

## SPOTLIGHT

## Gender pay gap on the rise

Viet Nam is among a few countries in the world where gender pay gap has been widening by 2 per cent while the gap has declined in most nations in the 2008-11 period compared to 1999-2007, according to the ILO Global Wage Report 2012-13.

The 2011 General Statistical Office data showed that women earn 13 per cent less than men. The 2012 survey on workers' salaries carried out by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) in enterprises nationwide revealed that female workers' salaries are only 70-80 per cent of their male colleagues'. The global average gender pay gap is hovering around 17 per cent.

"The widening gap is worrying even though it is difficult to pinpoint the exact percentage

in Viet Nam as wage and income data are not systematically collected and surveys do not always take into account the entire remuneration package, including benefits, bonuses or allowances," ILO Asia-Pacific Senior Specialist on International Labour Standards, Tim De Meyer.

VGCL Vice President Nguyen Thi Thu Hong said female workers often face discrimination before and during their work career compared to their male colleagues and women with families even have more difficulties.

"Gender gap cannot be addressed overnight. It requires a process that involves the efforts of not only enterprises, trade unions but also female workers themselves," she added.

## Dialogue and compromise essential to settle labour disputes



Consensus will be required between workers and employers to address the sensitive issues of employment contracts and reduce labour disputes throughout Southeast Asia.

The recommendation was the highlight of the Fifth Tripartite Regional Seminar on Industrial Relations organized in February in Hanoi by the ILO, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) and the ASEAN Secretariat and funded by ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme.

"Workers and employers will need to confront difficult choices that will often require a certain amount of compromise," said ILO Asia-Pacific Labour Relations Specialist John Ritchotte. "Balancing the need for employment security and flexibility means that neither side will get everything they want, but compromise is often the only way forward."

While the establishment of the ASEAN economic community by the end of 2015, which provides the free movement of skilled labour, is getting closer, most of the regional countries have been upgrading their labour laws and touching the issues of employment contracts.

"It is important for governments to involve workers and employers in the process of making labour laws," said Mr Shinichi

### Secondary school students to learn

## business

The Ministry of Education and Training has decided to integrate ILO business training package into the national secondary education curricula, which will be revised in 2015.

The package "Know About Business" (KAB), a training methodology for trainers and teachers to create awareness about entrepreneurship among young people, has been used in 50 countries worldwide.

In Viet Nam, KAB has been piloted in some secondary schools, continuing education centres and vocational schools by the ILO, Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Vietnam Institute of Education Science.

"Pilot KAB showed that KAB training manual is feasible, attracting interests and attention of students and satisfying practical needs," said Vice Minister of Education and Training Nguyen Vinh Hien at a workshop on entrepreneurship training education at secondary schools in January.

It is necessary, he added, to cooperate with and mobilize the support from enterprises and entrepreneurs in different segments of the entrepreneurship education, including adaptation of training materials, training for teachers and sending students to enterprises for field visits.

Takasaki, Deputy Assistant Minister for International Affairs of Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

A new community-based tourism village near the World Cultural Heritage My Son Sanctuary in the central province of Quang Nam officially opened its service to tourists in March.

The activity is part of the Luxembourg-funded project Strengthening of Inland Tourism in Quang Nam, implemented by the ILO and the provincial government and aimed at contributing to the promotion of pro-poor tourism in Viet Nam.

# My Son

## community based tourism village opens to tourists



My Son Sanctuary, Hoi An Ancient Town, and Quang Nam's 125 km stretch of white sand beaches all help to charm and attract millions of domestic and foreign tourists annually to the province, bringing significant growth to the provincial tourism industry. However, poor communities such as those living around the My Son site benefit little from tourism growth as visitors spend most of their day trip in the sanctuary area only.

The My Son community-based tourism model was set up to address this problem. The aim is to maximize the local tourism potential around the My Son Sanctuary while generating income and employment for the local community. The My Son community-based tourism village will offer tourists a homestay, catering and tour-guide service, as well as other environmental friendly and sustainable tourism activities such as mountain trekking, or kayaking in the nearby Thach Ban Lake.



Promoting tourism beyond Quang Nam's iconic attractions has become the provincial focus for other inland districts. "Quang Nam has set a goal to maximize tourism potentials to contribute more to the provincial economic growth, poverty reduction and job creation for the province's remote and poor areas," said provincial People Committee Vice Chairman Tran Minh Ca.

