

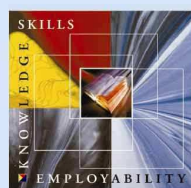
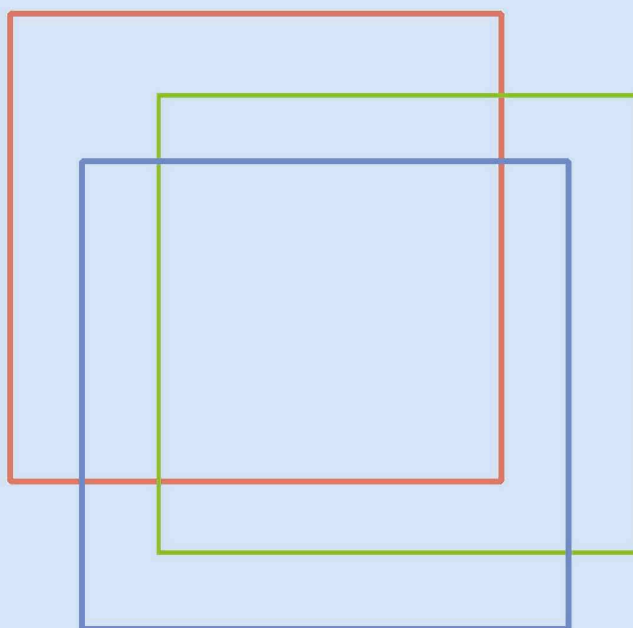
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Strengthening Regional Skills Network through Partnerships in Asia and the Pacific

*Report of ILO/SKILLS-AP/Korea Second Technical Meeting
of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific
SIVAT, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 16-18 April 2008*



SKILLS-AP

Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS-AP)

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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**Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS-AP)
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**

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Foreword

There are many skills development challenges facing countries in the Asia Pacific and skills development is a very high priority for all of the countries and for the ILO. This Second Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations was designed to review these challenges and to discuss ways to improve cooperation and information sharing.

I am pleased to have had an opportunity to attend the opening of this meeting and I congratulate all participants for making the meeting a success. I consider that the meeting made excellent progress in identifying the needs of partner organizations and identifying ways to respond. The revised Cooperation Framework and the Common Understanding demonstrate a strong commitment from the partner organizations to participate and support the Network. I hope that all countries will follow up this commitment with increased cooperation and collaboration in the future.

The Regional Office has recently reviewed the various options and modalities available to share knowledge between constituents and our new knowledge network will facilitate this sharing of information and resources between partner organizations. A new web-site system and accompanying content management system will be developed over the next few months. Support will be provided for building Communities of Practice (CoP) or cooperative groups in the region using a central package of applications.

As a first step in this information sharing, the major skills challenges faced by member States and strategies to address them have been extracted from the country reports. These will be published as a separate document and distributed to all partner organizations in the Network. Hopefully, this will provide some new ideas for countries seeking to improve their skills development systems.

I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for the strong support that they provided for this meeting and skills development in the region, I would also like to acknowledge the staff of HRD Korea, especially Mr Byung-Gie CHOI, Mr Jai-Myoung CHOI, and Ms Jong-Soon KIM together with staff of the SIVAT Centre who all played important roles in ensuring the smooth and effective functioning of the meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Christine Evans-Klock and Mr Trevor Riordan, SKILLS, ILO Geneva, who provided their expertise in this meeting. I would also like to thank Mr Ray Grannall, Senior Adviser on Skills Development and Manager of SKILLS-AP who planned and organized this meeting in close collaboration with Mr Riordan and colleagues in the region. Special thanks to Ms Akiko Sakamoto from the Sub-Regional Office (SRO) in New Delhi and Ms Anne Richmond from SRO Bangkok, who designed and led the working group processes within the meeting. Thanks also to Mr Andre Lewis for his excellent technical support to the meeting. Finally I would like to thank Ms Wipusara Rugworakijkul who provided the secretariat support to the meeting and Ms Alin Sirisaksopit who assisted in the preparation for the meeting.

Sachiko Yamamoto
Regional Director
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Inaugural Addresses	2
Introductory session.....	3
Technical session 1:	4
Technical session 2	6
1 st Working Group session:	9
2 nd Working group session:	10
Synthesis of the Working Group discussions	11
Cooperation Framework.....	11
Common Understanding	13
Closing session	13
Annex 1: List of Participants.....	15
Annex 2: Programme	23
Annex 3: Background Paper	28
Purpose	28
Introduction.....	28
Key Skill Issues.....	29
Skill shortages and gaps	29
New Skills.....	30
People disadvantaged in the workforce	31
Workplace learning.....	32
Assuring training quality	33
The 'need for speed'.....	33
Informal economy skills	33
How to address regional skill development issues cooperatively?	34
Bibliography	35
Annex 4: Network Survey.....	36
Response Rate	36
Findings from the Survey	36
Conclusions and recommendations	39
Annex 5: Framework for Cooperation	40
Annex 6: Statement of Common Understanding.....	44

**ILO/SKILLS-AP/Korea Second Technical Meeting of the Regional
Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific
(Incheon, Republic of Korea, 16 – 18 April 2008)**

Report of the Meeting

Introduction

Skills development is seen by most countries in Asia-Pacific as a key priority. They are finding it a growing challenge to respond to the skills needs of their workforce in a time of increasing globalization, new technology and changing patterns of work. A major challenge for countries is to improve their productivity and competitiveness. A key factor in translating these challenges into reality is the development of inclusive and effective national skills strategies. The key factor is an alignment between the skills produced and the development goals and the needs of industry. This is not a simple task as shown in the difficulties faced by many developing economies as they attempt to reform their national policies and systems. For countries grappling with the aftermath of disasters and conflicts the development of effective national skills strategies have been shown to be critical for helping people find new jobs and restore livelihoods.

The *First Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations* was held in Incheon, in November 2005. This meeting brought together, for the first time, national skills development partner organizations in all ILO member States in the region to discuss skills development issues. The meeting examined and agreed upon the key issues and challenges for skills development across the region and discussed the ways and means of sharing knowledge and experience among ILO constituents in the region to optimise human resource development processes and promote decent work. The meeting also reached a tripartite Common Understanding on the role and work of SKILLS-AP and the Regional Skills Network as a common platform for better cooperation and services to member States on skills issues. The revitalization of the ILO Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific was seen a key measure to assist countries in the region to access information and share expertise and knowledge through networking, technical cooperation and joint programmes.

The objectives of this Second Technical Meeting were:

- to review the progress made in the revitalization of the Regional Skills Network and;
- to explore the ways and means to make it more effective as a mechanism for sharing knowledge and expertise with and between countries in the region.

The overall aim was to contribute to improving economic and social development in ILO member States in Asia and the Pacific. Participants were invited from 30 ILO member States in Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India,

Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Brunei Darussalam, Iran, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea were unable to participate. Representatives of Employers' and Workers' Organizations, as agreed by the Governing Body took part. Twenty-eight per cent of the participants were women.

Participants registered and then met in each of the tripartite groups to consider how the Regional Skills Network had performed since its inauguration in 2005. They also reviewed the key issues for skills development in the region to identify those that were still a high priority for action. Chairs for the programme sessions were elected.

Inaugural Addresses

The meeting opened with addresses from Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO Regional Director, Ms Christine Evans-Klock, Director ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva, Mr Choi Joon Sub, Director General of the Ministry of Labour and Dr. Kim Yong Dal, President, HRD Korea. Ms Yamamoto welcomed all the participants on behalf of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. She thanked the Government of the Republic of Korea and particularly Human Resources Development, Korea and the Ministry of Labour for their generous support and partnership in organizing the meeting. Ms Yamamoto also acknowledged the senior officials from the ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Ms Christine Evans-Klock and Mr Trevor Riordan.

Ms Yamamoto noted that skills development was regularly raised at the International Labour Conference and other regional meetings such as the Beijing Employment Forum. It is also a key issue in many of the Decent Work Country Programmes. She indicated that the work of the first technical meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in 2005 took positive steps to address skills development issues in the region cooperatively and this has helped shape the work and activities of ILO staff in the region.

She hoped that this second meeting would revitalize the original understanding on cooperation and sharing and provide very clear directions for where ILO and Network Partner Organization resources can best be directed to achieve this. To date there have been 26 technical meetings, training sessions and workshops and many other activities to address the priority skills development issues agreed at the first meeting. This activity should be examined in the meeting to check progress and move forward. This should be seen in the light of the generous support of the Government of Korea and the Government of Japan plus others such as Thailand and the Philippines who have provided support for regional meetings.

Ms Yamamoto continued by noting one of the important roles for the ILO Regional Office has been to facilitate cooperative processes and workshops such as that held for Lao PDR Ministry of Youth Union staff by experts from the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. She indicated that this meeting should focus on how the ILO Office can help the Skills Network work better and facilitate even more collaboration between all the Network Partners.

Ms Yamamoto closed by stating that the ILO Regional Office and regional skills programme SKILLS-AP, the Headquarters Skills Department and field technical experts, Mr Ray Grannall, Ms Akiko Sakamoto in South Asia and Ms Anne Richmond in East Asia will assist the Network Partners to review progress to date and chart the future course of skills in the region.

Mr Choi Joon Sub, Director General of the Ministry of Labour, Korea welcomed the meeting participants and thanked the ILO and HRD Korea for facilitating this important meeting of leaders in skill development from so many countries in the Asia and the Pacific region. Mr Choi indicated that the Republic of Korea was very focused on developing a highly skilled workforce and helping regional neighbours to develop their own workforces for the benefit of the region. He noted that Korea and other countries in the region have been facing increasing skilled labour shortages even while expanding the population and available workforce. This was a normal result of economic growth and expansion of industry in new areas but other factors such as a much more mobile workforce contributes to skill shortages and gaps as skilled people move to progress their careers and seek better remuneration for their work. Skills development has to be seen as a need that is not confined to one country but is a cross-border issue in a globalizing industrial world. He thanked the participants for their attendance and hoped that the meeting would be interesting and beneficial to all concerned.

Ms Christine Evans-Klock, Director of the ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva spoke next and welcomed the participants to what she expected to be a very full and valuable programme. She re-affirmed the support of the ILO for skills development in the region and indicated that while the Organization could facilitate the Skills Network, it was the Network Partners working together that would expand the knowledge and strategies for skills in participating countries.

