

Summary of Panel discussion 6

Successful cases on building national strategies and implementing social protection floors (SPFs)

8 September 2016

This session was chaired by Ms Valérie Schmitt, Social Protection Department of the ILO. She introduced the session by describing the elements that make up the sequential stages to reach a national social protection floor. She then invited the speakers to share their experiences in terms of how each of their countries worked to obtain a national consensus and the role of dialogue in that process. The importance of dialogue to reach a consensus and move the social protection agenda forward were indeed common to all the interventions.

Ms Arildiipurev Tsevelragchaa, Director of International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MOLSP), Mongolia, described the Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) in Mongolia and how this process influenced the definition of new schemes, as well as the expansion of existing schemes. She explained how its conclusions and recommendations influenced the design of the National Employment Policy and contributed to the Sustainable Development Policy of Mongolia.

The flagship social protection programme in Mongolia is the Universal Cash Grant Programme. Ms Arildiipurev explained how the Programme is funded by mineral resources. The Programme redistributes national mineral wealth back to the people of Mongolia through their children, thus making an investment in the future of the country. One aspect that she considers essential to the success of the Programme is its efficient administrative procedures.

One important feature of the social protection system in Mongolia is the provision of services through a “single window”, allowing residents to access benefits from a variety of services in a single location. “Whatever people need they can get in one place and at the same time they receive the information and the benefits they are entitled.”

“The Universal Cash Grant Programme is one way of redistributing the outcomes of national mineral resources back to the people of Mongolia through their children.”

“Thanks to the One-Stop-Shop, whatever people need they can get in one place and at the same time they receive the information and the benefits they are entitled.”

Dr Thaworn Sakunphanit, Health Insurance System Research Office, Thailand, confirmed that the results reached by Thailand were only possible thanks to years of dialogue. The introduction of social protection in the first Social and Economic Development Plan more than 15 years ago was only possible through the contributions of many stakeholders, including government departments, academics, civil society organizations, social partners and United Nations (UN) agencies. He also underlined the importance of making information available to political parties to ensure that social protection is part of their agendas. Despite the positive results achieved during the ABND process, Dr Thaworn emphasized that there is always a need for improvement and that keeping the debate open is crucial for defending the levels of protection achieved and creating additional space for social protection schemes.

One of the main debates in Thailand is on the approach to target beneficiaries. Some argue for a targeted approach while others argue for a more universal system.

“We can show that that social protection increases productivity, leads to job creation and has a positive impact in economic growth.”

Ms Than Than Nu, Director, Insurance Division, Social Security Board (SSB), Myanmar, highlighted the fact that the decision to create a National Social Protection Strategic Plan was the President’s initiative to address social and economic vulnerabilities. She also described the roles of various stakeholders working under the Social Protection Committee. She finally described the structure of social protection in Myanmar with its different schemes (contributory and non-contributory) and programmes. She noted that good coordination is important due to the involvement of many partners in the implementation of social protection programmes. For instance, social assistance programmes involve seven different ministries.

Ms Than Than noted that the launch of the Social Security Law in 2012 and the establishment of the financial autonomy of the SSB were major milestones in the development of the social security system in Myanmar. Currently, with the support of the ILO, Myanmar is carrying out an actuarial review of the systems to ground the reforms in the existing law.

Mr Luu Quang Tuan, Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs, Viet Nam, shared with the audience the ongoing process of developing the Master Plan for Social Assistance in Viet Nam with the goal of expanding coverage and increasing the level of benefits provided to the population. The process started with an assessment of existing provisions through fieldwork and local-level consultations to better understand the context in which the programmes are implemented. The work was done in collaboration with various UN agencies. The Plan uses a life-cycle approach with a priority focus on two target groups: children in their first 36 months (introduction of a cash transfer) and the elderly (initially reducing the universal pension eligibility age to 75 years).

Mr Luu Quang Tuan highlighted several challenges facing Viet Nam, including the country’s fiscal situation and the difficulty of extending contributory programmes. He explained that the country took some measures to introduce more categories of workers, but enrolment is still a challenge. Mongolia and Myanmar also emphasized the need to expand the capacity to collect contributions. In the case of Mongolia, the nomadic lifestyle brings additional challenges to collecting regular contributions.

All four of the representatives stressed the importance of improving the education of employers and workers in understanding the benefits of social protection. They all showed interest in learning more from the experiences of other countries through South-South cooperation and the need for innovation, such as the use of mobile technologies and joint work between social security institutions and tax authorities.

There was also a consensus on the need to increase budgetary allocations for social protection. Thailand recommended the promotion of national and regional dialogues on the economic impact of social protection and the need to create quantitative evidence, as he believes that “we can show that social protection increases productivity, leads to job creation and has a positive impact on economic growth.”