



International
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Labour and Social
Trends in ASEAN

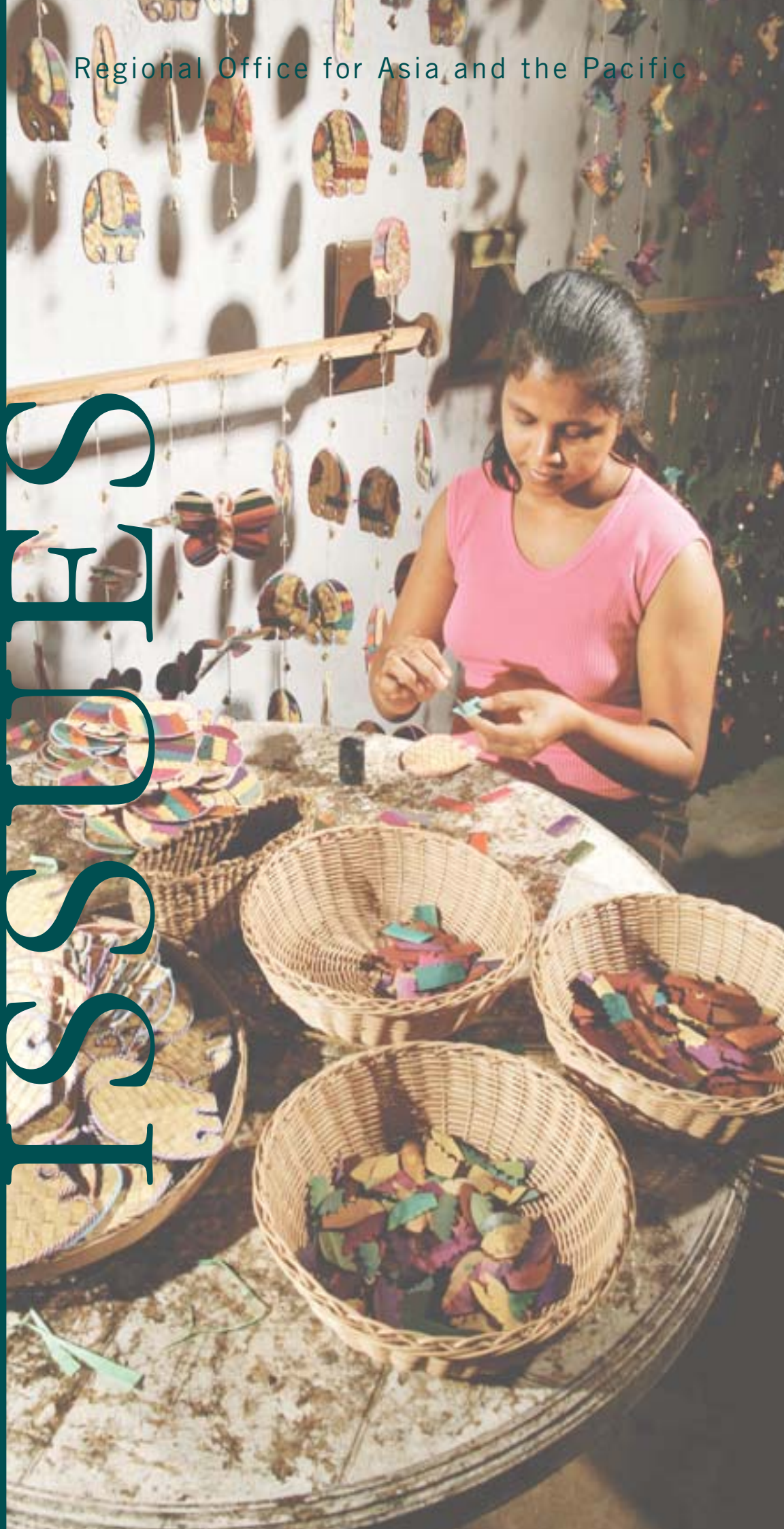
Gender Campaign -
Creating Opportunities

Extending Social
Protection

Trafficking & Labour
Exploitation

ASIAN 2006
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2015

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



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Cover Photo: The ILO's Global Gender Campaign focuses attention on gender issues related to decent work, for example the prevalence of female workers in the informal sector. Craft shop worker in Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. ©ILO/Y. R. Perera, 2007.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Regional Director Sachiko Yamamoto
 Dep. Regional Director Guy Thijs
 Editor-in-Chief Sophy Fisher
 Editor Krisdaporn Singhaseni
 Editorial Assistant Kwantawan Hongladarom

ILO AP Issues
 P.O. Box 2-349, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
 Bangkok, 10200 Thailand
 Tel. (662) 288 2202, 288 1664
 Fax: (662) 288 1076
 Email: bangkok@ilo.org

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IN BRIEF



ILO 90

In 2009 the ILO will mark its 90th anniversary. In recognition of this milestone the ILO's tripartite constituents will organize high level national events, under the theme of social dialogue on decent work for a fair globalization. The events will take place between 21 and 28 April. It was on 28 April 1919 that the draft of the ILO's original Constitution was approved by the Versailles Peace Conference.