Finally Dr Kim Yong Dal, President, HRD Korea welcomed the meeting participants and acknowledged the senior level of representation by the Partner Organizations. He hoped that the meeting would be fruitful and build upon the work already done to enhance skills development across the region. Dr Kim indicated the vital importance of continuous development of the workforce in any country to improve economic and social well-being for the whole community. The increasing pace of technological change meant learning was a lifetime need for everyone wishing to build a successful family life and to contribute to their countries' prosperity.

Introductory session

The introductory session was chaired by Mr Choi Byung-Gie, Director General, International Cooperation Bureau, HRD Korea. He asked all the participants to introduce themselves and the organizations they represent at the meeting. The list of participants is provided at Annex 1. He then stated the importance placed by Korea on working in close partnership with other countries in the Asia and the Pacific region to build up the skills of the workforce. Mr Choi then outlined the way that Korea plans and implements skills development strategies to ensure the whole community can access high quality training and have their skills recognized against local qualifications and benchmarked internationally.

He closed by thanking everyone for their time and commitment in attending the meeting and asked Mr Trevor Riordan, ILO Geneva to introduce the meeting programme and objectives. Mr Riordan outlined the structure of the meeting (see Annex 2) and indicated that each session would be chaired by either a government, employer or worker participant. Panels would be drawn from a cross-section of the attending countries. The intention of the meeting was to consider the successes of the Regional Skills Network but also to identify shortcomings and potential improvements that should be addressed in the future. The ILO/SKILLS-AP continues to be fully supportive of the Network but has limited resources so Network Partner Organizations should think of ways to independently and collaboratively work with each other to increase the sharing of expertise and resources.

Technical session 1:

Review of the work of SKILLS-AP and the Regional Skills Network – implementation of Network activities in 2006-07 and feedback from Partner Organizations

The chairperson for the 1st technical session was Mr Daniel Urai Manufolau (Workers, Fiji). He outlined the topic of feedback on the previous activities of the Network and introduced Mr Trevor Riordan and Ms Anne Richmond from the ILO to briefly cover the various activities that had occurred since 2005 and key themes that had emerged through cooperative work and sharing experiences in skills development.

They indicated the Regional Skills Network had certainly developed useful networks of Partner Organizations although it was notable that of the participants at this meeting only three had been at the previous meeting in 2005. This was an inevitable movement of personnel in participating country organizations but this did impact on the continuity of the Network and made maintaining contacts difficult. One key theme for the Network to date was a need to bring young people into the labour market more effectively in real jobs with prospects for advancement through on-going skills development. The other key issue was the importance of dealing with the informal economy operating in many countries and build up the skills of those using informal economy jobs as their main income so they can maintain/expand their productivity and possibly move into formal economy job roles when possible.

The chair introduced each of the panelists who presented country activities they had experienced as Network Partners and some views on how the Network could be strengthened in future.

Mr Teh Sing (Employers, Cambodia) indicated that his country has instituted many skills development strategies within the construct of their national economic development framework called the Rectangle Strategy and the five-year National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010 (NSDP). As the country is moving from a centralized planning model to a market economy a comprehensive government programme for skills development was required. The Cambodian National Training Board (NTB) identified 14 strategic directions for change to TVET. These include poverty reduction, decentralization of training delivery, community and enterprise-based training, training for out of school youth, self employment opportunities, micro credit, small enterprise

development, public-private partnerships (PPP) for financing, enterprise involvement and expansion of TVET, quality assuring TVET delivery including leadership and management, better labour market information, and competency standards development.

Cambodia and other employer representatives cited examples of successful skills development implementation such as a successful HIV-AIDS programme and taking forward skills strategies for dealing with the large youth cohort. Although there is a labour surplus in Cambodia and other countries there are still shortages of skilled trades-people so this is a primary issue to be addressed. Another particularly important development activity was to skill people with a disability so they can re-enter the workforce. Cambodia has a large number of people injured by landmines and gaining them productive and fulfilling work is a key policy initiative. The employer representative from Cambodia said on behalf of his group he would like to see the Regional Skills Network share experiences on good programmes and skills development strategies to ensure the best outcomes for people seeking work in the region.

Mr Mehboob Hassan (Government, Pakistan) spoke next and indicated that Pakistan shared many common issues with other countries in the region in terms of skills development. Pakistan had a large youth cohort seeking employment at home or as migrant workers that required recognized and portable skills. Dealing with a dispersed population that required a range of training institutions was a challenge both financially and in terms of quality of delivery. Other key issues for Pakistan include an accreditation and qualification framework not sufficiently linked to national competency standards. This meant that locally trained people found it difficult to get employment abroad. There was a lack of continuous in-service opportunity training to increase productivity and inflexible entry-exit points for training. There needs to be more training for the informal economy sector but there was no well-defined national policy on skills development. Added to this was the lack of financial and other resources, limited rural sector training and training intuitions ill-equipped to deliver training for the new knowledge economy.

Representing government Mr Hassan said Pakistan and other government participants welcomed the opportunity to work together with Network Partner organizations to build up training strategies and assure the quality of outcomes. Perhaps a good idea is for participants to look at problems they encounter and address as well as successes. Good learning can come from sharing experience of what is difficult to resolve or where plans do not always work out as it helps others avoid making the same mistakes.

Mr David Lumbukly (Government, Vanuatu) indicated his support for a lead organization such as the Regional Skills Network to assist countries with skill development issues and programmes. Like many Pacific nations Vanuatu has a number of young people seeking training to enter the workforce and pursue careers. He agreed with the other panel members on the need to share a range of experiences in skill development including information and examples of strategies that work well and others that do not. From the government of Vanuatu perspective it was important that the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations had a robust mechanism for maintaining contact with each other

including support by the ILO for maintaining the Network website and extending this to provide for on-line discussions and resource sharing.

Technical session 2

Issues and challenges for skills development: International and Asia and the Pacific perspectives

Mr Sharda Prasad (Government, India) chaired the session. After outlining the topic of identifying key issues and challenges for skill development in the region he introduced Ms Christine Evans-Klock (ILO, Geneva) who presented some relevant outcomes relating to skills for improved productivity, employment, growth and development from the Background Report of the International Labour Conference (ILC) 2008.

She indicated that in the area of skills development, Decent Work Country Programmes place priority on skills development to improve competitiveness, enhance employment opportunities for young people and extend opportunities to disadvantaged groups. The ILC Background Report talks about a “Virtuous circle” that keeps productivity and employment growing together. Skills development is important in this regard but so are other factors such as macroeconomic growth policies, effective industrial relations, occupational health and safety and innovation in the private sector among others.

Skills and productivity are considered at three levels - national, enterprise and individual. At the national level, discussion is organized by groups of countries at different development levels (such as OECD and developing countries). Promoting skills development and productivity at the enterprise level looks at different kinds of workplaces, such as enterprises in local clusters or small enterprises. Specific target groups include rural communities, disadvantaged young people and migrant workers. Developing countries are challenged by addressing skill shortages in high-growth sectors, promoting formalization in the impoverished informal economy, lowering the cost of change through re-skilling, improving youth employability and using training as part of unemployment insurance schemes among others.

Policies for skills development need to be forward looking to prepare the workforce for future jobs. Examples of the “virtuous circle” are taken from Republic of Korea, Ireland, Costa Rica and Viet Nam. Findings from these, and other examples, emphasize the importance of social dialogue and the role of workers’ and employers’ organizations, gender issues and policy coordination and coherence.

The chair thanked Ms Evans-Klock for a stimulating presentation and asked Mr Andre Lewis (ILO resource person) to present a background to key issues for skills development in the region and opportunities for sharing information and resources. Mr Lewis briefly outlined some recurring skills issues in the region and elsewhere in the world and indicated they could be usefully put under three broad categories - National skills development systems, National strategies and Training and assessment delivery. Within these categories the issues included qualification frameworks, industry competency standards and quality assurance systems; skills shortages and

gaps, core skills and access and equity in training; new training methodologies, workplace learning and informal economy development.

He noted that the Regional Skills Network had already shown it was developing expertise and resources to address all these recurring themes in skills development. The next step was to encourage more sharing across the Network and the ILO had examined the potential of a simple web-based resource that may assist it in this regard. He indicated that information to be shared could include papers on key skills issues, examples of existing policy and legislative frameworks, strategies and innovations in training and assessment delivery. The full background paper is at Annex 3.

The chair then asked four government participants to present three sub-regional perspectives on key skills development issues.

Mr Sharda Prasad (Government, India) began by noting his country's large population and significant workforce of half a billion people. There were a number of anomalies between the education and training outcomes in India and the labour force indicators. For example India had skills shortages in key industry areas but relatively low employment outcomes for technical graduates. This indicated that the training provided was not matching industry needs in all instances. In common with other countries, it was difficult to gain enough training input from enterprises and there was also a shortage of skilled trainers. A recent initiative to ensure the future workforce was able to take advantage of emerging economy jobs and shifts in the labour market was a programme called "Modular Employability Skills". These were modules of training provided to school leavers and those seeking to enter the workforce with flexible skills that would suit a range of job roles. People could add specific technical skills to the employability skills they possessed through workplace experience and short targeted training programmes as required.

India had specific needs for future skilling and one was a national qualifications framework that covered the educational and vocational competencies across the whole economy. The second urgent need was for competency standards, particularly in the various manufacturing sectors.

Next Mr Nobuo Matsubara (Government, Japan) presented a comprehensive overview of Japan's human resource development policies and initiatives. In July 2006 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare formulated the 8th Basic Plan for Human Resources Development. This plan sets out priorities to develop worker expertise for sustainable career development. Specific measures include improving labour market infrastructure, supporting people to access different careers throughout their working life, promoting skill development to industry and strengthening "genka ryoku" or expertise on the shop floor. Japan was also improving its public vocational training system through increased technical programmes of between one and two years to school leavers. There are also grants for training which can contribute to up to 40% of training costs for people re-entering the workforce in a different industry area. The grants require that a person has enrolled in employment insurance for at least three years.

