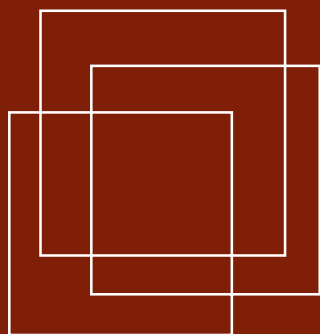




International  
Labour  
Organization

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



Youth Employment  
in the Pacific

Work and Peace in  
Timor-Leste

Former Afghan  
Fighters Reintegrate

Asians Work  
Excessive Hours

August 2007



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Cover Photo: Young women at a rural development vocational training center in Vanuatu. Photo: U. Sarkar, ILO, 2007.

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## I N B R I E F

## New Regional Director



*Ms Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto.*

Ms Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto took up the post of ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific in July.

Prior to joining the ILO she spent six years in Geneva as Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention on the Control of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

Ms Yamamoto's work in the fields of sustainable development, environment, international law and peacekeeping took her to many parts of the United Nations. Her previous professional appointments have included Principal Legal Officer at the UN Office of Legal Affairs, Deputy Legal Adviser for the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, and Secretary-General/Coordinator of the International Convention for the Protection of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

She has traveled extensively in connection with her work and has lived in the United States, Cambodia, Germany, Kenya, Switzerland, United Kingdom and France.

Ms Yamamoto has published a number of articles and books on international law. She has also lectured at the Ritsumeikan University and Aoyama Gakuin University in Japan. She also conducted research on trade and environment at OECD.

Ms Yamamoto, who is Japanese, holds a PhD in International Law from the University of Cambridge, an MA in International Administrative Law from the Graduate School of Public Administration, International Christian University, Tokyo, and a BA in International Relations from the University of California.

## New Subregional Office Director

Mr Bill Salter arrived in Bangkok in May to take up the post of Director of the Subregional Office in East Asia. Mr Salter first joined the ILO in 1984 (for one year). He rejoined the organization in 1988. Prior to arriving in Bangkok he was Officer-in-Charge of the Conditions of Work and Employment Programme in Geneva.

He had earlier been ILO Senior Specialist on Conditions of Work for South-East Asia and the Pacific, based in Manila, for five years. He also worked as Director, Work Environment and Working Practices, Public Service Board and Department of Industrial Relations of the Australian Government. Mr Salter is a dual national of the United States of America and Australia. He holds a BA (Hons) from the Australian National University, Canberra.



*Mr Bill Salter.*

## ILO-ASEAN Cooperation

The ILO took part in the 5<sup>th</sup> Senior Labour Officials Meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta, 15-16 May 2007. Mr Guy Thijs, Deputy Regional Director, headed the ILO delegation along with representatives from the region. The ILO launched a groundbreaking report "Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN, 2007: Integration, Challenges, and Opportunities" during the meeting.

The meeting agreed on four areas for concrete collaboration and follow-up action:

*(continued on page 11)*



# THE PACIFIC'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

By Aurelio Parisotto, INTEGRATION, ILO Geneva, Margaret Reade Rounds, ILO Suva & Urmila Sarkar, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

*It is Genevieve Doni's second day in school. She looks unsure of herself, probably because she is 17 years old and only in primary school. Like tens of thousands of young people on Bougainville Island, Genevieve missed out on the chance of an education. She was born just before the start of a 10-year civil conflict over the independence of Bougainville from Papua New Guinea. When the time came to go to school the conflict was at its height. Genevieve spent her childhood hiding in the mountains and rain forests, trying to survive. Schools were burnt down and teachers fled. But now, things are different. She concedes she feels strange being in primary school, but even on her second day she is motivated. "I should be in secondary school, but I want to continue learning. I want one day to get a job in an office, so I can look after my family. Many of my friends are still out of school. I feel lucky." (Source: UNICEF, Papua New Guinea, 2004).*

There are many obstacles facing young people like Genevieve who want to get an education and a job in the Pacific subregion. The area is characterised by small, low income developing countries with high economic and political volatility. The 22 island nations cover about one fourth of the globe (30 million km<sup>2</sup>, mostly ocean). The total population, excluding Australia and New Zealand, was about 9 million in 2005, more than two-thirds of whom were in Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup>



Micahel Taurakoto, Project Manager (left) and Lionel N. Kaluat, Commissioner of Labour, Department of Labour, Ministry of Internal Affairs (right) with a young man at the Wan Smol Bag Theatre, Vanuatu. Photo: U. Sarkar, ILO, 2007.

Six states are ILO members: Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa (previously Western Samoa), the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The last decade has seen a rapid increase in the youth population (ages 15-24) of the Pacific Island countries. In 2005, 58 per cent of the population was aged 24 or under, and about one in five people were in the 15-24 age bracket. If current demographic trends continue the number of young people is expected to grow by 42 per cent between 2005 and 2050.<sup>2</sup>

Data collected reveals systematically higher open unemployment rates among young people than for those aged over 25. For example, in Papua New Guinea in 2000, young people were 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed compared to adults, and 49 per cent of those registered as unemployed were aged under 25.<sup>3</sup>

But statistics do not reflect the distress lack of work causes young people or indeed the difficult choices they face. The majority cannot afford to remain unemployed and hence are not registered as such. If they do not find a paid job they are expected to work the family land or take casual work.

