

Closing remarks of Ms. Valerie Schmitt, ILO DWT Social Security Specialist, Bangkok

Workshop on Integrating Social Policies and the Delivery of Social Protection Floors, 29 May 2013, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Distinguished H.E. Mr Kim Chhai Hieng, Deputy Governor of the Province of Siem Reap

Distinguished guests, dear participants,

The workshop on “Integrating social policies and the delivery of social protection floors” has come to an end, and I would like to thank you for your active participation, in all the technical sessions and group discussions.

This workshop aimed at achieving a better understanding of the concept of the social protection floor, how it fits in broader social security extension strategies, and at increasing our knowledge on how to successfully implement national floors of social protection.

From the presentations and panel discussions we understand that developing a national SPF is not the responsibility of one unique body, but that there is a need for coordination across ministries, between the central and the decentralized levels, while involving the social partners, academia and civil society.

Coordination mechanisms include national social protection taskforces that can be supported by the United Nations and other development partners. At the delivery level, the integrated delivery of the social protection floor can be achieved through single window services and harmonized IT systems that respect confidentiality and integrity.

However coordination, discussions, consultations are not enough. At some point we need a driver in the driving seat. We need a driver that consolidates all of the views into a national strategy document (this was the role of CARD in Cambodia). We need a driver that takes the responsibility for implementation in a coordinated manner. This can be achieved by the sub-national governments under the Ministry of Interior. Full political commitment is needed at the national and sub-national levels.

This does not mean that line ministries such as health, labour, social affairs have fewer responsibilities. Line ministries continue to deliver the services and keep the budgets of their interventions. However their interventions are better coordinated at the policy level and at the implementation level, so that they can collectively offer better services to people in need of protection.

By empowering populations, by informing them and supporting registration, the single window service organizes the demand for social services and transfers, and contributes to increasing the expectations of the people. The work load of the ministries of health, labour, social welfare, education and the demand for social services will as a consequence increase, because their “clients” will be more numerous, better informed, solvent and more organized.

As Dr Sok Kanha said we cannot wait for the poor to come to us. We need to go to them. Reaching out the beneficiaries of the SPF is challenging for all countries, and becomes a real headache in countries like Brazil and South Africa where the Single Window Service is put on the back of a truck (!!)

or Indonesia with its 17,000 islands. We need a bridge between

the government and the people, and this is what the single window service supported by efficient IT systems can offer.

More than that, the SWS provides access from a single location to a combination of social services and transfers to fully promote everyone's full potential, across the life cycle. This has the potential of reducing poverty in a sustainable manner.

Ideal combinations are always difficult to design if we want to achieve the highest impact. And many of you have adopted pragmatic approaches, with a mix of universal and targeted interventions. It is also important to keep track of the potential and unexpected impacts of social interventions on the behaviours of people, to avoid for instance social transfers creating disincentives to work. However, as Martin Hirsch explained "Disincentives to work are a poison but poverty is also a poison".

The SWS also has the potential to empower local administrations. What does this mean? In the framework of decentralization, the subnational level has increased responsibility in providing social services to the people. This is written in the Law but is not yet a reality, because there is no concrete tool that the subnational level can use to fulfil its mandate. The SWS is embedded in local administration, at district and commune levels, and gives the subnational level the capacity to deliver on their mandate. The establishment of the SWS will contribute to increasing the capacities of the subnational administration in the provision of social protection and employment services while channelling more decentralized funds (such as commune Sangkat funds in Cambodia) to the social sector. But this should be done in full respect of transparency and traceability. Information technology and direct & automatic transfer mechanisms such as in the Bolsa Familia

in Brasil can support good governance and the efficient use of funds.

A social protection programme cannot be perfect from day one even if we have spent three years and hundreds of consultations on its design. The example of the SISBEN in Colombia shows that we need to accept that social protection programmes need to be transformed and progressively improved. For that to happen we need to incorporate into the design of the programme the capacity for adaptation. A programme that is not able to collect feedback and use it for its further improvements is bound to fail. Feedback mechanisms are not only useful to assess the satisfaction of final users. They are powerful tools to understand how the programme works on the ground, and will give the keys for the constant improvement of the design and operations.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can see that after these three days spent together the level of informal interaction between us has progressively increased, most probably thanks to the ice breaking exercise (thank you Christine for the good idea) but also thanks to your willingness to exchange and learn from each-others' good practices, challenges and failures. The discussions did not only stay at the "high level", but they were also extremely friendly, creating a good spirit of mutual cooperation. I was amazed to hear that some of our friends from Latin America, Asia and Africa are ready to provide support to ASEAN countries in the delivery of social protection floors through south-south cooperation.

I can see that the workshop has contributed to the further preparation of an ASEAN framework on social protection, which aims at sharing and promoting a rights based approach to social protection, better understanding social protection

situations in ASEAN member states, supporting the further implementation of national floors of social protection and higher levels of social protection. This social protection framework will contribute to an ASEAN integration with a human face.

I can see that the workshop has also provided concrete inputs for the further implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy and the social service delivery mechanism in Cambodia. Cambodian constituents are today fully committed to the implementation of the NSPS in an integrated and coordinated way.

We hope that the government of Siem Reap province and particularly the districts of Angkor Chum and Srei Snam are now fully on board and ready to work hard with our team in the implementation of the SWS that should receive its first clients by October this year. The ILO is ready to support you in this process, but we cannot achieve anything without strong engagement with the provincial and district governors as well as commune chiefs.

Ladies and gentlemen, the presentations and discussions of this workshop will also contribute to an ILO SPF Good Practices Guide on “Integrating Social Policies and the Delivery of Social Protection Floors” so that the knowledge exchanges among us in these three days can be shared beyond our group, to more practitioners and experts.

Finally we will put all the content of the workshop (including the videos of your presentations and all pictures taken) on our GESS platform. A list of participants with pictures and contact details will be distributed to all of you so that you can easily interact with each other after the workshop.

Thank you so much for your active participation, for your generosity in sharing your experience, good practices and failures. We hope that all of you have gained knowledge and inspiration from these presentations and interactions and that the collaboration which was initiated here in Siem Reap will continue and develop in the coming months. I wish you all a safe trip back home and I hope that before you do you will manage to discover or rediscover the Angkor temples.

Thank you.