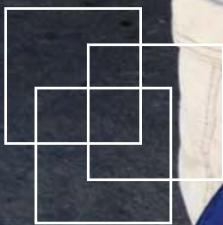


SPOTLIGHT

Special ILO/Japan Edition



International
Labour
Organization



ASIA-PACIFIC 2006
DECENT WORK
DECADE 2015

DECENT WORK

A better world starts here.

Welcome

For more than 40 years the Government of Japan has supported the ILO and promoted decent work in Asia and the Pacific. I'm delighted to say that this long-standing partnership has brought many improvements, changing the lives of ordinary working people for the better.

In this special edition of "Spotlight", you will have the opportunity to get to know a number of inspiring individuals who the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme is proud to have helped. They include a young boy from Sri Lanka's tea plantations who is finding his way back to school, workers at a rock quarry in Viet Nam looking for improved safety and health, and a Burmese migrant worker in Thailand building up a mushroom-growing business. Than Wai Aung, the Burmese mushroom entrepreneur learned his new skills from the C-BED project, supported by ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme. He said, "The training gave me a goal. I can see that in two or three years' time I will be an entrepreneur." His words sum up the difference we hope to make to people's lives, to help them make the best of their talents and opportunities. His happiness makes all our efforts and hard work worthwhile.

There are other inspiring stories like Than Wai's in this edition. While we are proud of the impact we have made on people's lives, it's their consistent pursuit of a better future and their resilience in face of difficulties that really deserves our utmost respect.

Happy reading!

Ariga Yasuo
Chief Technical Advisor

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“The training gave me a goal. I can see that in two or three years’ time I will be an entrepreneur.”

Than Wai Aung
mushroom grower

The road to entrepreneurship

BANGKOK, THAILAND – Than Wai Aung, 44, was a construction site worker until 18 months ago, when he attended a training course that transformed his life.

Than Wai left Myanmar 16 years ago and moved to neighbouring Thailand, spending most of those years working on construction sites, building housing estates in northern Thailand and the capital, Bangkok.

Three years ago Than Wai visited relatives in Ratchaburi province, along the border with Myanmar. There he saw local people growing mushrooms for a living. He decided to move there and attend a mushroom growing class run by a Thai government agency.

“Construction work is very hard. And as I love to be with nature, growing mushrooms appeals to me,” said Than Wai, “But it didn’t go well as a business during

my first year. The local market in Ratchaburi was not big enough to sell my crop. My mushrooms rotted,” he said.

Than Wai moved back to Bangkok, spending a lot of time looking for a place to rent where he could grow his mushrooms. He made sure he found markets where he could sell his products. He rented a small strip of land sandwiched between two fish ponds on the outskirts of Bangkok. There were two markets in this area. But he did not know how to calculate his income and expenditure, making it difficult to save money.

Learning the business ropes

This prompted him to attend a business management training course designed by the ILO’s Community Based Enterprise Development (C-BED), and funded by the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme. This innovative training programme for business start-ups

teaches by sharing the experiences of other trainees, helped by facilitators who direct the sessions by asking appropriate questions and following the C-BED modules provided by the ILO.

“I never knew that I had to charge for my time, and include things like gasoline and car rental into my costs,” said Than Wai, who used to rent a pick-up truck to deliver his mushrooms to market, costing him Baht 300 a day. “I have now learned to calculate my costs, to save money, and especially to save my time”.

Than Wai is not the only migrant worker to turn himself into an entrepreneur. C-BED has worked with more than 40 partners in Thailand, Cambodia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic in the past two years. More than 1,600 people have received training on business development.

Particularly well suited to marginalized and vulnerable communities, the C-BED approach has helped rural migrants and displaced people, refugees and asylum-seekers, ex-combatants, people with disabilities, school-leavers, vulnerable women and people living with HIV/AIDS.

“The C-BED designed training tools are simple and practical,” said Sho Sudo, Programme and Operations Specialist for the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme. “94 per cent of those reached have never before had access to entrepreneurship or business development training opportunities, and the majority of

small business owners report improvements in their enterprise”.

