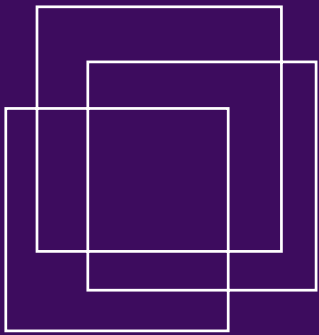




International
Labour
Organization

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



Decent Work
Priorities
in Asia

Microfinance &
Child Labour

TV Drama Helps
China's Migrants

Arbitration in
Cambodia

April 2007



NEWS

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Cover Photo:

A woman worker in a garment factory on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. Some 334,000 workers, mostly young women, work in the Cambodian garment export industry. ILO/J. Montessuis, 2005.

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IN BRIEF

Regional Director's Outlook

By Gek-Boo Ng, Regional Director

2006 was a good year for the ILO in this region. The Asian Regional Meeting was a success and, with the launching of the Asian Decent Work Decade, the meeting's conclusions provide a concrete plan of action that the ILO and its constituents can follow to realize Decent Work in the region.

The year also turned out to be an excellent one in terms of technical cooperation, providing us with additional means to work with our constituents in advancing the goals of the Decent Work Decade. Expenditures reached more than US\$80,000,000 – a 14 per cent increase on 2005. New approvals reached a record level of almost US\$70,000,000, an 89 per cent increase on the 2004 amount.

On the regional and subregional fronts, our cooperation with ASEAN achieved new heights during 2006. We worked with the member countries to develop their national capacities and programmes for occupational safety and health, in line with the new ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187).

After the publication of the Joint ASEAN-ILO study on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, follow-up action included the identification of focal points in Ministries of Labour, who will work with the tripartite constituents on awareness raising and reducing discrimination against workers with HIV/AIDS.

In addition, the ILO and ASEAN are working to build an Industrial Relations Network and document progressive labour practices. Initiatives are also underway to expand cooperation on labour migration

management, skills and employability, and youth employment.

We extend a very warm welcome to Brunei Darussalam which became the 180th member of the ILO in January 2007. With its membership, all ten ASEAN Member Countries are now also members of the ILO.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our constituents for their cooperation and support during the year, and thank our donors for their generosity and support in financing our technical cooperation work.

I must also thank all our staff - from the Regional Office, Subregional Offices, Country Offices and technical cooperation projects - for their contribution and hard work.

Looking forward, we still face major challenges in finding effective ways to reach the working poor, especially in rural areas and the urban informal sector. To meet this, and to build on the principle of working out of poverty, we have launched a range of new initiatives including an enhanced programme on local development for decent work.

2007 will be a year of challenges. As well as developing the capacity and programmes that will allow us to fulfil the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade we have to participate more effectively in the UN reform process. We also have to show results towards achieving the Decent Work Country Programme outcomes by the end of the year.

These are important goals. In working to meet them we must develop closer relations and better cooperation with our tripartite constituents, the donor community and the UN system as a whole. I am sure you join with me in welcoming the challenges and the opportunities the year presents.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE ASIAN DECENT WORK DECADE

To support the aims of the recently-launched Asian Decent Work Decade five priority areas have been selected: labour market governance, local economic development, youth employment, labour migration, and competitiveness, productivity and jobs in a globalizing world. To encourage progress in these areas a range of tools, guidelines, manuals, training materials, operational frameworks and technical areas of work are being developed. Below the key aspects of work in each area are summarized by the responsible managers.

Labour Market Governance

Labour market reforms must be country-specific, respond to constituents' needs and produce efficient and fair labour market outcomes on the basis of informed social dialogue.

The main approach is to put in place a viable system of labour regulation, industrial relations and labour administration based on ILO's time-tested principles of bipartite and tripartite consultations and social dialogue. Besides ensuring compliance with ratified international labour standards, labour law reform will also address issues related to the fundamental principles and rights at work endorsed by all member countries, fill existing deficiencies and gaps in the law and try to find the appropriate balance between the employers' demand for greater flexibility and the workers' need for greater security and stability. The labour administration system will be analyzed to identify the deficits in capacity and performance and practical recommendations will be made for better governance and more efficient service delivery to the clients.

The first step in supporting improvements in labour market governance is to review the available ILO publications, products, training materials, and other tools concerned with industrial relations, social dialogue, labour law and labour administration. This will allow identification of deficiencies and knowledge gaps, propose concrete steps to update and upgrade existing products and teaching-learning materials, and promote relevant research and statistics to support and facilitate its work on labour market governance.

The objective is to equip ILO headquarters and field staff with the toolkits that will allow them to deliver more effective professional services to constituents.

Contact: Abhik Ghosh, Senior Specialist on Industrial Relations

Local Development

Local Development for Decent Work is an integrated participatory process whose ultimate aim is the creation of decent jobs and sustainable economic activities on a specific territory.

Local development is an appropriate approach for most Decent Work Country Programmes because it encourages and facilitates public-private partnership between local stakeholders, so enabling the design and implementation of strategies that are mainly based on the competitive use of local resources.