Economic uncertainties and limited private sector development make it hard for young people to find formal employment. In

Papua New Guinea, where only 58 per cent of children reached the last grade of primary education in 2002<sup>4</sup>, it is estimated that of the 80,000 young people who leave school every year fewer than 10,000 enter the formal labour market. Of the rest, some remain unemployed while some become self-employed. Others are under-employed in the informal economy - usually with low earnings, poor working conditions, no career prospects and uncertain social protection other than that provided by traditional social structures. Some also resort to illegal activities.

In Samoa only about 1,000 of the 4,500 young people who leave school every year are able to find work. In Kiribati where the total number employed in the cash economy is just 13,000, about 2,000 young people enter the labour market every year. In Vanuatu it is estimated that there are 500 new formal sector jobs available each year, leaving most of the 3,500 school leavers unable to find formal, waged employment.

These problems are compounded by a number of interrelated factors that go beyond population increase and uncertain economic growth. They include:

- Inadequate access to relevant education;
- Low levels of entrepreneurship;
- Under-employment, informal and low paid jobs;

<sup>1</sup> UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision Population Database (<http://esa.un.org/unpp/>).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Table 9 ([www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strate/kilm/](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strate/kilm/))

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/>)

(continued from page 3)

## PACIFIC'S YOUTH...

- Social and cultural pressures;
- Rural-to-urban migration by young people;
- Emerging problem of child labour;
- HIV/AIDs; and
- Persistent gender inequality.

Last November we undertook a joint mission to develop a subregional programme to address the youth employment challenge in Kiribati, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. After extensive consultations the outcome was the "Subregional Programme on Education, Employability and Decent Work for Youth in the Pacific Island Countries". This programme has three main pillars:

- Sharing and developing knowledge on how to address the challenges young people face in securing decent wages or self-employment;
- Capacity building and mobilization of governments, social partners and young people themselves to create a common policy framework and mechanism for the delivery of youth employment services; and

- Pilot interventions which enable young women and men to access skills that will help them get waged employment or become self-employed.

Across the Pacific subregion constituents have made decent work opportunities for young women and men a priority in their Decent Work Country Programmes and there are clear opportunities for the ILO to spearhead the UN's role in promoting training and employment, particularly for young people.

The growing importance of a regional approach is reflected in the progressive harmonization of UN programmes, in particular those for young people. The need for the UN to work with governments and civil society to address these issues, particularly employment matters, is therefore a key element in the current Pacific UN Development Assistance Frameworks (2003 – 2007) as well as the Pacific Plan and the Pacific Youth Strategy 2010.

Though they might lack experience, young people tend to be highly motivated and able to offer new ideas and insights that

can assist economic growth. Foregoing this potential is an economic and social waste. Greater access to decent employment means giving young people a chance to work themselves and their families out of poverty. Achieving decent work early in their working lives would help avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or under-employment, poor working conditions and social exclusion. When there is widespread poverty and lack of opportunity the growing number of disaffected young people has been linked with a rise in urban crime, outbursts of ethnic violence, and political instability. Unless the causes and implications of the youth employment challenge are tackled, progress towards better economic and political governance in the Pacific subregion will remain uncertain.

In the words of one young delegate to the 2005 Pacific Youth Summit for the Millennium Development Goals: "What should be done to improve the lives of young people? More opportunity should be given to build confidence, skills and capacity. We are not the problem; we are the solution to the problems".

## 96<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

The International Labour Conference (ILC) ended its 15 day meeting after adopting a comprehensive new set of labour standards for the fishing industry and holding discussions on new approaches to promoting sustainable enterprises and decent work.

The Conference, which ran from 29 May to 15 June, was attended by more than 3,000 delegates, representing most of the ILO 180 member states.

Delegates also marked World Day against Child Labour on 12 June by launching a new partnership with five key international agricultural organizations to eliminate child labour in agriculture.

A range of issues concerning the adherence of member states to international labour standards was also considered and detailed reports of the cases, conclusions and recommendations adopted by the

Conference and published.

The Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 and the Recommendation received overwhelming support, and will come into effect when they are ratified by 10 (including eight coastal nations) Member States. The new standards are designed to improve occupational safety and health and medical care at sea and ashore, ensure sufficient rest periods, give workers the protection of a work agreement and the same social security protection as other workers.

A number of special guests addressed the Plenary Session of the Conference, including the President of Chile, the President of the Republic of Ghana, the Crown Prince of Bahrain, the President of the Republic of Poland, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the President of the Republic of Senegal, the Prince of Asturias (Spain), and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

During the conference the ILO also awarded the first annual Decent Work

Research Prize to Nelson Mandela, the Nobel peace laureate and former President of South Africa, and the social security specialist, Professor Carmelo Mesa-Lago, of the University of Pittsburgh, USA.