ILO launches new web site

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has launched its new web site. As well as a clearer design the new site is backed by a searchable content management system (CMS) that is shared with the ILO's main headquarters site. Consequently the site offers users a powerful knowledge sharing tool that will offer easy access to ILO expertise while the consistent look and feel will also strengthen the ILO's public image. Asia and the Pacific is the first region to roll out the new web site and CMS. It will be extended to other offices in the region and ultimately will be adopted by all ILO field offices globally. The new site retains the existing URL, at: www.ilo.org/asia

ASEM Bali Declaration

Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific represented the ILO Director-General at the 2nd ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting in Bali, Indonesia. The event, held from 13 to 15 October, brought together Ministers and senior labour officials from 10 ASEAN countries, 27 EU Member States and the European Commission.

Delegates adopted a *Declaration on More and Better Jobs – Strategic Cooperation and Partnership to promote decent work and global labour markets to our mutual benefit*. The so-called Bali Declaration recognizes the contribution of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and concludes that the “promotion of full and productive employment, decent work for all, including full respect for workers' rights, social protection, social dialogues, are key factors to achieve sustainable economic development, social progress and social cohesion”.

The Ministers' Meeting was preceded by the ASEM Trade Union Summit, at which representatives of 13 Asian and three European countries discussed greater union involvement in the ASEM process.

ILO official receives Thai Award

Ms Anne Richmond, ILO Vocational Training and Employability Specialist, received Thailand's award for “Outstanding Work for the Ministry of Labour”. The award was presented as recognition of her cooperation and contribution to Thailand's development of human resources. It was presented by the Minister of Labour H.E. Ms Uraiwan Thienthong, on 23 September, the 15th anniversary of the Ministry of Labour.



Anne Richmond receiving her award from the Thai Minister of Labour. ©ILO, Thailand, 2008.

FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

By Christina Nelson, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Seam Mom used to spend her days in the fields, trying to grow rice to feed her family in a province south of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. With six children, the 50-year-old widow was only able to produce enough rice to feed them all for five or six months of each year.

But five years ago things changed. Ms Mom joined a local women's group and was trained in small business management, animal husbandry, agricultural techniques, handicraft making, and gender awareness. Now, she not only grows enough food for her family, but raises pigs and makes handicrafts too. Her income has risen by 80 per cent.

"My life has changed so much," Ms Mom said. "I did not know how to make compost. Now I can make it and I use the compost to grow more rice than I could before."

As well as feeding her family, Ms Mom's extra money has allowed her to buy land and build a new house. Perhaps best of all it has also raised her status in her community. "Before I could not find a daughter-in-law for my son; now many families are interested in marrying off their daughter to my son," she said.



Training in entrepreneurial skills and rights helps Cambodian women lift themselves and their families out of poverty. ©ILO, 2007.



Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work Campaign 2008-2009

In June 2009 the International Labour Conference will hold a debate on "Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work". To prepare for this discussion the ILO has launched a year-long global campaign on gender equality and the world of work. The campaign focuses on 12 decent work-related themes, looked at through a gender lens, that illustrate how issues in the world of work may affect women and men differently, particularly in regard to their rights, finding employment, social protection and social dialogue.

The theme for November encompasses issues related to gender and entrepreneurship (see feature story below). Forthcoming themes include migrant workers (December), gender and climate change (January 2009), social dialogue and the transition from informality to formality (February), workers with family responsibilities (March) and women at the ILO (April).

The project that changed the future for Ms Mom was the Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EOW), run by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with funding from the Government of Japan. EOW has been operating in Cambodia and Viet Nam since 2002 and specializes in training women on their rights and in techniques for increasing their income – including better agricultural methods, handicraft production, or managing their own businesses.

Ms Mom is not alone in seeing an improvement in her life. In Cambodia, 76 per cent of project participants increased their income after applying their newly-learned knowledge and skills. In Viet Nam the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs reported that 133 of 188 participating households in one project site at La Hien commune, Thai Nguyen province had risen out of poverty (locally considered to be around VND200,000 or US\$12 per month). Poverty reduction was even greater in households headed by women – 78 per cent of these were lifted out of poverty.

In addition to teaching women skills to boost their incomes, the project also addresses the discriminatory attitudes that keep women in poverty by promoting gender equality and social justice, both in daily lives and at the level of local and national policy-making and implementation.

Training and awareness raising among men and leaders has also brought benefits.

One Cambodian woman told ILO project staff that after her husband attended gender awareness training he started helping her with the cooking. "When I arrive home, my husband cooks and I just eat," she said.

In Viet Nam, village leaders noted that women seemed more confident not only in their work, but also in dealing with community affairs. One leader in La Hien commune said: "They contribute actively in our decisions, and some of our decisions were really made by women. We also pay more attention to the leadership role of women in villages as well as mass organizations including the veteran association, which was traditionally only for men".

According to Aya Matsuura, ILO Technical Officer on Gender and Women Workers' Issues, providing women with access to training in jobs usually held by men is important for women's social and economic empowerment as well as poverty alleviation in the family because they do a lot of agricultural and animal husbandry work. In the past, Government vocational training programmes were attended mostly by men, who rarely passed on their new knowledge of agricultural techniques to their wives.

"Usually when they have a meeting, it's the men that come to the meetings because they're the heads of the household, but women actually do the work," Ms Matsuura said. "So training women is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do."

AVIAN AND PANDEMIC HUMAN INFLUENZA AND THE WORKPLACE

By Suttida Chaikitsakol, National Project Coordinator, Subregional Office for East Asia

The continuing outbreaks of cases of avian influenza have prompted worldwide concerns of possible pandemic human influenza. This is because as the number of cases of infection in humans increases, it becomes easier for the virus to mutate, so that it spreads efficiently amongst people, something which could lead to a human pandemic.