In addition to My Son community-based tourism village, the project also supports two other Catu ethnic minority villages, Bhoong and Droong of Dong Giang District. These two villages will officially open their services to tourists in June.

All of these pro-poor tourism models are being piloted with public-private partnership cooperation, linking local authorities, communities and a private tourism company. This promises a sustainable approach with potentials to scale up, contributing to pro-poor tourism development in Viet Nam. After being piloted in Quang Nam Province, it is expected that this intervention can lead to a model for the project to share and inspire similar communities across Viet Nam.

"Tourism, if properly developed could and should have a positive impact on poor and disadvantaged people and communities and become a powerful tool to reduce poverty and inequalities," said Mr Marc Franck, Charge d'affaires a.i of the Luxembourg Embassy in Viet Nam. "Our aim is to prove that tourism can be developed off the beaten track in a more equitable way and in partnership with local communities which have, so far, not benefitted from this rapidly developing sector."

Through this US\$1.3 million project, the Luxembourg Government, together with the ILO, expected to develop best practices which can be replicated beyond Quang Nam Province and Viet Nam in countries like Laos where Luxembourg development cooperation is very active.



# Viet Nam looks for more intl support to improve work safety



On the occasion of the 15th National Week on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and Fire Prevention launched in the northern province of Bac Giang on 17 March, the ILO talks to MOLISA Vice Minister Bui Hong Linh.

**Despite lots of efforts, Viet Nam witnessed an increase in the number of both occupational accidents and victims in 2012 compared to 2011. How would you comment on this?**

A total of 6,777 occupational accidents with 606 fatal cases were reported in 2012, up by 14.9 per cent in the number of accidents and 5.6 per cent in death toll against 2011. The major reasons for the increase include:

- The work accident report system at local level and enterprises is getting better. (More than 19,000 enterprises sent reports in 2012 compared to 12,000 in 2011.)
- As a developing country, Viet Nam has more and more enterprises of bigger sizes and new forms.
- The credit crunch in 2012 made it difficult for many enterprises to maintain production, which affected the investment in improving work conditions.



*"Ministries, State corporations and localities need to take the lead in working out and issuing action plans on occupational safety, health and fire prevention on a yearly, quarterly and monthly basis and regularly follow up with the implementation of the plans,"*

**Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Pham Thi Hai Chuyen**

**Industries with the most and serious occupational accidents last year remain mining and construction. What are the major barriers for OSH in these industries?**

To be fair, in these industries, very few accidents occur in big companies, State-owned or foreign enterprises because they are usually able to invest in OSH. More accidents happen in small and medium-sized enterprises and private companies with limited equipment and managers failing to pay enough attention to OSH.

Workers in hazardous industries such as mining and construction usually have short-term or seasonal contracts. They are mostly from the countryside and lack proper work skills and work discipline.

**What is the breakthrough measure to improve OSH issues in the coming time?**

It is important to draft the Law on Occupational Safety and Health, expectedly to be brought to the National Assembly for approval in early 2015. That will create a legal framework.



*"We must go beyond workplaces to create increased awareness of occupational safety and health. We must reach out to families, communities, and schools where our greatest asset, young people learn and prepare for work,"*

**ILO Country Director for Viet Nam Gyorgy Sziraczki**

Dissemination and education need to be pushed up to raise the awareness for workers, employers and the whole society on how to prevent work accidents and occupational diseases.

Another key measure is to strengthen labour inspection. We don't have enough State inspectors, so the only way is to promote self-inspection. Each enterprise or craft village needs to self-inspect and train workers and direct production managers in OSH.

We understand the current limited capacity of the labour inspection system in Viet Nam. We would like international organizations to help us carry out a research on how to improve the system.

**What do you think about the international supports for Viet Nam in OSH issues?**

We appreciate the international supports for Viet Nam in both technical and other resources to improve work environment and OSH.

With the special supports from the ILO, the projects on OSH in agriculture, hazardous industries and training have been effectively implemented with widespread results.

Viet Nam has got good credits for its coordinating role in National OSH Profile and for its national programme on OSH. Each year, Viet Nam receives dozens of billions of dong and technical supports from governments such as Japan and the Republic of Korea and international organizations for OSH activities.

We hope Viet Nam will get more precious supports from the ILO and other organizations in the coming time to help us improve OSH and minimize work accidents and occupational diseases for workers.