After attending the training course, held at the premises of one of the C-BED partners, the National Catholic Commission on Migration (NCCM), Than Wai stopped delivering his mushrooms. Instead, he asked his vendors to come and collect them from his farm. He dropped his prices, but saved time and other costs, including truck rental and petrol. He now spends the time saved tending his crops. He now earns about Baht20,000 (US\$628) net profit a month.

“I used to work without a goal. Whatever I earned, I spent it,” said Than Wai who now uses financial management software provided by the NCCM, together with the C-BED training, to record income and expenses on his computer. “If you don’t know how to save, you will remain an employee. But I want to be an employer.”

Than Wai is expanding his business. He has hired one more worker, who is also a migrant worker from Myanmar. He is looking for a bigger piece of land to enlarge his farm, and wants to hire three more workers. His goal now is to double his production and produce 70-80 kilograms of mushrooms every day.

“The training gave me a goal. I can see that in two or three years’ time I will be an entrepreneur,” he said.

About C-BED

Community-Based Enterprise Development or C-BED is a low-cost, easily implementable training approach for helping entrepreneurs and micro-business owners to improve their businesses. Carried out without external trainers or resources, C-BED has great utility in poor, vulnerable or marginalised communities, where funding is limited or communities are hard to reach due to social or geographical isolation.

C-BED empowers participants to share experiences and aspirations with others from their community, strengthening community networks and bonds particularly where high levels of social exclusion and isolation have prevented members of these vulnerable groups from forming supportive networks.

C-BED training provides ILO constituents with easily sustained tools to engage these beneficiaries from vulnerable populations, assist beneficiaries to reduce their economic vulnerability, link them to other members of their community and other social safety net programmes and services, and improve their access to decent work. In Asia-Pacific, the ILO is implementing C-BED in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Nepal, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam.



“I will come to school and I don’t want to be out of school. I like to come to school.”

Saddis Kumar

The way back to school

RATNAPURA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA – Every morning Saddis Kumar puts on his uniform, carefully combs his hair, straightens his tie, fills his water bottle and says goodbye to his parents. With all that done, the 13-year-old boy is ready for school.

It wasn’t always like this. Saddis only recently returned to school after a two year lapse.

“I will come to school again and I don’t want to be out of school. I like to come to school,” he said.

Saddis and his family live on the Rilhena Estate, a vast tea plantation in Ratnapura District, in Sri Lanka’s Sabaragamuwa Province. There are about 500 workers on the estate, producing the world-famous Dilmah tea.

Saddis’ stepmother, Ambiga Kumar Meena, is one of the tea pluckers. She’s also the family’s only income earner, because two years ago Saddis’ father had major kidney surgery and has been unable to work since. After that the 39-year-old woman had to work even harder, to pay medical bills, while also looking after Saddis’ younger half-sister. Without enough parental support, the young boy started playing truant and eventually dropped out of school completely. Unfortunately, Saddis is not an isolated case.

“The indicators of children’s educational attainment and health in the plantation sector are lower than the

national average,” said Hiroshi Gunatilake, Programme Assistant of the ILO’s Social Protection and Child Labour Project. “We have seen children not going to school regularly finally end up in child labour and we want to prevent this from happening.”

The Social Protection and Child Labour Project began work in June 2014, with support from the the ILO/Japan Multilateral Programme. ILO specialists trained the staff on the Rilhena Estate in social protection and child rights. They also taught them how to collect and analyse data so that they could keep track of the child labour situation.

It didn’t take long for the newly-trained welfare officers on the estate to spot Saddis. During a visit to his family they talked to his parents and concluded the young boy was very vulnerable to falling into child labour. Action was needed.

“We enrolled the child in our school about two months ago. We are observing the child and intend to bring the child on par with others in his age group,” explained Wilma Perera, welfare officer of Rilhena Estate.

At school, Saddis enjoys a free breakfast. In class he enthusiastically answers his teacher’s questions. A smile has returned to his face.

The child labour project already boasts quite a few

successful stories like Saddis'. As well as helping existing child labourers with education and health care, the project also focuses on prevention – for example by teaching better family budget management so that children don't have to earn.

