IMPROVING SKILLS RECOGNITION, QUALITY AND QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

Report of the ILO/SKILLS-AP/Thailand Regional Technical Meeting on Improving Skills Recognition, Quality and Qualification Systems for IMT-GT and GMS Countries
Songkhla, Thailand, 4 - 6 November 2008

Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS-AP)
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
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vi, 30 p.  
ISBN: 9789221222071; 9789221222088 (pdf)  
ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS–AP)  
conference report / occupational qualification / equivalence of certificates / skill / Asia / Pacific  
13.02.2  

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data
Foreword

Many countries in Asia have identified “improving skills recognition” as a priority and done so for a variety of reasons: increasing requests on the government to address the mismatch problem between skills training and industrial demand, the need to value the skills of an expanding number of migrant workers and the volume of workers returning from overseas. As well, governments are under constant pressure to develop an internationally competitive workforce and to provide workers with “second chance” and lifelong learning opportunities.

Labour ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations have agreed to develop a qualification framework to encourage regional recognition of skills; but it requires a similar framework in each country.

Although the development or improvement of a skills recognition or qualification system is considered a solution to the various skills issues, the experience of other developed and developing economies have shown it to be technically complex, time consuming and expensive to institute successfully.

The technical meeting that is the subject of this report (ILO/SKILLS–AP/Thailand Regional Technical Meeting on Improving Skills Recognition, Quality and Qualification Systems for IMT-GT and GMS Countries, in Songkhla, Thailand in November 2008) addressed the issues associated with developing a qualifications system and provided an opportunity for many country constituents to meet together and talk of future directions for skills recognition in the Asia-Pacific region. Issues they identified in that meeting will be reflected in research that the International Labour Organization will pursue and in subsequent recommendations for developing a national qualification system.

I am pleased to have had an opportunity to review this report, and I congratulate all participants for making the meeting a success. I would like to thank the Governments of Thailand and Japan for providing funding for the meeting and for their strong support of skills development in the region. I would also like to acknowledge the director and staff of Thailand’s Department of Skill Development and Songkhla International Institute for Skills Development for playing an important role in ensuring the smooth and effective functioning of the meeting.

I also take this opportunity to thank Raymond Grannall, SKILLS-AP, Regional Office-Bangkok, and Anne Richmond, Subregional Office-Bangkok, who organized and provided expertise at the meeting. Finally, I would like to thank Eun Jin Shim, who prepared the draft report of the meeting, Wipusara Rugworakijkul, who provided the secretariat support and Alin Sirisaksopit, who assisted in the meeting’s preparation.

Sachiko Yamamoto
Regional Director
Regional Office for Asia and Pacific
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AADCP</td>
<td>ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation Program</td>
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<td>DSD</td>
<td>Department of Skill Development</td>
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<td>EQF</td>
<td>European Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>GMS</td>
<td>Greater Mekong Subregion</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMT-GT</td>
<td>Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MOL</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualification Framework</td>
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<td>NTB</td>
<td>National Training Board</td>
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<td>NTQF</td>
<td>Cambodian National TVET Qualification Framework</td>
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<td>NVQ</td>
<td>British national vocational qualifications</td>
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<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of prior learning</td>
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<td>RCC</td>
<td>Recognition of current competency</td>
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<td>RMCS</td>
<td>Regional Model of Competency Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKILLS-AP</td>
<td>Skills and Employability Programme for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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Introduction

Skills recognition, quality and qualifications systems have emerged as major issues in the Asia-Pacific region. At the close of a June 2006 technical meeting on skills and workforce development within the Indonesia Malaysia Thailand-Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) countries, there was consensus to further discuss those issues. The International Labour Organization (ILO) thus organized in November 2008 follow-up technical meeting on improving skills recognition, quality and qualification systems, which is the subject of this report.

The purpose of the second meeting was to provide a better understanding of the different approaches to skills recognition, to enable countries to better plan the development of systems, to identify areas for potential collaboration between countries and to identify the research and development of tools that ILO could assist. The organizers intended the meeting to lead to the establishment of a tripartite group within each country that would develop action plans to address policy challenges for expanding skills recognition.

The ILO’s Skills and Employability Programme for Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS-AP) office and the Songkhla International Institute for Skills Development arranged the three-day meeting, which took place in Songkhla province, Thailand. Thailand’s Department of Skill Development and the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) hosted the gathering. Delegates representing government and employers’ and workers’ organizations from Asia and the Pacific participated, along with delegates from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Thailand’s Ministry of Education, seven observers from Timor-Leste and the Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO’s Technical and Vocational Education Training Reform Project in Bangladesh. David Lythe, Mitsunobu Kawakami, Michael Young and ILO skills specialists participated as resource persons and consultants. (The list of all participants and the meeting’s programme are provided in appendices I and II.)

Inaugural session

The meeting opened with speeches from Metee Na Nakorn, Vice Governor of Songkhla, Thailand; Ray Grannall, Senior Regional Adviser for SKILLS-AP; Nakorn Silpa-Archa, Director General, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand; and Somchai Choomrat, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Thailand.

Following welcoming remarks from Mr Na Nakorn, Mr Grannall noted that the SKILLS-AP’s role in addressing the emerging issue of skills recognition is to share expertise across countries and provide technical advising and training.
Mr Silpa-Archa touched on the meeting’s purpose before Mr Choomrat highlighted the significance of developing competitive and well-trained labour forces in the world market and in encouraging cooperation between countries.

Technical session 1: overview of skills recognition issues and the purpose of the meeting

Kounthdy Iem, government representative (Cambodia), chaired the session. Panel members consisted of Azizah Talib, employers’ representative (Malaysia), and Pito Sumarno, workers’ representative (Indonesia).

In introducing the session, Mr Grannall first indicated that the objective of the meeting was to develop a better understanding of different options and ideas for appropriate national action, then to identify areas for country-to-country collaboration and establish key questions for further ILO research.

He noted that there was a high level of interest within the region in finding the best strategies and models for skills development and recognition. At the same time, he pointed out, each country needs to establish priorities, taking into account all the other needs to reduce skills shortages and the skills mismatch problem. He indicated that while quality assurance, a qualification framework and skills recognition may be a part of many systems, they might not be appropriate for a country that has needs in many other skills development areas.

