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Seminar on the potential of social protection to build resilience to disasters
Manila, Philippines
22-24 November 2016

Background:

Natural hazards: imminent threats to ASEAN countries

The economies of the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are projected to continue robust growth in the coming years, partly driven by positive effects of the economic integration (ADB, 2014; OECD, 2016). However, the region's vulnerability to disaster often puts this economic and social progress at risk. The ASEAN region is located in one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world, exposed to almost all types of hazards including typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, volcanic eruptions, landslides, forest-fires, and droughts (UNISDR, 2010). Between 2000 and 2015, 777 natural events hit the South-East Asia region, causing the deaths of over 360,000 people, and affecting 236 million people (UNISDR database, 2015). In 2013, the region had the most number of disaster victims relative to its population size and the highest cost of reported damages relative to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A confluence of geophysical factors, high population density, poverty, and ill-equipped infrastructure explains the high costs of disaster.

Disaster Risk: a significant hurdle to economic development and poverty reduction

Natural hazards are a threat in both rich and poor countries. However, due to lower prevention and response capacities, disasters affect poorer countries disproportionately. Disasters can also set back progress in poverty reduction. In the short and medium term, disasters decrease national income and tax revenues, raising fiscal and trade deficits (e.g. Lis and Nickel, 2009; Otero and Marti; 1995; Hochrainer, 2009). In the long term, disasters may have long-lasting impacts on wellbeing and income through disruptions in the provision of health services and education. Also, victims often have to rely on harmful coping strategies such as reducing essential food consumption and health care, pulling children out of school or depleting productive assets. Poor households are often disproportionately affected by disasters due to heightened vulnerabilities and fewer resources for coping. However, disasters hit people of all economic levels and may push the previously non-poor into transitory and ultimately chronic poverty. Against this backdrop, social protection can play a potentially crucial role in times of natural disasters to complement and strengthen an existing Disaster Risk Management System.

Linking social protection with disaster risk management

Social protection and disaster risk management are both gaining increasing prominence due to their efficacy in mitigating risks, increasing the resilience of individuals and households to cope with shocks, protecting people from falling into (or falling deeper into) poverty, and safeguarding the national economy. Social protection systems, when properly designed, can help to mitigate the effects of natural events and hazards. International experiences show that countries that have social protection systems in place before a shock hits are better able to respond (ILO, 2009). However, to date, efforts to reduce and mitigate the risks of disasters have often been ad hoc, and reactive emergency programming is now seen to be insufficient to address natural events and hazards (World Bank, 2013). This has been highlighted, among others, by the World Humanitarian Summit's commitment to scale up social protection in times of crisis (UN, 2015).

Established social protection systems provide the avenue to better respond to disaster by using the existing population and recipient data to identify the affected population; using existing benefit disbursement mechanisms; using existing networks of social workers for needs assessment as well as

the delivery of assistance; and scaling up existing programmes by increasing benefit levels and covering more beneficiaries in the wake of natural disasters; among others. At the same time, the importance of addressing vulnerabilities even before disaster strikes is crucial; a disaster-preparedness mind-set should be an important part of social protection systems. There is an apparent need for social protection to be mainstreamed in the disaster risk reduction continuum, which does not only address post-disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation but also prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) places social protection and the protection of the environment as key elements of the new development agenda for the coming 15 years. The International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No.102)¹ and Social Protection Floors Recommendations, 2012 (No.202)², provide guidance for countries in developing social protection systems based on worldwide-agreed minimum standards. The universal approach to social protection extension, which is emphasized in Recommendation No. 202, is particularly relevant in disaster settings since natural hazards affect all members of the population regardless of their prior welfare levels. Most recently, recognising the urgency of ensuring decent work, including social protection, in times of disaster, the ILO's constituents proposed a revision to the Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71)³ to include natural disasters and catastrophic events as part of the crisis situation to address. Strengthening social protection to better protect people from disasters and mitigate the impacts of climate change is part of the ILO's Global Flagship Programme Strategy (2016-2020) on Building Social Protection Floors for All⁴ as well as ILO's programme on Jobs for Peace and Resilience.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) was adopted by United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015, outlining seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks. Across the targets and priorities, social protection stands as a crosscutting area. Under the Sendai Framework "Words into Action", a guide is to be developed to provide models for integrating disaster risk management into national social protection programmes.

