



**Welcoming Remarks by Mr Bill Salter
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**At the workshop on
Promoting Decent Work for Women and Men with Disabilities-INCLUDE
Subregional Disability Equality Training of Facilitators
7-11 September, 2009
Amari Watergate Hotel
Bangkok, Thailand**

Dear participants and colleagues,

On behalf of the International Labour Organization and myself, I am pleased to welcome you all to this sub-regional Disability Equality Training of Facilitators that the ILO is organizing in the region in the context of the project: Promoting Decent Work for Women and Men with Disabilities also known as INCLUDE.

When we look at the current situation on disability in the world, the numbers are shocking: some 650 million worldwide. And if we think that one of every 10 people in the world has a disability, our reaction is, well, all of us in this room either have a disability or is most likely to have someone in the family with a disability or to develop a disability during the course of our lives.

If we look at disability from a labour and employment perspective, we know that approximately 470 million people with disabilities are of working age. While many are successfully employed and fully integrated into society, as a group, persons with disabilities often face disproportionate poverty and unemployment. Their social exclusion from the workplace deprives societies of an estimated US\$ 1.37 to 1.94 trillion in annual loss in GDP. We are all aware that a large percentage of people with disabilities in the world live in rural areas of developing countries and have limited or no access to services they need, including education and information. Thus, providing decent work for people with disabilities makes human, social as well as economic sense.

Just to give an idea of the numbers we are talking about in the countries here represented,

- Vietnam: more than five million women and men in Viet Nam, or approximately six per cent of the population, have a disability
- China: nearly 83 million women and men in China, or 6.3 per cent of the population, have a disability
- Cambodia: 700,000 people with disabilities
- Laos: 400,000 people with disabilities
- Thailand: 200,000 of the population

But in this room we also know very well that data on women and men with disabilities is in itself a problem as countries do not often have the capacities to collect and analyze this type of information.

If we look at what is happening in the world of work, persons with disabilities tend to experience high unemployment and have lower earnings than persons without disabilities. They are often relegated to informal, low-level, low-paid jobs with little social and legal security, or segregated from the mainstream labour market. Many are underemployed. This affects their self confidence. Many become discouraged and drop out. Not to forget that among persons with disabilities, men are almost twice as likely to have jobs as women and that disability has an impact on women's labour force participation as women remain in the most of societies the primary care givers. Yet experience shows that when women and men with disabilities find jobs suited to their skills, abilities and interests, they can make significant contributions in the workplace.

In this scenario, there are also some very positive and promising aspects. Today the laws, policies, programmes and services concerning people with disabilities are undergoing a fundamental change in most countries in the world, including the countries here represented. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities together with other human rights instruments has determined a paradigm shift. Increasingly, there is greater emphasis on the need for change the world over - at every level of society - to be inclusive of disabled persons and to promote their access to education, training, the labour market and all other spheres of society with opportunities. At the policy level, the goal of inclusion and full participation in democratic decision-making is being adopted widely. This implies that people with disabilities must have access to programmes and services which are open to the population in general, and effectively making a difference in the lives of people around the globe. The INCLUDE Project as well as other ILO projects (Women's Entrepreneurship Development, HIV/AIDS, vocational training, employment centers, etc.) envision a world in which people with disabilities can participate as fully as they choose at all levels of society.

The International Labour Organization's Disability Programme has worked for over 50 years to promote the rights of persons with disabilities through labour standards, social dialogue, advocacy among governments, employers' and workers' organizations, disabled people organizations, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. The ILO has also had a long involvement in providing support for disability in the Asia Pacific Region and there are many examples of successful interventions in rural and urban communities in many countries in the region.

Decent work is the ILO's primary goal for everyone, including persons with disabilities. Putting decent work into practice means promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities based on the principles of equal opportunity, equal treatment, mainstreaming and community involvement.

Progress has been made. However, as I am sure you all know - much remains to be done and the work that you are going to do during this week is part of this inclusion process where the main actors are people with disabilities themselves in the spirit of 'count us in' and 'nothing about us without us'.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you fruitful learning and look forward to a successful outcome of this training.

Thank you