The Local Development for Decent Work approach is responding to the need for employment and growth in rural and urban areas, poverty alleviation, reducing decent work deficits in the informal economy and of specific target groups. It often brings a shift in policy development, as local needs, priorities and consensus are formulated into local development plans and voiced by a representative forum of local key actors.

There are already many tools and resources available to assist local actors in the implementation of their plan, such as Start Your Business (SYB), Gender and Enterprise Together Ahead (GET), small business associations, Microfinance for Self Employment

by Laid off Workers, occupational safety and health checklists for homeworkers, construction workers and agriculture workers, local infrastructure planning and management, community based social protection, etc.

Local development strategies establish closer relationships with stakeholders that allow for ownership, convergence and trust amongst stakeholders and for common vision and collaboration in implementing local development plans.

Contact: Ginette Forgues, Senior Specialist in Local Strategies for Decent Work

Youth Employment

The promotion of decent work opportunities and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men, in particular by easing the school-to-work transition, will be a crucial part of realizing the aims of the Asian Decent Work Decade. While unemployment has risen generally, young workers have borne the brunt and are at least three times more likely to be unemployed in the region's developing economies. Of equal if not greater concern are the young working poor, many of whom are forced to accept long hours on short-term and precarious contracts, hazardous working conditions, low pay and little or no social protection.

Achieving decent work early in working life helps to avoid a vicious cycle of unemployment or underemployment, poor working conditions and social exclusion. It is the opportunities and experiences during the most formative stages – childhood and youth – that shape people's access to decent work and enable them to enjoy security and protection for the rest of their lives. Unless the causes and consequences of the youth employment challenge are tackled progress towards better economic and political governance in the region will remain uncertain.

The approach of the ILO and the constituents has been one that is pro-employment and pro-youth with targeted interventions to overcome specific disadvantages faced by young people entering and remaining in the labour market.

(continued from page 3)

Regional Priorities

In order to achieve even greater impact in the region, a more institutionalized approach to managing the ILO's technical assistance on youth employment is being developed building on past experience, good practices and lessons learned. This is in the areas of: knowledge development; employability and entrepreneurship tools that can reach the disadvantaged more effectively; knowledge-sharing networks; supporting the tripartite constituents and youth themselves in policy advocacy and implementation; partnerships with the UN family and civil society; resource mobilization and demonstration projects including stronger links with child labour programmes.

Contact: *Urmila Sarkar, Child Labour and Education Specialist, Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit*

Labour Migration

The core issue for labour migration is how to govern the employment of migrant workers in a way that balances the individual's right to basic protection with society's interest in harmonious development and growth.

How to govern covers a multitude of policy and decision-making issues, including deciding on a rational admissions policy, avoiding the displacement of national workers, and organizing the orderly return and re-employment of migrant workers. It covers approaches to monitoring and meeting labour shortages, designing admission programmes, supervising efficient and orderly recruitment, preventing trafficking and abusive treatment, regularizing the status of the undocumented, protecting rights and enforcing standards, providing services to facilitate integration and encouraging social dialogue.

The ILO's labour migration services are vast. The available components include elements such as worker admission programmes, agreements on migration (including on free movement), systems for



Encouraging small businesses, an element of local development, is one of the priority areas of the Asian Decent Work Decade. ILO/M. Crozet, Thailand, 2005.

organizing migration (including private sector participation in recruitment), and model employment contracts. Other modules include laws and regulations on trafficking issues, methods of ensuring non-discriminatory treatment of foreign employees, information, welfare services and funds for migrants, sanctions to discourage illegal migration, strategies for assisting remittances, and methods of helping returning migrants reintegrate.

There are many organizations offering technical assistance in the field of migration. However the ILO's approach has two unique aspects. Firstly, its "Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration" comprises principles that have been through a formal vetting process with the tripartite constituents. Secondly, the ILO is able to draw on many technical programmes with long-standing involvement in labour issues, including migration and social security for migrant workers. No other organization benefits from these strengths.

Contact: *Manolo Abella, Chief Technical Advisor, Asian Programme on the Governance of Labour Migration*

Competitiveness, Productivity and Jobs in a Globalizing World

The aim of this priority area is to provide countries with technical support, statistical resources and examples of best practices that will allow them to enhance

competitiveness and productivity and improve opportunities for achieving decent work.

Key areas of work include: improving decent work statistics, improving knowledge and understanding, strengthening the basis of knowledge of the links between growth, productivity and job creation, encouraging progressive workplace practices, and supporting skills development that bolsters productivity and employment growth.

While other agencies working in this field tend to have a narrow focus, the ILO takes a broader view that emphasizes sustainability, human rights and dignity, dialogue, and protection. In addition the organization's tripartite structure enhances the legitimacy of its recommendations, tools and outcomes.