Quality assurance is important in order to generate confidence in products, Mr Grannall continued. But quality standards can be considered in a continuum of different approaches, from detailed national standards to an institution-based quality system. However, it is important for countries to recognize the high cost of fully implementing a quality-assurance system and the amount of record keeping and documentation required.

He suggested a national qualification framework (NQF) could take many forms: It could range from developing a framework for future development to full implementation, complete with licensing, regulation, auditing, appeal processes and all the associated costs.

He pointed out that skill recognition is a complex and expensive option compared to traditional forms of training. There are a range of issues to be considered in developing an effective skills recognition strategy, including training and registering of assessors, collecting statistical data and developing government policies and regulations.

To inform all stakeholders of the issues, effective communication strategies will be necessary. This will also require the development of a common vocabulary.

There are few examples of successful implementation of a skill-recognition system. Among them are systems between organizations; these examples reflect a continuum, from bilateral recognition
arrangements between institutes to totally mutual recognition between all organizations. Thus the role a skill-recognition system has in national skills development must be intensely considered in the planning process and should be implemented in phases.

Following the presentation, tripartite representatives presented the interests of their respective constituencies: Mr Ilem noted the interest of governments in models and guidelines for developing skills recognition and certification and in gaining support from employers. Indonesia, he added, is particularly interested in assistance with a less developed system.

Mr Sumarno said that workers are interested in developing skills needed of the workforce and in establishing a qualifications and classification system. China in particular wants to upgrade the competency of rural workers.

Ms Talib stated that the employers want greater involvement of the private sector in setting the evaluation criteria and hoped to see more dialogue and negotiation in the process of establishing the system.

In the open discussion, participants were particularly interested in generic guidelines for developing competency standards and a skills recognition system. The Indonesian representative suggested that the ILO develop and disseminate generic guidelines that could be used internationally. Due to differences in industries across the region, Mr Grannall replied, there would be technical difficulty in producing generic guidelines.

There was concern about the variations in standards across the region and the non-existence of national recognition schemes, which also make developing a regional standard difficult. One delegate suggested that the European model provides a benchmark for addressing this problem by translating the different standards. Mr Grannall indicated that the Regional Model of Competency Standards developed by the ILO could help when comparing various national skills standards. However, there is a need for each country to develop its own skills standard first and commit more funding to expand the standards to more sectors.

Closing the gap between the skills generated in the training institutes and what is needed in industry is a major problem. To address this issue, industries and other stakeholders must be involved in the developing of skills and of a recognition system. The Thai Government, for example, created a committee to promote cooperation between the Ministries of Labour and Education and the industrial federations to promote youth employment.

Technical session 2: skills recognition - the policy concerns

Keomanivone Sayavongsa, employers’ representative (Lao PDR) chaired the second technical session, with Surono, government
representative (Indonesia) and Maria da Gloria P.S. Tilman, workers’ representative (Timor-Leste) on the panel.

In his presentation on policy concerns for skills recognition, David Lythe explained that countries have different objectives for developing a skills recognition system. Accordingly, different approaches can be chosen to address the different concerns.

In raising issues to think about when developing a system, Mr Lythe presented examples of the different policy objectives and approaches in the region. Sri Lanka’s National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Framework, he began, was established to encourage international and domestic recognition of skills, match the supply of training to market demand, recognize the qualifications acquired through the NVQ system and create a globally competitive workforce. The seven-level framework covers vocational skills, uses standards identified by industry and recognizes progressive skill acquisition. It also called for the creation of a national database of certificates in order to promote international recognition of migrant workers.

Singapore’s Workforce Skills Qualifications System was established to support economic growth and the national strategy for industry development by bridging structural skills gaps and providing ways for workers to be trained for new jobs or to upgrade existing skills. Singaporean qualifications are developed by industry and structured as modular qualifications that recognize industry knowledge and skills as well as generic and portable skills. The recognition of employability skills is a special feature of the system. Also, there is a progressive statement on the attainment of skills and quality is well monitored.

The Qualifications Framework of Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China) was established to support the transformation into a knowledge-based economy, ensure that the local workforce is well equipped to enhance its capabilities and competitiveness, promote sustainable workforce development and establish flexible pathways for workers and learners to upgrade their skills. This framework was designed to be applicable to all sectors and includes academic, vocational and continuing education qualifications. Well-defined qualifications standards, outcome-based generic descriptors, creation of industry training-advisory committees with representation from employers, employees and government, development of a qualifications database, and a mechanism for recognizing prior learning are some of the key features of the system.

The Philippines’ skills recognition system is currently undergoing a change from the competency-based, occupation-focused TVET Qualifications Framework to the National Qualifications Framework, a broader structure that covers all sectors of education and training. The rationale for the transition was to promote connected, “ladderized” education and to establish a coherent national and internationally recognized qualification structure. Internationally referenced qualification definitions and programme-based quality assurance are used.
Policy objectives underlying Vanuatu’s Qualifications Framework are to safeguard the standards of technical and vocational qualifications, ensure that TVET qualifications support the country’s economic future and provide training options to achieve career and personal ambitions. This system provides second-chance opportunities for learners to extend their literacy, numeracy and basic skills (with community-based certificates), creates fresh pathways for learners to progress to further study and defines quality-assurance standards and qualifications standards.

The Maldives’ National Qualification Framework was developed to support development goals, strengthen industry links, develop future-focused training strategies, improve international recognition, training collaboration and rationalization, and increase the quality, relevance, performance and responsiveness of the system. The system’s features include qualification levels based on the ten-level Scottish definition, a central database of achievements and recognition of qualifications acquired on and off the job, of foreign qualifications and of international benchmarking.

Mr Lythe concluded by summarizing five things to consider in developing a national skills recognition framework: i) national development goals, ii) the scope of the system, iii) qualifications development, iv) quality assurance and v) lifelong learning.

There was interest in the ensuing discussion regarding which framework is the best model. Mr Lythe replied that the best model of skills recognition is the approach that effectively addresses the objective each country aims to achieve, therefore is different case by case. None of the examples given are perfect models, although each has some good features. It is extremely important for each government to think hard about what it needs to accomplish and what should be done to accomplish this goal.

There was also interest in the pros and cons of the different models. The representative from Indonesia suggested that the ILO assist constituents by analysing the different models and providing advice on what works and what does not work.

