

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

1. The need

Many countries in Asia-Pacific faces similar challenges in terms of skills development: ensuring training matches labour market needs; finding effective means to recognize individuals' skills; ensuring that the costs of training are not unfairly distributed; and ensuring that there is fair and equitable access to training and skill development so that the overall level of productivity in the country is improved, along with the employability of workers. Equally, across the region there is a wealth of examples of how 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 implementers minimize risk and maximize the value of investments which are inevitably limited.

2. The vision

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.

3. 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, in its Part X, 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.

Information exchange and collaboration, however valuable, does not happen without facilitation. Evaluations of the APSDEP programme and subsequent consultations confirm that there is a need for a dedicated programme whose task is precisely to identify needs and match this with available knowledge in the most effective way possible. Consequently, a new ILO Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP), building on the earlier work of APSDEP, will be established with the task of facilitating the identification of information needs, collaboration opportunities and other practical ways to realize the vision.

4. Practical action

A range of practical activities and programmes will developed by SKILLS-AP with and for network members, which would include:

- 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

5. Participation

All constituents, as well as technical and research institutes and related organizations, within the Asia-Pacific region will have the opportunity to become Partner Institutions in the network, responsible for participating to the extent and in the manner most valuable to them. To ensure effective in-country coordination, governments will act as Focal Points, ensuring national presence in the network and within the country ensuring that current and potential members of the network are aware of it.

6. Information and knowledge sharing

SKILLS-AP would also ensure that all participants in the network have access to information from a wide variety of sources, including network members, on:

- relevant events;
- comparative data;
- new research and publications on skills
- international best practices on skills
- case studies;
- skill development policies and strategies;
- training packages and material;
- competency standards, skill recognition and certification;
- technical resources, including experts and consultants.

7. Means and tools

There will be a range of ways and means in which information and assistance can be exchanged. A partial listing of selected skills issues, means of action and potential partners, developed in the ILO/Korea First Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Institutions, Incheon, 22 to 25 November, 2005, is shown in Annex A.

Effective means of ensuring network members have access to information and can participate in events and dialogues will be developed by SKILLS-AP in consultation with the network. A new website will be one important means. SKILLS-AP will ensure, however, that ways to ensure full participation of network members who have limited internet access will also be developed as a priority.

ISSUE		INTEREST IN		MEANS	BARRIERS	ACTIVITY/PRIORITY	SUPPORT
		LEARNING	SHARING				
National systems of qualification and recognition that are internationally valid; and the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills between countries in the region. Quality assurance systems to ensure validity of certification.	Achieving Mutual Recognition & skills and qualifications	ALL	Philippines; A/NZ, Thailand	Workshop, technical assistance, fellowships	Funding	1: Technical workshop on Qualification Frameworks in the broader context of quality assurance and regional recognition: staged process beginning with information collection, analysis and dissemination, followed by technical workshop to explore key topics in depth, building the basis for development of regional recognition framework.	Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore and India indicate potential for support.
	How to develop a national qualifications framework	Vietnam, Bangladesh, Solomon, Mongolia, Indonesia, Kiribati, India, Malaysia	New Zealand, China, Philippines, Thailand	Workshops	Funding		
	Regional Competency standard (Asia)	All	All	Workshop, technical assistance, fellowships	Funding		
	Accreditation of migrant worker skills	Australia, Iran, Laos, India Afghanistan, Bangladesh	Australia,	Links to specialized agencies i.e. IOM for info, experience and expertise	Inter-agency cooperation needed		
	International benchmarks, concerning training and recognition and mutual recognition of qualifications	all	all	Access to models, evaluations of other country approaches, and views of tripartite partners for their views; support for preliminary study and assessment before study tours; funding to support reform or development programs; consultancies (access to quality consultants); bilateral agreements	Quality of consultants, funds, capacity to do initial policy and research work, issues are often handled bilaterally		
Sustained availability of quality skills development services in countries; including solid financing, financial support of employers, and continuing refreshment of training approaches and trainer skills.	National Qualifications Frameworks	all	all			2: Specific topic to be addressed within the above (linked to quality assurance): new skills for trainers, new approaches for learning, e.g. coaching / mentoring to deliver soft skills. 3: Workshop on approaches to testing and examinations (later)	Singapore, Sri Lanka
	Quality assurance of training providers and of qualifications achieved	all	all				
	How to promote and develop private sector training in the workplace	ALL	Thailand, Malaysia Regional employer	Workshop	Funding incentives		
	Help improve training facilities in less developed economies	Bangladesh, Solomon, Indonesia, Kiribati, Mongolia	Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand	Training, workshops	donor assistance required		
	Involvement of employers and the private sector in skills development	Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, Laos, Solomon Islands	all	Provision of information on good practice in region e.g. IMC's (India) SD councils (Pakistan) CII's (India)	Financing of training program		
Useable Labour Market information and other mechanisms to ensure	Financing Skills Development	all	all	Training program using ILO materials	Fund to organize training	2: Develop web-based program on public-private partnerships in skills development 1: Facilitate country-country partnerships for advice and support in specific areas	ILO-Turin
	Training for new fields, content and delivery methods						
	Skills of trainers - use of new and effective approaches	Solomon Islands		Relates to the location of training - in workplaces, private sector etc. Access to information on methods, training of trainers.			
	Gathering information on international labour demand	All	Philippines	Research	ILO staffing		
	Skills development information	Laos, Vanuatu, PNG, Solomon Islands	Australia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Iran	Sharing/disseminating LMI data, LMI training program	Data not readily available, local collection capacity weak		
Useable Labour Market information and other mechanisms to ensure						2: Compile and make available country level data on LM needs, with annual updates. 3: Technical support to countries to improve LMI systems	Australia

