

ILO China ASEAN High Level Seminar to achieve the SDGs on Universal Social Protection through South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Side event: ILO's Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All

Summary and quotes

Ms Valérie Schmitt, Chief of the Social Policy, Governance and Standards Branch of the ILO's Social Protection Department, chaired this side event. She provided a brief presentation of the framework of the Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors.

The Global Flagship Programme aims to implement a twofold strategy to foster and support the design and implementation of social protection systems, with a final goal of making social protection floors (SPFs) a reality for more people:

- Twenty-one countries will receive comprehensive and coordinated “A to Z” support over five years to build social protection floors. This will start from the development of social protection visions through national dialogues, leading to technical and financial support to develop national capacities and cover implementation start-up costs.
- Additionally, a Global Knowledge Campaign on Social Protection Floors will promote the SPFs through developing and sharing knowledge and evidence, based on countries' experiences. The aim is to develop capacities for the implementation of social protection floors and strengthen partnerships to enhance outcomes through a multiplier effect.

Through this Programme, the ILO will mobilize its constituents and partners for the achievement of several Targets of the SDGs, and particularly Target 1.3.

Quote: with the Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All, we will change the life of millions

Mr Nuno Cunha Meira Simo, Senior Social Protection Specialist, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific, provided further insights regarding the relevance of the Global Flagship Programme for the ASEAN.

The first characteristic of Member States of the ASEAN is their diversity. There is little to be compared in terms of economic and social development in between Singapore and, at the other hand countries such as Lao PDR or Cambodia. Another characteristic of the region is the low levels of public investment in social protection. There are also huge challenges in the region for a fair and sustainable development, particularly the high share of the informal economy, and the already aging society. The latter also is a challenge in terms of social protection sustainability.

There are also very positive elements in the region such as the increased interest for social protection with countries launching new schemes or expanding existing ones. Just to mention some of the recent development, Cambodia and Indonesia are looking at Health Insurance, Thailand at a Child Grant, Malaysia at Unemployment Insurance, and the Philippines at starting new schemes.

This increased interest also means that there is more request for support should it be for national dialogues, the design of schemes, cost assessments and the identification of fiscal pace, or regarding the extension of social protection to the informal economy. The ILO alone cannot answer all of these

requests and there is a need for mutual support ASEAN countries, and with important partners such as China.

Quote: There is a growing consensus in the region that the establishment of social protection floors is key to reduce poverty and inequality and to promote inclusive and sustainable growth. The region has become a hub for exciting developments and innovations in the area of social protection.

Mr Liu Yuton, Director for Technical Cooperation, International Cooperation Department, MOHRSS, China, shared the interest of China to collaborate with the ILO for the SDG implementation in the ASEAN region.

China has some instruments and economic models to showcase that social protection is an asset and brings benefits to the people. Besides, the internal diversity of the country makes it a partner full of various experiences. The country is also facing the challenge of aging society and could transfer its knowledge at the same time it would learned from ASEAN countries.

Focus on SSTC is not an easy path, as early as 2000 China focused on social security, and we have faced a lot of challenges requiring tremendous efforts. This seminar and the presence of delegations from many countries demonstrate the importance to move further in that direction.

Following the success of the SSTC project on public employment services that China supported in Lao PDR and Cambodia, there is a clear interest for the next phase to deal with social protection.

Quote: We want to be involved with the ILO on the SDG implementation in ASEAN.

Mr Sho Sudo, Deputy Director for international cooperation, International Affairs Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Government of Japan, presented the long-term Japan-ILO collaboration on the area of social protection.

Japan has a 40 years history of collaborating with the ILO, mostly in the ASEAN region. Since 2011 this collaboration is happening in the area of social protection. This collaboration is entering its third phase; Phase 1, 2011-2013 focussed on unemployment insurance and employment services, particularly in Viet Nam; Phase 2, 2014-2016 focused on Mongolia and ASEAN; Phase 3, 2017-2019 focusses on the extension of social protection, particularly in Viet Nam and Indonesia and is having an ASEAN level component.