Mr Matsubara indicated that Japan had a very significant international cooperation programme in human resource development initiatives in the

region coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This included cooperation with APEC projects, particularly the APEC-IT Training, the Japan-ASEAN Collaboration Programme for HRD and, of course, ILO/SKILLS-AP.

There were three main issues of skills development in Japan including supply and demand gaps arising from ongoing changes to the traditional seniority based salary system, long-term company employment and company based labour union systems. There is also a demographic decline in population with fewer young people so older people are being encouraged to work longer. Even though the youth population is declining, youth unemployment was still a problem. To some degree this was not a lack of skills per se but graduate attitudes that were not convergent with employer expectations of job roles, conditions and remuneration.

Mr Lemalu Tate Simi (Government, Samoa) spoke next and noted the Samoan experience of being a small developing nation. The population of Samoa is very small compared to many Asia and the Pacific countries and has fewer industry sectors. The challenges were to encourage broader industry development and participation in skills development. This was particularly important for young people who sought career opportunities and may be inclined to go overseas to achieve this rather than stay and work in Samoa. The country training system was concentrated on basic skills development with more limited delivery of higher end skills that would help attract and develop new industries.

Key skill needs were in areas of contract and project management and supervision skills. There was also a demand to build up skills in food processing to avoid Samoa being reliant on simply selling primary agriculture and fishing products. Tourism was another area where there was potential and skills training could help develop this part of the economy.

Concluding the government perspective Mr Chai Soon Ang (Government, Singapore) outlined the Singapore strategies for skill development. While the labour force is growing strongly by 6% in 2007 (to two and three-quarters of a million workers), this is an ageing workforce with more than half being 40 years of age or older. Future industry demand for workers with higher level skills is another challenge. Globalization and new technologies impacted on Singapore's industries and the education and training policies have adjusted to meet this. The Manpower 21 "two-pronged" approach intends to skills people through maintaining a strong pre-employment training system plus developing a comprehensive system of continuing education and training to improve workforce competitiveness. Learning was promoted as an investment and the Singapore Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund (LLEF) and the Skills Development Fund (SDF) both ensure people can access institutional and workplace-based learning opportunities throughout their working life.

Key skilling challenges for Singapore were ensuring that as old jobs disappeared and new industry sectors emerged, the labour force could be rapidly and effectively trained to remain in fulfilling employment. This means encouraging lifelong learning, regular skills upgrading and retraining.

The chair then invited Ms Wong Yoke Woon (Workers, Singapore) to present a worker's view. Ms Woon noted that the Singapore National Trade Union Congress supported the approach of the Singapore Continuing Education and Training (CET) Master Plan '*Investing in our workers - Investing in our future*'. It was important that the approach be tripartite in nature and that workers had full input into the strategy and sub-programmes to ensure they were working and meeting individual's and national economy needs. To recognize the full extent of worker's skills a central centre for assessment of skills was an important aspect of Singapore's ongoing skills development.

Finally the chair asked for an employer perspective which was provided by Ms Eun Hye Choi (Employers, Korea). Ms Choi highlighted the need for accurate and timely labour market data as there was frequently a lack of information to make coherent links between current and emerging employer skills demands and training system responses. Another challenge was a training system still largely provider driven and course-based. This was not responsive or flexible enough for skilling the future workforce in economies that change more rapidly and where new technologies can completely alter occupations and skills in demand. Finally she indicated that the Regional Skills Network Partners had limited resources to apply to the key skills issues that arose from the 2005 1st Technical Meeting and this would need to be addressed in the future.

The chair thanked the panel for their valuable contributions and closed the session.

1st Working Group session:

Priority skills issues in the region and potential for technical cooperation (Four mixed working groups)

The chair for this session was Mr Anand Kuver (Government, Fiji) who introduced Ms Anne Richmond (ILO, Bangkok) and Ms Akiko Sakamoto (ILO, New Delhi) to outline the working group process. First Ms Richmond provided a short presentation on the outcomes of the survey that had been distributed to participants before the meeting. Thirty-four response had been received by the previous evening and these had been graphically represented to show what respondents thought were the priority skills issue for the Regional Network Partner Organizations based on the seven priorities identifies in 2005. The survey asked the respondents to indicate how to amend the original Framework for Cooperation and the eight practical activities for SKILLS-AP and the Network. In addition the survey asked general questions on guiding the future development of SKILLS-AP and where its activities and services could be improved.

Based on the survey responses it appears that the originally identified priority skills issues all remain valid but the importance varies considerably to Network Partners. ILO assistance to the Regional Skills Network has been seen as valuable but there is still room for improvement in some areas, particularly marketing of information across the Network. The Decent Work Country Programmes which drive much ILO activity appear not to be well known. The ILO regional technical specialists were a well regarded source of assistance and SKILLS-AP was an important support mechanism for Network

activities. Respondents all indicated they had ideas and information to share and valued the advice and experience of others which was a very positive indicator for the future of the Regional Skills Network.

Ms Richmond and Ms Sakamoto asked the participants to move into four mixed working groups to discuss and put forward their views on what are the future priority skills issues for the region and to indicate the potential avenues for technical cooperation across the Network. The working groups utilized the remaining session of the first day of the meeting and the opening session on the second day to develop their collective responses. A summary version of the survey results is included at Annex 4.

2nd Working group session:

Discussion of the Cooperation Framework and making the Regional Skills Network more effective (Four mixed working groups)

The chair for this session was Mr Nicholas Green (Employers, New Zealand) who introduced Ms Anne Richmond (ILO, Bangkok) to establish the same four mixed working groups that dealt with the 1st Working Group topic. The role of the groups was to review the Cooperation Framework established in 2005 and determine what was required to take this forward. In addition the groups were to consider ways to make the Regional Skills Network more effective and provide some examples of what Network Partner Organizations could contribute and share with others.

The outcomes of the four working groups were discussed in a plenary session and the ideas for improving the Cooperation Framework consolidated. The final result on a revised Framework is at Annex 5. In addition various participants indicated the sort of information, strategies or resources they could provide to the Regional Skills Network. This included:

- Japan** – provision of tested and effective skills development funding strategies that could operate nationally
- Pakistan** – training manuals for multi-skilling in various trades that comprised trainer and learner guides and assessment materials
- Korea** – information on setting up worker employment and unemployment insurance schemes
- Lao PDR** – a new curriculum for automotive mechanic training
- Sri Lanka** – access to 65 sets of industry competency standards with curriculum materials and learner guides
- Vanuatu** – models for developing skills in the informal economy
- Philippines** – access to detail of the TVET Quality Assurance Framework plus competency standards with assessment guides and required facilities to deliver the training.

The session was followed by individual meetings of the Government, Employer and Worker participants to consider a draft Common Understanding from the meeting.

Synthesis of the Working Group discussions

Mr Anand Kuver (Government, Fiji) re-convened the full meeting in plenary and asked the four working groups to report back on their deliberations. The report back highlighted that the priority issues identified in 2005 still had currency but there were mixed views about the priority ranking and overall importance of some issues.

In summary the four working groups identified that three priority issues still had major importance for the Regional Skills Network. These were:

- Qualification and skills recognition systems that operated effectively in a country and also allowed for mutual recognition across borders. This involved robust and well understood qualifications based on national industry competency standards.
- Ongoing high quality training delivery mechanisms with skilled trainers. This involves capability building in training systems and trainers and trusted quality assurance approaches to maintain the value of outcomes.
- Better, more current and useable Labour Market information. This involves systems that can gather useful data across a country that is transparent to users and able to be used to predict skills needs accurately and in a timely way.

Other important skills issues were better marketing the benefits of skills development to industry and the community more generally, and raising the perceived value of qualifications. Others were effective strategies to engage young people in training and providing skilling opportunities to those disadvantaged in employment, including women, older workers and people with a disability.

Core or 'soft' skills were still a necessary aspect of overall skills development as was financing of training for migrant workers but these were of a lower order of importance. Some working groups thought that the priority of skills issues specific to small countries was less important as they tended to have the same issues of skills development as larger countries and activities and initiatives from the Network would apply equally across the region. However representatives from small countries still felt they had special needs that should be considered in future Network activities.

Cooperation Framework

Review of the Cooperation Framework and follow-up strategy of the regional Skills Network

This session was chaired by Ms Florencia Pantaliano Cabatingan (Workers', Philippines) who invited Mr Trevor Riordan (ILO, Geneva) to present on the review of the 2005 Cooperation Framework and a follow-up strategy by the Regional Skills Network. Mr Riordan noted the number of meetings, workshops and development activities that had occurred since the initial formation of the Regional Skills Network. This included the ILO/SKILLS-AP/Japan Second Planning Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations on regional approaches to skills recognition and qualification systems held in

Chiba, Japan in March, 2006. The Networking activities covered a range of knowledge sharing opportunities such as the Workshop on Application of Vocational and Training Institutions which produced a management handbook and CD-ROM (March 2006), The Expert Group Meeting on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Vocational Training (February, 2006), the Technical Meeting on Developing Skills and Employability for Young People in Asia and the Pacific (February, 2007) and the Regional Technical Meeting on Developing National Skills Strategies (March, 2007) among others.

There were many Network activities hosted by Partner Organizations with examples such as the Regional Technical Meeting on Developing Skills Standards and Improving the Quality and Effectiveness of Training in IMT-GT and GMS Countries (June, 2006) hosted by Thailand Songkhla Province and the Regional Workshop on Improving Workplace Learning (May, 2007) hosted by KRIVET, Republic of Korea. These are bi and multi-lateral activities between Network Partner Organizations showed how the Network could contribute to knowledge and experience sharing.

Technical cooperation projects such as the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) methodology carried out in Pakistan and the Philippines provided useful lessons on how to deal with lack of opportunity and poverty in rural populations. Plus there were Training and Fellowship programmes supported by Korea and Japan Network Partner activities and special initiatives shared through the Network.

SKILLS-AP has an important programme to develop Regional Model Competency Standards and has published these and other useful resource material such as *Developing National Skills Strategies* and *Skills Recognition for Migrant Workers*.

Overall there have been considerable benefits to Partner Organizations arising from the Regional Skills Network. However, more can be done in future and this will rely upon the Network Partner Organizations becoming increasingly involved and pro-active in sharing information and working cooperatively on development projects and activities. ILO/SKILLS-AP can provide coordination, facilitation and secretariat support for the Regional Skills Network but has limited human and financial resources so ongoing funding of major technical meetings is not an effective way of using scarce these resources.