In response to a question on which factors contribute to establishing a successful framework, Mr Lythe noted several points: i) careful consideration of the policy issues; ii) selection of an approach that addresses the problem; iii) strong support and commitment from the government; iv) sustained communication among stakeholders and strong backing by the social partners; v) alignment with other policies and systems; and vii) adequate resources. He recommended the development of a system that addresses the policy problem effectively instead of one that only copies a “good model”.

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Technical session 3: introduction to Japan’s skills-evaluation system

Azlan Bin Yacob, workers’ representative (Malaysia) chaired this session, with Quang Viet Nguyen, government representative (Viet Nam), and Gibson Sianipar, employers’ representative (Indonesia) as panel members.

Mitsunobu Kawakami, Director of the International Cooperation Department, Japan Vocational Ability Development Association (JAVADA), provided an overview of his association as well as the Japan’s skills-testing system and its Skills Evaluation System Promotion Programme in Asian countries.

JAVADA, explained Mr Kawakami, is a private organization created under the Human Resources Development Promotion Act to motivate people to develop their skills and support national competitiveness. It networks with government and other relevant organizations, such as the local human resources development agencies, trade associations and private organizations. Its operation is decentralized, and operational costs are covered by a fee-charging scheme. JAVADA’s main activities include skills testing, skills competitions and certification.

Japan’s National Qualification Framework is occupation-based and consists of national occupational licenses for professions such as lawyers, medical doctors, pilots and teachers and national skills testing and certification for professions in manufacturing, construction, craftwork, etc. To enhance the social value and status of work and occupational skills, the framework remains independent of the academic qualification stream.

National skills testing and certification was established in the 1960s to match skills to needs in the rapidly evolving economy. It is a unified, nationwide system that covers 140 trades, with 300 subtrades. Nominated national experts with more than 15 years of experience are responsible for designing the standards and tests. Testing involves both a practical test and a paper test, assessed against standard times for completion. Companies support testing because it demands fast, accurate and safe work and thus generates high commercial value of products. The Government does not allow expansion to other industry sectors but permits in-house testing of workplace-specific skills not covered in the national skills-testing system.

Japan’s Skills Evaluation System Promotion Programme (SESPP) supports the strengthening of skill assessors, technical experts and administrators in the region through method development and information exchange. In this programme, companies organize an in-house skills competition and then invite other companies to compete. This process helps nurture a body of qualified skills assessors in the short run and builds up a national skills system in the long run.
In the ensuing discussion following Mr Kawakami’s presentation, Quang Viet Nguyen commented that from the Vietnamese experience of the SESPP, testing does not necessarily link to the development of skills standards, and organizing testing and involving the private sector can be extremely difficult for developing countries. Mr Kawakami replied that the Japanese testing system was designed to meet the urgent skills needed in 1960s Japan. Simple testing criteria, which act as a common language between industry, trainers and students, contributed to closing the skills gap. He urged each country to develop a model that is suitable and appropriate to address the situation it is in.

Other clarifying questions centred on quality assurance, representation of all stakeholders, qualifications needed for managers and assessors, and the difference between the skills testing system and the skills standard system.

Mr Kawakami noted that quality assurance of in-house testing can be achieved by involving technical colleges and large companies, such as Toyota, in the skills assessment of other companies that lack the capacity to do so on their own. The Japanese evaluation system encompasses the interest of all stakeholders by inviting social partners to committees and establishing a consensus among them before further development. The Japanese consider “general ability” more important than education qualifications in recruiting workers. Managers are selected and trained within the company. Assessors are first-grade skilled workers who can perform, teach and assess. And he concluded, the Japanese system differs from the skills-standard system in that it has a broad classification of occupations but no specific skills standards. The Japanese vocational-ability standard was developed to create a common language between employers, trainers and students to assist in retraining.

Technical session 4 (part 1): country presentations

Len Si, employers’ representative (Cambodia) chaired the first portion of the fourth technical session. For the session, government representatives of the meeting’s eight participating countries and one observing country each gave a ten-minute presentation. The representatives from Cambodia, China, Indonesia and Lao PDR presented in the Tuesday afternoon portion.

Each presentation covered the following points: i) how skills are recognized in the respective country; ii) barriers to a “seamless” system; iii) mechanisms for ensuring national recognition of skills and qualifications; and iv) gaps and challenges in the present system.

Following the country presentations, the discussion focused on strategies for reducing the skills mismatch and linking trainees to employment. The Malaysia representative suggested that industry

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1 The Government of Thailand invited participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. The ILO extended the invitation to participants Cambodia, China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam.
attachment programmes may be a good strategy to reduce the skills
mismatch by developing skills that are needed by industry. Strategies
for linking graduates to actual employment included creating a
committee that involves the industry and professional associations in
adapting qualifications to meet the needs (as in Indonesia) and
ensuring that training centres function to match jobs with employers (as
in Lao PDR).

Technical session 4 (part 2): country presentations

Prior to the Wednesday morning technical session, representatives
from Myanmar and Timor-Leste were invited to reflect on the issues
covered the previous day; the Myanmar representative summarized
the ideas and lessons learned. The Timor-Leste representative
reflected on the complexity of implementing a skills recognition system
and the diversity in recognition systems across the region. He
expressed concern regarding the skills mismatch problem.

Somphan Sibounheuang, employers’ representative (Lao PDR)
chaired the second portion of technical session 4. Government
representatives from Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste and
Viet Nam made their country presentations.

Following the presentations, the discussion particularly centred on
the need for ASEAN cooperation in developing a system that
recognizes the skills of migrant workers. Skills recognition of foreign
workers is a complex issue, but as the Indonesian representative
noted, ILO member countries are obligated to work together to
recognize the skills of migrant workers.

The Malaysia representative noted the involvement of the education
ministry in skills development. Other issues discussed include the
expansion of employment centres and the selection of vocational
students in Timor-Leste and the informal nature of standards in the
tourism sector in Viet Nam.

Working group session 1: key questions

Ms Aruna Isamail, government representative (Malaysia) chaired
the first working group session, with David Lythe, Anne Richmond and
Michael Young making introductory remarks. The participants were
divided into four groups to discuss issues that need to be considered in
developing or strengthening a national skills recognition system. The
discussion was to cover what is needed in countries with a well-
developed system and in countries with a limited system, particularly
looking at “why, how and who”.