But bringing children back into school solves only part of the problem. The bigger question for Ms Gunatilake and her colleagues is how to make sure the students complete their education.

To address this the project team started working with Sri Lanka's social partners - workers' and employers' organizations – and the partnership has already produced positive improvements. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sabaragamuwa has asked its members not to use child labour, is sponsoring meetings and workshops on child labour issues, and providing children with schoolbags and stationary.

"If we can bring all the partners like the private sector, the government, and some other social partners together, we'll be able to give plantation children proper education," Ms Gunatilake said. "If we can give them proper education, definitely they will not be vulnerable to child labour."

With the help from the ILO, Balangoda Plantations PLC, another plantation in Sabaragamuwa Province, has established an activity center in Pettiagalla. The centre provides plantation workers with training in sewing, paper cutting and book binding, to help them make extra money and so keep their children out of child labour.

"From that training I started my own business," 29-year-old Selvaraj Selvamalar explained. "I received many benefits from the project. I would like to thank ILO for this. The ILO needs to continue their work in our plantation." Her business has grown so well that she has moved into town and now sends her children to a better school.

According to Anil de Mel, General Manager of Balangoda Plantations PLC, as well as helping workers' households manage their existing budgets better, "we are also trying to generate more income for the family. That part is also being covered with the new programme that just started with the ILO."

In 2010 the Sri Lankan Government made a commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in the country by 2016. Since then the Government and the ILO have been working together towards this goal, and the new child labour project is intended to build on existing achievements. The project has boosted confidence that the Government will reach its 2016 goal.

"We took, with the ILO support, the new initiatives, what we call 'child labour free zones'. It means we mainstreamed or integrated the child labour concerns into district or sectoral development plans." Ananda Wimalaweera, Senior Assistant Secretary of Labour and Labour Relations of Sri Lanka, said.

"We are optimistic that we will reach our target as we planned, with ILO support."





Unemployed? In Viet Nam there's no need to panic

HANOI, VIET NAM – Luong Van Thanh has his own ideas about job-hunting. Although the young factory engineer is unemployed, he's not jumping into the first opportunity that comes along. Rather, he is taking time to look for a job that really suits his skills and experience and offers him good future prospects.

“Firstly I search online, secondly, through friends,” he said. “I think it's not difficult to find just any job but it is challenging to find a suitable job”. Mr Thanh's ability to take time to look for what he wants isn't a matter of luck, or wealth. Some time ago he joined Viet Nam's Unemployment Insurance Scheme, which was set up in 2009. The contributions he made during his last period of employment guarantee him a monthly income while he is looking for work.

When Mr Thanh lost his job he went to an Employment Service Center (ESC) near his Hanoi home and made a claim for benefits. When the claim was approved he received an ATM card through which he could access his monthly unemployment benefit, as well as a health insurance card that covered him for medical services. These benefits are available for up to six months, depending on how long the scheme member has been making contributions. For Mr Thanh, the benefits gave him enough time to think properly about where his career should go next.

“Initially I wanted to start my own business but I received advice from my friends who are successful in business saying that at present it's better to choose a safer option.”

Dam Viet Ha also joined the unemployment insurance scheme. The petite young mother had some savings from her previous job, but the extra insurance benefits made sure she had enough to get by during the three months she was without work. “With those additional unemployment insurance benefits, my family was able to pay for day-to-day costs, especially for my baby,” she said.

As well as the benefits and health care, the ESC also helped Ms Ha find a suitable new job, in product promotion. “Based on my previous experience, they searched their databases for a suitable position and then they helped me get the job,” she said. “I have passed the two-month probationary period and now working as

a staff member. I have a formal contract now.”

The ESC also helps companies find the staff they need, a tricky task in Viet Nam’s fast-changing economy. At least twice a month job fairs are organized to give employers and job-seekers a chance to meet and talk face to face in the ESC’s modern and spacious offices.

Pham Hong Lan, a HR officer, says her manufacturing company receives many applications when it advertises through the internet, but that isn’t enough to select the best candidates. “I like to come here and have direct contact with those interested in the position so as to understand what their needs and expectations are,” she said.