The Chair thanked Mr Riordan for this presentation and invited questions from participants. There was a brief discussion on the best ways to utilize resources across the Network, including ILO/SKILLS-AP input. Ideas such as continuing maintenance and expansion of the SKILLS-AP website as an information sharing resources were put forward. Partner Organizations also indicated they had useful strategies and materials that could be shared with others but this needed a supported mechanism for easy access.

Common Understanding

Regional Skills Network: Common Understanding on the Cooperation Framework and follow-up strategy

The chair for this session was Ms Imelda Taganas (Government, Philippines) who asked Mr Ray Grannall (ILO, Bangkok) to present the Common Understanding developed by the tripartite groups. The chairs of the groups, Mr Sharda Prasad (Government, India), Ms Florencia Pantalano Cabatingan (Workers', Philippines) and Mr Habibullah N. Karim (Employers', Bangladesh) presented their views on the draft Common Understanding and supported the version presented to the participants.

This was adopted by the meeting as the agreed Common Understanding of the 2nd Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific and is provided at Annex 6.

Closing session

The closing session was chaired by Ms Christine Evans-Klock (ILO, Geneva). Ms Evans-Klock noted that all the meeting participants had made contributions to a full programme of discussion and information sharing. She invited closing statements from representatives of government, employer and worker participants. First was Mr Sharda Prasad (Government, India) who congratulated participants for a revised Framework for Cooperation and Common Understanding that would bring fruitful future action to the Regional Skills Network. He indicated that naturally the various country Partner Organizations would have different experiences and skills development situations to bring to the Network but all could be shared usefully. The network would benefit from an agreed, comprehensive Action Plan to take the outcomes of the meeting forward.

Next Ms Siriwan Romchatthong (Employers', Thailand) said the meeting had been very successful and established good contacts and relationships between the 27 country participants. The most important outcome was an expressed willingness of the tripartite Partner Organizations to share expertise and resources that would benefit all members of the Network. She noted that employers make a significant contribution to sustainable national human resources development, education and lifelong learning. Through the Common Understanding from the meeting the participants have strengthened the commitment of the Network to participate actively and support local networks in their own countries. She urged all participants to do what they could to give practical meaning to ILO HRD Recommendation 195 and thanked the ILO for organizing the meeting.

Abdul Halim Mansor (Workers', Malaysia) then indicated that workers were recipients of better skills development and would benefit from the future activities of the Regional Skills Network. It was important that the Network be supported and he noted the work of the ILO in continuing to facilitate meetings and programmes that brought together the three social partners. The meeting participants had been willing and actively engaged and should be congratulated on their work.

Ms Evans-Klock invited Mr Choi Joon Sub, Director General of HRD Korea to address the meeting. Mr Choi stated that although the meeting was of only three days duration, it had achieved good results. The support of the ILO and SKILLS-AP was very valuable to the Regional Skills Network and the work to date had created significant cooperative ties and forums for skills development in Asia and the Pacific region. Like all agreements of this nature that operated across many countries it is important that there is effective and ongoing implementation of the Network activities. To assist in the regard HRD Korea will continue to work with the ILO on Regional Skills Network support.

On behalf of the meeting Ms Christine Evan-Klock thanked Mr Riordan for the work he had done in building up the Network and maintaining SKILLS-AP and then closed the 2nd Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific with thanks to HRD Korea, ILO staff and the participants. She noted that the Skills Network was entering a new phase with committed donor organizations and valuable resources to share. The outcomes of the meeting and review of activities of the Skills Network to date was a good world example of international cooperation.

Annex 1: List of Participants

List of Participants ILO/SKILLS-AP/Korea/Second Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific SIVAT, HRD Korea, the Republic of Korea, 16-18 April 2008

No	Country	Name/Position	Organization	Address	Telephone	Telefax	Email
Government							
1	Afghanistan	Mr Fareed-Ud-Din Noori Regional Officer	National Skills Development Program, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs. AFGHANISTAN	UNDP Compound, Shah Mahmood Ghazi Watt, Chara Chi Naw, Kabul	93 700 604020		fareed.din.noori@gmail.com fnoori@nsdp.gov.af
2	Australia	Ms Mary-Jane Liddicoat Counsellor (Education) Australian Embassy, Seoul	Australian Embassy, Seoul		61 2 6121 5672	61 2 6276 8003	david.yardleey@deewr.gov.au
3	Bangladesh	Md Sakawat Ali Principal	Technical Training Center Mymensingh	Technical Training Center, Mymensingh, Bangladesh	880 091 54977 880 091 54299		sakawat_ali@yahoo.com
4	Cambodia	Mr Tep Oeun Deputy Director General of TVET	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training	#3 St. Russian Federation Blvd, Kham Tom1Kok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	855 12 60 6592	855 12 60 6592	oeun_tep@yahoo.com
5	China	Mr Li Zhimin Research Officer	Department of Training and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Security	12 Hepinli Zhongjie, Dong Cheng District, Beijing, P. R. China	86 10 8420 7448	86 10 8420 7448	lizhimin@molss.gov.cn

No	Country	Name/Position	Organization	Address	Telephone	Telefax	Email
6	Fiji	Mr Anand Kuver General Manager, Productivity & Standards	Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji	1 Beaumont Road, Narere, Nassinu, P.O. Box 6890, Nassinu, Fiji	679 3392000	679 3340184	anand_k@ tpaf.ac.fj
7	India	Mr Sharda Prasad Director General/ Joint Secretary	Directorate General of Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment	108, Shram Shakti Bhawan, Rafi Marg, New Delhi 110001 India	91 11 2371 0446	91 11 2335 1878	shardaprasad81@ nic.in
8	Indonesia	Mr Hendra Iswara Head of Division Programme, Evaluation and Report	Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration	JL Jeeenderal Gatot Subroto Kan 51 Jakarta Selataan Indonesia	62 021 52921057		
9	Iran	Mr Esfandyar Chaharband Director of Training Department of TVTO	Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs	Azadi Avenue, Tehran	009 821 6642 7690	009 821 6642 8034	chaharband@ irantvto.com
10	Japan	Mr Nobuo Matsubara Deputy Director, Overseas Cooperation Division	Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8916 Japan	81 3 3502 4657	81 3 3502 8932	matsubara-nobuo@ mhlw.go.jp
11	Korea	Mr Joon Sub CHOI Director General,	International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Labour	1-1, JoonAngDong, Gwacheonsi, Republic of Korea	82 2 503 9760	82 2 507 4755	
12	Korea	Mr Won Doo LEE Director	Skills Development Team, Ministry of Labour	1-1, JoonAngDong, Gwacheonsi, Republic of Korea	82 2 2110 7254		212mk@ hanmail.net
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15	Korea	Mr Choi Byung Gie Director General	International cooperation bureau, HRD Korea	370-4 Gongduck-dong Mapo-gu, Seoul 121-757 Republic of Korea	82 2 3271 9140	82 2 716 5742	bgchoi@ hrdkorea.or.kr

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28	Solomon Island	Mr Josiah Manehia Commissioner of Labour, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment	National Trade Training, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Tourism	P.O. Box G26, Honiara	677 26810	677 25084	jmanehia@yahoo.com
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31	Timor Leste	Mr Ismenio Martins da Silva Principal Advisor	Department for Vocational Training Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment, RDTL, RDTL	Ex-CNRT Building, Estrada De Bacide, Calcoli Dili, Timor-Leste	670 736 3745		ismenio_nito@yahoo.com
32	Vanuatu	Mr Lambukly David Chief Executive Officer	Vanuatu National Training Council, Department of Labour	P.O. Box 153, Port Vila, Vanuatu	678 22134	678 25885	dlambukly@vanuatu.gov.vu

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Employers							
34	Bangladesh	Mr Habibullah N. Karim Managing Director	Technohaven Company Limited (Member Executive Committee, Bangladesh Employers Federation)	70 Green Road, Fattah Plaza 9th floor, Dhaka-1205 Bangladesh	880 2 967 0567	880 2 966 7251	karim@ technohaven.com
35	Cambodia	Mr Teh Sing Vice President of CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers & Business Associations	#119 Street 144, Sangkat Phsakandal II, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	855 16 399 900	855 23 222 186	singteh@gmail.com
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38	Indonesia	Ms Iftida Yasar Vice Secretary General	The Employers Association of Indonesia	JL Tambak No. 20C Pegangsaan Menteng, Jakarta Pusat 10320, Indonesia	60 21 311324	60 21 311326	lftida@cbn.net.id

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40	New Zealand	Mr Nicholas Green Manager Education, Training and Productivity	Business New Zealand	P.O. Box 1925 Wellington, New Zealand	64 04 496 6566	64 04 496 6550	ngreen@ businessnz.org.nz
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48	Singapore	Ms Wong Yoke Woon (Vicky) Business Development Manager	Singapore National Trade Union Congress C/O Employment and Employability Institute	NTUC Centre, No. 1 Marina Boulevard #11-01 S (18989), Singapore	65 6471 6015	65 6471 6050	wongyw@e2i.com.sg; wongyw@ntuc.org.sg
49	Sri Lanka	Mr Vasantha Gunasekara Deputy Director Worker Education	National Workers Congress	94 1/6, York Building, York Street, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka	94 112 71 3386	94 112 71 3604	normscmb@itmin.net; nwcchild@eureka.lk
ILO staff and resource person							
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51	ILO	Ms Christine Evans-Klock Director for Skills and Employability Department	International Labour Office	4, route des Morillons, CH - 1211, Geneva 22, SWITZERLAND	41 22 799 7833	41 22 799 6310	evans-klock@ilo.org
52	ILO	Mr Trevor Riordan Skills and Employability Department (EMP/SKILLS)	International Labour Office	4, route des Morillons, CH - 1211, Geneva 22, SWITZERLAND	4122 799 6825	41 22 799 7650	riordan@ilo.org
53	ILO	Ms Anne Richmond, Skills Development Specialist	ILO, Sub-regional Office for East Asia	United Buildings, 10th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand	66 2 288 1780	66 2 288 3058, 288 3060	richmond@ilo.org

