

CONCEPT NOTE

Technical meeting to shape ILO-ASEAN study on “decent work promotion in rural economy through productivity growth, local employment promotion, and transition from informal to formal employment”

DATES: 27-28 June 2019

VENUE: Bangkok, Thailand

Participants: National and regional consultants engaged to conduct the study, ILO, ASEAN secretariat, Lao PDR and Thailand as lead in this study, ASEAN focal points on rural employment, and ACE/ATUC.

BACKGROUND

The AEC could generate 14 million additional jobs by 2025, but the gains will not be distributed evenly across countries or sectors, or between women and men¹. While new opportunities for jobs and incomes will be generated, its distribution across sectors, geographical locations and population groups will likely differ. To ensure that increasing global and intra-regional economic integration result in improved incomes and employment prospects for men and women, in urban and rural areas, appropriate policies need to be in place, including in infrastructure, education, better wages, social protection and skills recognition. Furthermore, agriculture, and in particular subsistence agriculture, will likely remain one of the largest employers, requiring investment in on-farm employment to increase productivity and incomes and in off-farm employment opportunities such as agro-processing².

As many jobs and economic activities are located in rural areas in many ASEAN countries, including in plantations and those linked to regional supply chains, there is heightened recognition that labour protective policies and instruments need to be applied in both urban and rural work environments. Furthermore, much of the rural employment has been perceived to be informal in nature, lacking legal and social protections.

The commitment to rural employment promotion has prompted the ASEAN leaders to highlight this theme in the ASEAN Declaration which was approved during the 28th and 29th ASEAN Summit in September 2016 in Vientiane Capital. Entitled “Decent Work Promotion: Transition from Informal to Formal Employment,” the 2016 ASEAN Declaration upholds the fundamental principles of decent work, encourages South-South cooperation and fosters intra-ASEAN learning on relevant issues regarding formalization, with special attention also to rural employment. The Declaration is followed up with an action plan focusing on knowledge sharing and learning among ASEAN countries.

As ASEAN represents a heterogeneous group, within ASEAN Member States, there is a rich set of experiences and successes that can be shared. As a first step, a meeting was held in Pakse between 13th and 15th of December 2017 to share information on informal employment situation, to share experiences in addressing the challenges of informality among the AMS, and to identify common areas of research that can strengthen current policy efforts. The common thematic interest in information

¹ ILO-ADB, 2014. ASEAN Community 2015: Managing Integration for better jobs and shared prosperity

² ILO-ADB, 2015. Will the AEC support Lao PDR's goal to overcome least developed status? Lao PDR's Country Brief, March. See also ILO, ADB, 2015. ASEAN community 2015: Managing integration for better jobs and shared prosperity, ADB and ILO 2014.

and knowledge encompassed “decent work promotion through productivity growth, local employment promotion, and transition from informal to formal employment”, to be led by Lao PDR with ILO’s support.

The country case studies to be covered by this study include Indonesia, Lao PDR and Thailand. The regional study will synthesize the findings from these case studies, as well as other existing well known case studies in the AMS on instances of successful rural economic transformation and employment generation. The consultants had been identified by during 2019 for the national case studies and the regional study. The studies need to be finalized before end 2019, and to maximize cross-fertilization of ideas, knowledge and policy experiences, the current technical meeting has been proposed, to bring together the consultants, the ILO, and the ASEAN stakeholders. The hiring of the consultants took place at different times, resulting in differences in lead time that each consultant has in relation to the others.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the meeting is to:

1. All participants will share relevant information and knowledge on rural employment and development situations at the regional and the national levels.
2. The consultants will present some background statistics and the focus of the country cases (e.g. policy tools for rural transformation, winning strategies from recent economic history, contemporary market and investment opportunities successfully tapped) and likely narratives
3. Gather inputs to find a way (or ways) of weaving the different parts of the studies together into an interesting narrative, overall framework of the study, and clustering of ASEAN countries based on past/future role of agriculture and rural economy.
4. Agree on the next steps.

This will be a technical meeting, and the exchange of ideas and inputs is expected to be done in an open and straightforward manner.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of the meeting include:

1. A narrative for the whole study, on contextual and policy ingredients that can lead to rural transformations that generate decent rural employment, overall framework of the studies
2. A review of research methods and issues that will be appropriate for the study
3. Potential or emerging narratives from the national studies and how they contribute to the regional narrative
4. An agreement on the way forward with the study, including continued exchange among the research consultants.