The improvements and expansion of Viet Nam’s Unemployment Insurance scheme have been supported by a project run by the ILO. Since 2011, the ILO/Japan Project to Promote and Build Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services has been working with the Government, workers’ and employers’ organizations of Viet Nam, to improve the delivery of social security benefits and services.

“Unemployment Insurance policies are very important for ensuring social security for the people of this country, because they not only provide financial support...to stabilize their lives during the period of unemployment, they also help them to find new work,” said Nguyen Thi Hai Van, Director of Bureau of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA).

“This project has contributed significantly to our review of unemployment insurance policy and has supported its implementation in Viet Nam. The project has made special contributions to our revision of UI administration and it has studied ways to extend the coverage of the unemployment insurance system.”

The project also helped create a stronger partnership between the Government, workers’ and employers’ organizations, by running workshops, seminars and training sessions. Its success means that consideration is now being given to applying the approach and lessons learned elsewhere.

“We hope that the Viet Nam experience can be shared and replicated in other ASEAN countries,” said Ngo Thi Loan, ILO National Project Coordinator of Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services in ASEAN.



“Unemployment Insurance policies are very important for ensuring social security for the people of this country, because they not only provide financial support...to stabilize their lives during the period of unemployment, they also help them to find new work.”

Nguyen Thi Hai Van
Director of Bureau of Employment,
Ministry of Labour,
Invalids and Social Affairs



“Now that we learned the business we can pick it up and do it for a living when returning home.”

Pyone Cho
catfish farmer

Skills for a brighter future

MAE SOT, THAILAND – Standing on an edge of a pond in the jungle, Pyone Cho starts to sing, in a pleasant, wordless, rhythm that rises and falls. The 46-year-old Karen refugee from Myanmar uses the song to call his fish to eat.

With his upturned hat serving as a bowl, he gently throws small balls of fish food into the pond. Catfish, the size of an adult's arm, eagerly gulp down the pellets, making big splashes and painting a smile on Pyone Cho's face.

Inside the confines of a remote refugee camp, Pyone Cho has found a new career, raising catfish for sale, thanks to an innovative programme that combines livelihood training with business skills.

“Now that we learned the business side of it, we can pick it up and do it for a living when returning home,” said Pyone Cho.

In 2006 he and his family fled their home in Hpa-an, capital of Karen State in Myanmar, and sought refuge

in Mae La Temporary Shelter in Mae Sot, Tak, Thailand. Since then he and his wife have earned a little money making and selling snacks to school children inside the camp.

But in 2014, thanks to his new catfish farming skills, Pyone Cho made his first surplus income. “1,600 Baht,” (US\$50) he says, grinning as he recalls the sale of his first catch.

Livelihood training programmes had been run at the Mae La Temporary Shelter for about three years, by the humanitarian organization Solidarités International. About 300 refugees at Mae La Temporary Shelter were given equipment, catfish fry, tadpoles and fish food, and trained to raise catfish and frogs to eat themselves, with the aim of improving the refugees' diet by boosting their protein intake.

“It failed. People didn't continue after their first attempt,” said Apisit Laolumpuk, Solidarités International's Livelihood Team Leader. “People who live in refugee camps are very used to receiving. They

become dependent. To get them to do something or invest in anything is very hard.”

Realising there was a problem, Solidarités International changed their strategy. They combined the 2014 livelihood training with the ILO’s Community-Based Enterprise Development (C-BED) course for Aspiring Entrepreneurs.

Pyone Cho was one of 36 refugees who took the new livelihood-plus-business skills course. Four or five months later, all 36 trainees sold their first harvest of catfish and started nurturing a second batch.

“It is a success. They have continued to raise the fish and even expand production on their own initiative. I’m very happy,” said Apisit.

A second, combined livelihood-plus-business training was held in May 2014. Say Lar Htoo, 57, took part and after just a few months her fish had grown impressively.

“They are so big already,” said Say Lar proudly. “I myself eat only twice a day, but I feed my fish three times a day.”

“What I learned from the training was to do small business to survive wherever we go.”