No	Country	Name/Position	Organization	Address	Telephone	Telefax	Email
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55	ILO	Mr Raymond Grannall Regional Senior Adviser for Skills Development and Manager of SKILLS-AP	International Labour Office	United Buildings, 11th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand	66 2 288 1855	66 2 288 1086	grannall@ilo.org
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Annex 2: Programme

ILO/SKILLS-AP/Korea Second Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific SIVAT, Incheon, the Republic of Korea

16 - 18 April 2008

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 16 April 2008

0800 – 0830	Registration
0830 – 0930	Individual meetings of Government, Employer and Worker participants
0930 – 1000	<i>Inaugural Addresses</i> Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Ms Christine Evans-Klock, Director ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva Dr KIM, Yong Dal, President, HRD Korea Mr Choi, Joon Sub, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Republic of Korea
1000 – 1030	Tea/coffee break
1030 – 1130	<i>Introductory session</i> Chairperson: Mr Byung-Gie CHOI, Director General, International Cooperation Bureau, Human Resources Development Korea Introduction of participants Introduction to Korea – HRD Korea Programme and arrangements for the meeting – Mr Trevor Riordan, ILO Geneva
1130 – 1230	<i>Technical session 1: Review of the work of SKILLS-AP and the Regional Skills Network – implementation of Network activities in 2006-07 and feedback from Partner Organizations</i> Panel Chairperson: Mr Daniel Urai Manufolau, President FTUC and General Secretary of National Union of Hospitality, Catering & Tourism Industries Employees (FIJI) Introduced by: Mr T. Riordan and Ms Anne Richmond

	Panel members:	Representatives of Partner Organizations involved in Network activities Mr Teh Sing, Vice President of CAMFEBA, Cambodia Mr Mehboob Hassan, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas, Pakistan Mr David Lumbukly, Chief Executive Officer, Vanuatu National Training Council, Department of Labour
		Questions and comments
1230 – 1400		LUNCH
1400 – 1600		<i>Technical session 2: Issues and challenges for skills development: International and Asia and the Pacific perspectives</i>
	Panel Chairperson:	Mr Habibullah N. Karim, Managing Director, Technohaven Company Limited, Bangladesh
	Presentations by:	Ms Christine Evans-Klock, Director, EMP/ SKILLS, Geneva Mr Andre Lewis, ILO Consultant
	Panel members:	Four sub-regional perspectives and worker and employer views. Mr Sharda Prasad, Director General/Joint Secretary, Directorate General of Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment, India Mr Lemalu Tate Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, SAMOA Mr Nobuo Matsubara, Deputy Director, Overseas Cooperation Division, Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, Japan Mr Chai Soon ANG, Deputy Director, Manufacturing Skills Division, Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)
	Workers':	Ms Vicky Wong Yoke Woon, Business Development Manager, Singapore National Trade Union Congress
	Employers':	Ms Eun Hye CHOI, Specialist, Korea Employers' Federation
1600 – 1630		Tea/coffee break
1630 – 1730		<i>1st Working Group session: Priority skills issues in the region and potential for technical cooperation (four) mixed working groups</i>

Panel Chairperson: Mr Anand Kuver, General Manager,
Productivity & Standards, Ministry of
Labour, Industrial Relations and
Productivity, Fiji

Introduced by: Ms A. Richmond ILO SRO-Bangkok and
Ms A. Sakamoto ILO SRO New Delhi

1800 – 2000

Welcome dinner hosted by HRD Korea

Thursday, 17 April 2008

0900 – 1000

1st Working Group session: Priority skills issues in the region and potential for technical cooperation (continued)

1000 – 1030

Tea/coffee break

1030 – 1130

Synthesis of the Working Group discussions

Panel Chairperson: Mr Anand Kuver, General Manager,
Productivity & Standards, Ministry of
Labour, Industrial Relations and
Productivity, Fiji

Facilitated by Ms Anne Richmond, ILO SRO Bangkok

Panel: Mr Nicholas Michael Green, Manager
Education, Training and Productivity,
Business New Zealand

Ms Mary L. Maddison, Director, National
Training Council, Republic of Marshall
Island

Ms Vicky Wong Yoke Woon, Business
Development Manager, Employment and
Employability Institute, Singapore

Ms Florencia Cabatingan, Director,
Women's Department, Trade Union
Congress of Philippines

Questions and comments

1130 – 1200

Review of Cooperation Framework and follow-up strategy of the Regional Skills Network

Panel Chairperson: Ms Florencia Cabatingan, Director,
Women's Department, Trade Union
Congress of Philippines

Introduced by: Mr T. Riordan, ILO Geneva

Questions and comments

1200 – 1330

Lunch

1330 – 1700

Visit to Korean industry and training centres

Friday, 18 April 2008

- 0900 – 1030** ***2nd Working group session: Discussion of Cooperation Framework and making the Regional Skills Network more effective (Four mixed working groups)***
- Panel Chairperson: Mr Nicholas Michael Green, Manager Education, Training and Productivity, Business New Zealand
- Introduced by: Ms A. Richmond ILO SRO-Bangkok
- 1030 – 1100** Tea/coffee break
- 1100 – 1200** ***2nd Working groups session (continued)***
- 1200 – 1300** ***Individual meetings of Government, Employer and Worker participants to discuss Common Understanding***
- 1300 – 1430** Lunch
- 1430 – 1500** ***Regional Skills Network: Common Understanding on Cooperation Framework and follow-up strategy***
- Panel Chairperson: Ms Imelda Taganas, Director, Cooperate Affairs Office, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Philippines
- Introduced by: Mr Raymond Grannall, Regional Senior Adviser for Skills Development and Manager, SKILLS-AP
- Panel Members: Chairpersons of the Constituent Groups
- Mr Sharda Prasad, Director General/Joint Secretary, Directorate General of Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment, India
- Ms Siriwan Romchatthong, Secretary General, Employers' Confederation of Thailand
- Mr Daniel Urai Manufolau, President FTUC and General Secretary of National Union of Hospitality, Catering & Tourism Industries Employees (FIJI)
- 1500 – 1530** ***Closing session***
- Chairperson: Ms Christine Evans-Klock, Director ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva
- Statements by: Mr Ismenio Martins da Silva, Principal Adviser to Vocational Training & Employment, Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion, Timor Leste

Ms Siriwan Romchatthong, Secretary General, Employers' Confederation of Thailand

Mr Daniel Urai Manufolau, President FTUC and General Secretary of National Union of Hospitality, Catering & Tourism Industries Employees (FIJI)

Closing remarks: Mr Byung-Gie CHOI, Director General, International Cooperation Bureau, Human Resources Development Korea

1530 – 1600

Tea/coffee break

1800 – 2000

Farewell reception hosted by the ILO

Annex 3: Background Paper

SKILLS Development Issues in Asia and the Pacific

Purpose

To explore issues facing Asia-Pacific region countries in ensuring they have a highly skilled and adaptable workforce by identifying key skills development challenges and how sharing best practice approaches to dealing with these can benefit regional partners.

Introduction

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have undergone significant economic and social changes in the last two decades. These include integrating with a globalizing economy where every country now has trading relationships with multiple others; *“Trade interdependence in Asia continues to strengthen, reflecting the ongoing development of sophisticated production networks aimed at exploiting differences in comparative advantage”*¹. However, this trading benefit also means impacts of external forces such as inflation/recession, currency parities and multi-national enterprise decision-making among others are felt by all countries in the region. Social conditions also change as successive generations have different work and career expectations and workforces alter structurally as well as growing every year.

In this context there have been fundamental transformations in the nature of work and in the structure of workforces, which have become more feminised and often have a higher proportion of contractual, casual and part time work. Work organization also changes continuously, such as employer expectations that workers operate semi-autonomously and with greater levels of responsibility in many occupations and job roles. Much new industry knowledge is pioneered in enterprises first.

These transformations have been well documented but, by way of practical example, mobile telephones were not in common use, nor were personal computers in the early 1990's. Access to the internet was confined to a few specialists and to limited and highly specialized information. But school leavers in 2008 had only just been born in those years and this technology for them is not just in common use today but an absolute expectation of day-to-day communication.

In the 1990's large sections of many economies were regulated more heavily and differently than they are now when self-regulation is favoured. Ongoing high levels of economic growth, together with these transformations, are driving demand for higher skills levels exposing those without adequate skills or formal recognition to low and intermittent levels of participation in the workforce. Relentlessly the world economy is becoming more knowledge-based and those who can filter and utilise the ever-growing information available are far better placed to prosper in the 'new economy'. This is becoming well understood in the region and education and training is increasingly seen as a vital factor in preparing young people for the new world of work and helping those already in the workforce to improve their skills and gain new capabilities so they can move through different work roles and career

¹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Regional Economic Outlook – Asia and the Pacific*, October 2007, page viii.

options. As identified by APEC Ministers in their 2001 Joint Ministerial Statement on human resource development:

The new economy is impacting upon all of our economies to varying degrees. We recognise that while the new economy creates unprecedented opportunities, it also presents challenges to businesses, workers, education and training providers and policy makers. Our task is to better understand the forces that shape and drive the new economy, address the challenges that it presents to the workforce of the 21st century, and foster an environment which assures greater access to the opportunities generated and more widely shared prosperity.²

To meet these challenges the region's training systems have to recognise the different future directions expected of vocational training and try to meet them flexibly and in a timely way. The boundaries of training systems are consequently blurring and diversifying, with enterprises, schools and higher education providers being part of the vocational training process. Growing numbers of international students enrol in other countries to gain particular skills outcomes, and many training organizations operate in their own country and overseas markets to meet these demands. Thus some private and public training organisations are themselves enterprises, operating commercially in a competitive training market.

Associated with the challenge of the continual upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce, there is growing recognition of the importance of skills formation outside of the formal education and training system. This is particularly through the range of structured and adaptive strategies adopted by companies as part of their broader workforce development systems to attract and retain workers and effectively use their skills in a highly competitive labour market.

Key Skill Issues

Skill shortages and gaps

Many developed and developing countries in the region are experiencing skills shortages. Surprisingly skills shortages can occur in economies with much less than full employment as there is often a segment of the population that seeks work but does not have the particular skills that are in demand by industry. Skills needs of industry change dramatically at times because of structural adjustment as industries move production to another country where labour or other operating costs are cheaper, changing consumer tastes or industry sectors in decline due to technology advancements.