The Conference also adopted a programme and budget for the 2008-09 biennium of US\$ 641.7 million, an amount which represents no change in real terms.

The 97<sup>th</sup> ILC will take place in Geneva in May and June 2008.

## New Governing Body Chair

The ILO's Governing Body has elected H.E. Mr Dayan Jayatilaka, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, as its Chairman for 2007-08. Daniel Funes de Rioja and Sir Leroy Trotman were re-elected as the Employers' and Workers' Vice-chairpersons, respectively.

The Governing Body is the executive council of the ILO and meets three times annually in Geneva.

# PEACE, SECURITY AND WORK IN TIMOR-LESTE

By Jose Assalino, Chief Technical Advisor,  
Timor-Leste

**A**s a newly independent country with a fledgling economy, Timor-Leste faces many social and economic challenges. To help the Timorese people find decent work the ILO has started three new initiatives. Each is designed to address a different aspect of the labour market while complementing each other and promoting employment, income generation and decent work.

## Work for Peace

The Work for Peace project is designed to reduce the potential for conflict and further destabilization in Timor-Leste by providing short-term employment opportunities. It is designed to focus particularly on young people but other vulnerable groups such as women, displaced persons and former soldiers also benefit.

Limited access to jobs and training has been a major source of frustration for young Timorese and has also been associated with the violence and destruction that took place during the April/May 2006 crisis. The fear is that this lack of work could create a vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion that could lead unemployed young people to become involved in criminal activities, or prevent them from returning to legitimate occupations.

The Project (*Projektu Serbisu Ba Dame*) started in April 2007 and, in its six months timeframe, will provide short-term employment for 23,350 people in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste, equivalent to 350,250 days of work. This should decrease the demographic pressure on the urban areas and ease the burden on rural households which still host thousands of internally displaced persons.

The project promotes an approach that focuses on manual work rather than investment in equipments and materials. Ideas are identified after discussions with communities and local authorities at all



Timorese learning electrical engineering at a training centre. Photo: ILO, 2007.

levels, from district to sub-village. In line with the project's strategy of using rural infrastructure-related projects to generate jobs, the activities concentrate on repairing and rehabilitating rural roads, cleaning and restoring irrigation canals, cutting grass, restoring road drainage systems and rehabilitating sports facilities. Other schemes are selected in response to concrete proposals by local communities.

The project is executed by UNDP/ILO in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion, supported by the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. It is funded by the European Union in the amount of US\$2.7 million.

## Skills Training

Terezinha, a mother of three from the town of Maliana is an example of how the second initiative - Skills Training for Gainful Employment (STAGE) - uses training to help rural Timorese communities to find decent and productive employment.

Terezinha's husband died in the clashes which erupted after the 1999 independence referendum, leaving her to raise their three daughters alone. For almost three years Terezinha has been sustaining her family by selling vegetables along the road. However, this work did not allow her to dedicate enough time to her family or generate enough income to pay the school fees for her kids.

Terezinha decided to ask for assistance from the local District Employment Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion. They referred her to a Business Development Centre where she took a two-week training course, "Start Your Business". During the course Terezinha came up with a good business idea and learned how to develop it into a micro-enterprise. With the help of the District Employment Centre she managed to obtain a credit from a microfinance institution and opened a shop selling kitchen equipment. The shop – now one of the largest of its kind in Maliana town – has allowed Terezinha to repay the loan, support her family and even save enough money to open a second business in town. "The training made me change my mindset about business," Terezinha said. "I also learned a lot of very useful things that I apply every day in my new business, such as how to determine cost and prices of the products, how to do good planning, how to keep family expenses separate from business and how to deal with suppliers."

The STAGE Programme is a partnership between the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion and local training providers. It is funded by the European Union and UNDP, totalling US\$6.2 million.

So far almost 10,000 (more than 40 per cent of them women) jobseekers have been registered at the District Employment Centres of Dili, Baucau, Bobonaro and Oecusse.

(continued on page 10)

## ASIANS WORK EXCESSIVE HOURS

By Jon C. Messenger, Senior Research Officer, Conditions of Work and Employment Programme

Nearly a century after the ILO adopted its first international standard on working time, a new study estimates that one in five workers around the world (more than 600 million people) is still working more than 48 hours a week - often merely to make ends meet. Many of Asia's workers are among those putting in the longest working days.

While Peru topped the study's list with 50.9 per cent of workers doing more than 48 hours per week (among the countries for which there was data), the Republic of Korea ranked second with 49.5 per cent of people working such long hours. Thailand was third with 46.7 per cent<sup>1</sup>, a figure that includes one in three salaried employees (as opposed to the self-employed).

Elsewhere in Asia, 44.4 per cent of workers in Pakistan worked long hours and 51.2 per cent of workers in Indonesia (although due to data limitations "long hours" in Indonesia were defined as more than 45 hours per week).

In other words, depending on how long hours are defined, either three of the top five or four of the top six countries with the highest incidence of long hours are in Asia.

