

THE RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS OF THE APEC WORKING GROUP ON HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

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The economies most affected by the crisis are all members of APEC. In its January 1998 meeting in Bali, the APEC Working Group on Human Resource Development established a Task Force to consider responses to the human impacts of the crisis, particularly in relation to unemployment.

The work programme of the Task Force combines four key elements:

1. an *Experts' Workshop*, held in Jakarta in April 1998, during which four case studies (four of which have been discussed) were presented and at which the proposed June 1998 symposium was planned;
2. the *June 15, 1998, Symposium*, held in association with the mid-year Working Group Meeting, in which information sharing, networking and analysis around HRD responses to the crisis will take place, involving a wide range of stakeholders. Outcomes from the symposium are to be discussed in the Working Group Meeting;
3. the *conduct of research, analyses and sharing of best practices* before, during and after the June Working Group Meeting;
4. *monitoring, reporting and disseminating information by the Task Force*, including the publication of a summary document on analyses undertaken and best practices identified.

The creation of the Task Force and the development of the work plan as a result of discussions at the Bali Working Group Meeting is not surprising. All the affected economies were represented at the Bali meeting, which, of course, was held in an affected economy and at a time in which the domestic currency plummeted to 17,000 rupiah to the US dollar against the previous 2,400. The economies less immediately affected recognized the significance of the crisis and its potential for extended trade effects. Shock was registering at both the rapidity of the crisis' development and its depth. As already noted, issues associated with labour markets and HRD were already pressing for short-term responses. Shutdowns, reduced-time working and unemployment were evident in many economies. Exploration of ways to alleviate the HRD dimensions of the crisis made eminent sense.