Mr Lythe advised the participants to reflect on why and how a
particular system was implemented, the scope of the different systems
and how to deal with the complexity in the qualifications. Mr Young
emphasized the importance of assessing the weakness of one’s own
system and in establishing the right priority for investment to improve
skills development.
After the participants reconvened, the first group reported that they came to three conclusions: i) A national qualification framework should be established in each country based on the Regional Model of Competency Standards. ii) An ASEAN qualification framework is needed to harmonize the countries of the region. iii) A guideline is needed to harmonize the different recognition and qualification systems.

Group two concluded that countries need to develop a qualification framework for skills through cooperation between government, trade unions, academic associations and employers. The countries with a well-developed system need a national qualification framework to bring the tripartite groups together. Government will be the regulator and much autonomy and responsibility should be given to trade and industry associations. The countries with a less developed system need a national qualification framework to build up the skills development system. Government will play a key role in establishing the system and involving employers and trade unions. Establishment of trade unions in the informal sectors may have to precede the process.

Group three concluded that countries need a national qualification framework to develop skills that meet employers’ needs of the employers and catch up with technology advancements. There is also need to develop industry-led standards and qualified trainers and promote communication standards with all social partners. Wages must be linked to a qualification framework, and skills competitions would be useful. To establish a robust system, employers, employees, training providers and students should be involved in the creation of standards and there should be cooperation between the relevant government ministries.

Group four concluded that the countries with a well-developed system need a national qualification framework to promote private sector investment, integrate new demands from industry into the standards, facilitate international trade and migration, link the standards with professional licensing, build social recognition, raise productivity and recognize and produce “core work competencies”. A new national body that involves all stakeholders needs to be created. Countries with a limited system need a national qualification framework to promote the quality of skills, address the issue of migrant workers, develop training institutes and teachers, anticipate skills needed in the future, provide a basis for training assessors and develop training materials. Tripartite agreement must underlie the creation of such a system. Other important issues include alignment with the academia and the development of a common language for levels, standards and goals.

Technical session 5: ILO reflection and research

Tran Chi Dung, employers’ representative (Viet Nam) chaired the final technical session, with Zhimin Li, government representative
Mr Tran opened the session and commented on each country’s challenge of choosing the optimal model. In introducing the session, Michael Young first briefly reviewed his 15 years of experience working with national qualification framework development. He has been involved in the systems of the United Kingdom, South Africa, Eastern Europe, Australia, New Zealand and now in the Asia-Pacific region. He expressed his concern over implementation of “generic” model, without consideration of a country’s context, history and education system.

He advised that governments need to carefully consider the purpose of a qualification framework because the strategy chosen may not be the best answer to address specific problems. There are many different models and many different strategies for implementing them.

He went on to outline six issues that that also need to be considered: i) directing resources to the best strategy for improving skills, which may not be in a national qualification framework; ii) the uniqueness of the vocational stream because its methods are driven by the industry sector; iii) recognition of the difference between ISO standards and qualification standards (which involves human judgement); iv) recognition of the difference between craft and intellectual skills and how not all can or should be crossed; v) the importance of skills demand; and vi) the distinguishing between German “competence” and English “competency”. The participants were warned not to be seduced by what looks simple but, rather, implement what works.

Mr Young explained that the primary objectives of the forthcoming research are to look at different types of national qualification frameworks and the strategies of earlier models and earlier successes and their features, and identify complementary strategies that can help in developing a framework. The research also will look at the late starters to see if they learned any lessons from the early starters in developing their systems. He stressed the importance of reviewing the context and history of the earlier models.

Mr Tran commented that it may be better for GMS countries to delay their development of a national qualification framework for a year in order to take advantage of the research because it would be a useful source of ideas and information. The government representative from China echoed the importance of the research.

In the question and answer session, the resource persons clarified the difference between “competence” standards and “competency-based” standards. The concept of competence standards originate in German tradition and regard skill as a full function in an occupation, while the Anglo competency standards break down the function into small bits. Although competency-based standards conceptually provide more flexibility, atomized competencies don’t necessarily add up to the full function of an individual. The consensus was that competence-
based standards per occupation form a better basis for overall capacity building and skills recognition, although social collaboration is needed to reinforce the system.

The UK model has not been widely successful, despite investment in it over the past 21 years, Mr Young commented. Its acceptance was based on what was easy: competency-based standards and little trust between the Government and trade unions contributed to it being unsuccessful. The participants were urged to look at the strength of their own system and resources and carefully build upon them instead of implementing an easy model that will end up being problematic. He also warned against models advocated by other countries.

The Scottish system provides some ideas for the factors that led to development of a successful system. Incremental development, leading role and involvement of universities and voluntary component were some of the features that led to success of the system. The operation cost was low and manageable by decentralizing the operation, instead of relying on creating an expensive, inefficient qualification authority. Drawing on the problems in the UK model, Mr Young noted that a successful model of skills recognition is good in terms of both technique and social trust. It is important to develop a mechanism for cooperation between trainers, assessors, industry and ministries in the context of ongoing profession development. Strong social trust and cooperation between training providers, professional associations and employers that give feedback to users and producers of trainees is important for the qualifications standards to close the skills gap.

Some participants were interested in an international model of competency standards. One of the resource persons noted that the nature of competency standards differ from standards for industrial products in that they only guide human judgement. The European Qualification Framework was suggested as a model. The European system is a register of qualifications that provides guidance on developing national qualifications. It is voluntary but its political and legal relationship with the European Union may be a contributing factor to its status. Thus, an ASEAN qualification framework would need some sort of similar socio-political backing to have the same status and function.

Working group session 2: country group - action planning: national plans and requests

To open the session, the Lao representative summarized the lessons learned from the previous technical session. The Indonesian representative summarized the interest of countries in developing a skills recognition system and reflected on the purpose of the ILO research.
Saykham Phanthavong, government (education) representative (Lao PDR) chaired the final working group session. David Lythe, Anne Richmond and Michael Young provided introductory remarks.

In this session, each country’s representatives discussed the “next steps” (country action plan) for addressing some of the concerns raised in the opening country presentations, including national action, future plans to consult with other countries and how they might be involved in the ILO research.

Each country grouping then gave a ten-minute presentation (the country action plans are attached at the end of the report; see the summary of the national action plans in appendix III).

Closing session

As chair of the closing session, Mr Grannall highlighted the meeting’s first day issues on developing or improving quality, a qualification framework and skills recognition. The discussions have generated useful information for governments to adapt their systems or for developing something new.