*According to the ILO, every 15 seconds, a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease globally. Every 15 seconds, 160 workers have a work-related accident. The economic burden of poor occupational safety and health practices is estimated at 4 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product each year.*

Future migrant workers expect more financial support to go abroad while returning migrant workers hope Viet Nam will soon become as developed as the countries where they used to work.

The recommendations were among the major findings during the ILO consultations with migrant workers last January in Ha Noi as part of the One UN consultation process for the post-2015 development agenda.

According to MoLISA, Viet Nam has about 500,000 workers who work abroad and labour migration is a strategy for many Vietnamese poor to change their life.

### Save up for a better life

Financial support was a major concern to all the interviewed future migrant workers who experienced difficulties in accessing the bank loans needed to be able to work abroad and high interest rates.

"It's really tough to get a bank loan, particularly in the run-up to Tet [Lunar New Year]," said 19-year-old Nguyen Van Kien from the central province of Nghe An. The young man had to borrow \$6,000 from his relatives to pay recruitment and training fees before being able to access a bank loan with annual 13 per cent interest.

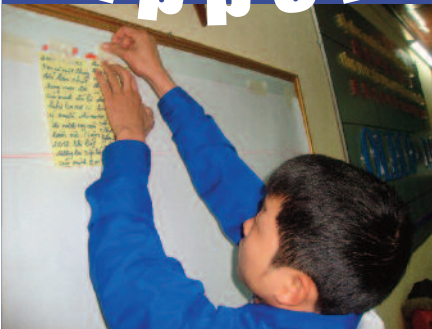
Complicated procedures and paperwork is another barrier for them.

"It took ages to get a paper stamped at the communal authorities," said Phan Van Tuan, 25, who was expecting to set off for Taiwan before Tet.

This group expected to experience good work conditions in their destination countries, be in good health and save up for a better life after getting back to Viet Nam.

"I want to learn how to open and run business so that I can invest what I earn abroad into a shop in my home city later," said Ta Thi Quynh Mai, 20, from northern Viet Tri City.

# The world we want: migrant workers need support



The ILO joined other UN agencies during the national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, for which Viet Nam is one of 50 countries selected. The consultations focus on poor and marginalized groups that otherwise may not have a voice in the formal negotiation process.

### Dream and reality

Most of the returning migrant workers from Phuc Lam Commune in Ha Noi's outlying district of My Duc said they preferred working in their homeland to going abroad.

They used to work in various countries, including Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia.

"It was such a tough time working abroad without speaking their language," said 50-

year-old Le Thi Oanh who spent three years in Taiwan as a domestic worker.

Nguyen Thi Ly, now a pork trader, was unluckier as she was sent to Malaysia by an illegal recruitment agency.

For the woman, who is now happily married, the time abroad was a nightmare when she was imprisoned after five months' working as a cook for workers at a construction site.

"I hope the Government will take strong actions to crack down on those terrible companies," she said.

The former migrant workers, however, all hoped Viet Nam would one day be as developed as the countries they had a chance to live in. The group expected a stronger job-growth economy, a better education system, a cleaner environment, improved traffic, a good healthcare system, a society with fewer crimes as well as gender equality and less domestic violence.

According to National Programme Coordinator of ILO TRIANGLE project to protect migrant workers, Nguyen Thi Mai Thuy, one of the facilitators of the consultations, Vietnamese workers, who are mostly young people without much prior work experience in an industrial environment, need to be better prepared.

"They need access to formal information channels and get in touch with licensed and reliable recruitment agencies," she said. "Policies should also be improved to better protect migrant workers."

### Upcoming events

- National workshop on the national action plan on elimination of the worst forms of child labour, Hanoi, 4 April
- Workshops with employers and workers on unemployment insurance policies, 4 April in Hai Phong, 16 April in Hanoi
- Workshops on addressing sexual harassment at the workplace, 15-16 April in HCM City, 23-24 April in Hanoi

- National workshop on "Meeting today's and tomorrow's skills needs", HCM City, 25 April
- Trainings for SIYB (Start and Improve Your Business) trainers in Hanoi, Hai Phong, Da Nang and Can Tho, April
- First annual ILO Media Awards launch, May
- Better Work Safety Fun Run, Binh Duong, 5 May
- Workshop on actuarial valuation of the Social Insurance Law reform, Hanoi, May
- Two community-based tourism villages in Quang Nam to open to tourists, June

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