In addition, the minimum legal entitlement for annual holiday in Thailand is also among the lowest of the Asian countries included, at 10 days or less. That's lower than the legal minimum in Cambodia, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

In compiling the study, *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws and policies in a global comparative perspective*<sup>2</sup>, we reviewed working time issues in more than 50 countries, including their national laws and policies, trends in actual working hours, the specific experiences of different economic sectors and different types of workers, as well as the implications for future policies. The result is the first-ever global comparative analysis of national laws, policies, and actual working hours that focuses on developing and transition countries.

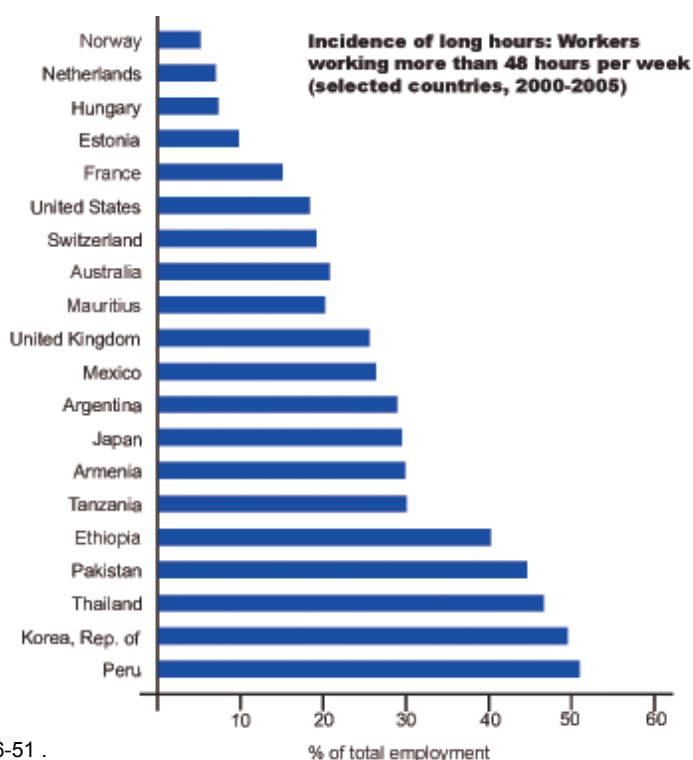
In terms of conclusions, the good news is that progress has been made in regulating normal working hours in developing and transition countries. However, overall, the findings are definitely worrying, especially the prevalence of excessively long hours.

Our report found an estimated 22 per cent of the global workforce, or 614.2 million workers, are working "excessively" long hours. At the same time, many short-hour workers in developing and transition countries may be underemployed and thus

more likely to fall into poverty.

In the last 40 years there has been a worldwide shift towards a 40-hour limit on the working week, although substantial regional differences and uneven progress are apparent. In Asia six of the 11 countries that have a general hours limit still maintain a 48-hour standard working week. Of the remaining five, four (China, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and Mongolia) legislate a 40-hour work-week, while one (Singapore) has a 44-hour limit. In addition, neither India nor Pakistan has a generally applicable weekly limit on working hours.

Despite the global progress that there has been towards the 40-hour week, the number of hours that people are actually working have remained relatively stable for the last 10 years. Substantial proportions of employees still work more than the standard statutory hours in each country and in some countries, such as Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, more than 40 per cent of the workforce does so. This implies that the standard hours in law are not really "standard" in practice.



Source: Table 3.4, in *Working Time Around the World*, pp. 46-51.

<sup>1</sup> 2000 figure.

<sup>2</sup> *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws, and policies in a global comparative perspective*, by Sangheon Lee, Deirdre McCann and Jon C. Messenger, Routledge, London and ILO, Geneva, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Interestingly - and contrary to the commonly-accepted wisdom - countries which have higher limits on weekly working hours (i.e., less stringent standards) also see relatively low compliance with their legal limits. In addition, the report finds an association between longer statutory hours and lower national per capita incomes. Thus, it can be said that low-income countries have poor compliance with legal limits on working hours *despite (not because of)* the fact that they allow longer working weeks.

Gender and age also appear to play an important role in determining working hours. Despite women's increased participation in paid labour, there is a clear 'gender gap' in working hours worldwide: men tend to work long hours, while women are far more likely to work short hours (less than 35 per week). Among married couples with children men's paid working hours tend to increase while women's hours typically decrease, particularly when they have young, pre-school children.

Women's availability for paid work appears to be constrained by their household and domestic responsibilities and they continue to be primarily responsible for "unpaid" household work and for providing care for family members, not only children but the elderly and sick.

Age is a less powerful but nonetheless important factor. Both younger and retirement-age workers appear to work slightly shorter hours than prime-age workers, often reflecting the insufficient employment opportunities of these two groups.

"Tertiarization", or the expanding service sector, and informal employment are two of the hallmarks of today's global economy and are also major sources of longer working hours. Working hours in the services sector and its subsectors tend to be the most varied, and these hours are particularly long

in industries such as wholesale and retail trade, hotels, restaurants, transport, storage and communications, all of which also commonly involve shift work and "unsocial" hours. For instance in Malaysia, 44.8 per cent of workers in wholesale and retail trade spend more than 50 hours per week on the job - a higher proportion than any other industry.