The tripartite representatives were invited to give final comments. In addition to appreciation to the organizers and hosts, government representative Mr Iem advised on the useful information being applied within the context of each country’s unique situation; employer representative Azizah Talib noted that the urgent issue of defining the skills needed and addressing the immediate skills shortage problem had not been adequately addressed; and worker representative, Mr Yue Kang, commented on the need to develop a common language, promote cross-border harmonization and achieve better coordination between the executive bodies to create clear and simple policy and procedures and skill recognition between countries.

Areeya Rojvithee, on behalf of the Director-General of Thailand’s Department of Skill Development, highlighted in the closing speech the ineffective use of skills development systems in Asia and the hope that this meeting would help each government in developing the quality and quantity of needed skills. She asked for closer cooperation between the Asian countries.
Appendix I: Participants

Cambodia

Mr Kounthdy Iem
Deputy Director
Department of National Competency Standards, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
No. 28 Street 184, Sangrat Cheychumneah, Khan Daun Penh Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: (855 12) 954 731
Fax: (855 23) 217 322
kounthdy_iem@yahoo.com

Mr Len Si
Manager
Training and Employability Skills, Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA)
119 Street 144, Sangkat Phsar Kandal II, Khan Chamkarmon Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: (855 23) 222 186
Fax: (855 23) 222 186
si_len@camfeba.com

China

Mr Zhimin Li
Deputy Director
Department of Vocational Capacity Building, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security
12 He Ping Li Zhong Jie, Dongcheng District Beijing 100716 China
Tel: (86 10) 8420 7448
Fax: (86 10) 8420 7448
lizhimin@mohrss.gov.cn

Mr Yue Kang
Deputy Director
Division, Economic Technology Department, All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU)
10 Fuxingmenwai Street

Beijing 100865 China
Tel: (86 12) 6859 1541
Fax: (86 12) 6856 2031
jianfu_sun@acftu.org.ch

Indonesia

Mr Muchtar Aziz
Head
Subdivision of competency standard, Directorate General of Standardization and Training Programme Department, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration
Jalan Gatot Subroto Kav. 51, Floor 6A Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia
Tel: (62 21) 526 2643
Fax: (62 21) 526 2643
uthazis@yahoo.com

Mr Subandi
Head
Subdivision of Training Method & System, Directorate of Standardization & Competence Training, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration
Jalan Gatot Subroto Kav. 51, 6th floor Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia
Tel: (62 21) 526 2643
Fax: (62 21) 526 2643
subandi_cvst@yahoo.com

Mr Surono
Chairman
Planning & Development, BNSP (Indonesian Professional Certification Authority)
Jl. M.T. Haryonon Kav. 52 Jakarta, Indonesia
Tel: (62 21) 799 2685
Fax: (62 21) 799 2321
surono@bnsp.go.id
Mr Gibson Sianipar  
Chairman  
Electrical Professional Certification Body, Indonesian Electrical Engineers Association (LSP-IATKI)  
Jl. K.H. Mustofa 45  
Bandung, Indonesia  
Tel: (62 22) 720 0489  
Fax: (62 22) 710 1550  
Gibson@power.ee.itb.ac.id

Mr Pito Sumarno  
Director  
Indonesian Society of Project Management Professionals  
Wisma 76, 21st floor  
Jl. S. Parman, Kav 76  
Jakarta 11410 Indonesia  
Tel: (62 21) 5366 6574  
Fax: (62 21) 5366 6574  
ptosid@yahoo.com

LAO PDR

Mr Chansouk Khamphan  
Director  
Centre for Skill Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare  
Kaison Phomvihane Road (13 South), Ban Phone Phanao, Saysetha District  
Vientiane, Lao PDR  
Tel: (856 21) 415 170  
Fax: (856 21) 416 463  
chansoukcsd@yahoo.com

Ms Keomanivone Sayavongsa  
Assistant  
Employer's Bureau Activities, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LANCCI)  
Kaisone Phomvihan Road  
P.O. Box 4596  
Vientiane, Lao PDR  
Tel: (856 21) 453312  
Fax: (856 21) 452580  
incci-cba@laopdr.com;  
keo200500@yahoo.com

Ms Somphanh Sibounheuang  
Head  
Labor Development Division, Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)  
87 Thanon Lane Xang Ban Hatsadi Neua, Muang Chanthaburi  
Vientiane, Lao PDR  
Tel: (856 20) 569 4046  
Fax: (856 21) 212 750  
ssomphanh@yahoo.com

MALAYSIA

Ms Aruna Isamail  
Principal Assistant Director  
Division of Human Resource Policy, Ministry of Human Resources  
Aras 7, Block D4, Parcel D, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan  
Putrajaya 62502 Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 8886 5485  
Fax: (603) 8889 2423  
aruna@mohr.gov.my

Mr Ghalip bin Spahat  
Principal Assistant Director  
Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Human Resources  
Aras 7, Block D4, Parcel D, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan  
Putrajaya 62502 Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 8886 5009  
Fax: (603) 8889 2423  
ghalip@mohr.gov.my

Mr Mat Setia Mohd Raji  
Director  
Skills Development Division, Manpower Department, Ministry of Human Resources  
Level 6, Block D4, Complex D, Federal Government Administration Centre  
Putrajaya 62530 Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 8886 5440  
Fax: (603) 8889 2417  
matsetia@mohr.gov.my
Ms Azizah Tailb  
Economist  
Malaysia Employers’ Federation  
3A06-07, Phileo Damansara II, No.15  
Jalan 16/11, off Damansala,  
46350 Petaling Jaya,  
Selangor Dural Ehsan,  
Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 7955 7778  
Fax: (603) 7955 6808  
azizahe@mef.org.my

Mr Azlan Bin Yaacob  
Financial Secretary  
Timber Employees Union Peninsular  
No 10A, Tingkat Satu,  
Jalan Au 5C/14, Ampang,  
Ulu Klang, 54200  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 4107 3594  
Fax: (603) 4107 8180  
azlanteu@gmail.com

Ms Daw Khin Mar Aye  
Assistant Director  
Skill Training Centre, Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour  
22/24 Anawa Ave, Baho Road,  
Ahlone, Yangon, Myanmar  
Tel: (95 1) 538 862, 560 384  
Fax: (95 1) 564 773  
dol@mptmail.net.mm