Against a backdrop of accelerating globalization, the ILO's approach covers five strategic areas:

1. Improving the quality of economic growth;
2. Strengthening policy coherence;
3. Achieving competitiveness, but not at any cost;
4. Balancing productivity growth and decent world goals; and
5. Improving statistics for monitoring and policy development.

Contact: *Gyorgy Sziraczki, Senior Economist, Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit*

LATEST ASIA PACIFIC EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

By Steven Kapsos, *Labour Economist, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*

The 2007 Global Employment Trends Brief has found that, despite strong global economic growth, the number of people unemployed worldwide remained at an historical high in 2006, at 195.2 million, or 6.3 per cent of the global labour force. While the percentage of working poor in total employment declined over the past ten years, when looked at in absolute numbers the number of working people living on US\$2 a day continued to grow, reaching 1.37 billion in 2006.

If long-term inroads into unemployment and working poverty are to be made, the Brief stresses it will be essential for economies to translate strong growth into decent and productive jobs more effectively.

The annual GET Brief was released in January by the Employment Trends Unit (EMP/TRENDS). The 2007 document takes a regional approach, outlining some specific labour market challenges facing the three Asian subregions: East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia.

East Asia

Underpinned by China's growth rate of more than 10 per cent, East Asia led the world in output growth in 2006. Strong export performance was a key driver behind this impressive showing. Regionally, East Asia's unemployment rate remains the lowest in the world. However, the Brief highlights several challenges facing the region:

- Rising inequality in income levels and access to schooling;

- A large youth population (232 million in 2006) that requires training and skills-building;
- Wage growth continues to lag behind productivity gains;
- Women face more difficulties in the labour market than men, something reflected in lower participation rates and in the greater incidence of women in informal employment;
- Improvements in decent work are not keeping up with economic development: long average working hours, occupational safety, rights at work, and a lack of social dialogue between workers, employers and governments remain outstanding issues.

South-East Asia and the Pacific

The region's overall GDP grew at a significant rate of 5.4 per cent in 2006. Cambodia and Viet Nam registered the fastest GDP growth, averaging more than 6 per cent per year over the past decade.

However, economic performance remains poor in many Pacific Island states. Combined with high labour force growth rates and poor labour market performance, living standards have deteriorated in many of these economies.

Between 1996 and 2006, the unemployment rate in South-East Asia and the Pacific surged by 2.8 percentage points. Yet a more serious problem facing the region is that nearly 57 per cent of workers are unable to lift themselves and their families above the US\$2 a day poverty line. In addition to this the Brief says that if decent work in this region is to be advanced, five key issues must be addressed:

- Finding the right balance between productivity growth and decent employment creation;
- Promoting decent jobs for young people;
- Managing labour migration;

- Adapting and modernizing labour market governance;
- Extending social protection coverage.

South Asia

Generating decent and productive employment opportunities for the region's rapidly growing labour force remains South Asia's main challenge. In the last decade the labour force increased by an average of 2.1 per cent per year. Between 2005 and 2006 employment grew by 11.7 million.

Women remain significantly disadvantaged. Only 36 per cent of women participate in the labour market, compared with more than 82 per cent of men. Those women who do work have a higher risk than men of becoming unemployed; the female unemployment rate in 2006 was 6.2 per cent compared to 4.9 per cent for men.

Yet unemployment remains only the "tip of the iceberg" in South Asia. While working poverty has been dramatically reduced in the region, at 87.2 per cent, the US\$2 working poor rate is still very high. In addition to this several key challenges face in South Asia:

- Low adult literacy rates. More education and training is needed in order to expand employment opportunities and increase labour productivity;
- Young people in the region are under-utilized. In 2006 they were 2.8 times more likely than adults to be unemployed and had a low participation rate of 47.1 per cent;
- Economies in the region need to find an effective balance between flexibility, stability and security of working arrangements in dynamic labour markets;
- Poor working conditions, lack of social protection and an absence of benefits such as sick leave and paid holidays are common problems. This lack of decent working conditions impedes the development process.

Unemployment, GDP growth, and working poverty. Asian subregions and world wide

	Unemployment rate (%)			GDP growth rate (%)			US\$2 Working poor (% of total employment)	
	1996	2005	2006*	2005	2006*	2007 ^p	1996	2006
World	6.1	6.4	6.3	4.9	5.2	4.9	54.8	47.4
East Asia	3.7	3.5	3.6	9.2	9.2	9.1	61.9	44.2
South-East Asia & Pacific	3.7	6.6	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.7	64.7	56.9
South Asia	4.4	5.2	5.2	8.2	7.9	7.2	91.1	87.2

* 2006 are preliminary estimates; p = projections

Source: Global Employment Trends Brief (Geneva, 2007), January. <http://www.ilo.org/trends>

USING MICROFINANCE TO FIGHT CHILD LABOUR, HUMAN TRAFFICKING

By Linda Deelen, *Microfinance and Enterprise Development Expert, Subregional Office for East Asia*

The presentation of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus, founder of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, showed the increasing worldwide recognition of the important role that microfinance is playing in poverty alleviation and employment creation.

