

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN ASIA PACIFIC – THE BEST OF TWO SYSTEMS

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Public-private partnerships are gaining increasing traction in international development cooperation and are being used more and more by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Public-private partnerships (PPP) have the potential to increase the visibility and advocacy of the ILO. They also provide a channel for influencing public and private sector investment, policies, and practices, and so promoting decent work more effectively.

A strong PPP recognizes that the public and private sectors each have certain advantages and optimizes the allocation of tasks, obligations and risks to play to these particular strengths. For example, the public sector can offer social responsibility, environmental awareness and local knowledge, while the private sector can offer expertise in commerce, innovation, efficiency, management and operations. Businesses can also gain grassroots access and influence over policy-making and by working with the ILO they may enhance their brand and reputation.

Definitions of PPPs vary. In the ILO they are described as *“voluntary and collaborative relationships among various actors in both public (state) and private (non-state) sectors, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common goal or undertake specific tasks”*¹. In terms of practical implementation partnerships also come in different forms, including funding or in-kind donations, joint development or implementation of projects and activities, organizing meetings or events, joint campaigning or advocacy, and cooperative research and publications.

In Asia and the Pacific the ILO is already using public-private partnerships in a growing variety of ways and circumstances.

The Better Work Programme is a unique partnership between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank. Built on the experience gained by Better Factories Cambodia in raising labour standards and improving competitiveness in that country, the programme has now expanded to Viet Nam, and is also operational in Haiti, Jordan, and Lesotho. Since its launch in February 2007 Better Work has been helping to improve supply chains and assist enterprises in complying with ILO labour standards and national labour laws. Its approach is akin to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and while it was not designed as a public-private partnership the involvement of international commercial buyers gives the private sector a role.

¹ [ILO Governing Body, 2008](#)

In Bangladesh the ILO and Grameen Shakti are operating a pilot project as part of the ILO's initiative to promote green jobs. It includes several activities built around a partnership with the Government of Bangladesh and Grameen Shakti. The ILO work focuses on skills training for solar energy technicians.

The ILO's partnership with the energy multi-national BP in Indonesia is providing vocational and entrepreneurship skills training for out of school youth in West Papua Province. Implemented by the ILO's Jakarta office, the [Education and Skills Training Project \(EAST\)](#) promotes youth employment through skills development. BP has gas exploration and production operations in the province and contributes by promoting livelihood opportunities for the local population as part of its community development activities.

In China's Sichuan Province, partnerships were used to promote employment after the earthquake in 2008. The aim was to develop a livelihood programme in Mianzhu County, which was particularly badly struck by the earthquake. The partnership brought together the local government of Mianzhu, the Postal Savings Bank of China, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and PlaNNet Finance.

The IFRC provided a financial contribution of more than US\$230,000 while PlaNNet Finance, an international microfinance aid organization, gave capacity-building training to the microfinance institutions the RCSC is working with. The ILO is providing the Mianzhu Labour Bureau with technical tools, such as Start and Improve Your Business Training, community-based training, value chain analysis and training needs assessment modules.

Public-private partnerships are an innovative and complementary way for the ILO to promote decent work for people in Asia and the Pacific. PPPs can create channels for introducing innovative approaches and reforms into the labour markets and economies of member States. They therefore sit well with the emerging development trends of the Asia-Pacific region, which need to be oriented towards social justice and inclusive growth.