In response, a pilot project entitled “Avian and Pandemic Human Influenza and the Workplace” has been initiated by the ILO’s CRISIS Department in Geneva and the Subregional Office for East Asia, based in Bangkok. This project has two main objectives: to promote the preparedness of the business sector for a pandemic, in particular small and medium enterprises, and to prevent the spread of and reduce the risk of avian influenza infection amongst poultry workers and farmers who have low to minimal bio-security.

A key project activity is the development of training materials to promote safe practices at the workplace and encourage businesses to identify preparedness plans. The training manuals are the product of several field visits to observe good avian influenza prevention practices in the poultry industry, and consultations with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

The research on these good practices began when the ILO’s Occupational Safety and Health Specialist for East Asia, Dr Tsuyoshi Kawakami, toured some of Thailand’s neighbouring countries, such as Viet Nam and Cambodia, to observe the farmers’ techniques. Prevention practices

were also examined at the national level. These observations formed the basis of the illustrations and contents of the training manuals.

The two manuals, one responding to pandemic human influenza and the other to avian influenza, are user-friendly and practical, with a checklist of various prevention measures, explanations and descriptions.

The application of these newly-developed training materials is also covered by the project, and aims to promote understanding and encourage behavior changes amongst the target population. It draws on the unique participatory training methods developed for the ILO’s Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development (WIND) and Work Improvement in Small Enterprises (WISE) programmes.

Pilot and training of trainers (TOT) workshops were successfully organized in August and October respectively. Most of the workshop trainees developed the expertise and confidence to become trainers and more than 10 proposals for further training sessions were submitted to the ILO at the end of the workshop. These subsequent sessions were held in the first half of November.

Each training session averages approximately 40 participants so this translates to the immediate dissemination of the easy-to-apply training materials to about 400 people within a month of the TOT workshops. This multiplier effect is an important element in the project’s sustainability.

Similar pilot and TOT workshops to launch the avian influenza training materials took place around the same period.

Improvements and modifications to the training materials continue to be made. Throughout the year project staff conducted fact-finding trips to businesses in Thailand’s Nonthaburi and Supanburi provinces. They also organised workshops during the National Safety Week, and surveys of pre and post workshop evaluations. To assess relevance and practicality many consultations were held with specialists from key organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Food



Good practices in the poultry industry help prevent the spread of infection. ©ILO, Thailand, 2008.

and Agricultural Organization, the UN System Influenza Coordinator and Thailand’s Department of Livestock Development.

The application of the project’s training materials will not be limited to Thailand. They will serve as a model that can be adapted to different countries’ conditions and needs. They have already been shared with a sister project in Indonesia, and eventually they will be modified to suit that country’s conditions.

An important element in the implementation of the project is the use of the ILO’s unique tripartite mechanisms that promote the involvement and cooperation of government, employers and workers.

The ILO has also partnered with the International Union of Food Workers and shared the training materials with IUF Thailand in an effort to promote best workplace practices in poultry production to limit the effects of avian influenza and to encourage behaviour changes. This is done through awareness raising, capacity building, and training activities that focus on preventative and protective measures.

This project is funded by the UN Central Fund for Influenza Action (CFIA). CFIA was established after a request by donors to the United Nations Development Group, through the UN System Influenza Coordinator, to establish and design a central financing mechanism that enhances inter-agency coordination.

LABOUR AND SOCIAL TRENDS IN ASEAN 2008

By Phu Huynh, Steven Kapsos, Gyorgy Sziraczki, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and Kee Beom Kim, Subregional Office for East Asia

A new ILO report highlights the importance of labour productivity, education and migration in shaping competitiveness, growth and development in the ten ASEAN countries.¹

The report, *Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN 2008: Driving Competitiveness and Prosperity with Decent Work*, also finds that effective mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation between workers and employers are one of the keys to increased competitiveness and productivity, as well as to other shared benefits.

The report notes the region's recent strong economic performance, which resulted in a 3 per cent increase in employment, from 260.6 million in 2006 to 268.5 million in 2007. Over the same period unemployment in the region declined from 6.1 per cent to 5.8 per cent and the region's very high youth unemployment rate also eased slightly.

The employment growth seen in 2007 was in waged employment, which indicates a possible expansion in formal employment opportunities. Nearly three-quarters of the jobs growth took place in industry and services (which also contributed to the rise in productivity since these sectors are more productive than agriculture). Nonetheless, agriculture still accounts for almost half of ASEAN's total employment, albeit with considerable variation between countries.

Despite these positive trends the number of vulnerable workers (measured as own-account workers and unpaid family

members) remained massive, at about 60 per cent of the region's workforce (2007 figure). Many of these people work in the informal economy. Women constitute a disproportionately large share of these vulnerable workers, a reflection of their limited employment opportunities.

In addition, the global financial crisis, coupled with high energy and food prices, is expected to lead to weakening domestic and external demand. This in turn is expected to push the region's unemployment rate up, from 5.8 per cent in 2007 to 6.2 per cent in 2009.

The report examines the challenge of labour productivity in ASEAN, a critical factor in determining competitiveness and living standards. In recent years China has overtaken ASEAN in terms of output per worker, while the gap between India and ASEAN has narrowed markedly.