Skills shortages are generally most acute amongst professionals, para-professionals and tradespeople. In the professions, shortages show up across a range of occupations, from civil engineers to accountants to health care workers such as nurses and dentists. Trade shortages occur in most fields including manufacturing, building and construction, electrical/plumbing and even cooking.

² 4th APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting, Japan, September 29-30, 2001, Joint Ministerial Statement, *Labour Market for the New Economy* Item 19.

Enduring rather than short-term skills shortages in any industry area are of concern because they constrain business output, investment and innovation. In non-trades occupations, shortages usually emerge as a result of rapid industry or sector growth, high attrition rates of workers who leave for higher pay in other areas or overseas and insufficient investment in training nationally.

There are a number of reasons why skills shortages occur in trade occupations, including:

Sustained high output across a broad range of industries such as mining and minerals processing, utilities, communications, construction, manufacturing, tourism. This results in increased demand for skilled labour.

Persistent decline in the ratio of people-in-training to employed trades-people. For reasons that include:

- Reduction in the proportion of young people in the workforce seeking trade type work
- Competing job opportunities arising from growth in service sectors such as retailing and hospitality
- Longer school retention and increased participation in tertiary education as an option for young people
- Reluctance to invest in longer-term training as a result of intensified competition and a shortening of time permitted for investments to return a profit

In some countries the increased use of labour hire firms that contract trained staff to companies who use this rather than train up their own labour resources.

As jobs evolve and new skills are required as a result of new technologies or work practices, gaps will continue to emerge in the skills sets of workers. Skills gaps are common for workers returning to the workforce after an absence or for people moving to new job functions. Vocational training systems will need to increase flexibility around the provision of training so that gaps in skills can be addressed through gaining sets of discrete skills, with the focus being on the individual needs of clients.

New Skills

In addition to employment growth projected in existing occupations, vocational training needs to respond to demand for skills development in new and emerging industries. These can include biotechnology, environmental technologies, advanced electronics and information and communications technologies.

In addition to new skills required by completely new technologies, products and services there are also new skills that need to be 'added on' to existing skills in industries where the means of production or work organization undergo change. An example is television manufacture where the once predominant CRT screen has been almost completely replaced by flat screen technology such as LCD and plasma in a matter of five years or so. The same companies produce the new products but clearly production workers must learn new work techniques and become familiar with handling, assembling and quality assuring different materials. A similar transition is underway in the sign industry where light emitting diode (LED) technology is increasingly used instead of the common neon illuminated sign systems. Both technologies will exist side by side for many years so workers in that

industry must learn to deal with both systems and design, manufacture and install them as required.

It is also recognised that workplaces now require more emphasis on innovation and seek adaptable, responsible, ethical workers with higher level interpersonal skills such as group problem solving and negotiation. These generic employability or core skills will need to be integrated into the future delivery of vocational training programs where appropriate, to complement the technical skills required by employers.

It is clear that providing a training system flexible enough to meet individual and industry demand for new technical and employability skills is a major challenge as the demand for new technical skills must be accurately predicted and the appropriate training developed and implemented ahead of, or in synchronisation with the workplace need. Core skills are more durable and systems should embed them in a wide range on entry level programs and ensure they are included in enterprise based training.

People disadvantaged in the workforce

Most countries have groups of citizens who find it difficult to gain regular employment and attain a progressive and fulfilling career. This may be because of a lack of basic education, social disadvantage, physical or mental disabilities³ or other reasons. Young people who leave school early or without completing their secondary education are particularly vulnerable to periods of unemployment or underemployment and find it difficult to progress through the workforce to higher paid and more stable jobs.

Other groups who need special assistance to gain good employment are women trying to return to the workforce after bringing up children, men out of full-time work after middle age, new migrants and unemployed people with redundant skills because the industry they were employed in no longer operates where they live.⁴ Consider the shrinking manufacturing sector in Australia as an example of whole industries moving their operations off-shore and shedding thousands of workers in the process. Many have good skills in the jobs they previously held but find these are no longer suitable, or all that is needed for gaining work in a different sector.

Intervention is necessary to bring these groups into a learning situation to improve their economic and social position and ensure the economy benefits from the most skilled workforce attainable. National training policies and planning for workforce development in any economy have to account for all sectors of the populace and make concerted efforts to assist people into gainful and fulfilling 'decent' work,⁵ particularly those marginalized through no fault of their own.

³ Many ILO employment reports note that people with a disability are only half as likely as people without to be in any form of paid employment and periods of unemployment rates are twice as high.

⁴ 4th APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting, Japan, September 29-30, 2001, Joint Ministerial Statement, *Closing points*, Item 19.

⁵ ILO, Director General's *Decent Work report*, 1999.

Workplace learning

Skills development is first and foremost a responsibility of individuals who have to value their own education and skills development and pursue it throughout their life. Inculcating in everyone the desire to learn from more experienced others is a key factor in ensuring that a countries' workforce builds skills. School and full-time further education and training are the first learning environments that almost everyone experiences and they can tend to establish a view that education and training is something that is done to a person that they passively receive. In reality learning is something that can be actively sought and found in other than formal institutions; "...the need to learn how to access, analyse and exploit information and transform it into new knowledge is increasing".⁶

Few, if any people leave full-time training able to undertake skilled work at the level of productivity and effectiveness expected by employers. On the job experience is the necessary catalyst that brings together knowledge and understanding with practical work situations alongside others who are already using their skills to produce a high level of performance. This is why enterprises are not just places of employment but very effective sources of learning and personal development:

*.... Less skilled employees benefit from working alongside higher skilled staff as, through natural interchanges at work, they learn more and thus become more skilled themselves.*⁷

This is no more the case than in structured on and off-the-job training programs that bring together the benefits of institutional learning and workplace practice. Many countries have specific national programs that link formal learning and employment, usually called by the traditional name of apprenticeships (or sometimes 'traineeships' or 'cadetships'). This form of skills development assist individuals to enter their first jobs as working learners with a well defined development plan and specific off-the-job training components that integrate over a period of time with real work experience. Employers gain a committed new entrant who is carefully taken through the necessary training while being coached and mentored by experienced workers so they fit well into the company structure. The apprentice or trainee earns while they learn and can operate in a real and supportive workplace culture and environment while practicing their new skills.

Whether a country pursues a policy of formal programs like apprenticeship or not it is vital to bring industry together with training organizations to ensure all possible skills development environments are utilised in the economy. As new technology and products/services emerge and types of work undergo fundamental change much future learning will have to be in real workplaces. Individuals therefore need not just technical job skills but also the ability to adapt and take advantage of development opportunities in their normal job situation. National training system polices have to support this through direct engagement and encouragement of enterprises to contribute to skilling.

⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO), *Learning and Training for Work in the Knowledge Economy*, 2002, page 6.

⁷ UK Department of Education and Employment, Final Report of the National Skills Taskforce, *Skills for all: Proposals for a National Skills Agenda*, 2000, page 16.

Assuring training quality

For a country to support its economic and social development through skills development the quality of the training and recognition of skills processes must be assured. While training organizations largely would strive to provide high quality outcomes for their students this cannot be left to self-regulation alone. Government has the responsibility to set benchmarks for training and the quality of outcomes.

The primary way this occurs is through a qualification framework that defines the type and level of qualifications the country recognises for general education, vocational training and (possibly) higher education. Without a framework of this type training organizations, both local and international, will issue myriad qualifications of various types, quality and with inconsistent titling. Employers will be confused as to what learning outcomes and skills they represent and individuals may be disadvantaged having their learning achievements recognised in employment or further training.

Once a qualification framework is established training organizations can be formally recognised or licensed by governments to deliver suitable training and issue specific qualifications where they can demonstrate the resources, infrastructure and expertise to do so. Some form of auditing is required to maintain such a system so the community and industry can have confidence in the ongoing quality of training in the country.

The 'need for speed'

A factor imposing on training and development systems worldwide is the ever increasing pace of industry change and introduction of new materials and production techniques. Added to this are consumer expectations of receiving what they want faster and to their particular specifications. It would not have been uncommon 20 years ago for a new car to be available in only three of four factory colours with a standard range of engine and transmission specifications and accessories. Anything different to the product on offer at the car dealership would have had to be ordered from the factory with many months delay. Today people expect to ask for a wide range of new car specifications and combinations and have it delivered with weeks not months. Car manufactures and dealers respond to this by quite different and complex production techniques with a consequent raising of the required workforce skills levels.

This scenario plays out in many other industry sectors with the result that employers seek workers who can multi-task, adapt and respond to change faster. Skills development is paramount in this regard so individuals and industry clients of training systems also want skills delivered in less time, as and when needed and through methods that fit in with their work and life activities. Training systems based on lengthy classroom deliver methodologies and programs offered periodically in semester-type arrangements may suit the training provider's planning and scheduling but they fall far short of the expectations of their clients.

Informal economy skills

Many countries have informal economies where individuals create their own employment opportunities or join together with others to do so. By definition an informal economy is one where there is little or no government regulation in regard to normal employer/employee relationships and protection. An informal economy job may be the primary source of income for a significant part of the population in

some still developing countries. In other cases informal economy work may supplement income from a formal economy job. This work is not necessarily underground or illegal in any sense but rather operates outside of the normal industry concept of an enterprise structure with limits on liability, access to business rather than personal finance and established working conditions.

Informal economy skills used are often those applied in general living adapted to a commercial purpose such as cooking, cleaning, and growing or making small goods for sale.⁸ While the skills used can be honed and developed through repetition there are few opportunities for individuals in the informal economy to have their abilities recognised for access to other work or to achieve career progression and further training. Nonetheless, informal economy work can be a stepping stone to formal economy employment and should be given due consideration in overall skills development in any country where it occurs.

How to address regional skills development issues cooperatively?