Mr Ko Ko Gyi  
Hon. Treasurer  
Myanmar Engineering Society  
MES Building Hlaing University  
Campus  
Hlaing T/S Yangon, Myanmar  
Tel: (95 1) 519 676  
Fax: (95 1) 519 681  
kokogyi.kokogyi@gmail.com

Ms Areeya Rojvithee  
Deputy Director-General  
Department of Skill Development,  
Ministry of Labour  
Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng  
Bangkok 10400 Thailand  
Tel: (66 2) 246 1820  
Fax: (66 2) 247 0300, 643 4457  
areeyaroj@yahoo.com  
areeyaroj@dsd.co.th

Mr Sandod Themsawanglert  
Senior Expert on Skill Development  
Department of Skill Development,  
Ministry of Labour  
Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng  
Bangkok 10400 Thailand  
Tel: (66 2) 246 1704  
Fax: (66 2) 247 0300, 643 4457  
sandod_dsd@hotmail.com

Ms Phasaworn Wichasmitt  
Vocational Training Official  
Department of Skill Development,  
Ministry of Labour  
Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng  
Bangkok 10400 Thailand  
Tel: (66 2) 643 4980  
Fax: (66 2) 643 4980  
phasaworn@dsd.go.th

Ms Anchana Keskanda  
Director  
Skill Standard Testing and Controlled Occupation, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour  
Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng  
Bangkok 10400 Thailand  
Tel: (66 2) 245 1707  
anchana@hotmail.com

Mr Prapas Muangjunburee  
Lecturer/Trainer  
Department of Mining and Materials Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Prince of Songkhla University  
Hat Yai, Songkhla 90112 Thailand  
Tel: (66 74) 287 322  
mprapas@eng.psu.ac.th
VIET NAM

Mr Viet Nguyen Quang
Vice Director
Research Centre for Skills
Development and Vocational Training,
National Institute for Vocational
Training, General Department of
Vocational Training, International
Cooperation Department, Ministry of
Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
(MOLISA)
37 B Nguyen Binh Ichim Street,
Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel: (84 4) 826 3974, 5198
Fax: (84 4) 3974 5020
quangviethung@yahoo.com

Mr Tran Chi Dung
Deputy Director
Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and
Industries (VCCI)
International Trade Centre
9 Dao Duy Anh Str,
Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel: (84 4) 574 2022
Fax: (84 4) 574 2020
dungtc@vcci.com.vn

Mr Son Nguyen Trung
Expert
Vietnam General Confederation of
Labor (VGCL)
82 Tran Hung Dao Street,
Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel: (84 4) 822 1701, 942 1794-5
Fax: (84 4) 942 3781
trunson52@yahoo.com

RESOURCE PERSONS

Mr Raymond Grannall
Regional Senior Adviser on Skills
Development/Manager SKILLS–AP
International Labour Organization
United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200 Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 288 1855
Fax: (66 2) 288 1086
grannall@ilo.org

Ms Anne Richmond
Skills Development Specialist
ILO/Subregional Office
Bangkok 10200 Thailand

Ms Wipusara Rugworakijkul
Programme Officer
ILO/SKILLS–AP
United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200 Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 288 2478
Fax: (66 2) 288 1086
wipusara@ilo.org

Ms Eun Jin Shim
Intern
ILO/Sub-regional Office
Bangkok 10200 Thailand

Mr Mitsunabu Kawakami
Director
International Cooperation Department,
JAVADA
4-1, 1-Chome, Koishikawa,
Bun-kyo-ku, Tokyo 112-8503
Tel: (81 3) 5800 3313
Fax: (81 3) 5800 3920
m-kawakami@javada.or.jp

Mr Michael Young
ILO/Consultant
23 Emerald Street
London WC1, England
M_Young@ioe.ac.uk

Mr David Lythe
ILO/Consultant
97 Rangatira Road
Auckland 0626 New Zealand
Tel: (64 9) 483 9903
Fax: (64 9) 483 9960
david.lythe@gmail.com
Mr Saykham Phanthavong  
Director  
Pakpasak Technical School,  
Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, Ministry of Education  
PO Box 3552  
Vientiane, Lao PDR  
Tel : (856 21) 213 142  
Fax: (856 21) 218 167  
phsaykham@yahoo.com

Ms Kamonrat Chayamarit  
Senior Programme Assistant  
Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO  
Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building  
920 Sukhunvit Road, Prakanong Klongtoey, Bangkok 10110 Thailand  
Tel : (662) 391 0577  
Fax: (662) 391 0866  
c.kamonrat@unescobkk.org

Ms Siripan Choomnoom  
Deputy Secretary-General  
Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC), Ministry of Education Thailand  
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue Dusit, Bangkok 10300 Thailand  
Tel : (66 2) 280 1832  
Fax: (66 2) 280 1832  
siripanch@hotmail.com

OBSERVERS

Mr Cidalio Leite  
Deputy Director-General  
Education and Vice President of the Executive Commission of INDMO National Labour Force Development Institute Timor-Leste  
Rua de Vila-verde, Dili Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 333 9631  
cidalio@yahoo.com.au

Mr Januario Viana Mota  
Chief  
Technical Higher Education, Ministry of Education  
Rua de Vila-verde  
Dili, Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 333 9675  
anjamota@yahoo.com

Ms Isabel Fernandes de Lima  
Chief of Secretariat of the National Labour Force Development Institute (INDMO)  
Dili, Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 723 7914  
afamata@yahoo.com

Mr Albano Salem  
National Director of Vocational Training, Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Ex - CNRT Balide  
Dili, Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 730 4496  
salemalbano@yahoo.com

Mr Ismenio Martins da Silva  
Vocational Training Adviser  
Vocational Training Department, Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Ex - CNRT Balide  
Dili, Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 333 1207  
ismenio_nito@yahoo.com

Mr Fernando Afonso da Silva  
Executive Member of INDMO Timor-Leste Employers' Organization  
15 October Street Dili, Timor-Leste  
Tel : (670) 723 4681  
Fax: (670) 723 4681  
dasilva_fa59@yahoo.com
Ms Maria da Gloria P.S. Tilman
Executive Member of INDMO
Commission of Sindicil of Timor-Leste (KSTL)
Colmera Street, Matadouro - Vila verde, Dili, Timor-Leste
Tel : (670) 726 2467