Informal employment accounts for at least half of total employment in all regions of the developing world, with about three-fifths of it consisting of self-employment. The distribution of working hours is highly diverse, with some people working very long hours while others actually work short hours. Once again gender seems to be key; while self-employed men are likely to work either very long or very short hours (the latter mostly due to under-employment), short hours are clearly the rule for self-employed women. It seems that these women are using self-employment to get the shorter hours that they cannot find in the formal economy, in order to earn some money while simultaneously carrying out their family responsibilities.

Attempts to reduce working hours in developing countries have been unsuccessful for various reasons, including the need of workers to put in long hours simply to make ends meet, and the widespread use of overtime by employers trying to increase the output of enterprises that have low productivity.

Flexible working time is often proposed in policy documents as an alternative to long working hours but in practice these measures are not much used in developing countries. Laws and policies on working time appear to have a limited influence on actual working hours in developing economies, especially in terms of maximum weekly hours, overtime payments, and their effect on hours worked in informal employment.

In an earlier ILO study focusing on industrialized countries<sup>4</sup> a framework for promoting decent work in the area of working time was suggested. It proposed that decent working time arrangements need to fulfil five inter-connected criteria: they should preserve health and safety, be 'family friendly', promote gender equality, enhance the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises, and facilitate worker choice and influence over working hours.

Taking into account the very different realities found in developing and transition countries, our study adapts and applies this general framework to produce a range of policy suggestions. These include:

- Reducing long working hours to cut the risks of occupational injuries and illnesses, and thus the related costs born by workers, employers, and society as a whole.
- Adopting family-friendly working time measures appropriate to national circumstances, such as flexi-time, emergency family leave and part-time work.
- Promoting high-quality part-time work, shaped by local institutions and traditions and informed by the principles and measures found in the ILO Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), which can help promote gender equality.
- Helping to break the "vicious cycle" of long hours and low pay by adopting and enforcing reasonable statutory hours limits that support productivity, alongside other measures to help businesses improve their productivity.
- Considering measures that allow workers to devote more time to their families and to have more influence over their work schedules, in order to make formal economy jobs an option for more women.

<sup>4</sup> *Working time and workers' preferences in industrialized countries: Finding the balance*, edited by Jon C. Messenger, Routledge, London, 2004; reprinted ILO, Geneva, 2007.

## HELPING FORMER AFGHAN FIGHTERS REINTEGRATE

*By Ingrid Christensen, Officer-in-Charge,  
Jacqueline Paul and RamGopal Parajuli, ILO  
Kabul*

**M**any years of strife and war in Afghanistan means that thousands of ex-combatants now need help to resume normal lives.

To support these people the Afghan Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), the ILO, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed the Reintegration Support Project for Ex-combatants (RSPE).

The RSPE offers a comprehensive approach to help former fighters and their families find ways of supporting themselves. While services are provided directly to those in need, RSPE simultaneously works to create a labour market that supports their re-integration.

This is in line with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

Funded by the United Kingdom Government, the RSPE will assist ex-combatants and their families reintegrate



*Afghans at a vocational training center in Kandahar. Photo: ILO, 2007.*

into Afghan society by helping them find sustainable ways to make a living.

The Project will also strengthen the structures and resources of the MoLSAMD so that the Ministry can provide sustainable labour market services to targeted vulnerable groups.

To do this the RSPE will work through and build on the existing network of public Employment Services Centres (ESCs). These 10 centres (in Gardez, Ghazni, Herat, Jalalabad, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar and Pul-i-Khumri) were set up under a MoLSAMD/ILO project that began in May 2004. Staffed by Ministry personnel, they help jobseekers find vocational training,

paid work or start their own businesses.

The ESCs also help employers recruit qualified people. Training providers also use the ESCs to find suitable training programme participants, and afterwards refer their graduates back to the Centres to help them find work.

While the ESCs will continue to help all Afghans, specific attention will be given to ex-combatants and their families under the RSPE.

These people will first register at a Centre where they will receive vocational counselling to help them identify which training or job opportunities suit them best.

The RSPE will also provide training programmes specifically tailored to meet the needs of the most vulnerable former fighters.

It is expected that the RSPE will foster strong links between the ESCs and others with an interest in the labour market, including private sector employers, vocational training providers, employer and worker organizations, UN agencies implementing large-scale projects, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups.

The RSPE will also work to establish operating systems and procedures at the MoLSAMD that will oversee the network of Employment Services Centres, including the development of a decent work and sustainable livelihoods strategy.



*Learning new skills helps local people to become more employable. Photo: ILO, 2007.*



## S R O F O C U S

SUPPORTING  
JOB CREATION

*By Linda Wirth, Director, Subregional Office for South-East Asia, Manila*

**T**he forces of economic globalization march inexorably on throughout the subregion, bringing the benefits of economic growth to Indonesia and the Philippines in particular.