The brief outline above of some of the regional skills development key issues can be categorised into areas where cooperative regional approaches and sharing of information can be beneficial. In particular they have implications for:

- National skills development systems
- National skills development strategies, including access and equity
- Training and assessment delivery
- Training for the informal economy

Many of the key issues can be addressed by seeing how countries in the Asia-Pacific region deal with them in various ways to find good practice examples that others can consider. For example under the heading of enterprise based training it was noted that some countries establish apprenticeship training systems to provide a wide range of trade and other occupational skilling. A country that did not yet have such a system may be interested in looking at how they work, what advantages and advantages they have and perhaps contacts in other countries that can be followed up in more detail. In some cases a special paper could be developed to set out the topic comprehensively and discuss particular aspects from an Asia-Pacific region perspective. This has been done by ILO/SKILLS-AP in a short paper on apprenticeship systems.

To provide an easily accessible source of this type of information the ILO/SKILLS-AP is considering a web-based Good Practice Guide with basic information on various skill development topics. This will have cascading levels of detail and useful content sources plus contacts across the region to follow up. The guide can grow to cover many topics but would begin with the training systems, strategies, quality assurance and informal economy items noted above

An extract of a draft Good Practice Guide structure is at **Attachment A**. A more comprehensive example with multiple entries is available from the ILO/SKILLS-AP office.

⁸ Policy Integration Department Bureau of Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, *Measuring the informal economy: From employment in the informal sector to informal employment Working Paper No. 53*, December 2004, page 7.

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Annex 4: Network Survey

As preparation for the Regional Skills Network meeting in April 2008 an online survey of members was developed. Completion of the survey was one of the requirements for country reporting. The survey was intended to provide information to assist the meeting to review the relevance and effectiveness of the themes and strategies defined at the 2005 meeting and carried out since; and to identify improvements and adjustments for collaboration and support in the coming years. It was also noted that as the Regional Skills Network was also one of the ILO's Knowledge Networks, and that such Networks had been identified as an important area for further development by constituents in the Region, to ensure that ILO's information and services are more relevant and accessible. The issues under review were:

- Priority issues for technical cooperation
- Cooperation Framework.
- Role of the ILO, its Regional Skills Programme (SKILLS-AP) and its technical expertise.
- Technical support provided by SKILLS-AP in 2006-07.

Response Rate

By the time of the meeting, 33 respondents from 22 countries had been completed in full. Many of these responses were incomplete, and at least some were by respondents who later filled out a complete response. Responses covered countries from all three sub-regions, with 9 from East Asia, 7 from the Pacific and 6 from South Asia. Governments were most represented with 22 responses, Employers with 8 and Workers with 3. There were an additional 18 responses which did not provide the required information on country and constituent group, so these surveys were not included in the final analysis.

Findings from the Survey

The priority issues for technical cooperation

The 2005 Regional Meeting had identified seven areas for technical cooperation between members of the network and by the ILO. These were:

Qualification & Recognition: National systems of qualification and recognition that are internationally valid, and the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills between countries in the region.

Sustainable systems: Sustained availability of quality skills development services in your country, including sustainable financing, participation of employers and continual upgrading of trainers.

Information for relevance: Usable labour market information and other data to ensure that training meets national and international demands, currently and in the future.

Accessibility: Effective approaches to ensure skills development for specific groups (such as women, youth, older workers, disabled people, etc.)

Core Skills: Soft skills - developing curricula and standards for areas such as entrepreneurship, leadership, life skills, etc.

Small countries: Issues specific to very small countries - effective skill systems in these cases.

Migration: Financing training for in- and out-migrating workers.

Respondents were asked to rate the relative importance to them of these seven issues over the coming four years, to indicate if they had something to offer others, and/or sought to learn from others; and were asked to rate the effectiveness of the Network and the ILO in promoting regional knowledge sharing and assistance to date.

Most of the seven issues were rated as top priority or important by all respondents, with the highest overall ratings going to “Qualifications and Relevance”, “Information” and “accessibility”. The issue of small countries was necessarily relevant to only some respondents, and while migration is of high importance in a significant number of countries, it was scored as low priority by others. This result would argue for some consistency in future priority areas for the network.

While most countries sought mostly to learn from others, as many as 25% felt they also had things to offer others in some areas, notably qualifications and recognition. Areas where there is a good proportion of countries with ‘something to offer’ may be good candidates for regional technical meetings and seminars to facilitate knowledge sharing, whereas those where the proportion of countries with ‘something to offer’ is relatively low may indicate a need for ILO to undertake research and knowledge gathering from other countries or regions.

In most areas, the work to date was rated as ‘adequate’, In small country issues and migration the most common rating was ‘not effective’. It is not clear with this small sample if there would be a relationship between these two issues (also rated as relatively lower priority by most respondents) and the degree of satisfaction, but the potential for this relationship should be considered. The ILO and network was considered most effective in the areas of accessibility, sustainable systems and qualifications, but the relatively low ratings of ‘very successful’ indicate a need to improve the quality and relevance of assistance and information across the board.

Framework for Cooperation

The 2005 meeting had agreed on a framework for cooperation. The survey asked respondents to review this text and indicate the degree to which the document was still relevant or in need of amendment. This was used as a guide to discussions in the second meeting, at which a revised framework was adopted. The respondents were asked to rate each of the seven sections of the document.

Few respondents saw a need for amendments to the text, with a somewhat larger group calling for amendments to the section of “practical action”. This point was further examined in the survey, which asked respondents to assess the performance of the ILO and network to date on 8 types of practical action identified in 2005:

- workshops, seminars, technical meetings on specific activities related to skills development;
- research on key skills issues in the region;
- pilot projects at regional, sub-regional and country level;
- training courses on specific skills topics;
- exchange of knowledge, information and training resources between and among member states with common interest;

- activities to solve common problems;
- fellowships or exchange of staff between network members to improve the level of skills of instructors, administrators, web and computer technicians etc.;
- opportunities for country-to-country technical assistance and advice.

There was wide agreement that improvements were needed in all areas of practical action, although the slight majority of respondents felt that workshops, seminars and technical meetings were working well or adequately. The next best ratings went to training courses and research, although for both of these fewer than half of the respondents were satisfied. Respondents called for elimination of action in only two areas: pilot projects and fellowships/staff exchanges although this was a very small number of respondents. The highest levels of call for 'needs improvement' may have been in areas where the network and ILO have been the least active to date.

Respondents were further asked to assess the effectiveness of information sharing within the network, on the range of issues that had been proposed and agreed at the 2005 meeting. The general assessment here was much more positive, with positive ratings for information exchange in the areas of skills development policies; case studies; new research and publications on skills; training packages and competency and skills standards. However, there is still a significant call for improvement in this area.

Role and Technical Expertise of the ILO and SKILLS-AP

Respondents were also asked to provide feedback on how they received assistance from the ILO, its Regional Skills Programme (SKILLS-AP), its technical expertise and their assessment of this. They were asked to comment on the areas of support they found most useful, on how they in their countries normally receive ILO assistance, and the degree to which the assistance provided in the area of skills is part of their country's overall Decent Work Country programme. These responses form useful inputs for planning for the ILO's skills activities at all levels.

Very few areas of support were ranked as 'not useful'. The three areas which received the highest ratings for 'Most valuable' were: workshops and technical meetings; active support for networking and information exchange; and research. This would imply that the ILO is particularly valued for its role in bringing people together to exchange views and build connections; and as a research agency.

Not surprisingly, most respondents picked the website and publications as a way they received support from the ILO. However, 60% of respondents reported getting assistance from ILO technical experts in the field, compared with just over 30% from HQ, suggesting that the presence of experts in the field is useful. Turin was relatively less noted as a source of support on ILO skills issues.

Between 30-50% of respondents reported that they did not know about their country's Decent Work Programme. Interestingly, a higher proportion of those reporting they got their assistance from the UN, Turin or ILO Headquarters did not know about their DWCP, whereas those reporting they got assistance from a field based specialist or project were more likely to know about their DWCP. Assistance provided by ILO technical experts based in the respondents country or region was the most likely to be reported as being part of the DWCP.

Technical support provided by SKILLS-AP in 2006-07

The final section of the survey reviewed all the activities of the SKILLS-AP/Regional Skills Network in 2006-2007, and asked respondents to indicate whether they had

participated in the event, and if so, their assessment of the relevance of the topic and what they had done to follow up after their participation. The survey to some extent drew the attention of network members to the activities undertaken since November 2005. These included more than 25 events: technical meetings, workshops and trainings, at the regional level and in national events following-up on regional work or drawing on resources across the region to address a national concern.

In addition a number of new publications: some more widely distributed, others developed as part of specific projects. Unfortunately, the small number of respondents to the survey who had actually participated in the events limited the usefulness of the data. It is also noted that there is no ongoing database of participant assessments of the various events to provide a more robust data source and the basis for follow up.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions were presented at the Network meeting:

- The priority areas continue to be of value, but some much less so than others.
- While ILO assistance is valued, in most practical ways there is seen to be considerable room for improvement – possibly mainly in terms of marketing information that is available!
- There is a relatively low level of awareness about Decent Work Country Programmes.
- Constituents receive assistance from ILO in a range of ways – from SKILLS-AP, from the regional technical specialists, and from other parts of the ILO. This suggests a need to ensure that on the ILO side these efforts are coherent.
- Respondents continue to see themselves as both having ideas to share with others, as well as valuing others' advice: good conditions for a Network.

Further conclusions and recommendations would include:

- Efforts are needed to actively engage 'network members' in ongoing dialogue. Surveys and the response to surveys may be one way to engage participants; there was a high level of interest in the results of the present survey at the meeting. It could also be repeated regularly as a monitoring tool for the SKILLS-AP-Regional Skills Network.
- The very low levels of awareness of the different skills network/SKILLS-AP events over the two year period illustrates a need to improve marketing of the events and follow up to ensure there is broader impact. Each meeting contains materials that would be of interest to other countries and constituents, but these materials (country reports, technical presentations etc.) are not readily available.
- There should be consistent performance/feedback tracking for all Skills events in the region so that a database of the more effective topics, presenters, and formats can be built.

Annex 5: Framework for Cooperation

A FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Need

Many countries in Asia-Pacific face similar challenges in terms of skills development. To ensure that the overall level of productivity and the employability of workers are improved, countries need to ensure that:

- training matches labour market needs;
- the costs of training are not unfairly distributed;
- there is fair and equitable access to training and skills development; and
- they find effective means to recognize individuals' skills.

Across the region there are numerous examples of the ways that different countries have addressed these challenges over time and in response to changing circumstances. Effective means of understanding, documenting and sharing these experiences can help ensure that decision makers and those implementing policies can minimize risk and maximize the value of their investments.

