



International
Labour
Organization

THE ILO IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC PROMOTING DECENT WORK FOR ALL





How we work

To create a framework for their national development ILO member States are encouraged to develop Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), which define priorities for development and provide a structure for ILO assistance. The ILO supports these DWCPs with a wide range of technical assistance that includes the development of employment and work-related policies and legislation, labour market systems, social dialogue, industrial relations, social security, skills and vocational training, labour migration, working conditions and occupational safety and health.

In addition, the ILO supports the collection of labour market data and analyses economic and social indicators, so that policies and programmes can respond to evolving and emerging labour market trends.

The ILO's work in Asia and the Pacific has been strengthened by a growing number of formal partnerships, a trend that also reflects the region's deepening integration. In addition to long-standing arrangements with the European Union, Japan and the United States, there are more recent partnerships with the Governments of Australia, Republic of Korea and Singapore, and support from multi-lateral organizations such as the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and other parts of the United Nations system. One result of these arrangements is the growing portfolio of technical cooperation projects that make possible additional work in areas where more impact is required, at regional, national or local level. These cover a wide range of work and workplace related issues, including labour migration, green jobs, youth employment, gender, enterprise development, skills and vocational training.

In September 2006 the ILO's membership in the region - governments, and employers' and workers' organizations - committed themselves to an "Asian Decent Work Decade". In doing this they reaffirmed their dedication to the overall goal of full, productive and decent employment for all by 2015 and, specifically, to implementing the priorities laid down in their national Decent Work Country Programmes. To support the aims of the Decade, five regional priority areas were selected: competitiveness, productivity and jobs; labour market governance; youth employment; managing labour migration; and local development for poverty reduction.

ASIAN
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2006
2015



Striving for social justice in Asia and the Pacific

For some years Asia and the Pacific has been not just the fastest growing part of the world but the fastest growing region seen in modern times. While this growth has lifted hundreds of millions out of absolute poverty, it has also imposed economic and social strains and forced countries to adjust to change and make decisions about their future development at unprecedented speed.

The region's policy-makers have faced a range of challenges relating to uneven economic growth, increasing informality, inadequate recognition of work-related rights, and intensifying globalization. These coalesced around the economic and jobs crisis that began in 2008 and brought not only a rise in overall unemployment but, equally concerning, an increase in under employment, vulnerable employment, youth unemployment, and persistent gender inequality. Together these pose a threat to the region's long-term, equitable, sustainable social and economic development, as well as to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

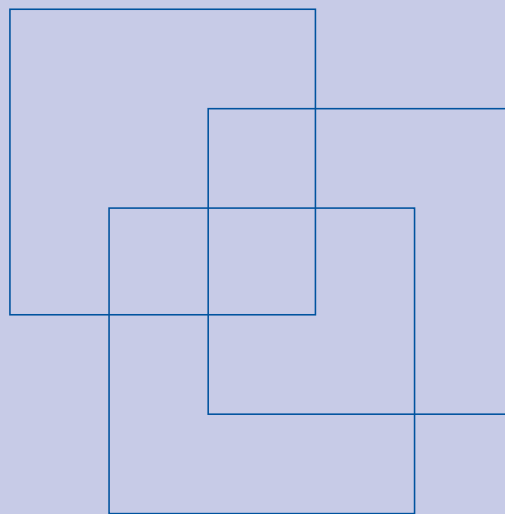
The ILO's member States responded to the crisis by unanimously adopting the Global Jobs Pact. The Pact is based on the Decent Work Agenda and the ILO's four principle strategic objectives, which are critical for both recovery and continuing development. The Pact offers a set of robust, realistic and practical policy options that are designed to ensure employment and social protection are at the heart of crisis response strategies and that such policies support development that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, fosters equity and supports fair globalization.

The ILO works with countries to respond to the labour and employment-related issues they and their people face. Institution building, healthy social dialogue and sound labour market governance help create the right conditions for sustainable, 'greener' local development and advance social and economic progress. However the rapid pace of development has brought a considerable range of challenges, influenced by geographic, social and economic conditions. These challenges include improving adherence to international labour standards and enhancing respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, combating the growth of informal and insecure employment, increasing productive employment opportunities and creating a basic social floor (an important tool in the fight against poverty). Other pressing concerns include the employment, social and human rights of some specific groups (such as migrant workers, indigenous peoples, displaced and disabled workers), human trafficking, bonded labour and eliminating the most hazardous forms of child labour.

The International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes social justice and internationally-recognized human and labour rights. It is dedicated to bringing decent work, job-related security and better living standards to people in both poor and rich countries. The overarching goal is to achieve decent work for all so everyone can work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Uniquely in the United Nations system, governments, employers and workers act as equal partners in the ILO, making its decisions representative of the real economy. This tripartite structure is reflected in the symbol of three interlocking squares that appears on ILO publications.



The ILO was founded in 1919 and is the only surviving major creation of the Treaty of Versailles, which established the League of Nations. Subsequently, in 1946, it became the first specialized agency of the United Nations. In 1969 the organization received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Since 1919 the ILO's membership has unanimously adopted three major statements of principles. The Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 laid out – among other precepts – that labour is not a commodity and that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. The 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work committed all ILO member States to respect and promote four categories of principles concerning freedom of association and collective bargaining, discrimination, forced labour, and child labour. In 2008 the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization emphasized the contemporary relevance of the ILO's core mandate and the need for globalization to be both fair and based on the principles of decent work.

In order to support progress towards decent work for all, the ILO has defined four principal, strategic objectives. These are:

- Promoting standards and fundamental principles and rights at work.
- Creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment.
- Enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all.
- Strengthening the relationship between workers, employers and governments, and encouraging social dialogue.