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that training provided meets national and international employment demand, currently and in the future.	Relevance to demand: of students, of employers, and for the long term; for national and international employment			Access to skill and competency requirements of other countries; exchange of experts; information on means that have been taken nationally to ensure relevance (Training Boards, Sector Councils etc., and evaluations of them)	LMI is not the total answer and is not always right in detail or over time. High cost to create LMI where it doesn't exist.	3: Research on experiences with linking demand mechanisms with supply decisions: range of approaches and the resulting impacts.	Nepal, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Korea

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Effective approaches to ensure skills development for specific groups: transfer of information and models between countries with similar or complementary situations.	Lack of gender equality in vocational training	All	Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh	Workshops to develop good practice guide	Funding	2: Collate and disseminate existing research, experiences and models.	SKILLS-AP with input from network countries
	Special target groups	all		Share information on approaches e.g. TREE, EOW (for women)	Training in CBT is expensive	2: Launch pilots/demonstrations in additional countries on request and where funds available.	
	Effective means of ensuring skills development for specific groups of people: women, youth, older workers, workers in transition, high- and lower-skill migrants, informal and rural workers. Issues include access, realistic career/work advice and location of learning (at and before work)	New Zealand, Nepal, Japan, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands		Availability of existing reports and studies - 'digested' for easy access. Facilitation w-w and e-e exchanges of views. Facilitate specialist groups around common interests (e.g. countries with aging workforces; countries with migrant workforces, etc.)	Prioritize issues/groups for most strategic, ensure non-government views are sought and included in discussions, loss of professional capacities in some countries, funding (need for external support depends on the group of countries interested in an issue), language prevents easy access to information.	2: Study tours to functioning models where appropriate. 1: Access and links on website	SKILLS-AP
Skills development in and for the informal and traditional sector workers, articulated with formal training and recognition	Providing Training Informal sector	All	All	Pilot for less develop economies	Local funding, ILO expertise	2: Study tour to India to share expertise on formal/informal linkages.	India
	Integration of non formal learning	Afghanistan, Laos, PNG, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands	India, Philippines	Research/study on linking formal/informal training	Access to required information in region is limited		
	Traditional skills - review and improve work methods while valuing approaches.			Must involve traditional workers (often indigenous peoples)			
'Soft Skills'	New skill areas 'soft' skills - developing curricula and establishing standards: areas include entrepreneurship, life skills, leadership, and links to realistic work expectations.	ALL	All	Exchange of training modules as they are developed, develop regional framework for core skills and menu of implementation approaches	Ownership of training modules	2: Employer-led workshop on leadership and entrepreneurship. 1: Work towards region-wide framework of measurable competencies in employability skills, through initial research and meeting to agree on understanding of employability skills, followed by plan to progress to competency definition. 3: Research on practical ways to stimulate life long learning for people in work.	Employer organizations in region, ACT/EMP, Indonesia Australia, Employers New Zealand

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Very small countries	How to facilitate training in countries where numbers are small	NZ, Kiribati, Solomon	Thailand,	Research workshop	ILO facilitation	2: Facilitation of large-small country assistance partnerships 2: Pilot Community Based Training if interest and funds available. 2: Study on strategic approaches to skills development, other examples (Caribbean)	Big : China, Malaysia, India Small :Solomon Islands, Kiribati
Policies for financing for training for both in- and out-migrant workers	Policies for financing for training for both in- and out-migrant workers			Exchange of policies on how to recoup funds e.g. remittance policies.			