Viet Nam achieved outstanding economic growth of 7.2 per cent per year over the last decade. (World Bank) Even though its current labour force is young and abundant, it is projected that its youth labour force will start to decline from 2015. (ILO, 2012) Furthermore, the low levels of skills and technical specialization of Vietnamese workers would become a major constraint for the rapid economic development of the country.

Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

Young people suffer from lack of decent work opportunities provided to them. Youth unemployment rate was 5.5 per cent in 2012, which was five times higher than the unemployment rate of adult over 25 years old. (General Statistics Office, 2012) Only 19.3 per cent of young workers were waged workers whereas 33.3 per cent of them were unpaid workers in 2012. (General Statistics Office, 2012) Many young people are in a vulnerable employment situation as 42.2 per cent of young people work without contracts due to the lack of understanding on their labour rights and laws.

Rural Youth

In 2012, 76 per cent of total youth population lived in rural areas. (General Statistics Office, 2012) The labour force participation rate of rural youth is 17 per cent higher than that of urban youth as they tend to help family farms and other activities. (ILO, 2011) Many young people in rural areas are attracted to move to urban areas to seek employment as the average salary of workers in urban areas was 63 per cent higher than that of rural workers. (ILO, 2011)

Young Women

More girls attend secondary education than boys in Viet Nam. (General Statistics Office, 2011) However, it is more difficult for young women to secure employment than young men. Unemployment rate of young women was 6.6 per cent, which was 2 per cent higher than that of young men in 2012. (General Statistics Office, 2012) Many young women migrated to the urban areas with a high concentration of labour intensive industries such as garment and footwear manufacturing sector to find jobs.

Internal and External Labour Migration

Many young people moved to industrialized areas such as Ho Chi Minh City and North and South Central Coast to find employment opportunities. Nearly half of all internal migrants were youth aged between 15 and 24, and young women represented almost 70 per cent of youth migrants in 2012. (General Statistics Office, 2012) Approximately 70,000 Vietnamese young workers left the country for employment opportunities abroad and Taiwan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos and Malaysia are their main destinations. (Dang Nguyen Anh, 2008) However, many young migrant workers faced difficulties in the host countries such as poor working conditions, ill treatment and contract breach.

Child Labour

9.5 per cent of children aged between 5 and 14 engaged in child labour in Viet Nam. (General Statistics Office, 2011) More girls (10.6 per cent) are involved in child labour than boys (8.5 per cent). Even though there is no precise statistics on the worst forms of child labour, evidence point to widespread child prostitution and pornography. (UNICEF, 2011)
Education and Skills Development
Most young people face difficulty in continuing their education. Despite 99 per cent of primary education net enrolment rate in 2011, tertiary education gross enrolment rate was only 24 per cent in 2010. (UNESCO) The chances of getting technical and vocational training were also low as approximately 83.2 per cent of the total labour force had never received any forms of technical and vocational training by 2012. (General Statistics Office, 2012) Many employers argued that most young workers were not equipped with the necessary technical skills and did not meet the job requirements. (Vietnam General Department of Vocational Training, 2011)

Government Priorities
The Government of Viet Nam recognizes the importance of youth development and developed youth law in 2005 and a youth development strategy for 2011-2020. The youth development strategy aims to promote youth education, technical and vocational education and training and youth health issues awareness to better prepare them to foster youth’s roles and responsibilities in building and protecting the country.

The UN and Youth in Viet Nam
17 United Nations’ and other international organizations are working to support the economic, social and cultural development of Viet Nam. The United Nations Country Team promotes youth employment through supporting enterprise development and enhanced social protection for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth of Vietnamese society. (United Nations in Viet Nam, 2012)

The ILO in Viet Nam
The ILO aims to tackle youth employment by improving their access to decent work and providing them protection from discrimination and exploitation at workplace. The ILO is currently working on 18 projects in Viet Nam including Enhancing income security measures and employability programs for the unemployed and vulnerable workers in Viet Nam and Promoting and building unemployment insurance and employment.

Policy and Programme Recommendations
As part of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth and the following activities can be conducted to support youth employment in Viet Nam.
- Providing the quality of skills development training to maintain Viet Nam’s long-term competitive advantage.
- Building more employment services centers for youth and strengthen their capabilities to increase the employability of young people.
- Providing entrepreneurship skills development programmes to promote youth entrepreneurship, especially in the region where global climate change would affect the livelihood most.
- Providing information sessions and trainings on migration for youths and supporting the creation a legal migration system to prevent exploitation of the Vietnamese workers abroad.

References
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More information is available at www.ILO.org

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