Microfinance – financial services for the poor – gives poor people the chance to invest in their businesses, save for their future and insure themselves against events that might threaten their livelihoods.

There is also a strong causal link between the availability of microfinance and success in combating child labour and human trafficking. Consequently, the ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) often employs microfinance as part of its strategy. Families who want to replace the income their working children bring in, can often best do so by starting a small business, but to do



Members of a village bank, Lao PDR.

this they need credit. More importantly, people who build up micro-savings can protect themselves from the kind of abject poverty that often leads to child labour and human trafficking.

In the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Cambodia, IPEC has been looking at new ways to strengthen the impact of microfinance in its programmes.

In Lao PDR the ILO has partnered with a local NGO to create more than 100 village banks in villages with a high incidence of human trafficking in three provinces in the south, bordering Thailand. Two years into the programme more than 12,000 families have become members and clients of these village banks. The banks have collected more than US\$400,000 in savings, which they use to give business-related loans to members. Each month around 350 loans are made, the majority to women.

In Cambodia the approach has been different. Unlike Lao PDR there are already

many microfinance institutions offering loans and savings services to poor people. However IPEC's target groups are usually excluded from these services, because they lack collateral, are indebted to money-lenders, or both. The ILO's response to this situation is three-fold:

- The families of working children are trained in business as well as in managing their household finances (Financial Education). They learn about debt management, the importance of savings and making their own household budgets.
- NGO partners support the creation of self help groups, groups of 10 to 20 women who want to improve their livelihoods by setting up their own savings and credit fund.
- Microfinance institutions that have agreed to work closely with the child labour programme offer information sessions to the target families and take them on as clients to the extent that their own credit risk procedures allow.

An important lesson is that there is no tailor-made microfinance strategy that works in each and every country. The approach needs to be adapted to the needs of the target group, the existing microfinance landscape and local capacities. The trick – and the challenge – is to develop something that outlives the project, giving people access to savings and credit services for the years to come.

Microfinance and Human Trafficking

Microfinance can be an effective anti-trafficking intervention if:

- 1) The microfinance programme is well targeted - operating in communities with high incidence of human trafficking;
- 2) Microfinance clients are given information and messages on anti-trafficking and safe migration;
- 3) The microfinance model has a component on emergency funds, so people in acute economic stress will have options other than unprepared migration.

How Do Village Banks Work?

The process starts when the ILO, together with local NGO staff, visits a village and explains the concept of a village bank to the villagers. If the village shows an interest, and can form a group of at least 25 individuals, the ILO offers them a training programme on village banking methodology. After the training the group will elect a village bank committee, consisting of a president, a treasurer, an accountant and two other members. The committee will manage the day-to-day affairs of the village bank and approve loans. The whole group will agree on the rules and bylaws of the village bank.

Once the village bank has been set up members start depositing their savings. When the village bank has accumulated a considerable amount of savings, say US\$100 or US\$200, it starts issuing small loans to members. The interest rate on the loans is decided by the village and is usually around 3 per cent per month. Village cohesion in Lao PDR is strong and so far members have paid their loans and interest on time. The NGO pays regular auditing visits to the village banks. At the end of each year members receive a dividend on their savings.

TV SERIES HELPS MIGRANT WORKERS BECOME ENTREPRENEURS

By Christoph David Weinmann, Chief Technical Advisor SIYB China Project, ILO Office for China and Mongolia

Where do you go when the construction boom is over? What happens when you are fired? What if your husband suddenly decides to invest all the family savings in something as risky as a new business? These questions are common among China's migrant workers and they have taken center stage in a soap opera on Sichuan TV.

China's "floating population" of internal migrants is estimated at between 120-150 million. The majority are rural labourers moving to the cities to seek work. But, given their mobility, migrants are a difficult target group to reach with support programmes.

Getting the message out

Male migrants mainly look for work in construction and female migrants in restaurants. However in their free time both groups share a common habit — watching soap operas. From this came the idea of reaching these migrants through their favourite leisure activity.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOLSS), with technical assistance from the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Project, decided to create a soap opera called "My Future Is Not a Dream" to encourage migrants to enroll in SIYB training. Viewers see how against all odds the main character, Zhao Dayong overcomes strife, cheating, and family quarrels to set up his business.

Producing the series

The series was made in collaboration with Sichuan TV. It was produced by Ouyang Fenqiang, famous for starring in China



Wang Wei (left) and Hai Dun (right) play Xie Chunmei and Zhao Dayong, migrants seeking their fortune in the big city in the mini series "My Future Is Not a Dream". Photo: ILO China/Movie Screenshot, 2006.

Central Television's "A Dream of Red Mansions", and directed by Liu Xuesong. ILO technical input on SIYB was provided by Deng Baoshan.

For Ouyang, the series presented special challenges because the budget was modest in comparison to normal commercial productions, while expectations were high and the requirements of SIYB China's experts needed to be met.

To keep costs down talented but unknown actors were hired to play the main characters. A number of famous local actors from Sichuan province made cameo appearances in supporting roles.