Mr Teerasak Yupetch
Vocational Training Official
Department of Skill Development,
Ministry of Labour
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel : (66 2) 245 4837
Fax: (66 2) 247 9421
kamiwaza123@yahoo.com

Mr Somsak Promdum
Vocational Training Official
Office of Skill Standard and Testing Development, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel : (66 2) 643 4987
Fax: (66 2) 643 4987
somsak@dsd.gov.th

Mr Soontaree Chaipichit
Vocational Training Official
Department of Skill Development,
Ministry of Labour
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel : (66 2) 245 4837

Mr Pipat Seetoon
Vocational Training Official
Department of Skill Development,
Ministry of Labour
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel : (66 2) 354 0281
Fax: (66 2) 643 4988
pptstn@yahoo.com

Ms Pataraporn Samantarath
Senior Officer, Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), Bureau of Economic and Social Policy Coordination
60 Sukayang Road, Sataeng Subdistrict, Muang Yala 95000 Thailand
Tel : (66 73) 203 771
Fax: (66 73) 203 771
joysamanta@hotmail.com

Mr Arthur Shears
CTA of TVET Reform project
ILO/Dhaka, Bangladesh
Tel : (880 2) 911 2876
Fax: (880 2) 811 4211
ashears@ilo.org
Appendix II: Programme

ILO/SKILLS–AP/Thailand Regional Technical Meeting on Improving Skills Recognition and Quality and Qualification Systems for IMT-GT and GMS Countries

Songkhla, Thailand, 4 - 6 November 2008

PROGRAMME

Monday, 3 November 2008

Arrival of delegates
Check in at the BP Samila Beach Hotel & Resort, Songkhla province
[Dinner will be provided]

Tuesday, 4 November 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.00 – 08.30</td>
<td>Registration/orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30 – 09.00</td>
<td>Individual meetings of government, employers and workers participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 10.00</td>
<td><strong>Inaugural session</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addresses:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mr Metee Na-Nakorn, Vice Governor of Songkhla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mr Ray Grannall, Regional Senior Adviser and Manager of the ILO Regional Skills and Employability Programme in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS–AP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mr Nakorn Silpa-Archa, Director-General, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mr Somchai Choomrat, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Thailand (opening speech)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction of participants</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Programme and arrangements for the meeting</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Group photograph</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2 Delegations from Cambodia, China (Yunnan province), Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam will participate in the meeting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00 – 10.30</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10.30 – 11.30| **Technical session 1: Overview of skills recognition issues and the purpose of the meeting**  
Panel chairperson: *Mr Kounthy Iem*, Deputy Director of Department of National Competency Standards, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Cambodia  
Introduced by: *Mr Ray Grannall*, Manager, SKILLS–AP  
Panel members:  
- *Ms Azizah Talib*, Economist, Malaysia Employers’ Federation  
- *Mr Pito Sumarno*, Indonesian Society of Project Management Professionals  
Prepared comments from representatives of government (ministry of labour/ministry of education), employers and workers  
Questions and comments |
| 11.30 – 12.30| **Technical session 2: Skills recognition – the policy concerns**  
Panel Chairperson: *Ms Keomanivone Sayavongsa*, Assistant of Employer’s Bureau Activities, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)  
Introduced by: *Mr David Lythe*, ILO consultant  
Panel members:  
- *Mr Surono*, Chairman of Planning & Development, BNSP (Indonesian Professional Certification Authority)  
- *Ms Maria da Gloria P.S. Tilman*, Executive Member of INDMO, Commission of Sindical of Timor-Leste (KSTL)  
Comments from representatives of government (ministry of labour/ministry of education), employers and workers  
Questions and comments |
| 12.30 – 14.00| Lunch                                                                |
| 14.00 – 15.30| **Technical session 3: Introduction to Japan’s skills-evaluation system**  
Panel Chairperson: *Mr Azlan Bin Yacob*, Financial Secretary, Timber Employees Union Peninsular Malaysia  
Panel members:  
- Past participants of Skills Evaluation System Promotion Programme (SESPP) of Japan  
- *Mr Quang Viet Nguyen*, Vice Director of Research Centre for Skills Development and Vocational Training Standard, Ministry of |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.30 – 16.00</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00 – 17.00</td>
<td>Technical session 4: Country presentations (part I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel chairperson: Mr Len Si, Manager for Training and Employability Skills, Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentations from countries – Government members (labour and education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social partner comment: Employer or worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions and comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>WELCOME DINNER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wednesday, 5 November 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 09.15</td>
<td>Reflection from day 1 – 2 speakers</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.15 – 10.15</td>
<td>Technical session 4: Country presentations (part II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel chairperson: Ms Somphan Sibounheuang, Head of Labour Development Division, Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao PDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15 – 10.30</td>
<td>Working group session 1: Key questions (three mixed working groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel chairperson: Ms Aruna Bi. Isamail @ABD Wahab, Principal Assistant Director, Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduced by: Mr David Lythe, Ms Anne Richmond and Dr Michael Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Agenda item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30 – 11.00</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00 – 12.00</td>
<td>Continuation of working groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00 – 13.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30 – 15.00</td>
<td>Report out from the small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30 – 16.00</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16.00 – 17.00| Technical session 5: ILO reflection and research | Panel chairperson: *Mr Tran Chi Dung*, Deputy Director, Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industries (VCCI)  
Introduced by: *Dr Michael Young*, ILO consultant  
Question and answer: First question from representatives of government, employers and workers |

**Thursday, 6 November 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.30 – 08.45</td>
<td>Reflection from day 2 – 2 speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 08.45 – 09.30| Working group session 2: Country group – Action planning  
Panel chairperson: *Mr Saykham Phanthavong*, Director of Pakpasak Technical School, Ministry of Education, Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, Lao PDR  
Introduced by: Mr David Lythe, Ms Anne Richmond and Dr Michael Young |
| 09.30 – 10.00| Reporting on national plans and requests         |
| 10.00 – 10.30| Tea/coffee break                                |
| 10.30 – 11.30| Reporting on national plans and requests         |
| 11.30 – 12.30| Closing session and award of certificates        |
|              | Chairperson: *Mr Ray Grannall*, Manager, ILO/SKILLS–AP  
Statements by: *Mr Kounthdy Iem*, Cambodia  
*Mr Azizah Talib*, Malaysia  
Closing speech and certificate award: *Ms Areeya Rojvithee*, Deputy Director-General, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.30 – 13.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Tour of CHEVRON for underwater welding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>Farewell dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Friday, 7 November 2008**