“I feel proud of them,” said Sho Sudo, Programme and Operations Specialist for the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme, which funds the programme, during a visit to the refugees’ fish farms at the camp. “They have mastered it here. The knowledge can travel with them. They can do it when they return home too.”

Funded by the ILO/Japan Programme, C-BED has worked with more than 40 partners in the last two years, in Thailand, Cambodia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. More than 2,500 people have received training on business development. Particularly well suited to marginalized and vulnerable communities, the C-BED approach has helped rural migrants and displaced people, refugees and asylum-seekers, ex-combatants, people with disabilities, school-leavers, vulnerable women and people living with HIV/AIDS.

C-BED’s training approach is innovative because it teaches without the involvement of trained trainers or experts. Instead the training tools are self-facilitated in and by communities and new skills are developed through activities designed to draw on the existing life



experiences, skills, and knowledge of trainees.

“I never thought the C-BED’s training methodology, the kind of training without a trainer, would ever work,” said Kanika Tamrongsaksanguan, Area Coordinator, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Thailand (ADRA), another NGO that has added C-BED’s business skills training to their livelihood training. “But it got them to argue and share. Also, as they work in groups, they are more relaxed and prepared to speak up”.



Fighting a slow and invisible killer

HA TINH, VIET NAM – The 40 degree Celsius heat cools down after a night of northern winds in the central province of Ha Tinh – one of the poorest parts of Viet Nam.

The drop in temperature is a great relief to the more than 30 workers at Hung Thinh rock quarry. Dang Quoc Dai, a driller, is happy starting a new work day – with his gloves off and the mask in his shirt pocket. “I usually don’t wear the mask and gloves, especially on a cool and breezy day like this,” the 32 year-old father of two children says. “Look! I’m healthy,” he shouts, to make his voice heard while placing his sun-burned and wrinkled hands on the drilling machine at a dusty mountain edge.

But the industry he has been in for the past three years is not only infamous for deadly work accidents, but also has an alarming rate of occupational diseases. Each year, thousands of workers become victims of diseases that can be fatal without proper treatment.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Silicosis – a lung disease caused by the inhalation of crystalline silica dust – is one of the common health problems experienced by workers in Viet Nam’s rock quarries.

In 2011, 76 per cent of occupational disease compensation in Viet Nam was related to Silicosis. The symptoms of this incurable disease usually take years to develop but can become acute under intense exposure, causing shortness of breath, hearing loss, weakness, weight loss and ultimately, death.

Self-inspection and training

To help prevent occupational diseases in the industry, the ILO Viet Nam office has started to develop a set of tools for self-inspection and training on safety standards at rock quarries. The work is part of the project funded by the ILO/Japan Programme, Occupational Safety and Health in Hazardous Work.

Violations of occupational safety and health regulations are common at rock quarries in Viet Nam, which are mostly small in size and use manual work. Enhancing self-inspection and training are important to save the lives of workers in this hazardous sector.

“We don’t have enough state inspectors, so the only way is to promote self-inspection,” the Vice-Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Bui Hong Linh, explains. “Each enterprise needs to self-inspect and train workers and direct production managers in occupational safety and health.” According to the Ministry of

Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), many workers in the industry are on short-term or seasonal contracts, which give them fewer chances for training, including on safety and health issues. “They are mostly from the countryside and lack proper work skills and work discipline,” said the Vice-Minister.

Managers themselves tend to play down the real extent of the problem. While visiting the production site amidst the silica dust, the chief supervisor at Hung Thinh rock quarry, Le Thao Trung, has no protection mask on. “Why do you need masks when the weather is so pleasant? We only need them for hot days when it becomes really dusty,” he says.

Tran Dinh Thang, Director of another quarry in Hong Linh District, in the province of Ha Tinh, does not know which type of mask he should buy for his 40 workers.

“We distribute new masks twice every year and they are all the normal type [without filters]. We have a budget of about VND30 million (more than US\$1,400), a year to buy protection tools but I honestly don’t know which ones suit quarry workers best,” he explains. The Hong Linh mountain range, that has inspired many artists and musicians, is the home of 13 rock quarries, generating jobs for some 1,000 locals in Hong Linh District.

