - Including questions on preferences & perceptions;
  - Including questions on the specific barriers facing youth;
  - Including info on contract situations, earnings, job satisfaction, labour protection;
  - Allowing for examining the ease or difficulty of the transition



## 2. ILO's SWTS Design

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### 1. Two components

- Household-based sample of persons aged 15 to 29 years
- Sample of employers of young people (aims to measure the demand for young labour) → possible mismatches

### 2. Development of indicators defining the ***stages*** & ***quality*** of transition

### 3. Application of “decent work” in the survey’s analytical framework

- *“Productive work performed in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, to which women and men have access on equal terms”*



### 3. ILO's SWTS Design

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4. Allows analysis of the characteristics of youth (aged 15-29) in 4 subcategories

- In school
- Employed or self-employed
- Unemployed
- Outside the labour force



## 3. ILO's SWTS Concepts & Definitions

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### 1. *Stages* of transition:

- *Transited* to the first “career” or “regular” job (& relative ease or difficulty);
  - “Career” or satisfactory:
    - Subjective concept based on self-assessment of the jobholder
    - Implies a job she considers “fit” to her desired employment path
  - “Regular” job:
    - Defined in terms of duration of contract / expected length of tenure



### 3. ILO's SWTS Concepts & Definitions

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*Transited* includes those youth in any of the following statuses:

- A fixed-term and satisfactory job;
- A fixed-term but non-satisfactory job;
- A temporary but satisfactory job; or
- Self-employed and satisfied

For these categories, we can analyse the relative *ease* or *difficulty* of their transition (easy, middling or difficult)



### 3. ILO's SWTS Concepts & Definitions

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*In transition* includes those youth in any of the following statuses:

- Employed in a temporary and non-satisfactory job;
- In wage & salaried employment with no contract;
- Self-employed and unsatisfied;
- Unemployed;
- Inactive and not in school, with an aim to work later



### 3. ILO's SWTS Concepts & Definitions

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*Transition not yet started* includes those youth in any of the following statuses :

- Still in school; or
- Inactive and not in school, with no intention of looking for work



# SWTS in Syria

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SWTS in Syria was administered by the SCBS

- Sample size - youth: 2,000 aged 15-24
- Sample size - employers: 200
  - Randomly selected from the 2004 official listing of registered businesses
- Reference period: 2005
- Geographical coverage: 5 provinces: Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Hamah, and Tartus
- Not nationally representative



# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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Main indicators leading to definition of transition

1. Preferences & perceptions

- Stated work preferences by economic activity and sector vs. in demand

2. Min level of education necessary for a “decent job”

3. Working while in school

# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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## 4. Employment history (→ ease of transition; room for improvement)

- Missing or unusable due to inconsistencies in the treatment of the time element
  - Respondents were asked to list their activities since they completed education/training first → then give details for each row
  - Not enough guidance for field surveyors to emphasize to respondents that there must be no time gaps between entering start/finish dates
  - Improvement: a series of recall questions beginning with the first date of departure from education

# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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## 5. Job search and reservations among the unemployed (→ career mediation)

- Length and means of job search
  - Methods of job search (asked of unemployed, employed; recruitment methods of employers)
- Perceived obstacles
- Job search urgency (willing to accept any job / can afford to “wait” for a better suited job?)
  - Job refused? Reason (also asked of employed)
  - Conditions for accepting a job (including minimum wage level)

# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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## 6. Working conditions(→ quality of transition)

- Existence of contract & satisfaction with contractual arrangement
- Excessive hours of work & overemployment (>45 hrs/week; overemployment: actual hrs > desired hrs?)
- Time-related / visible underemployment (desired hrs > actual hrs) → need info on desired hours
- Salary/month (supplemented by info on HH income)
- Job satisfaction, desire to change & reason

# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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## 6. Working conditions(→ quality of transition)

- Trade union activity (freedom of association)
- Status in employment (different cats more vulnerable to poor working conditions)
- Access to social security & other benefits

# Transition- and policy- relevant questions

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## 7. Youth outside the Labour force (→ voluntary / involuntary)

- Main reason for not working
  - Reasons related to discouragement
  - Voluntary reasons (incl. illness, family responsibilities)
- Intention to work in the future (attachment to LF)
- Room for improvement: follow up question to ascertain voluntary inactivity?



# SWTS: Some Lessons Learnt

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1. Transition status definitions
  - Different definitions to better capture the concept of transition e.g. be sub-classified by applying additional criteria, such as desire to change main job
2. Improving employment history data
3. Additional info on “public” training or placement services
4. Conduct survey with a practical connection to supporting youth employment policy-making



# SWTS: Some Lessons Learnt for Syria

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## 1. Transition-relevant questions

- Stated preferences by economic activity and sector - ask among in-school youth & unemployed (not just employed and preference for sector during job search)
- Job urgency (refusal of job; min conditions...)
- Household income (not just among youth)
- Career planning & motivation for working while in school (not only plans to quit upon graduation)
- Add insecurity in current work (likelihood of employment at same place in one year & perception of insecurity)
- Add questions on desired hours of work
- Ensure formulation of questions include “decent”, when so designed (e.g. related to minimum education)



# SWTS: Some Lessons Learnt for Syria

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2. Like other SWTS countries, improving career path mapping (data errors; missing info)
3. Information on informal enterprises (lesson from Egypt)
4. Additional info on knowledge of & resorting to “public” training or placement services
5. Extending age group to 15-29 to capture those who stay longer in education
6. Among inactive youth, including follow-up questions to further determine choice of inactivity (e.g. family refusal)
7. Not nationally representative



# SWTS: Way forward

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- Value added in coordination in conducting SWTS surveys on the international and national levels
- Key elements of the SWTS or module to be integrated in national data collection
  - Example: Pakistan (SWTS module merged with pilot labour force survey covering 2,544 households in the district of Faisalabad)



# “Syrian Youth Transitions Survey”

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1. Conducted by SCBS with support of ETF in 2009
2. Youth sample: 3847 interviews among youth aged 15-30 who interrupted education in past 5 years
3. Geographical coverage: 7 governorates
4. Distinguishes
  - "any first job": registered / unregistered; no min duration or min hours worked
  - "first significant employment": registered / unregistered; duration of at least 6 months with a minimum of 20 hours a week
5. Focus: role of education in the transition process from education to work



# Questions for Discussion

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1. Regularity of monitoring school-to-work transitions among youth?
2. Nationally representative transition surveys?
3. ILO definition of transition: tweaks?
4. Follow one methodology + improvements?  
Comparability vs. Flexibility
5. Experience of other countries in the region in school-to-work transition monitoring?
6. Ideally: panel surveys?



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Thank you



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