The 12 episode mini-series was broadcast in Sichuan in August 2006. Each episode lasted 45 minutes.

Overwhelming response

Broadcast on Sichuan TV's Public Channel, an estimated 1-1.1 million people watched the series during this trial local broadcast. This compares well with commercial TV series, showing how effective this format is in getting public service messages across to a wider audience.

A telephone survey of viewers two months after the broadcast confirmed the popularity of the series. 72 per cent of respondents said that although the series was short they remembered the popular characters well.

Importantly, 31 per cent of viewers said they watched the series after finding it while channel-hopping – showing that it was

compelling and entertaining viewing.

Two-thirds of respondents said that they felt encouraged to start their own business after watching the series, and 62 per cent of respondents felt encouraged to join Start Your Business (SYB) training.

Telephone hotlines set up by local labour offices during the trial ran hot with 22,000 inquiries about local SIYB training classes in Chengdu City. In the City of Deyang the number of consultations and participation in SYB training increased dramatically after the broadcasts. In response between August and October the city organized 25 SYB training workshops in which 750 migrant workers took part.

No significant variation was found between responses from members of different demographic profiles (gender, occupation, etc.), except that the series may appeal more to younger people. This in itself is positive because the average age of migrants from the countryside to the cities in China is quite low and so reaching this target group is important.

The MOLSS is now negotiating to see if the series can be screened in other provinces in China. Given that the series has proven a very powerful tool, there is pressure on local labour authorities to boost their training capacities to be able to respond to the new demand. The SIYB China Programme, which trained 280,000 persons in the year prior to the broadcast, is thus getting ready for another shift of gear.

CAMBODIA'S ARBITRATION COUNCIL: BUILDING BETTER LABOUR RELATIONS

By Michael Lerner, Technical Advisor,
Arbitration Council Foundation

Only when laws break or legal institutions fail do most people realise how important they are.

This is also true in the area of industrial relations, where an effective institution is essential to help resolve labour disputes, prevent strikes, reduce disruption in production and provide a forum for workers to voice their complaints.

In Cambodia just such a legal institution, the Arbitration Council was set up in 2003. Provided for under the Labour Law, the Council was established by the Cambodian Government, employers' associations and trade unions, with financial and technical assistance from the ILO's Labour Dispute Resolution Project.

The Arbitration Council is the first tribunal established to hear industrial relations disputes in Cambodia. In its four years of operation it has gained the support of the social partners – workers' and employers' organizations – who acknowledge its role in reducing industrial actions, getting people back to work and minimizing industrial disruption.

The Council has already heard more than 350 cases, involving enterprises employing more than 270,000 workers. According to the Council's statistics, 93.5 per cent of the return-to-work orders issued by the Council have been complied with. Mr. Men Nimmith, Executive Director of the Arbitration Council Foundation, said: "A unique feature about Cambodia's system is that while the procedures are mandatory – parties are required by law to go through conciliation at the Ministry and arbitration



The Arbitration Council conducts a dispute resolution hearing. Photo: ILO Cambodia, 2006.

at the Council – the results are voluntary; parties are free to reject results that they do not agree with. Despite this non-binding aspect, the Arbitration Council has successfully resolved about 68 per cent of the labour disputes submitted to it".

The Council's jurisdiction is limited to collective labour disputes and so each case involves complaints brought by a group of workers against one or more employer. Dispute resolution services are provided free of charge.

Claims are brought on a range of topics, including wages and benefits, dismissals, anti-union discrimination, and health and safety. The Council encourages parties to settle their own disputes. If requested, arbitrators can act as mediators. Around 35 per cent of all disputes are resolved this way.

Mr. Men said that parties have many reasons to trust the Council. "It offers a free, fair, speedy and transparent hearing conducted by competent arbitrators who follow the law. Over time this has built a body of decisions which assists stakeholders to understand the Labour Law, and to have legal certainty," he said.

The Council's credibility and legitimacy with workers and employers has been enhanced by a system which allows them to select their own arbitrators. All disputes are heard by a panel of three: the employer and worker parties each select one arbitrator from an approved list, and these two select the third panellist. A hearing is then held to examine the relevant facts and law, and a reasoned decision is published within 15 days

of receiving the case – a deadline imposed by the Labour Law. In cases where there are complex legal or factual questions the arbitrators can ask the parties for extra time.

USAID, a donor to the Council's Foundation, said in a 2005 report: "The Arbitration Council is viewed as the only corruption-free body making judicial decisions and has improved labour-employer relations".

Cambodian's former Minister of Labour and Vocational Training, H.E. Nhep Bunchin, stated: "The Arbitration Council has been setting a high standard for legal and judicial reform in Cambodia".

Mr. John Ritchotte, Chief Technical Advisor for the ILO's Labour Dispute Resolution Project, said: "One invaluable service of the Arbitration Council's awards is that decisions provide a basis for further dialogue by workers and employers. Even in cases where the parties do not accept the award, they will often use it later as the basis for a future agreement. This demonstrates the widespread credibility of the Council's decision-making process".

