

The ILO at a glance: Viet Nam

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the United Nations agency devoted to advancing opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Its main aims are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues. These aims constitute the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda which spans the ILO, integrating what it does in support of economic and social progress at the international, regional, national and local levels.

The ILO fulfills its mission through: international policies and programmes to promote workers' rights, improve working and living conditions and enhance employment opportunities; international labour standards which serve as guidelines for national authorities; policy advice and technical cooperation formulated and implemented in active partnership with constituents; training, education and research at national and international levels; and publications and dissemination of knowledge and information.

The ILO has a unique tripartite structure in which employers' and workers' organizations have an equal voice with governments in shaping its policies and programmes. The International Labour Conference (ILC) meets annually in Geneva to examine and adopt the broad policies of the ILO and new international labour standards and to approve the biennial programme of the ILO. It also serves as a forum for the discussion of topical social and labour issues. The Governing Body guides the work of the Organization between the annual sessions of the ILC.

The ILO's secretariat, operational headquarters, research centre and publishing house are based at the International Labour Office in Geneva. Administration and management are decentralized through regional, sub-regional and area and country offices.

Major Milestones

The ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War 1, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. In 1944, during another period of international crisis, ILO members built on these aims by adopting the *Declaration of Philadelphia* which states that labour is not a commodity and sets out basic human and economic rights under the principle that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere". In 1946, the ILO became the first specialized agency associated with the

newly formed United Nations. On its 50th anniversary in 1969 the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The adoption of the *Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* in 1998 marked another milestone for the ILO, reaffirming the commitment of its tripartite membership to respect, promote and realize the rights of workers and employers to freedom of association and collective bargaining; and to eliminate child labour, forced labour and discrimination linked to employment. According to the Declaration, these fundamental principles and rights at work enable people “to claim freely and on the basis of equality of opportunity, their fair share of the wealth which they have helped to generate and to achieve their human potential”. The *Decent Work Agenda* was adopted in 1999.

The Decent Work Agenda

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for their families. It means better prospects for personal development and social integration and freedom for people to express their concerns, organize, and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. It entails equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. It is the key to eradicating poverty and to a more equitable sharing of the gains engendered by increased international economic integration, making globalization more inclusive and fair.

Promoting decent work is the shared objective of the ILO's constituents and the Office. In the tripartite ILO, the decent work agenda incorporates the concerns and priorities of the governments and the employers' and workers' organizations that constitute the Organization, mobilizing their energy and resourcefulness and providing a platform for constructing consensus on social and economic policies.

Progress towards decent work calls for action at the global level, mobilizing the principal actors of the multilateral system and the global economy around this agenda. At the national level, integrated decent work country programmes, developed by the ILO constituents, define priorities and the targets within national development frameworks.

The ILO in Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, a *National Cooperation Framework on Promoting Decent Work (2006 – 2010)* was signed by the ILO and its constituents on 12 July 2006. It sets out a strategic framework within which the Government and employers' and workers' organizations agree to work in partnership towards achieving the goal of decent work for all in Viet Nam. The Framework is intended to support the development strategies and policies that underpin the

country's transition to a socialist market economy and the Government's efforts to ensure that social and economic advancement occur in tandem. Its frame of reference and point of departure are the country's *Ten Year National Socio-Economic Development Strategy* (2001 – 2010) and its second *Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan* (2006 – 2010). Its concerns are reflected in the *United Nations Development Assistance Framework* (2006 – 2010).

The Framework comprises four themes: i) labour institutions, ii) labour markets and employment, iii) social security and occupational safety and health and, iv) vulnerable groups. Work on these themes is informed and shaped by the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda.

ILO-constituent cooperation on institution building includes support to the formulation and implementation of labour law; strengthening of labour administration and of industrial relations institutions and actors. Support to employment creation is delivered through advice and assistance on labour market information systems; youth employment; expansion of employment opportunities for women workers; and the provision of entrepreneurship training and support to public private partnerships, business associations and business development services. Policy advice and training are offered in support of social protection services and their extension to the larger population and includes pilot activities on risk management through micro insurance and micro finance; policy support, information and training on occupational safety and health in enterprises and in agriculture and the introduction of a safety culture at work. The situation of vulnerable workers is addressed through support on the prevention and elimination of trafficking and child labour; through activities for disabled workers and through action to address HIV/AIDS at the workplace.

ILO technical assistance is delivered through: research and analysis, advocacy and awareness raising, advisory services, technical cooperation projects, fellowships and study tours and training carried out locally and at the regional and international levels.

Viet Nam rejoined the ILO in 1992 and has served as a Deputy Member of the ILO's Governing Body since 2002. The ILO Office in Viet Nam was officially opened in Hanoi on 17 February 2003.