Increasing outward migration brings remittances that are critical for sustaining both families and economies; encouraging the channeling of these funds into growth that will create enough decent jobs remains the main challenge for the ILO.

Job creation is a high priority on national agendas in the subregion. This creates an important opportunity for the ILO to work with the tripartite constituents and stakeholders to design and implement national employment strategies that can counter the increasing inequality and poverty that affects a significant

number of people. Sustainable economic growth will require stronger labour market governance and more investment in human capital. In ILO terms this translates into deliverables such as skills and entrepreneurship development, social protection and respect for core rights.

An important area of work, therefore, is the reform and modernization of labour laws in line with ILO standards. Intensifying our work in this area could create a positive environment for sound labour market governance, which in turn is an important building block for democratic governance and equitable economic and social progress.

The Asian Decent Work Decade provides both a target and a vehicle that the ILO can use to build and share knowledge about these issues. As we enter the last quarter of the 2006-07 budget cycle for the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), it is a time to reflect on progress so far. The role of national-level technical cooperation projects has clearly been critical

and has given us valuable knowledge about what works and what does not, which can be used in planning the 2008-09 budget cycle of the DWCPs.

One challenge will be to use joint planning processes with ILO constituents more effectively, so that the DWCPs, are synchronized better with national action plans for decent work.

A second issue is to ensure ownership and make both the DWCPs and the national action plans more results-based so that they focus on agreed priorities and have specific, measurable results, indicators, timeframes and budgets.

A third priority is to integrate the ILO's four strategic objectives into the design and management of the DWCPs and search for additional technical cooperation opportunities. This will require us to work closely with national and local agencies, the international financial institutions and donors and to stay in close touch with the continuing UN reform process.

EMPLOYMENT  
TRENDS  
IN SOUTH ASIA

*By Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director, Subregional Office for South Asia, Delhi*

**W**inds of change have not left the countries of South Asia untouched. They are responding to the changing global environment by reforming and liberalizing their economies. Recent policy initiatives have brought economic growth in varying degrees to all these countries. However, despite progress on certain social indicators, there is no denying that translating economic gains into productive employment and poverty reduction remains a challenge.

There is high incidence of 'working poor', with over 80 per cent employed in the informal sector. This, coupled with increasing 'casualization' of labour, high youth unemployment, a stagnant agricultural sector and outdated labour laws means the employment situation needs urgent

attention. Insufficient appropriate and marketable vocational skills, gender discrimination, child labour, an absence of social protection, internal migration of unskilled workers, and vulnerability to natural and other disasters are some of the other issues.

There is a growing realization that a lack of decent employment opportunities could have a negative impact on their long term growth potential. This has resulted in some examination of the reasons for the disconnect between growth and employment opportunities. The strategic issues being considered include: how can economic growth become more employment intensive? Which sectors have the potential to create quality jobs? How can job quantity and quality be improved in the SME sector? How can core labour standards and basic ILO values and principles like social dialogue, freedom of expression, tripartism and equity be provided effectively to the informal sectors? What are the mechanisms required to address the mismatches between skills supply and demand, for both the formal and informal economies and among the large numbers of migrant workers? What social

protection mechanisms are needed? How can growth be more socially inclusive? How can women and men who want to work get access to decent and sustainable livelihoods? How can divisions such as rural-urban, social and gender be minimized?

These challenges also raise larger questions. To what extent are policies at the macro level coherent? Is decent and productive employment central to macro socio-economic policies? How is decent employment reflected in financial, trade and other policies? What are the potential short and long-term trade-offs with other policy objectives? Where policies and programmes are in place are implementation and delivery mechanisms strong enough?

After many decades of promoting tripartite dialogue and technical cooperation, the ILO is acknowledged as a crucial partner in the South Asian region. As the progress into the Asian Decent Work Decade, the Decent Work Country Programmes will address the key challenges faced by these countries, through the development of appropriate policy perspectives and the implementation of strategies and programmes.

# YOUTH WEBSITES

## [www.ilo.org/yen](http://www.ilo.org/yen)

The Youth Employment Network (YEN) website of the ILO, UN, and World Bank, aim to support the development and implementation of strategies to give young people opportunities to find decent and productive work.

## [www.ilo.org/employment/youth](http://www.ilo.org/employment/youth)

The site of the ILO's Skills and Employability Department gives information on skills development for young people.

## <http://go.worldbank.org/48Z06GMD70>

A World Bank site giving information on youth employment.

## [www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=155](http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=155)

Details of technical and vocational education for young people are included in this site, offered by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

## [www.iyfnet.org](http://www.iyfnet.org)

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) is a global network of country-level organizations that aims to help young people acquire the life skills and educational opportunities critical to their success.

## [www.imaginenations.org](http://www.imaginenations.org)

ImagineNations' youth investment strategy is a framework to give young adults better opportunities for employment and earning a living. It includes business coaching, information on raising entrepreneurial capital and various incentives.