As a relatively young institution the Council already enjoys an excellent reputation in its field. It is important that it continues to establish itself as an integral part of Cambodia's industrial relations and legal landscape. Support from the tripartite constituents for an independent, efficient, transparent and effective Council will play a vital role in its future success.

Staff from the Arbitration Council Foundation also contributed to this article

S R O F O C U S

PHILIPPINES DOMESTIC WORKERS

By Minette Rimando, Information Assistant,
Subregional Office for South-East Asia and
the Pacific, Manila

After a decade of advocacy by the Visayan Forum and the ILO, in January 2007 the Philippine Senate approved the Domestic Workers Bill, which gives additional benefits and protection to domestic workers in the Philippines.

“Our legal and moral obligation is made more emphatic with our international commitment to uphold the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, which outlines conditions of work for all workers, including labour standard policies, decent employment condition and income, and enhanced coverage of social protection,”

said Senator Jinggoy Estrada, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Labour, Employment and Human Resource Development in his speech sponsoring the bill.

The Philippine Labour Force Survey estimated that more than 1.3 million Philippine households employed domestic workers in 2002, while non-governmental organizations have estimated the number at 2.5 million. While domestic work has become a highly-sought service, wages remain low, unpaid or delayed. Some workers are exposed to abuse, harmful working conditions and long working hours.

The bill seeks to better define “household work,” increase the minimum wage of domestic workers, enhance social protection coverage, endorse the use of formal contracts, promote mandatory registration, prevent bonded labour and increase penalties under the Philippine Labor Code.

In support of the Domestic Workers’ Bill, the ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia in Manila organized an orientation on Social Security Programmes for Domestic Workers in partnership with the Social Security System (SSS) and Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth) in January. The event aimed to raise awareness on the need to provide social security coverage and facilitate the registration of domestic workers for social protection.

“Very often, domestic workers are invisible workers, not covered by social protection schemes, union membership. They are working under informal arrangements yet we bring domestic workers to our homes, we ask them to look after our precious children or sick family members. They are not service providers but people who should be treated fairly,” said Linda Wirth, Director of the ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific.

LABOUR MARKET REFORMS SPOTLIGHTED

By Neelam Aginhotri, Publications and
Information Assistant, Subregional Office for
South Asia, New Delhi

As a part of the Decent Work Country Programme for India a High-Level Roundtable on Labour Market Reforms was held from 7-8 December 2006 in New Delhi. The event was organized by the ILO at the request of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, in close consultation with employers’ organizations and trade unions. More than 60 senior-level participants attended, representing the Central and State Ministries of Labour and Employment, the Ministry of Finance, employers, trade unions, experts from India and abroad, academia, the UN and other international organizations.



A traditional lamp-lighting ceremony was held during the meeting. Photo: Mr. I.P. Anand (left) and Mr. N.M. Adyanthaya (right) ILO Governing Body Members; Mr. Kari Tapiola, Executive Director, Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director, SRO Delhi.

International experts and ILO officials presented details of labour market reforms in different parts of the world, including China, Brazil, the EU Countries, Africa and Asia. These case studies, which focused on the goal of “flexi-security”, highlighted the need for active labour market reforms through social dialogue. Stress was put on

the need to integrate labour market reforms with broader changes - including macro-economic policies - that are in line with local needs and requirements, particularly since most new jobs are in the informal sector.

H.E. Oscar Fernandes, Indian Minister of Labour and Employment, highlighted the importance of linking India’s economic

(continued on page 10)

I N B R I E F



Mr. Guy Thijs, Deputy Regional Director

New Deputy Regional Director

Mr. Guy Thijs has taken up the post of Deputy Regional Director at the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. His previous position was as Director of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in Geneva.

Mr. Thijs, who is Belgian, began his ILO career at the Jakarta office in 1988. In 1992 he joined IPEC as Subregional Programme Coordinator for South-East Asia and in 1994 he transferred to Bangkok with responsibility for IPEC activities throughout the region. In 1998 he moved to Headquarters where he held a variety of positions in IPEC, including ultimately that of Director of the Programme.

Mr. Thijs's predecessor, Ms. Lin Lean Lim, has taken up a post as Senior Advisor at the International Institute for Labour Studies in Geneva.

Directors meet on Decent Work

Directors of ILO field offices throughout Asia and the Pacific met in Bangkok for three days to discuss issues related to the strategy and implementation of the Decent Work Decade. Among the items discussed were the development and management of the region's priorities, advocacy techniques and methods that can be used to change policies and opinions, and the implications of the UN reform process. About 30 people attended the meeting, from 7-9 February. ILO headquarters' team was headed by Ms. Annette-Marie Ching, Senior Adviser on Asia and the Pacific Region, CABINET.