The Vision

The Vision is:

“That constituents across the region share their knowledge and experience, to optimize the human resource development processes across the region, thus improving the skills and well being of people and increasing the economic development of the region as a whole.”

This vision comes out of a commitment to cooperation rather than competition, recognizing that all constituents in the region have information and experiences to share which will be valuable to others, and that each can benefit from the experiences of others in making their own decisions. It also recognizes the inter-dependent nature of the economies of the region, and specifically the role that skills and human resource development have on those economies.

Policy framework

The ILO's Recommendation concerning Human Resource Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (R.195) provides the policy framework for ILO's work on skills development. It points the way by emphasizing the qualities that international and technical cooperation in human resource development should emphasize. These suggest the benefits that arise from regionally focused collaboration, for example, the potential to address issues of migration, links to regional economic integration policies and strategies, and the relevance of national examples.

The ILO's framework for assisting member States is through Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). In line with the commitments made at the 14th Asia Regional Meeting (Busan, August 2006) for the Asian Decent Work Decade, agreed work-plans between the ILO and national constituents establish priorities for collaboration. Across Asia, many of these national work-plans and DWCPs include priorities in the area of skills and employability. Priority areas for cooperation from the Second Technical Meeting Regional Skills Network are listed in Annex 4a.

Practical Action

Partner Organizations in the Regional Skills Network, with the support of SKILLS-AP, are committed to sharing information and expertise with other Partner Organizations through a range of practical activities and programmes. Some of the areas suggested, where SKILLS-AP could support the network include:

- Workshops, seminars, technical meetings on specific activities related to skills development;
- Pilot projects at regional, sub-regional and country level;
- Training courses on specific skills topics;
- Exchange of knowledge, information and training resources between and among member states with common interest;
- Activities to solve common problems;
- Country-to-country technical assistance and advice in areas such as the development of national qualifications frameworks;
- Mapping of country standards;
- Research on key skills issues in the region in areas such as;
- Costs and benefits to national economy of training out-migrating workers, done in several countries, to establish a sound factual basis for national policy and international agreements;
- The development of regional benchmarks for competency standards or qualifications frameworks (Future work could involve agreements and validation.);
- Fellowships, exchange of staff or support between network members to improve the skill levels of instructors, administrators, computer technicians, etc.

Further specific suggestions for sharing are listed in Annex 4b.

Participation

All constituents, as well as technical and research institutes and related organizations whose operations cover the Asia-Pacific region, will have the opportunity to become a Partner Organization in the network. Organizations are responsible for participating to the extent and in the manner most valuable to them. However, the Network will be strengthened by a high level of support by all participants. To ensure effective in-country coordination, governments will act as Focal Points, assuming responsibility for national participation in the Network and informing Partner Organizations within the country of Network activities.

Priority Issues identified

Need to resolve the mismatch between the supply and demand for skilled labour

- Need to develop regional competency standards
- Need to increase the amount of accurate, usable labour market information (i.e. information regarding skills supply and demand) for national workforce as well as for migrant workers)
- Need to develop an effective system for involving social partners recognising that some of the social partners have a limited capacity to participate effectively
- Need to address issues relating to retention and attrition levels

Need to improve qualifications systems and skills recognition

- Lack of an effective mechanism to compare qualifications between countries. This does not need to be mutual recognition.
- Need for countries to develop appropriate qualifications frameworks

Need to improve the quality and quality assurance of training

- Limited number of trainers and limited capacity for them to continuously upgrade their teaching and technical skills
- Curriculum and competency standards are not being reviewed and updated on a regular basis
- Lack of an effective system to register or provide accreditation of TVET programmes that meet quality standards
- Lack of an effective system to register or provide accreditation of TVET institutions

Need to increase sustainable financing

- Lack of sustainable funding

Need for effective approaches to ensure skills development for small countries, small island communities and specific groups

- Skills development issues in small island nations and small communities are similar to those in larger countries but there is a large impact due to the lack of effective infrastructure
- Certain groups in the communities have special skill development needs. These groups include women, young people, the disabled, rural workers, migrant workers and those in the informal economy

Need to improve the status and level of understanding of TVET

- Need to elevate the status of TVET so that it is not seen as a second class option in relation to higher education
- Need for employers and employees to better understand vocational assessment and certification systems and the benefits that these can provide
- Need models for building the capacity of tripartite partners to participate effectively in skills policy development and implementation

Suggestions for Sharing

Specific products and services that were suggested as needs by some members of the Regional Skills Network

- National Policies and legislation on skills development systems

- Labour market information from other countries in the region (to assess the demand for skilled migration, etc.)
- Information about strategies to attract and retain workers in trades and technical occupations, at the firm, industry and national levels
- Examples of effective data collection strategies and labour market analysis (with special reference to skills needs and the mapping of supply and demand)
- Quality assurance models and policies
- Models of financing skills development including strategies to involve the private sector in financing TVET
- Strategies and systems to continually upgrade the competency of instructors, especially with regard to teaching methods and new content
- Models for impact assessment on the quality of training
- Models of developing an industry (moving up the value chain) through improved skills (With a special focus on very small countries)
- Examples of business development services provided in different countries and in different industries
- Effective strategies to improve the status and level of understanding of TVET
- Effective approaches to skills development for small countries and special groups
- Policies, programmes and tools for training for specific groups such as:
- Injured/disabled workers
 - Rural and agricultural workers
 - Informal economy workers
 - Mature workers
 - Migrant workers
 - Women
 - Youth
 - Other disadvantaged groups

Competency standards, assessment guides and training guides for industries particularly:

- Hospitality
- Construction
- Agriculture
- Health care services
- Manufacturing
- Garment manufacturing
- Management and administration
- Accounting and financial services
- Operating a small or medium size enterprise

Training modules that can be used in the workplace on:

- Core skills
- Management
- Leadership

Annex 6: Statement of Common Understanding

ILO/SKILLS-AP/Korea Second Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Organizations in Asia and the Pacific, SIVAT, Incheon, Republic of Korea 16 – 18 April 2008

Statement of Common Understanding from the Second Meeting

The participants at the second meeting broadly re-affirmed the context description made in the Statement of Common Understanding from the first meeting, as slightly amended in the following section “Human Resources Development.”

Human Resources Development

The world of work is changing rapidly. Globalization and economic integration increasingly require reform of the skills development and recognition systems in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. A well-trained workforce is the key to establishing the nation’s competitive edge in products and services. While the governments of the member States are increasingly facing needs for increased skills and migration pressures for their national workforces, employers need to compete in the globalize economy through increasingly higher productivity and socially responsible workplace practices, and workers increasingly require higher levels of skills to adapt to accelerating technical and market changes and these skills need to be recognized. This presents a major challenge to many countries in the region.

The ILO HRD Recommendation (R.195)⁹ provides effective guidance to member States as they seek to develop the knowledge and skills of their workforces so as to achieve competitive advantage and higher productivity; with the end result of better employment opportunities in a fair society with decent work.

The HRD Recommendation states that ILO member States “should, based on social dialogue, formulate, apply and review national human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning policies which are consistent with economic, fiscal and social policies.” These policies should reflect the need for coordinating formal, non-formal, institutional and workplace-based learning and training as well as skills development in villages and the community for people with special needs. The result should be that national economic and social development includes a supportive, innovative and responsive human resources development system.

Human resources development policies and programmes cannot alone address all the economic and social challenges facing nations in the region. They should go hand-in-hand with economic, employment and related policies to establish, in an equitable manner, the new knowledge and skills-based society in the global economy.

Regional Skills Programme and Network

This second meeting of the Regional Skills Network re-affirmed the value of discussion and information exchange on common issues in skills development and stressed the commitment needed by all parties to contribute to this. It was acknowledged that both partner organizations and ILO/SKILLS-AP have responsibilities to realize the full potential of the Regional Skills Network in assisting countries to meet their skills challenges. Making the Regional Skills Network effective requires active participation and commitment by partner organizations both as a receiver and provider of

⁹ Recommendation concerning human resources development: education, training and lifelong learning, adopted by the International Labour Conference, 2004.

information and expertise. ILO/SKILLS-AP, meanwhile, plays a facilitating and enabling role in linking partner organizations, providing technical inputs where it can to ensure the quality of product development and services, and in extending the impact of the Regional Skills Network/SKILLS-AP activities by linking them to support for skills development at the country level. ILO/SKILLS-AP also plays a leading role in disseminating the information regarding the activities of the Regional Skills Network partner organizations and their outputs through a variety of means such as website, newsletters and workshops. The activity is regarded as crucial for increasing the visibility of the Regional Skills Network among partner organizations.

Extending the activities of the network has been constrained by limited availability of financial and human resources. ILO/SKILLS-AP and the Regional Skills Network agree that seeking additional funds is a critical part of expanding the network.

Cooperation Framework

An updated *Framework for Cooperation on Skills Development for Asia and the Pacific* has been agreed. This Framework comes out of a shared commitment to cooperation, recognising that all partner organizations in the region have information and experiences to share which will be valuable to others. The Framework also recognises the inter-dependent nature of the economies in the region, and the role that human resources development can have in national development.

Priority Issues

The meeting revisited priority issues established in 2005 and modified them to meet current demands. Accordingly, a list of concrete products and services that would address immediate and medium term needs in member states, which could be facilitated by ILO/SKILLS-AP and partner organizations was developed and forms an annex to the updated Framework for Cooperation.

Follow up action

Since the first meeting in November 2005, there has been considerable activity at the regional, subregional and national level, with some activities supported by Network members. The interest and willingness of partners to share ideas and information remain. However, the full potential of the Network has not yet been realized. There needs to be far more attention paid to raising awareness of the network and its activities facilitating greater involvement, and in promoting the products and services available from the ILO/SKILLS-AP and from partner organizations.

To move the practical actions forward, the participants agreed that each participant would develop a short proposal for areas where they feel their organization may be able to contribute to the network activities and would seek the commitment of their organization. Areas of contribution can include: sharing of products, initiating, or participating in joint research, hosting workshops and seminars, exchange of staff. Commitments, if any, made as a result of these proposals should be communicated to SKILLS-AP Secretariat by 31 May 2008.