

ILO COLOMBO e-newsletter

ILO and its Tripartite Partners sign Sri Lanka's Decent Work Country Programme for 2013 – 2017

The Government, Employer, Workers Organisations and ILO Office signed on the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Sri Lanka, during a ceremony held on Thursday 23rd May 2013 in Colombo.

The Secretary for the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations, Mr. W.J.L.U. Wijayaweera, ILO Country Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Mr. Donglin Li, Director General of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Mr. Ravi Peiris, General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya, Mr. Leslie Devendra, Vice President of the Ceylon Workers' Congress, Mr. K. Marimuttu, President of the National Trade Union Federation, Mr. K. Velayudam and President of the National Association for Trade Union Research and Education, Mr. D.W. Subasinghe were present and signed the DWCP on behalf of their respective organizations.

DWCP is an ILO initiative which extends technical support to member states in a results-based framework to achieve the Decent Work Agenda set by the ILO for the global work community.

The DWCP 2013 – 2017 is an umbrella framework for ILO engagement in Sri Lanka for the next 5 years to jointly promote employment opportunities and decent work for all in Sri Lanka. It is in line with the Sri Lanka ten-year Horizon Development Framework, UNDAF and the National Human Resource Employment Policy and National Action Plan for Decent Work in Sri Lanka.

The DWCP 2013-2017 also builds on the achievements and lesson learned during the implementation of the DWCP 2008-2012 which was instrumental in facilitating the government to formulate nine national policies, strategies and frameworks covering different areas of the Decent Work Agenda.

The Sri Lanka DWCP will address three priorities: Promotion of full, decent and productive employment and enabling environment for competitive, sustainable enterprise development; strengthening democratic governance of the labour market and; social inclusion and the establishment of a social protection floor.

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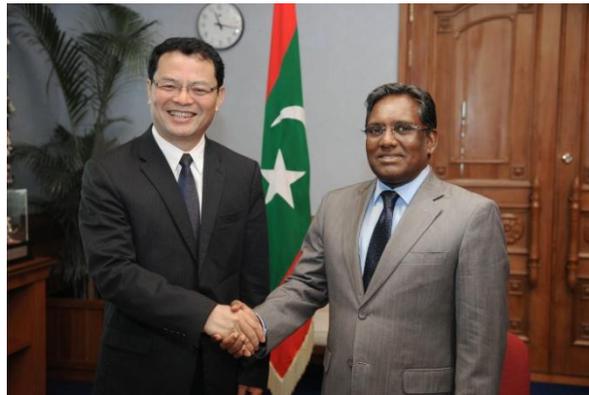
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ILO Country Director pays courtesy call on Maldivian President Dr. Mohamed Waheed



ILO Country Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Mr. Donglin Li, paid a courtesy call on Maldivian President Dr. Mohamed Waheed on 19th May at the President's office in the capital Male.

Mr. Li congratulated the President on the ratification of all 8 ILO Core Conventions. He said it is a major achievement for the Republic of Maldives since it joined the ILO in 2009, and also an important indicator of the government's commitment to labour rights and social justice.

He highlighted the importance of application and implementation of the 8 ILO Core Conventions and briefed the President on the ILO's 3-year on-going project in the Maldives which promotes labour rights and strengthens the labour market governance. He mentioned that ILO is supporting the reviewing of the labour law, capacity building of the government, workers and employers organisations, drafting the first Industrial Relations Act, developing labour inspection policy and employment policy, and providing assistance with Occupational Health and Safety Law and National Census.

President Waheed thanked ILO for the support and said Maldives needs more assistance related to the ratifications of the core conventions. He emphasized the need to figure out what national laws needs to be developed and pointed out that Maldives is facing problems of migrant labour and associated problems of human trafficking.

Mr. Li applauded the government of Maldives for its endeavours in promoting and protecting the labour rights and stated that ILO will start to develop the first Decent Work Country Programme for Maldives later this year which will include the provision of technical support to the Maldives on migrant workers' and human trafficking issues. He also proposed the establishing of the National Tripartite Labour Advisory Committee (NTLAC) in the Maldives, which would bring together the three parties to discuss on all labour related issues.

President Waheed expressed that he is happy that ILO is supporting the Government to address some of the emerging issues and hopes to continue to obtain assistance from the ILO to address the additional problems that the country is facing.