ASEAN frameworks on disaster management and social protection

At the ASEAN-level, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) adopted in 2005 reflects efforts to improve inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination. The AADMER Work Programme (2016-2020) highlights the importance of social protection in disaster management as a priority programme⁵. The Work Programme aims to "develop a regional social protection protocol under AADMER" (output 6.1) and "Support mainstreaming of DRR and Climate Change Adaptation into national policies, strategies and mechanisms to strengthen social protection programmes"(output 6.2).

Likewise, the Regional Framework and Action Plan to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection has also identified the impact of climate change and disasters as an area of support for the policy and programme development.

Recent experiences of ASEAN countries such as the use of Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program (4Ps) to reach those affected by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013); the extension of unemployment insurance benefits for those affected by the 2011 flood in Thailand; as well as public work programmes in response to various disasters can be drawn as bases to further develop disaster-responsive social protection systems.

¹ http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/legal-advice/WCMS_205340/lang--en/index.htm

² http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/legal-advice/WCMS_205341/lang--en/index.htm

³ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_358383.pdf

⁴ ILO, 2015, "Building Social Protection Floors for All: Global Flagship Programme Strategy (2016-2020)" available at <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowProject.action?id=3000>

⁵ Priority programme 4: "Protecting Economic and Social Gains of ASEAN Community Integration through Risk Transfer and Social Protection" particularly through component 6: "Ensuring social protection and establishing social safety nets in the context of disasters"

Objectives of the workshop:

On 22-24 November 2016, the ASEAN Member States will meet in Manila, Philippines, to share their experiences, and learn from countries in other regions on practices using social protection measures to prepare and respond to natural disasters. The overall objective of the seminar is to provide the opportunity for informed discussions on the importance of social protection in preparing and responding to natural disasters and assist policy makers in ASEAN in developing practical guidelines towards implementing disaster-responsive social protection in line with International Labour Standards.

More specifically, the seminar aims at:

1. Sharing knowledge, improving understanding and learning from countries' experiences on how social protection systems contribute to building resilience to disasters;
2. Adopting policy recommendations to improve disaster risks management and resilience through social protection, with the aim to feed into the AADMER regional social protection protocol and the Sendai Framework Implementation Guide on Social Protection;
3. Exploring possible areas for South-South cooperation across ASEAN Member States in this area;
4. Gathering views from workers and employers' representatives and engaging their contribution to build effective disaster-responsive social protection systems and floors.

Participants:

Given the interconnectedness of the subjects discussed, the effectiveness of the workshop will be contingent on the participation of the national agencies in charge of social protection, disaster management and labour. These national agencies, assembled respectively in the Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM), the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), and the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), along with representatives of workers and employers' organizations from the ten ASEAN Member States will attend the seminar. Representatives of UN agencies, researchers and civil society working on social protection will be invited to share their expertise and practice.

Expected outputs

1. A background paper compiling relevant practices and recommendations for realizing the potential of social protection measures to build resilience to disasters taking into account in particular the principles set forth in R.202 and other international labour standards;
2. An endorsed list of tripartite recommendations and concrete actions for strengthening linkages between social protection and disasters risk management in ASEAN, to be utilized as a reference for the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection (2013) and the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (2005), and as inputs to the development of AADMER regional social protection protocol and the Sendai Framework Implementation Guide on Social Protection;
3. Concrete proposals for South-South development cooperation projects on social protection and disaster resilience in the region, identifying the role of the ASEAN Secretariat, ILO, UNICEF and UN agencies.

Organizers and donors:

The seminar is co-organized by the ILO and the ASEAN Secretariat, with the contribution of UNICEF, under the sponsorship of the ILO/Japan project: Promoting and building social protection and employment services in ASEAN.