Furthermore, there are significant disparities in labour productivity rates between ASEAN countries – for example Singapore's productivity level is nearly 12 times that of Cambodia. The report concludes that a renewed policy focus on raising productivity in agriculture and in small and medium-sized enterprises (which provide jobs for the majority of workers in the region) is needed.

Investing in human capital and managing talent are also important drivers of competitiveness. While access to basic education has improved, educational attainment at secondary level is still limited in parts of the region, and few students are going into technical and vocational education and training.

There is also significant scope for qualitative improvements. The effectiveness of many education and training institutions is constrained by ineffective, irrelevant curriculums, a shortage of qualified instructors and inadequate links with the business community. In addition, the tertiary education system has not produced enough graduates with the technical and soft skills needed to fill the professional and managerial positions required in competitive economies. Consequently both



Ensuring ASEAN has enough skilled workers to remain competitive presents a challenge for policy-makers. ©ILO/A. Mirza, 2007.

multinational and domestic companies are facing growing skills shortages among managers, technical and professional staff.

The report also looked at the growing trend towards labour migration. An estimated 1.5 million ASEAN workers leave their homes each year to work in other countries, including other ASEAN members.

Intra-ASEAN migration has helped address labour shortages in the region's receiving countries, contributing to both increased productivity and economic growth. In sending countries, remittances from their migrant workers can spur investment in economic and local development. But the large, and growing, number of irregular migrants raises concerns about managing migration and migrants' protection.

The report looks ahead to 2015 (which is the target date for achieving the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade, ASEAN's plan for greater integration, and the Millennium Development Goals). By this date the region will need to accelerate labour productivity growth if it is to maintain the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 5.6 per cent that was achieved between 2000 and 2006.

By 2015 the services sector is likely to have overtaken agriculture as the largest employment sector. While the proportion of those in employment who are classified as vulnerable will decrease, more than half of

¹ Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

BANGLADESHI WOMEN'S EARN LOWER WAGES

By Steven Kapsos, Labour Economist,
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Why do Bangladeshi women earn so much less than their male counterparts? This question was the starting point for a recent ILO Working Paper, “*The gender wage gap in Bangladesh*”. The study analyzed data from the largest ever national Occupational Wage Survey in Bangladesh, which was conducted in 2007 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with technical and financial support from the ILO. The BBS survey collected data on the earnings of more than 60,000 men and women in 150 locations across Bangladesh. It also gathered information on employees’ ages, gender, educational background, industry, occupation, hours of work and geographic location.

The ILO study focuses on data for approximately 41,000 workers for whom hourly wage rates could be calculated from the survey data. Using econometric modeling techniques, the paper presents the first estimates of hourly gender wage gaps by level of education, establishment size and individual industry. It highlights the significant effect of gender-based occupational and industrial segregation in shaping men’s and women’s average wage rates in Bangladesh.

The study finds that even after controlling for factors such as differences in age, education, industry, occupational type and location, women earn 15.9 per cent less per hour than men. Furthermore, the survey data indicate that women tend to be grouped in lower-paying industries and do not have access to the same types of jobs as men. If this “segregation effect” is factored in, the gender wage gap increases by 7.2 percentage points – to an estimated 23.1 per cent. The largest male-female wage gaps are in the construction and hotel and restaurant industries (in which women earn



Narrowing Bangladesh's gender wage gap will require greater access to education and less occupational segregation as well as societal changes. ©ILO, Bangladesh, 2007.

an average of 30 per cent less than men), and in small- to mid-sized enterprises (those with between 6 and 20 workers). The smallest gaps are in the service industries, such as education, health and social work.

The study showed that as women’s education increases, the male-female wage gap decreases, because women tend to see more benefits from additional education in terms of earnings than men. Completing secondary education carries a major benefit: while women who have not completed primary education earn an average of 22 per cent less than their male equivalents, this differential narrows to only four per cent for those with secondary education.

It is evident that investment in education – at both primary and secondary levels – could play a substantial role in lowering the overall gender wage gap in Bangladesh. The survey results also indicate that if policy makers focus on measures to reduce occupational segregation, this could go a long way to reduce gender-based earnings inequalities. Progress on these two fronts could promote broad-based social and economic development in Bangladesh, as higher levels of educational attainment would improve worker productivity, while breaking down occupational segregation would promote greater equity and efficiency in the labour market.

(continued from page 5)

LABOUR AND SOCIAL TRENDS...

ASEAN’s workers will remain vulnerable. Job creation in ASEAN’s bulging cities will present another challenge, as urban areas in the region are likely to see their population grow by nearly 25 per cent. This will also highlight the need for a greener economy.

With ASEAN seeking to build a “people-orientated ASEAN Community”, the report provides some specific policy recommendations. In addition to promoting sustainable growth these include supporting productivity growth in all sectors, promoting progressive workplace practices, improving the relevance and quality of education and training and developing an ASEAN framework for managing labour migration.

In addition, the report says more needs to be done to produce quality labour market information to support informed decision-making, to strengthen the social dimension of economic integration and to invest in labour institutions to foster growth with equity.

The report was launched at the ASEAN Human Resources Summit, held in Singapore in October 2008. The ILO and ASEAN signed a Cooperation Agreement in 2007 as a precursor to creating a stronger partnership. Consequently, as well as analyzing key trends in employment and social conditions, the report identifies major policy challenges and opportunities, with a view to exploring areas for further ILO-ASEAN collaboration.