ILO marks Thailand's 60 years with the UN

H.E. Nitya Pibulsonggram, Thailand's Foreign Minister, visited the ILO's stand at a joint UN exhibition to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Thailand's membership. The event was at the Amarin Plaza, Bangkok in December 2006. Photo from left: Mr. Jiyuan Wang, Officer-in-Charge, ILO Subregional Office for East Asia; the Minister; Ms. Jittima Srisuknam, Programme Officer.



International Garment Buyers meet in Cambodia

Sixteen of the most important international garment buyers, who source more than US\$1 billion-worth of garments from Cambodia each year, attended the third Buyers' Forum in Phnom Penh on 5 December 2006.

The Forum gave the buyers an opportunity to discuss common approaches and strategies for addressing working conditions using compliance monitoring and remediation.

The buyers confirmed that one reason for their continuing interest in doing business in Cambodia is its garment sector's reputation and commitment to improving working conditions and productivity. "Working conditions are one part of the sourcing, but on-time delivery, price and quality are equally important factors when sourcing decisions are made; we absolutely endorse efforts to increase competitiveness based on higher productivity", said a buyer's representative.

Representatives of the 16 international buyers who use the ILO monitoring information expressed their support for the ILO's ground-breaking *Better Factories Cambodia* programme and called upon all stakeholders to continue to help make progress in improving working conditions in the Cambodian garment sector.

(continued from page 9)

Labour Market

...growth with decent work for the increasing number of young people in the labour market. Noting India's large reserve of technical people, he said that skills upgrading will "create a dynamic labour market environment" and the "right balance of flexibility, stability and security" would let India benefit from opportunities brought by globalization.

Mr. Kari Tapiola, ILO Executive Director, Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work reminded participants that the goal of a fair labour market is full, freely-chosen and productive employment. Labour market reform is a continuous process which calls for tripartite cooperation, social dialogue, respect for standards and fundamental rights as well as effective protection, he said. Reforms must reflect the real needs of both employers and trade unions.

Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director, Subregional Office for South Asia, stressed the need to integrate labour and social issues in the formulation of economic policies and link economic growth with India's demographic advantages. She reiterated the ILO's willingness to continue facilitating dialogue between the tripartite constituents and to provide technical support to ensure that growth benefits all members of society.

MICROFINANCE AND SIYB WEBSITES

www.siyb.com.cn

The China Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) site provides tools and information for the development of micro and small enterprises. In English and Chinese.

www.siyb.org.pg

The SIYB website of Papua New Guinea.

www.siyb.org.vn

The Viet Nam SIYB site. In English and Vietnamese.

www.entergrowth.com

The Sri Lanka/ILO/Swedish International Development Agency site on Enterprise for Pro-Poor Growth. Its goal is to support pro-poor economic growth and quality employment for women and men with an integrated programme for the development of micro and small enterprises.

www.ilo.org/socialfinance

The ILO Social Finance Programme site gives information on credit, savings and

other financial products that help the poor to cope better with risk, take advantage of income-generating opportunities, organize and make their voices heard. There is also information on promoting institutions and policies to create an enabling environment for microfinance institutions to operate.

<http://learning.itcilo.it/entdev/microfinance>

The Boulder Microfinance Training programme is a yearly three week event, bringing together microfinance practitioners from around the world. The training course is organized at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin.

www.microfinance.org.vn

The website of the ILO project “Extension of microfinance and microinsurance to informal women workers in Vietnam”, in English and Vietnamese.

www.grameen-info.org

The Grameen Bank provides credit for the

rural poor of Bangladesh who lack the normal collateral that commercial lenders require. Instead it lends on the basis of mutual trust, accountability, participation and creativity. Professor Muhammad Yunus, the Bank’s founder, won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in supporting grassroots economic and social development.

www.microfinancegateway.org

The Microfinance Gateway is the most comprehensive online resource for the microfinance industry. It includes research and publications, specialized resource centers, organization and consultant profiles, and the latest news, events and job opportunities in microfinance.

www.pmn.org.pk

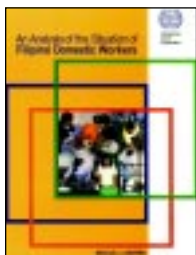
The Pakistan Microfinance Network is a framework of organizations dedicated to improving the outreach and sustainability of microfinance services in Pakistan.

CALENDAR

Forthcoming Asia-Pacific Meetings 2007

27-30 March, Chiba, Japan	Skills-AP Regional Technical Meeting on the Specific Role of Skills Development in Promoting Productivity, Competitiveness and Decent Work
1-4 April, Beijing, China	National Tripartite Workshop on Risk Assessment Methods and Occupational Safety and Health in Coal Mining
18-20 April, Hanoi, Viet Nam	Employers’ Organization Workshop on Occupational Safety and Health
23-27 April, Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Technical Workshop on Employment, Poverty Reduction and Local Development – An Introduction to Local Resource-based Approaches to Rural Infrastructure Development and Service Delivery
24-26 April, Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Technical Meeting on a Draft Framework, Methodology and Work plan on the Skills and Qualifications of Migrant Workers
2-4 May, Lao PDR (tbc)	Occupational Safety and Health for Small Enterprises, Training of Trainers Workshop
14-18 May, Seoul, Republic of Korea	Regional Technical Workshop on Improving Workplace Learning in Asia and the Pacific
16-18 May, Singapore	Subregional Tripartite Symposium on Managing Labour Migration in East Asia
May (dates tbc), Bangkok, Thailand	5 th Session of the Sub-Regional Advisory Committee of the Mekong Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women
21 May (tbc), Chiang Mai, Thailand	Regional Training on Local Development for Decent Work
8-11 July, Malaysia (tbc)	National Occupational Safety and Health Workshop on Convention 187 and National OSH Programme