All our project have looked at the development of local capacities, especially among social partners. There is no one size fits it all and the development of local capacities also is required to ensure continuity in what the project support and the sustainability of the social protection system. We have also invested in the development of knowledge that is shared during and after the termination of the project phase, notably through training courses delivered by the International training Center of the ILO.

SSTC is a modus operandi of our collaboration with the ILO. For instance ASEAN Members' representatives were invited in Mongolia to share experiences on integrated delivery and learn from the One Stop Shop. We have achieve qualitative changes and quantitative results through our collaboration with the ILO.

Quote 1: We can gain knowledge by reading books or other materials or communicate by Skype, but mutual conversation by face-to-face basis is most effective.

Quote 2: The project brought not only qualitative changes but also led to quantitative results.

Mr Claude Jentgen, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in Vientiane, Laos, shared the lessons learned through the ILO-Luxembourg cooperation in the area of health protection. The project, implemented jointly by the ILO and WHO, supported the Lao National Health Insurance Scheme and the extension of its coverage.

The first lesson learned thanks to the project is the importance of combining policy level support with practical solutions and operations to avoid any disconnection in between these two elements. The recommendation of the project have to be both sustainable at the macro-level and feasible at the operation level. This requires a lot of awareness raising efforts and the involvement of various partners, including Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, central and local actors, other development partners.

A great achievement is that the Lao government is willing to expand to other districts the Solidarity Fund mechanism that the project designed and supported in the Vang Vieng District. We cannot claim neither that we achieved the perfect solution, there are still concerns regarding the enrolment rate in rural areas, and the unmatched demand and supply sides. The Lao-Lux project, thanks to its multi-partners approach was able to work on both sides. The region has become a hub for the development of universal health protection, and the project notably encouraged exchanges between Lao PDR and Thailand.

A future partnership is being discussed to support the installation of a Health Care Facility in order to provide support at both regional and country levels for the achievement of universal social health protection. Social protection is a priority for Luxembourg development cooperation, therefore supporting the Global Flagship Programme of the ILO.

Ms Anita Amorim, Head of the Emerging and Special Partnership Unit, Partnerships and Field Support Department of the ILO, shared experiences from Brazil on SSTC.

Through SSTC, countries are learning from each-other. Brazil engaged in South-South cooperation within the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC) in two main areas, child labour and social protection. This engagement is both at the policy level and at the technical level. The ILO is acting as a facilitator of these peer-to-peer exchanges with Timor-Leste and Paraguay.

Major innovations in Brazil such as the Bolsa Verde and the Bolsa Familia programmes are part of these exchanges.

Ms Mei Wei, First Vice-President, Geely Holding Group, presented the view of a global company, member of the Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors (GBN).

We are operating in a more and more globalized world. Therefore we were honoured to be invited to join the Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors in 2015 at its launch. As a founding member of the GBN we would like to invite all enterprises to join the Network.

The absence of social protection or inaccuracies in social protection systems result in increased costs for enterprise. It also generates unfair competition between those contributing to social protection and those that are not contributing. It is therefore important to us to advocate for a better legal framework

for a fairer competition and to promote social protection globally. Social protection can also help to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity of workers, at the same time, it helps to maintain stability and encourage demand for goods.

The GBN is a platform for enterprises to support the ILO and its Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All. The Network is working in three areas, it fosters exchange of information at the enterprise level, it studies the impact of social protection systems for enterprises, and it engages on the development and reform of social protection systems.

Geely is international with presence in particular in Sweden and in the UK. Our ambition is to be in the Top 10 personal cars producer, reaching a capacity of 3million units. Being member of the GBN is part of this strategy to support our workers in achieving our goal.

Quote: The absence of social protection or inaccuracies in social protection systems result in increased costs for enterprise.