STRATEGIES TO EXTEND SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE

By Hiroshi Yamabana, Social Protection Specialist, Subregional Office for East Asia

At present only 20 per cent of the world's population has adequate social security coverage and more than half lack any coverage at all. In Asia and the Pacific, social security coverage is still very limited; more than one billion workers are in so-called vulnerable employment, including rural farmers, self-employed persons and those working in small enterprises with short-term contracts, part-time jobs or other forms of unstable work.

Social security, including health care, is a basic human right, laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also a major component of social protection - one of the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda - and was chosen as one of the priority areas for the Asian Decent Work Decade (2006-2015) by the ILO's regional members at their 14th ILO Asian Regional Meeting in 2006.

The extension of social security coverage was therefore the focus of a high level meeting held in New Delhi in May 2008, that brought together Government Ministers and representatives of workers and employers from 19 countries in the region.

In the meeting, representatives of the ILO stressed that social security should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment in human capital that leads to greater productivity. It is an effective way of reducing poverty, encouraging equity and supporting economic and social stability. The ILO has a basic package of social security consisting of four benefits, called the 'Social Floor', which is affordable for even the least developed countries. This Social Floor consists of basic health care, income security



More than one billion workers in Asia and the Pacific lack adequate social protection, such as basic health care and income security. ©ILO, Viet Nam 2008.

for children, social assistance for the poor and unemployed, and basic pensions for the elderly, disabled and survivors.

Delegates to the meeting agreed that although economic growth matters it does not automatically reduce poverty or achieve equity in society. However, social security can play an important role in ameliorating inequality and reducing poverty. They supported the extension of social security as one of the key factors in achieving the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade, where there is rapid economic growth with widening disparities among people, globalisation, rapid increases in migration, growing labour market flexibility, and – in some societies – a rapid aging of the population. Pragmatic and gradual ways of extending social security coverage, and the roles that could be played by Governments, workers, employers and the ILO were also discussed.

Examples of successful new methods of extending social security were given by delegates from a number of countries, including a tax-based Universal Health Care Scheme in Thailand, an Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, conditional cash transfers in Indonesia, and tax-based universal old-age pensions in Nepal.

The ILO has developed guidelines on creating policy for extending social security coverage. This suggests that any social security scheme should include seven pragmatic elements:

- The scheme must reach out to all;
- It must be effective in lifting people out of poverty;

- It must provide adequate, reliable and sustainable benefits;
- It must be financially and administratively sustainable in the long-term;
- It must support the achievement of more employment and good general economic performance;
- It must make efficient use of workers' and employers' taxes and contributions;
- It must be designed, managed and governed with the adequate and fair participation of Governments, Workers and Employers, on the basis of social dialogue and national consensus.

At the conclusion of the Asia-Pacific High-Level Meeting on Socially-Inclusive Strategies to Extend Social Security Coverage, the ILO delegation agreed to support constituents in extending social security coverage by developing and maintaining knowledge bases, and enhancing the capacity of social security institutions, government agencies and workers' and employers' organizations.

The ILO will also support policy developments by providing advice and by reviewing social security standards, and help with the design and implementation of a basic set of social security guarantees – in other words, a social floor. It will help member States monitor their own progress on population coverage, the adequacy of benefits and the sustainability of schemes. This strengthening of regional capacity and advisory facilities is done by seeking partnerships with national institutions, to build a regional facility for advisory training services.

PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION

By Allan Dow, Communication Officer, ILO Mekong Subregional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women

A ceiling fan turns slowly above a Vietnamese girl as she marks the fabric that will soon be cut into a new shirt. Aged 16, Tran Thi Bich is learning a new skill – through a training course supported by the ILO and the Viet Nam Women's Union – that she hopes will turn her life around and help erase the trauma she suffered three years earlier.

Thi Bich dropped out of school at 13. Her mother was very ill and she wanted to earn some money to help pay the medical costs. A friend from the same village said an uncle was looking for workers at his factory in another town and they could go there to work together. But when they arrived the 'job' turned out to be manual labour in a brick factory – and Thi Bich's 'friend' had just trafficked her into a so-called worst form of child labour.

"When we arrived she left me there," says Thi Bich. "I was small and the work was too hard for me, but I didn't know how to get home or contact my mother".

The story of Thi Bich is a sad but common feature of today's human trafficking. Yet surprisingly, trafficking for labour exploitation is a form of abuse that does not receive the attention it deserves.

The ILO estimates that globally there are 12.4 million victims of forced labour, including some 2.4 million who are trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Half of the world's trafficked victims are Asian. Indeed, three-quarters of the world's forced labour occurs in the Asia-Pacific region.

"These workers are being denied their basic human rights. Often as young migrants they have, either by choice, necessity or sometimes coercion or force, ended up labouring below the radar screen of the local authorities – and sometimes even within their view but with purposeful neglect," said Sachiko Yamamoto, Regional Director of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

"These young people are making the cheap clothing that one can so easily buy in the markets. They are catching fish that appears in our restaurants and clean the homes of many others – most often with no safety nets or redress should they be exploited, injured, cheated or treated unfairly".

However, working with a variety of partners, the ILO has led the way in finding methods to combat the forced labour and trafficking of young people for labour exploitation. Considerable progress has been made.