Departure of delegates
## Appendix III: Summary of country action plans and requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gaps/challenges</th>
<th>Next steps</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>ILO research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Gaps in the capacity of technical support staff for implementation</td>
<td>Continue development on the draft NQF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited national budget</td>
<td>Start work on skills testing next year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Coverage of vocational qualification system</td>
<td>Expand coverage of NVQ, including rural workers</td>
<td>Communication and cooperation with other countries and ILO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More authoritative and recognized certificate</td>
<td>Strengthen communication and cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational skills-testing system: Meeting the demand and improving the quality of testing</td>
<td>Improve the quality of vocational skills testing – quality control, question bank development, testing administration, certificate issuance, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Low recognition and use of the established system by employers</td>
<td>Short term; speed up NQF development by adopting the RMCS; Encourage industries implementing</td>
<td>Harmonize recognition system with regional and international competency</td>
<td>Seek recognition system between ILO model of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Gaps/challenges</td>
<td>Next steps</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>ILO research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Inadequate institute to accommodate students</td>
<td>Set up a committee responsible for training and upgrading skills</td>
<td>systems based on a NQF and industry requirements</td>
<td>competency and industry-based system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decentralized and uncoordinated training</td>
<td>Develop a plan of action for effective TVET</td>
<td>IMT-GT pilot project developing and implementing a recognition system and possible peer review programme for maintaining a quality-assurance system</td>
<td>Project for developing a model of proficiency testing for maintaining competency with competency-certificate holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research on how to change the proportion of general education to vocational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Inadequate institute to accommodate students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supply and demand of labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decentralized and uncoordinated training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Country Gaps/challenges**: Difficult cross-country recognition, Capacity to develop and update, No uniform training system, High implementation costs
- **Next steps**: HRD-based competency; cross-sector harmonization of certification scheme; developing standards/guidelines for operating; Training body implements the CBT programme harmonized with certification system; strengthen accreditation body to ensure and maintain competency; improve and develop assessment centres; develop standard of CBT trainers; training of trainers for competency assessment; develop accreditation programme for training body harmonized with professional certification body accreditation scheme; Long term: Develop assessment and certification scheme-recognition system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gaps/challenges</th>
<th>Next steps</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>ILO research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>system</td>
<td>Ensure participation from many sectors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak linkage between training and industries</td>
<td>Capacity building of TVET policy makers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Insufficient professional connection between skills development and industries</td>
<td>National skill standards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Irrelevant curriculum</td>
<td>Policy for recognizing NQF graduate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promote local competition</td>
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<td>Information about NQF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Societal stigma</td>
<td>Improve participation of industry and relevant government agencies</td>
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<td>Types of NQF – pros and cons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incompetent workers</td>
<td>Better coordination of national training infrastructure</td>
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<td>Guideline for developing NQF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expensive investment for skill generation</td>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
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<td>Country</td>
<td>Gaps/challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Incompetent instructor and assessors</td>
<td>Develop human resources development fund  Improve data collection  Research  Change social perception  Enforce National Skills Development Act  Improve standards based on industry needs</td>
<td>Participate in IMT-GT and GMS framework  Cooperation to develop regional skills recognition  Appreciate technical assistance to develop NQF from developed countries in ASEAN and ILO</td>
<td>Information of other countries qualification, training, assessment materials, systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Development of training material  Upgrading training facilities  TOT and assessors in priority skill areas</td>
<td>Focal point to be the Ministry of Labour  Develop NQF that includes lower-level skills  Capacity building of training centres to train and test according to qualification</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>More responsive skill development investment and establishment of the development fund</td>
<td>Need training capacity to train</td>
<td>Consult JAVADA, Japan, WDA, Singapore, MHR, Malaysia, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia</td>
<td>Would take active role in research on recognition of prior learning</td>
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<td>Technical expertise for quality control measures to regulate certification</td>
<td>Upgrade training centres and equipments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time-consuming comprehensive recognition system</td>
<td>Improve the national skill standard to meet the industrial demand by cooperating with all industrial sectors and trade unions</td>
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<td>Systematic prejudice against significant experience but no certificate</td>
<td>Cooperate with the Ministry of Education to credit working experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weak trade unions</td>
<td>Multinational cooperation to develop content of skill standard as well as upgrading skills of the workforce relevant to their demands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>Weak capacity of training providers to design and deliver curriculum</td>
<td>Launch national training authority body</td>
<td>Conduct a study or exposure tours:</td>
<td>Continue support with the Youth Employment Promotion Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inadequate, poor-quality training</td>
<td>Establish industry-based subcommissions for INDMO</td>
<td>Australia to look at the certification standard system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No accurate information on skills assessment and curriculum</td>
<td>Explore and draft NQF for TVET sector</td>
<td>Fiji and its model for tourism and hospitality</td>
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<td>Need for coordination with Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>Philippines and its basic skills and construction</td>
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<td>Indonesia and trainer education in construction, automotive, electronic,</td>
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<td>handicraft</td>
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<td>Vanuatu and its NQF</td>
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<td>Thailand for its home industry</td>
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<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>Little experience in organizing skills recognition</td>
<td>Develop national skills standard for occupations at levels 1–5</td>
<td>Consider admitting and recognizing equivalent skill certificates issued by other ASEAN countries</td>
<td>Viet Nam’s NQF can be one of the case studies</td>
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<td>Need for expansion of skills standard</td>
<td>Regulate national skills testing procedures and tools, criteria for national skills testing centre, criteria for assessors in terms of skills, methods, experience and training of assessors</td>
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<td>Develop model of skills testing and recognition system in Viet Nam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of capacity for implementing assessment</td>
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<td>Recognizing equivalent skills certificates issued by other countries</td>
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<td>National Institute for Vocational Training under GDVT will partner ILO research</td>
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IMPROVING SKILLS RECOGNITION, QUALITY AND QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

This is a report of a tripartite regional meeting covering different approaches to skills recognition. The aim of the meeting was to enable countries to better plan their own development; to identify areas for potential collaboration between countries; and to identify further research and development of tools that the ILO could assist with. The outcome of the meeting was for tripartite group of each country to develop country action plans to address policy challenges in the skills recognition.