Working in Asia and the Pacific

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is based in one of the most diverse regions of the world – ethnically, culturally, religiously and economically. The population of more than 3.7 billion includes some of the wealthiest people on earth as well as two-thirds of the world's poor.

The ILO has offices in Bangkok (covering Thailand, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic), Beijing (covering China and Mongolia), Colombo (for Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives), Dhaka, Hanoi, Islamabad, Jakarta (for Indonesia and Timor-Leste), Kathmandu, Manila, New Delhi, Suva (for Fiji and the South Pacific Island countries) and Tokyo. There are also a number of liaison or project offices including in Dili, Kabul, Phnom Penh, Ulaanbaatar, Vientiane and Yangon.

Two teams of Decent Work specialists, based in Bangkok and New Delhi, provide a range of technical services and expertise that support work in more than 32 member countries in the region and provide assistance to the ILO's constituents – governments, and employers' and workers' organizations.

Map of ILO Member States in Asia and the Pacific



Themes

The ILO's work to alleviate poverty and foster decent work covers many areas. Some focus on specific, short-term needs while others – sometimes less visible but no less important – support longer-term policy and structural development. These themes include:

CHILD LABOUR

Asia and the Pacific has more child labourers than anywhere else in the world – about 113 million five to 17-year-olds, or one in eight children. More than 48 million of these children are doing hazardous work. The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) aims to end all child labour, particularly that involving work in hazardous conditions and the so-called worst forms of child labour – such as slavery, prostitution and in armed conflict – with the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

CRISIS RESPONSE

Natural and man-made crises often directly affect livelihoods. The ILO proactively promotes job creation as an integrated part of humanitarian and reconstruction work and provides technical advice and support.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Most employment in Asia and the Pacific comes through small and medium-sized enterprises, which play a vital role in local development. Encouraging private investment and business-friendly policies – nationally and regionally – lays a solid foundation for the spread of decent work. The ILO supports sustainable enterprise growth through training in entrepreneurship and microfinance for individuals and factories and productivity-improvement programmes for enterprises.

GREEN JOBS

Green jobs are decent jobs that help protect the environment, support climate change adaptation and the shift to low-carbon development. Examples include jobs that mitigate the environmental impact of economic activity, protect ecosystems, reduce the consumption of energy, raw materials and natural resources, and minimize waste and pollution. ILO work includes research on the labour market impact of climate change and the development of environmentally sustainable, employment-focused, crisis recovery policies.

INFORMAL ECONOMY

Informal employment accounts for about 65 per cent of non-agricultural employment in developing parts of Asia, and the numbers are growing. Millions of people work long hours, often in hazardous conditions with low pay and little or no social or legal protection. Extending social protection schemes (including safety and health) to these workers is a priority for poverty alleviation, economic and social development.

MIGRATION

Asia and the Pacific sends out more migrant workers than any other region of the world. It is estimated 2.6-2.9 million people leave home annually to become overseas migrant workers (40 per cent going to other Asian countries). The ILO's labour migration programmes are designed to help migrant workers



find work that is legal, fair, safe and secure, while helping policy makers reduce illegal or irregular migration and govern labour migration more effectively.

POVERTY

Employment generation, sustainable livelihoods and decent work create a foundation for sustainable poverty reduction. Key elements of the approach include local involvement in infrastructure planning, developing small-scale private enterprise, cost-effective labour based technology, and local infrastructure maintenance.

RESEARCH AND DATA

Labour statistics are essential for developing and evaluating effective policies and programmes. The ILO helps member States collect, analyse and publish reliable, up-to-date labour market information and Labour and Social Trends reports.

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Safe and healthy working conditions are essential for both workers and productive, competitive enterprises. The ILO's Occupational Safety and Health programmes such as WISE (for small businesses), WISCON (small construction sites) and WISH (home workers) use inexpensive methods that are easy to learn, implement and replicate.

SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

The timely matching of workers' skills to market demands is vital to successful economic development. The ILO's skills and employability programmes help countries and workforces respond to globalization, new technology and changing work patterns.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

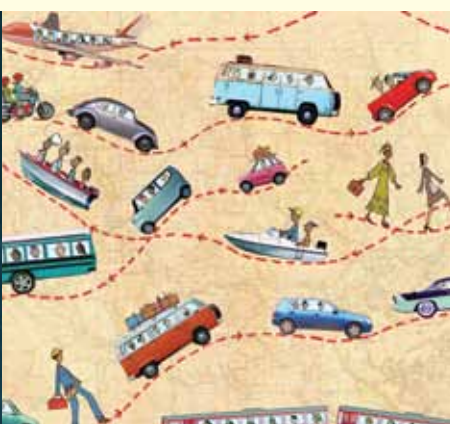
Social protection plays an important role in stable social and economic development. Measures targeting health care, income security, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are effective tools for reducing poverty, encouraging equity, developing domestic markets and rebalancing growth – particularly when combined with vocational training, incentives to find jobs and small business support. The ILO's work includes research, technical and policy advice to help countries at all developmental stages adopt basic schemes.

TRIPARTISM AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The ILO's unique tripartite structure gives governments, employers and workers an equal say in shaping policies and programmes. It is social dialogue – negotiation, consultation, exchanging information – between these three parties that underpins the ILO's activities, and it works to develop these organizations' capacity so they can effectively support their members and shape sustainable, equitable, social and economic progress.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Young women and men (aged 15-24) make up almost a quarter of the region's labour force and are an invaluable source of talent and energy. But they also account for a disproportionate 45 per cent of the jobless and are more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. The right policies, training and labour market mechanisms are vital for helping them find decent work and contribute to the region's social and economic development.



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DECENT WORK

A better world starts here.