## [www.youthlink.org](http://www.youthlink.org)

Global Youth Action Network is a youth-led organization that facilitates young people's participation and intergenerational partnerships. It focuses on global decision-making, supporting collaboration among youth organizations, and providing tools, resources and recognition.

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## TIMOR-LESTE...

With STAGE support about 1,700 people registered as unemployed took part in enterprise training courses organized under the programme and more than 3,000 subsequently found jobs or created their own income-generating activities.

In addition, the first National Vocational Training Meeting, involving all those engaged in skills training in Timor-Leste, was organized to promote the launch of the "Partnership in Training" concept, which brings together training centres and employers. This was an important step towards developing a vocational training system that reflects the needs of the labour market. After the meeting a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion and 12 training centres. Under this the Ministry will provide financial and technical support for skills training programmes.

STAGE has also upgraded the capacity of the Ministry's Division of Employment and Skills Development, by providing training in managerial and technical skills to its staff. The Division now provides job counseling and job mediation, organization, monitoring and supervision of training and employment programmes. The Labour Market Information Unit and the Employment and Vocational Training Fund also received support.

## Labour Market Information

To support the STAGE Programme the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion has set up a new Labour Market Information

Unit (LMI) in its Division of Employment and Skills Development. The aim is to design and implement a computerized database system (SIMU) that will register jobseekers, match them with employment offers and log training needs and opportunities.

The lack of accurate and up-to-date data in Timor-Leste, particularly related to the labour market, and the Government's ambitious Accelerated National Development Plan, has highlighted the importance of SIMU. This was the rationale for the launching of the Labour Market Information Project, funded by Irish Aid (US\$ 162,000) and executed by the ILO.

SIMU will help unemployed Timorese registered at District Employment Centres get access to new job opportunities created by public investment in the different governmental departments. It will track the progress of clients who register for services at the District Employment Centres. SIMU will also provide insights into labour market questions such as the education levels of different categories of jobseekers, how training affects an individual's chances of finding employment, and whether those who get access to micro-credit can then generate enough income to live on.

2006 and 2007 are challenging years for Timor-Leste. Despite the crisis, however, the Timorese people believe they have the ability to turn the gloomy present into a bright future. These initiatives also continue undeterred with the intention of making a positive contribution and helping the country and its people fulfill their aspirations.

## CALENDAR

18-20 July, New Delhi, India	Regional Seminar on Labour Market Reforms: The Trade Union Response
13-15 August, Beijing, China	Asian Employment Forum: Growth, Employment and Decent Work
21-24 August, Manila, Philippines	Regional Capacity-Building Workshop and Tool-Kit on Youth Employment
2-9 September, Bangkok, Thailand	Subregional Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking
October, Bangkok, Thailand	5 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Subregional Advisory Committee of the Mekong Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women
3-4 December, New Delhi, India	Asian Regional High-Level Meeting on Strategies to Extend Social Security Coverage

# I N B R I E F

## Migration Meeting in Singapore

The ILO and the Singapore Management University (SMU) jointly organized a regional symposium on "Managing Labour Migration in East Asia: Policies and Outcomes" in Singapore from 16-18 May. Delegates from 13 East Asian countries took part in the high-level meeting. More coherent policies, enhanced government capacity, effective enforcement and additional research were identified as among the things necessary for better management of labour migration in East Asia.

## Asian LED for Decent Work Seminar

Fifty-five participants from nine Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 22-25 May to share knowledge and experiences on Local Economic Development (LED) in Asia.

ILO representatives from field offices in Asia, Geneva and the International Training Centre in Turin also contributed.

The delegates agreed that as well as boosting local economies the LED approach must also involve vulnerable groups who need more support to work their way out of poverty. Specific ideas for action programmes were identified and discussed for each of the countries represented at the workshop.

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## ILO-ASEAN...

- ASEAN Forum on Migrant Workers;
- Ad-hoc Working Group on Progressive Labour Practices to Enhance Competitiveness of ASEAN (AHWG);
- A meeting of focal points of ASEAN Ministries of Labour on HIV Preventions and Control at the Workplace;
- Exploratory workshop on regional cooperation on labour and employment statistics.

This meeting was an important step towards enhanced collaboration following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and the ILO in Geneva in March 2007.

## World Day Against Child Labour



*The "White Broom Group" performed a mime about child workers in agriculture.*

World Day against Child Labour (12 June) was marked in Thailand with a half-day event at the CentralWorld shopping complex in Bangkok.

The programme included a children's drama performance about the life of child agricultural workers. There was also a public panel discussion on hazard-free, child labour-free agriculture involving government officials, academics, and representatives of workers, employers, NGO's and schools. An exhibition was also on show.

Around 300 students attended, including some from schools which include agriculture in their core curriculum.

The event was organized by the ILO, the Ministry of Labour (MOL), the National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD), the Foundation for Child Development (FCD); the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Central Pattana PLC (CPN).

Worldwide, agriculture is the sector that involves the largest proportion of child labourers – an estimated 70 per cent of child workers, of whom 132 million are aged between five and 14. Agriculture is also one of the most dangerous sectors to work in, especially so for children because their bodies and minds are still developing, making them more vulnerable to hazards such as chemical exposure, heavy lifting and the use of machinery.