SHELF LIFE



An Analysis of the Situation of Filipino Domestic Workers

Manila: ILO, 2006, 40 pp.

The rights and working conditions of Philippine domestic workers employed in the country and abroad are analysed in this report, which includes the scope of domestic work, legislative and regulatory framework, working conditions, common labour violations and abuses, and organizations addressing issues of domestic work, forced labour and trafficking.



Core Labor Standards Handbook

Manila: ILO/Asian Development Bank (ADB), October 2006, 142 pp.

The handbook provides information on the Core Labour Standards (CLS), explains the difference between core and other (non-core) labour standards, and presents ideas, opportunities and examples of good practices on the application of CLS in ADB operations.



Decent Work for Women and Men in the Informal Economy: Profile and Good Practices in Cambodia

Bangkok: ILO, Economic Institute of Cambodia and UNIFEM, 2006, 95 pp.

English & Khmer

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-26.pdf>

An analysis of gender issues and trends in the informal economy in Cambodia. It documents hours and wage differentials, identifies the decent work deficits experienced by women and men and offers recommendations to address the problems, from skills to social protection and formalization of informal economy workers.



Fighting Poverty from the Street, A Survey of Street Food Vendors in Bangkok

By Dr. Narumol Nirathron, Bangkok: ILO, 2006
<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-11.pdf>

This report studies the role of street food vending in reducing poverty. It shows how local policies and social attitudes that legitimize street vending can produce benefits not only to vendors but also consumers who gain access to cheaper basic goods. The research shows that street vending can provide adequate incomes, mobility across generations and a viable means of livelihood for population in the city.



Underpaid, Overworked and Overlooked, The realities of young migrant workers in Thailand

Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 145 pp.

English & Thai

A survey on young migrant workers, employers and recruiters in Thailand, focusing specifically on agriculture in Nakhon Pathom, fishing in Samut Sakhon, domestic workers in Chiang Rai and Tak, and all three sectors plus manufacturing in Bangkok and its surrounding area. A joint study with Mahidol University.



Informal Gold Mining in Mongolia: A Baseline Survey Report Covering Bornuur and Zaamar Souns, Tuv Aimag

By T. Navch, Ts. Bolormaa, B. Enkhtsetdeg, D. Khurelmaa & B. Muckhjargal

Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 112 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-12.pdf>

A survey on adult and child workers, local authorities, employers and intermediaries at two mining sites in Mongolia. It covers demographics, living/working conditions, occupational safety and health, income and productivity, organization and perceptions of work. Aimed at improving workers' safety, it provides guidance on future policy strategies for informal gold mining.



Handbook on Child Labour for Trade Unions

New Delhi: INDUS Child Labour Project, ILO, 2006, 64 pp.

A guide for trade unions on how to mainstream child labour into their work at grass roots level, with the aim of achieving the elimination of child labour.



Indonesia's Youth Labor Market and the Impact of Early School Drop Out and Child Labor

Jakarta: ILO, 2006, 112 pp.

English & Indonesian

A survey of 2,500 15-29 year-olds, from the lower socio-economic group in eight provinces in Indonesia. It shows that early drop out from school is a major contributor to insecure employment, poor working conditions and lower wages later in life.



Know more about HIV/AIDS: a toolkit for workers in the informal economy

By Karolin Holm, Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 38 pp.

English & Khmer (Mongolian forthcoming)

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-27.pdf>

Interactive exercises, demonstrations and role plays intended to increase knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention, care and community support, and understanding of related rights and responsibilities. Prepared for Cambodian informal economy workers, it can be adapted to other national contexts.



Work Improvement for Safe Home: Action Manual for Improving Safety, Health and Working Conditions of Home Workers

By T. Kawakami, S. Arphorn and Y. Ujita
Bangkok: ILO, 2006, 90 pp.

<http://www.ilo.org/asia/library/download/pub06-22.pdf>

Practical, easy-to-implement ideas for home workers to help them improve their occupational safety and health, so contributing to higher productivity and cooperation among home workers in the same workplace or community. The manual is illustrated with diagrams, pictures and checklists to ensure successful training and practice.

Informal Economy publications

For a complete list of publications on the informal economy in Cambodia, Mongolia and Thailand see: www.ilo.org/asia/library (employment). The reports were produced by the ILO's Informal Economy, Poverty and Employment Project, 2004-2006, funded by the UK Department for International Development.