In South-East Asia the Mekong Subregional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (TICW) funded by the United Kingdom, has just completed eight years of research and work on trafficking for labour exploitation by linking abuses to ill-prepared migration of young people across the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).

The project focused on trafficking prevention (at both source and destination) and has involved policy-level interventions, raising the awareness of young migrants and potential migrants, public and policy-level advocacy, and improving livelihood options closer to home. A trademark of this work has been the policy of operating at various levels of Government simultaneously with workers, employers and the target beneficiaries themselves.

As a result, Governments in the GMS are now paying much closer attention to the problems of labour exploitation of young people, and trafficking is now acknowledged as occurring within a labour migration paradigm.

Through these partnerships the project has reached hundreds of thousands of young people, especially girls and young women, to warn them about the dangers of ill-prepared migration when leaving home to look for work. From television soap operas about trafficking,

to formal and informal classroom instruction, to one-on-one outreach, it has armed young people of working age with the information they need to make migration for work a safer choice – within their own countries and when crossing borders.

The most common workplaces where the trafficking-for-labour exploitation occurs include the fishing and seafood processing sectors, small-scale manufacturing, agriculture, construction and domestic work.

Direct beneficiaries total 1 million. Indirectly, through mass media and other awareness raising efforts, the TICW project has reached 15 million young people in Cambodia, China's Yunnan Province, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The project also helped Governments to develop and implement recruitment policies to make migration work better for them. More and more employers in migrant-dependent areas want access to a flexible workforce. They see the value in treating their migrant workers fairly so they do not leave prematurely, after time and money has been spent to train them. Unions also see the value in ensuring migrant workers (documented or otherwise) get the same wages and working conditions as local workers, not to mention a duty of solidarity to workers everywhere to prevent exploitation.

"By listening to young migrants we have also learned a lot about ways to protect young workers from falling into the traps set by traffickers and the minority of employers who would abuse their vulnerabilities," said Thetis Mangahas, the TICW project manager and Chief Technical Advisor.

In October, prior to the project's close, Governments, workers' and employers' organizations in the five countries, NGO partners and others, gathered in Bangkok to examine more than 25 "proven practices" for human trafficking prevention. These proven practices had already been endorsed by the Governments, workers' and employers' organizations and the NGOs who work directly with target beneficiaries.

All of the proven practices, tools, publications and other resources can be downloaded from the project's web site: www.childtrafficking.net

TRADEOFFS IN LABOUR MIGRATION POLICY

By Geoffrey M. Ducanes, Technical Officer,
ILO/EU Asian Programme on the Governance
of Labour Migration

“There is no free lunch” is a popular phrase, meaning that all actions involve tradeoffs even if they are not always obvious.

Looking at these tradeoffs is often a useful – if not also cynical – way of approaching decision-making activities.

Labour migration policy at the state level and labour migration decisions at the individual level involve important tradeoffs of this kind, even if these are not always clearly acknowledged.

Migrant receiving countries

For vibrant economies experiencing labour shortages, the admission of foreign workers enables them to achieve higher economic growth than would otherwise be possible. For instance, in Thailand migrant workers have been estimated to contribute as much as 6 per cent of GDP. In Malaysia, a 20 per cent reduction in migrant workers will lead to a 1 per cent decline in GDP.

But this is believed to come at some cost. The increase in population caused by migration places additional stress on public services such as health and education. It also carries the potential risk of social conflict in the event of a sudden economic downturn.

In addition it is feared that excessive reliance on foreign workers, particularly those with lower-level skills, causes firms to delay or forego mechanization or automation, thereby hurting longer-term national productivity and competitiveness. It should be noted that while this claim is reasonable, actual evidence is scarce, perhaps because foreign workers allow firms to be more profitable and thereby accumulate resources for capital investment.



Indonesian migrant workers waiting for flights at the airport. ©ILO, Indonesia, 2007.

There is thus a tug (another tradeoff) between the inertial reliance on migrant workers and the enhanced capacity to overcome that reliance through the greater resources created by the same migrant workers. In the end what may be important is how forward-looking firms are. For instance, a recent ILO survey in Malaysia revealed that firms that have large numbers of foreign workers are also the ones more likely to invest in automation.

Migrant workers in a vibrant host country that is experiencing labour shortages also keep tabs on wage inflation, so helping to ensure the continuation of investment in the country. This creates employment not only for foreign workers but for native workers as well.

However, this also means that wages are kept lower than they otherwise would be, even for workers who do not benefit directly from the foreign workers' presence. In theory there must be a way to redistribute the gains that come from the presence of foreign workers, to compensate such people and ensure that everybody ends up better off, possibly through subsidies or lower taxes. In practice however, the extent to which such redistribution occurs is difficult to ascertain and measure.

Countries experiencing labour shortages who do not want the costs associated with admitting foreign workers, could respond by encouraging more women and young people to enter the labour force. However this means that in the long-term the fertility rate is likely to decline, leading to fewer potential workers in the future, possibly exacerbating labour shortages.

Migrant sending countries

A country sending workers abroad eases domestic unemployment and receives remittances, reducing social tensions and gaining funds that can be more easily accessed for physical and social investments.

However the country suffers potential harm to the long-term economic growth of its economy by losing those who are often its most productive workers and by becoming vulnerable to “Dutch Disease”. Dutch Disease refers to the large inflow of foreign currency (from remittances), leading to exchange rate appreciation and a loss of competitiveness by export manufacturers. The Philippines is one country which faces this fear; a third of workers departing are college graduates and remittance inflows now exceed US\$15 billion per year.

