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Executive course on designing and expanding universal pension systems

9 – 13 February 2015
Bangkok, Thailand



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Background

The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202) reaffirms the universal right to access to essential services, in particular health, and social protection benefits with the view of preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerabilities, and social exclusion, and preserving dignity of all members of a society, including older persons.

Over the past several decades, many countries in Asia have introduced old-age pension benefits with the aim to secure the livelihoods of older generations and provide invaluable income security to a particularly vulnerable group.

However, experiences show that old-age pensions financed predominantly on the basis of contributions from employers and employees have a limited capacity to extend coverage rapidly and significantly. Yet, in many countries of Asia and the Pacific, over 65 per cent of workers are employed in rural and informal economy. As a result, in low and middle-income countries of Asia and the Pacific, the proportion of older women and men, above statutory pensionable age, receiving an old-age pension varies from zero to 82 per cent; countries performing best, Thailand, Nepal and China, offer a universal social pension. Although when such schemes are in place, level of benefits are often too low to enable older women and men meeting their basic needs and secure their livelihoods. Moreover, certain countries in the region provide lump-sum payment of the pension savings upon retirement leaving pensioners at considerable risks of rapidly outliving their assets. Low performance or non-existence of pension schemes oblige older men and women to continue working as long as they are physically able to do so in order to survive. Women, who tend to be more represented in rural and informal works and for whom periods of contribution tend to be lesser, are

disproportionally more vulnerable at older ages.

Countries are increasingly exploring alternative options to contributory schemes through notably universal social pensions. In ageing countries, the need is even a more pressing to develop and reform old-age pension systems that will articulate different methods of financing, such as contributory and non-contributory schemes. Pension systems designs and reforms can take many forms in the region. In some cases, they require a full overhaul of the system, in others, an expansion of the previously limited population base. In nearly all cases, the aim of these reforms is to make pension schemes more effective, notably in terms of coverage and adequacy of benefits, and efficient.

A key element in the implementation of any changes is the proper training of those who will be involved in pension design and reform. In order to respond to this need, the course will focus on sharing international experiences in pension systems, with an emphasis on social pensions, in order to impart valuable lessons and innovations from abroad, which pension experts can adapt and apply in their home countries. Through these examples, the course will highlight a variety of issues and challenges related to pension schemes drawing particular attention to international good practices and lessons learned.



Learning objective

The executive course on social pension seeks to train pension experts in design, implementation, reform, and management of effective and efficient pension schemes. It provides advanced knowledge and capacities for the analysis and redesign of current systems, based on a wide breadth of comprehensive examples, with the aim of developing an international perspective on pension issues through comparative analysis and sharing

experiences of other schemes. The course also aims at increasing awareness of the international labour standards related to social security and pension in particular, notably the ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202). The executive course further explores mechanisms for improved coordination with other policies and programmes aimed at providing old-age protection and increased outreach of pension systems. Finally, the course strives to increase understanding of economic and financial implications of pension systems as well as the challenges posed by the financial and economic backdrop in a given context.



Participants

The course targets the representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, Social Security Offices, representatives of workers and employers involved at the technical level in the planning, financing and management of pension schemes of Asia and the Pacific. The course is also suitable for social protection experts from universities, United Nations agencies and civil society.



Content

This Executive Course covers the social, demographic, economic and financing challenges impacting on the viability and adequacy of pension schemes as well as the policy trends emerging from Asia and emerging countries around the world. Through an analytical review of the pension provision objectives, the course tackles the key planning and policy considerations to be addressed in the consolidation and expansion of comprehensive pension systems. Participants will have the opportunity to explore fundamental issues

and priorities related to modern pension systems, learning from specific countries' analysis.



Module

- **Introduction:** Designing comprehensive pension system and providing income security
- **Module A:** Challenges for extending old-age pension in East and South-East Asia
- **Module B:** Designing universal pension systems and ILO conventions and recommendations
- **Module C:** Financial sustainability and fiscal space
- **Module D:** Reform, Re-reform and social dialogue
- **Module E:** Institutional coordination and compliance, Delivery and implementation mechanisms
- **Country Analysis:** Policy and implementation



Methodology

An action-oriented, highly participated approach will be used throughout the course, with particular attention paid to sharing international experience with a view to adaptation and practical application. Training methods will combine lectures and discussions of case studies with group work.



Language

English



Dates and place

9-13 February 2015, Bangkok, Thailand