Workers in the industry – by law – should have two full medical examinations every year. However, only a few enterprises sent their workers to the local preventive medicine centre for health checks last year. The centre gave most of the examined workers “Grade A” health certificates, although it does not have any proper equipment to detect Silicosis.

Promoting better understanding of OSH

The self-inspection tool developed by the ILO in cooperation with MoLISA, is expected to promote a better understanding of safety and health issues in the quarries.

Instead of government regulations on OSH, which are difficult to understand and are scattered over various documents, a user-friendly inspection checklist will be provided to enterprises - particularly smaller ones in the industry – together with training.

“If enterprises and workers know the requirements, such as those relating to the concentration of dust, dynamite explosions, health checks and safety equipment, they can follow them on their own or with our help, to ensure a safe workplace,” ILO Viet Nam national project coordinator, Nguyen Thai Hoa said.

Fortunately, this is also what many quarry managers like Tran Dinh Thang are looking for. “We want to be shown what can be done to improve working conditions in the quarries,” he said.

For ILO Viet Nam Country Director, Gyorgy Sziraczki, creating a safety culture could make work “life-giving and not life-taking”. After all, he says, “decent work is safe work.”

Health and safety at work:

Facts and figures

- About 2 million people die each year from work-related diseases.
 - 321,000 people die each year from occupational accidents.
 - There are 160 million non-fatal work-related diseases per year.
 - There are 317 million non-fatal occupational accidents per year.
 - Every 15 second, a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease.
- Every second, 10 workers have a work-related accident.

“If enterprises and workers know the requirements, such as those relating to the concentration of dust, dynamite explosions, health checks and safety equipment, they can follow them on their own or with our help, to ensure a safe workplace.”

Nguyen Thai Hoa
ILO Viet Nam national project
coordinator

Bold move in Sri Lanka lets people with HIV get health coverage

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA – Palitha Bandara runs a business in Colombo buying and selling ready-made garments, which brings him a small income. Eight years ago, he was diagnosed with HIV.

Until recently, his HIV-positive diagnosis left him excluded from health insurance and he received no reimbursement for HIV-related medical costs. For people in Mr Bandara's situation, this often means severe financial consequences for them and their families.

However, in a bold move spearheaded by the ILO, four insurance companies in Sri Lanka have now removed HIV-related exclusion clauses. The firms - Janashakthi Insurance PLC, People's Insurance Ltd, Alliance Insurance Pvt Ltd and Co-operative Insurance Company Ltd - will now pay medical expenses for those living with the virus.

This policy shift has turned life around for many in the country who are HIV-positive. It means out-of-pocket expenses -- such as the cost of taking public transport

to health services - are now covered.

"This will really be helpful for positive people in cases of medical emergency. It can also help to enhance the quality of life for us and our families and reduce stigma and discrimination towards us," says Mr Bandara, who is also a member of Sri Lanka's Positive Hopes Alliance, a network for people living with HIV.

Out-of-pocket impact

Chandra Schaffter, Founder and Deputy Chairman of Janashakthi Insurance PLC, reflects the evolving attitude among insurers when it comes to health coverage policy.

"In my own view, HIV is not much different to diabetes, cancer or kidney failure...and there is no real reason for treating it differently. Insurance is meant to cover unexpected events and not certainties," he said.

Over the past few years, the ILO has been advocating for a national dialogue with insurers in Sri Lanka.

"This will really be helpful for positive people in cases of medical emergency. It can also help to enhance the quality of life for us and our families and reduce stigma and discrimination towards us."