Sending countries are rightfully concerned about the personal welfare and working conditions of their overseas workers and insist on minimum requirements prior to departure. For example, that migrant workers' wages are higher than the prevailing minimum for such workers, or that only workers of a certain skill level are allowed to migrate.

Insistence on higher wages could serve as a screening device, ensuring that only employers who can afford proper working conditions employ migrant workers. But this is likely to mean that fewer workers from any country that imposes such conditions are employed, especially if other countries sending the same type of workers do not insist on similar terms.

For example, since 2002 the Philippines,

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S R O F O C U S

MANILA CALL TO ACTION TO PROTECT MIGRANT WOMEN

By Minette Rimando, Senior Communication and Information Assistant, SRO Manila

Protecting the rights of migrant women was officially endorsed by more than 430 representatives of governments, workers, employers and various organizations at the International Conference on Gender, Migration and Development held in Manila, 25-26 September 2008.

The Manila Call to Action which aims to enhance opportunities and protect the rights of migrant women and their families was adopted by Governments from 36 countries, trade unions, employers' organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations, women's and religious associations, academia and international organizations. The Call highlights the importance of seizing opportunities and upholding the rights of women migrant workers and their families.

"The Manila Call to Action is a broader platform, with practical and doable



Meeting participants show their enthusiasm for the Manila Call to Action. ©ILO, Philippines, 2008.

solutions", said Linda Wirth, Director of the ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific. "We see a lot of deskilling of migrant women and they represent a high proportion in the brain drain, especially in health and education sectors. More women are trafficked for sexual exploitation than men. Women are mostly in the invisible sector such as domestic work which can be highly exploitative and abusive. But we also know that men migrants face dehumanizing working and living conditions in certain sectors and almost the same number face labour trafficking and bonded labour. They often have to take on new roles of family care as mothers migrate".

Today, the "feminization" of migration

has resulted in women making up nearly half of the global migrant population. The number of women migrants increased from 35.3 million in 1960 to 94.5 million in 2005. The majority of women migrants are migrating to work or study abroad. But they also continue to represent a significant proportion in migration for family formation and reunification, and as asylum seekers. Yet, gender-responsive solutions for protecting their rights are still not in place across countries. While they often face many challenges they also avail themselves of new opportunities opened up by migration - new and better jobs and the evolution of gender roles.

More details can be found at www.ilo.org/manila or www.icgmd.info

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TRADEOFFS...

with its insistence on higher wages for its workers, has been losing its share in the market for Hong Kong's domestic workers to Indonesia. On the other hand the Philippine government's firm insistence on minimum conditions for its workers may be the reason why numerous studies have shown that Filipino domestic workers are less likely to be victims of abuse than Indonesian workers.

Insistence on sending only higher-skilled workers means less vulnerability for a

country's emigrant workers; but this is also likely to reduce the impact of overseas labour migration on development and poverty reduction. In the Philippines only 8 per cent of the total annual number of outgoing workers are from the poorest 40 per cent of families, and they are mostly unskilled.

Individuals making the migration choice face stark tradeoffs. By working overseas they can sometimes earn as much as 10 times what they make at home, and are thus able to provide greater material consumption for their families, including better shelter and

better schools for the children. But they also risk trafficking and abuse, the consequences of their children growing up without their guidance, and spending years without the companionship of their families.

State policies and individual decisions are best based on well-informed analysis of the costs and benefits involved. There is not always enough information to properly measure the tradeoffs involved in any decision, but often even the mere recognition that tradeoffs exist, even if not immediately obvious, can lead to better decisions.

CALENDAR

2008

1-3 December, Bangkok, Thailand	ILO/IOE/CAPE Meeting on Human Resources Development for Productivity and Competitiveness
2-4 December, Rattanakiri, Cambodia	GET Ahead Training of Trainers Workshop
3-5 December, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam	ILO/VGCL Seminars on Tripartism and Social Dialogue
8-12 December, Siam Riep, Cambodia	Workshop on Rights, Responsibilities and Representation
9-10 December, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Japan/ASEAN-OSHNET Workshop on OSH Management Systems in Small Enterprises
*9-11 December, Bangkok, Thailand	First Asia-Pacific Community-Based Rehabilitation Congress
10 December, Kanazawa, Japan	Decent Work Promotional Seminar
15-18 December, Colombo, Sri Lanka	Regional Meeting on Freedom of Association
15-19 December, Mae Sod, Thailand	ILO/FTUB workshop on freedom of association and migration
15-19 December, Sihanoukville, Cambodia	Financial Education Training of Trainers Workshop
*18 December, Chiang Mai, Thailand	ASEAN-UN Summit

2009

22 January, Fukuoka, Japan	Decent Work Promotional Seminar
26 January-6 February, Chiba, Japan	Regional Workshop and Study Programme on Skills Development in the Workplace
31 January, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	National Stakeholder Workshop for Starting up The Time Bound Programme, Phase II
2-6 February, Cha-am, Petchburi, Thailand	ILO/MOL Training Workshop on Labour Migration Policy and Management in Thailand
14 February, Dhanusha, Nepal	LED Strategy and Role Building Workshop for Tripartite Partners
February, Manila, Philippines	Policy Coherence Conference for Growth, Employment and Decent Work
18-19 February, Singapore	ASEAN-OSHNET Workshop on OSH Good Practices
18-20 February, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Asia/Pacific Trade Union Regional Conference on C87 and C98
21-28 April	ILO 90 week