In Thailand considerable progress has been made in reducing child labour. But evidence suggests that, although fewer Thai children are working, migrant children from neighbouring countries are taking their places.

The ILO and the Thai Government are currently implementing a three-year programme aimed at preventing and eliminating the worst forms of child labour in six Thai provinces. This is being done through awareness-raising, education, vocational training and assistance to improve family livelihoods.



*Front row: Some of the 300 students who took part in the event. Back row from left: Dr Nattakit Tangpoonsinthana, Executive Vice President, Marketing, CPN; Mr Kobchai Chirathivat, President & CEO, CPN; H.E. Apai Chanthanajulaka, Minister of Labour; Khunying Natthika Wattanavekin Angubolkul, President, NCYD; Mr Pornchai Yuprayong, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Labour, MOL; Mr Guy Thijs, Deputy Regional Director, ILO; Mr Kittti Samanthai, Director-General, Office of Welfare Promotion Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.*



## SHELF LIFE



**Asian Experience on Growth, Employment and Poverty: An overview with special reference to the findings of some recent case studies**

By Azizur Rahman Khan

Colombo: UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo and ILO, 2007, 45 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub07-03.pdf>

A review of major findings on the employment intensity of economic growth as a means of poverty reduction. The report provides detailed, empirical analysis of trends in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.



**Country Review on Youth Employment in Indonesia**

Jakarta: ILO, 2007, 62 pp.

A detailed report on youth employment in Indonesia including factors involved, government policies and recommendations for future action. The work of international agencies, donors, private sector, non-governmental organizations, regional government and universities is also covered.



**Decent Work, Employment and Poverty Reduction in Urban China**

Beijing: Institute of International Labour Studies, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, China & ILO, 2007, 124 pp.

The study analyzes urban poverty, unemployment and labour markets, using decent work indicators. It aims to establish a link between urban poverty, the shortage of employment and a lack of improvement in the quality of employment. It reviews current policies and formulates policy recommendations on decent work, employment and poverty reduction.



**Guidelines for Development of Regional Model Competency Standards (RMCS)**

Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 53 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-48.pdf>

Skills standards provide a basis for vocational training programmes, testing and certification in many countries. National skills standards are a guide to the scope of skills and knowledge required in an industry. These guidelines are designed to be used to develop Regional Model Competency Standards for efficient and effective skills development in the Asia-Pacific region.



**Informal economy, poverty and employment in Cambodia, Mongolia, Thailand: good practices and lessons learned, final report**

Bangkok: ILO, 2007, 72 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub07-01.pdf>

The final report of the Informal Economy, Poverty and Employment Project, funded by the UK Department for International Development. It covers Cambodia, Mongolia and Thailand, providing information on national development frameworks, the work accomplished in each country, good practices and lessons learned, final report.



**Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN 2007: Integration, Challenges and Opportunities**

Bangkok: ILO, 2007, 107 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub07-04.pdf>

The first comprehensive report on labour market trends, employment, competitiveness, productivity and jobs, economic integration and labour markets, intra-regional labour migration, occupational safety and health, and social issues in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Member States. The study identifies decent work gaps and measure progress made in the different dimensions of decent work by providing relevant and up-to-date information.



**Migrant Workers' Rights: A Handbook**

Jakarta: ILO, 2007, 125 pp.

A guide and reference manual to promote and protect the rights of cross-border migrant workers. It discusses the dynamics, causes and consequences of labour migration and lists the international instruments and mechanisms which promote and protect migrant workers' rights. Aimed at assisting labour unions, it can also be used by governmental agencies as a guide to minimum standards when formulating policies to prevent the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers.

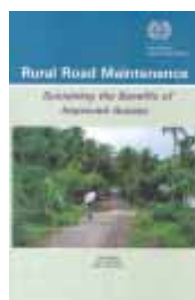


**Regional Model Competency Standard: Tourism Industry**

Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 144 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-49.pdf>

The Tourism RMCS helps the tourism industry to accurately define its workplace requirements, as well as training outcomes, and is a benchmark for recognition of competencies gained informally. It can be used as a tool in training and assessment and when certifying a person's capability to perform a task.



**Rural Road Maintenance, Sustaining the Benefits of Improved Access**

By Chris Donnges, Geoff Edmonds and Bjorn Johannessen

Bangkok: ILO, 2007, 111 pp.

The report provides an assessment of the rural road maintenance problem and gives suggestions for improvements. It draws on published works, practical ILO experience and detailed studies on rural road maintenance in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR and the Philippines.



**SIYB Directory of Assistance and Advice**

Jakarta: ILO, 2007, 122 pp.

A comprehensive source of information on regulations, governmental, non-governmental and international organizations involved in business, trade, investment and employment in Indonesia. The topics covered include business registration, permission and licensing, tax regulations, employment regulations, sources of finance, insurance, consumer protection, state support for micro, small and medium enterprises, and business development services.