The meeting was attended by the Vice President, Minister of Gender, Family and Human Rights, His Excellency's Political Advisor, and Ambassador at-large from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The First South Asian Labour Inspection System

Launched in Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka marked a significant milestone by becoming the first country in South Asia to launch the Labour Inspection System Application or LISA. The system provides the Ministry of Labour with the opportunity to improve coordination between its labour administration institutions spread across the country in 56 labour department offices.

The launch of this state of the art system supports the Government's e-Sri Lanka initiative that aims to develop the economy of Sri Lanka, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the people through ICT.

The fully automated system supports on-site inspection processes where authorized personnel can track and monitor the statuses of the inspections as and when they occur. The system supports improved collection and analysis of labour market and inspection data through enhanced monitoring of the quantity and quality of information that is being gathered by the labour officers. This also provides timely and accurate information to the senior management of the department based on statistical reports generated from the system. Duty rosters of hundreds of inspection staff are now generated automatically and staff can collaborate through a virtual workspace providing a much needed knowledge sharing platform.

The system was developed with funding support from the United States Department of Labour (USDOL) and the technical support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) under its Project on Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Sri Lanka.

Speaking at the launch ceremony the United States Ambassador Michele J. Sison said "The US Government supports these efforts, because it is clear that respecting the rights of workers leads to positive, long-term economic success." She further went on to add that, "In the United States, we have a deep-seated belief that labour rights are human rights, and thanked the ILO for taking the lead in implementing this system in Sri Lanka."

The Minister of Labour and Labour Relations Hon. Gamini Lokuge stated that the system LISA system is the 'future', and added that the Ministry can now plan its activities better. He further went on to state that all matters including cases for the day are available online and accessible to both the Department of Labour and the Ministry. This provides them with a snapshot in advance on the case, the case officer assigned and all other relevant information at hand. He emphasized that this system allows Sri Lanka to fulfil its international obligations such as the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81).

Mr. Donglin Li, Country Director for ILO in Sri Lanka and the Maldives highlighting the importance of this momentous occasion said that the International Labour Organisation has been supporting the Government of Sri Lanka to enhance its service delivery, fulfilling international obligations and conventions. The launch of this system provides an innovative approach to Labour Inspection whilst further strengthening the commitment of the ILO to the people of Sri Lanka.

Presentations were made by the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations Secretary, W.J.L.U Wijayaweera, Commissioner General of Labour, Pearl Weerasinghe, and representations from employers and workers.

The labour inspection system is part of the project on Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Sri Lanka that aims to build stronger worker and employer organizations, review and amend labour laws to comply with international standards, improve the institutions and processes for better labour-management relations, and improves the ability of the government-employer-employee relationship to resolve and prevent labour disputes.

Women Entrepreneurs at the forefront of Economic Development in Batticaloa



The women entrepreneurs of Batticaloa District displayed their contribution to economic development through a three-day exhibition and trade fair from 5th - 7th of April 2013 organized with the support of KAVIYA Self Development Women Centre, District Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture under the funding assistance of ILO ECAC Project.

The objective of this exhibition was to support the marketing of the products of women entrepreneurs to local customers, during the Sinhala/Tamil New Year season. The exhibition was a showcase for the ability of women in entrepreneurship to overcome economic hardships of their families in a post-conflict scenario. The event opened a platform to bring out their strength to outside world especially to other women that they could come out of their hardships by engaging in entrepreneurial activities at a scale of operation of their own. The exhibition displayed various skills and products of the women mainly based on resources available locally.

More than 100 women entrepreneurs from all parts of Batticaloa District displayed their products. Their productions included rice-based products, pottery, cane and Palmyra based products, milk-based products, garments, sweets and spicy snacks, leather-based products, handicrafts, and products of various other industries.

In addition to product displays, there were stalls of various government and non-government agencies including banks explaining their business development services. During the exhibition, 10 awards were presented to the best Woman Entrepreneur from each DS Division. Each entrepreneur collected an average income of Rs.20000/- through sales during the 3-day period.



ILO's experience shows that empowering women minimizes the impact of conflict related hardship. More importantly, it helps to uplift the standards of living of the families of these women. ILO's ECAC project delivers comprehensive community-based skills training and provides post-training support services which include a range of measures to assist target beneficiaries in organising themselves into credit and savings groups. Through the project, a space is created in which these vulnerable communities in the North and East of Sri Lanka could feel secure and empowered whilst rebuilding their lives.

project updates

International Labour Standards for Judges, Lawyers and Legal Educators

ILO provided training on International Labour Standards for Judges, Lawyers and Legal Educators in Maldives from 25-28 May 2013. The course was conducted by experts of the International Training Centre (ITC) and ILO. The workshop was inaugurated by the President of the Employment Tribunal. Ms. Mariyam Nazima. The objective of the course was to equip participants with the knowledge that will enable them to use international labour law sources at the national level.