ILO Office in Japan lecture series on the ILO Decent Work Agenda, jointly with Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan

5 December 2008, Tokyo, Japan	Gender Issues
12 December, Tokyo, Japan	Occupational Safety and Health in Asia
19 December, Tokyo, Japan	Social Security in Asia
9 January 2009, Tokyo, Japan	Social Dialogue and Tripartism
16 January, Tokyo, Japan	Synthesis

*Non ILO Meeting

WEBSITES: GENDER

<http://www.ilo.org/gender/Events/Campaign2008-2009/lang-en/index.htm>

Link to the dedicated site for the ILO's year-long campaign, "Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work".

www.ilo.org/gender

The ILO's Bureau for Gender Equality promotes and advocates gender equality in the world of work. It also manages an extensive knowledge base.

www.ilo.org/asia/WCMS_100172

Information and further links related to gender

equality can be found on the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific website.

www.awid.org

Association for Women's Rights in Development is an international membership organization aiming to achieve gender equality, sustainable development and women's rights.

www.apwld.org

The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development is an independent, non-profit organization, committed to enabling women to use the law for social change.

www.bpw-international.org

International Federation of Business and Professional Women has members in 80 countries including women leaders, entrepreneurs, executives and professionals.

www.gaatw.org

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women brings together more than 90 non-governmental organizations worldwide to promote human rights and safety standards for migrant workers.

S H E L F L I F E

**Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 6 booklets

ISBN: 9789221217732

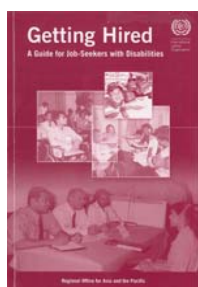
The Resource Kit provides information on the Asian Decent Work Decade's priority areas (competitiveness, productivity and jobs, labour market governance, local development, migrant workers and youth employment), the key challenges and the resources available to meet them.

**Decent Work Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, A Guidebook for Policy-makers and Researchers**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 100 pp.

ISBN: 9789221215424

A guidebook on decent work indicators designed to assist with the measurement and analysis of progress towards national, regional and international decent work goals.

**Getting Hired, A Guide for Job-Seekers with Disabilities**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 72 pp.

ISBN: 9789221208587

A guide intended for individuals or groups with disabilities who are looking for salaried or paid employment in the formal sector. It can be used on its own or for a training workshop by organizations, placement agencies, non-governmental organizations or community organizations.

Also available: **Getting Hired, A Trainer's Manual for Conducting a Workshop for Job-Seekers with Disabilities**

ISBN: 9789221208600

**Impact Assessment: Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET Ahead) Training Implementation**

Jakarta: ILO, April 2008, 102 pp.

ISBN: 9789220212127

(bilingual in English & Bahasa)

This report summarizes the main findings of an impact assessment of a GET Ahead training programme in Indonesia and gives recommendations.

Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN 2008, Driving Competitiveness and Prosperity with Decent Work

Bangkok: ILO, October 2008

ISBN: 9789221216940

This report looks at current labour and social trends in the 10 ASEAN member countries, analyzing the key factors that underpin long-term competitiveness and productivity and the policy challenges associated with maintaining growth and prosperity, including encouraging progressive workplace practices, raising the quality of the workforce, tackling vulnerability and strengthening social dialogue and cohesion.

**Labour and Social Trends in Indonesia 2008, Progress and pathways to job-rich development**

Jakarta: ILO, 2008, 95 pp.

ISBN: 9789220215081

(bilingual in English & Bahasa)

An analysis of socio-economic and labour market trends in South-East Asia's largest economy. The report also highlights key policy challenges.

**Meeting the Challenge: Proven Practices for Human Trafficking Prevention in the Greater Mekong Subregion**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 68 pp.

ISBN: 9789221213192

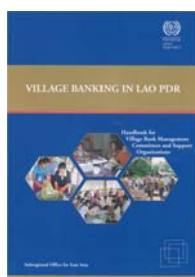
A report highlighting the achievements and lessons learned from an eight-year long project on the trafficking of children and women in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

**The Mekong Challenge: An Honest Broker – Improving cross-border recruitment practices for the benefit of Government, Workers and Employers**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 107 pp.

ISBN: 9789221215325

A study in Thailand, Lao PDR and Cambodia, on the implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers between Thailand and Lao PDR (2002) and Cambodia (2003).

**Village Banking in Lao PDR, Handbook for Village Bank Management Committees and Support Organizations**

Bangkok: ILO, 2008, 74 pp.

ISBN: 9789220215838

This handbook explains what village banking is, how it operates and the roles of supporting organizations. Its aim is to improve management capacity at village level and strengthen support to village banks.

Also available: **Village Banking in Lao PDR Ledger Guide**

Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Vietnam

Vietnam: ILO & Vietnam Chamber of Commerce & Industry, September 2007, 71 pp.

ISBN: 9789220206195

An assessment of the development patterns of enterprises owned by both women and men. It also identifies constraints and opportunities faced by male and female entrepreneurs as well as their needs, in particular for business development services and representation.

Also available in Vietnamese.