Palitha Bandara
Positive Hopes Alliance Sri Lanka



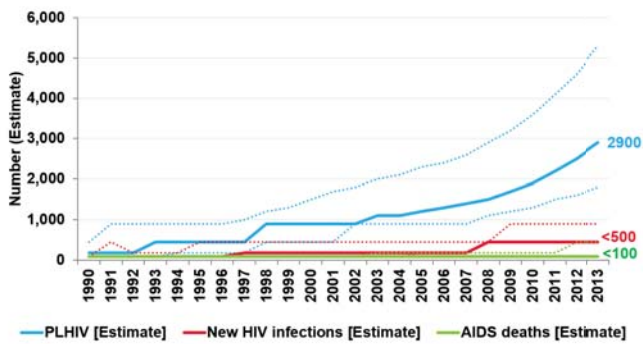
In August 2013, Indira Hettiarachchi, National Project Coordinator of ILO, Sri Lanka, was invited to address the country's quarterly CEO forum on the social and economic case for including those living with HIV in policies.

Stressing that HIV coverage would not burden companies with major costs, the ILO presented an evidence-based, humane and economic argument, and emphasized that better policies would help people avoid falling into poverty. The logic worked. As a result, several CEOs decided to overhaul their firms' policies.

The insurers' move is seen as the first step in the challenge to get all 20 of Sri Lanka's insurance companies to drop HIV-related exclusion clauses.

"This is a very important milestone in improving social protection for people infected and affected by HIV. We are confident that more insurance companies will also join this initiative, which is a significant step towards eliminating discrimination," said Li Donglin, ILO Country Director for Sri Lanka.

Estimated number of adults and children living with HIV, new HIV infections and AIDS deaths in Sri Lanka, 1990-2013



Source: UNAIDS

ILO recommendations

Such insurance industry progress is in line with the recommendations of a recent ILO study, Access to and effects of social protection on workers living with HIV and their households. The study, launched by the ILO in June 2014 in Geneva, was undertaken in four countries, Guatemala, Indonesia, Rwanda and Ukraine.

According to the study, the public sector plays a dominant role in social protection. But the majority of those living with HIV, particularly women and transgender persons, are not reached, as they are more likely to work in the informal economy, and often without contracts.

The report highlights the issue of high out-of-pocket expenses, including transport costs, in accessing free government-provided antiretroviral medication and treatment for opportunistic infections.

Beyond Sri Lankan borders

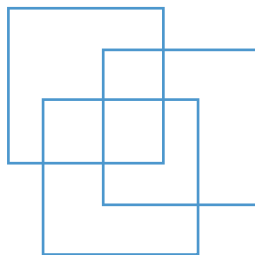
"It is extremely important for the private sector to complement the effort of governments and extend health insurance to people living with HIV. I hope the initiative of Sri Lankan insurance companies will be replicated in other countries as well," says Alice Ouedraogo, Chief of HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (ILOAIDS), Geneva.

Even more could be done to boost the impact of social protection for people like Mr Bandara. Beyond enhanced health insurance, this includes a combination of income, livelihood and employment support. However, in Sri Lanka, better health insurance coverage marks an ambitious step forward.

"The intervention lifts the financial barriers in accessing treatment and related services in the private sector, broadening the scope of HIV treatment, care and support," says UNAIDS Country Officer Dayanath Ranatunga. "This is a giant achievement in the Sri Lankan HIV response."

"This is a very important milestone in improving social protection for people infected and affected by HIV."

Li Donglin
ILO Country Director for Sri Lanka



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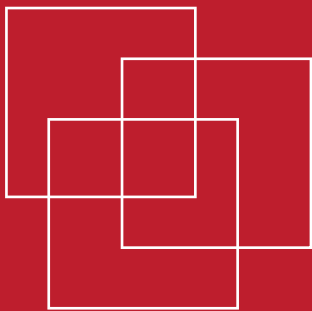
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The Asia Pacific Decent Work Decade

The International Labour Organization's members in Asia and the Pacific - governments, employers' and workers' organizations - have committed themselves to an "Asia-Pacific Decent Work Decade 2006-2015". In doing so they reaffirmed their commitment to achieving full, productive and decent employment for their people. To help realize the aims of the Decade five regional priority areas were selected:

- Competitiveness, productivity and jobs.
- Labour market governance.
- Youth employment.
- Managing labour migration.
- Local development for poverty reduction.

These priorities compliment each member country's individual goals, which are outlined in their national Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). In turn, these DWCP's shape the ILO's work with its member States and so support the Organization's mandated aim, of Decent Work for All.



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