The participants were from the High Court, Employment Tribunal, Department of Judicial Administration, Faculty of Sharia and Law, Prosecutor General's Office, Attorney General's Office, Human Rights Commission of Maldives, Labour Relations Authority and the Law Society.

Governance of Labour Migration Project to continue till 2015



ILO supported the launch of the Operational Manual for Diplomatic Missions in Labour Receiving Countries which is now being used as the primary handbook for labour welfare officers and officers of the SLBFE in relevant divisions for effective grievance handling.

The Code of Ethical Conduct for Recruitment Agents was prepared and is going through internal SLBFE regulatory processes and is expected to be launched within the next few months. In addition, 37 field-tested, standardized, pre-departure trainer and trainee guides have been developed through a participatory process for the SLBFE, to ensure consistent training across its pre-departure training centres island-wide.

A 3-month certificate course for prospective labour welfare officers to be posted to Sri Lankan Diplomatic Missions in destination countries, conducted by the Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute, commenced in February 2013 to enhance capacities and understanding of International Labour Standards and migrant worker issues.

Training of Trainers on Promoting Gender Equality



The ILO, under its component of the Joint UN Programme for Prevention of and Action Against Gender-Based Violence organized a five-day training of trainers programme in Colombo from 3 to 7 June 2013 for 18 trade union members representing major trade unions in Sri Lanka.

The TOT was aimed at preparing a team of trainers within the trade union movement, guide training delivery in terms of content and process, to provide training inputs and to build the capacity of the unions and individuals to develop, implement, support, and advocate for gender responsive trade unionism in Sri Lanka. It was also intended to assist women and men trade unionists to face up the challenge equality presents and make changes in the unions, changes at work and changes in their attitudes to each other. On completion, the trainees are beings supported to conduct programmes to raise awareness on gender equality at workplaces and at community level.

Newly Established Boat Yards increase Production



In the Kilinochchi and Mullativu districts there is currently a demand for 1000 boats to replace those that were lost during the conflict. With technical assistance from a private boat building company Neil Marine Ltd. Negombo, boatbuilding yards have been established in Kilinochchi and Mullativu under the respective Federations of Fishery Cooperatives as part of the Local Empowerment through Economic Development (LEED) project. The Kilinochchi yard which was opened in May 2012 is registered with the Department of Fisheries and the Mullativu yard which was opened in 2013 is awaiting registration. The Kilinochchi yard is producing 8 boats per month and currently has orders up to 2015. At present ten people are employed in both yards. These youths were trained in boat building at Neil Marin Company Ltd.

events

World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2013

The ILO called for an "urgent and vigorous" global campaign to tackle the growing number of work-related diseases, which claim an estimated 2 million lives per year.

Speaking at the Seminar for World Day for Safety and Health at Work organised by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Mr. Donglin Li said; at the policy level in Sri Lanka, the ILO is very pleased to note the new Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act - that has been approved by Cabinet - is far reaching and comprehensive. This is also a very significant improvement for the safety culture at the workplace in Sri Lanka. To implement the act, the ILO stands ready with its resources to assist in the necessary capacity building in a joint effort with Government, employers and Trade Unions.

Ratnapura – First Child Labour Free District in Sri Lanka



The ILO is implementing several creative activities towards making the Ratnapura District free of child labour by 2016. The first of these was the planning process which included the setting up of a Child Labour Free Zone.

Thereafter a process has been initiated to identify children engaged in child labour as well as those who are likely to be engaged and to set up an information data base, which will be updated constantly.

Concurrently an awareness campaign is being carried out among officials of the district, school authorities, political leaders, religious dignitaries, and the management of plantations, trade union leaders and children themselves.

Families who are likely to send their children to work will be assisted through various social protection schemes to improve their quality of life, which in turn will be a deterrent to sending children out to work.

There will also be a structured rehabilitation programme to restore the lives of children who are rescued from child labour. Creative visibility material and signage too will be displayed at strategic locations.

social dialogue

social protection

gender

employment