

ILO calls for Job-Rich Growth and Stronger Social Protection in Cambodia

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(ILO Cambodia) The International Labour Organization (ILO) today stressed Cambodia's need for job-rich growth warning that not sufficient productive jobs have been generated in the midst of the country's economic improvements over the past number of years.

"The challenge is not to increase the number of jobs but to increase the number of good jobs" said Sukti Dasgupta, ILO Senior Specialist on Employment and Labour Market Policies. "Cambodia's working age population is growing at the fastest level in the region, yet most available jobs are informal and don't help people to come out of poverty. This needs to be addressed on the demand side by creating more jobs and on the supply side by improving the quality of jobs for workers and setting up relevant institutions."

Prior to the 2008 economic crisis Cambodia had the fastest growing GDP in the Asia Pacific Region, second only to China. Although Cambodia has almost entirely rebounded from the crisis, the ILO warned that productive employment has not come with growth with over two million Cambodians classed as 'working poor' from a labour force of over seven million. The need to address the increasing issue of youth employment was highlighted. The ILO also stressed the need for social protection in the Kingdom to be strengthened. "Unemployment here is low, almost non-existent at 1.6% but in the absence of social protection people will take whatever jobs are available which are likely to be vulnerable jobs that don't provide good livelihoods" said Ms Dasgupta. "Social Protection leads to better employment and better growth and a more equitable, fruitful society."

The remarks were made at the Phnom Penh Hotel today during a workshop on "Extending Social Protection and Promoting Employment" organised by the MoLVT and the ILO with financial support from the European Union (EU). The event, at which Trade Unions, government and employers' representatives expressed their views and commitment towards extending the coverage of social protection, presented the results of two studies contributing to the forthcoming National Social Protection and Employment Strategies.

The EU Delegation to Cambodia conveyed its commendation to the Royal Government of Cambodia for the recent approval of the National Social Protection Strategy. "Wide-coverage social protection systems are key elements of social cohesion and stability. Thus the EU hopes that its support provided in partnership with ILO will go a long way in helping the Royal Government of Cambodia to take informed decisions to fulfil its commitment to increase social protection measures, especially for the most vulnerable groups."

The ILO-EU Social Protection/Employment project is working with the Royal Government of Cambodia and other key stakeholders in support of the National Social Protection Strategy, which aims at extending basic social protection for all Cambodians. The Royal Government has requested ILO's assistance in developing a national employment policy and strengthening social protection within the framework of the National Strategic Development Plan. The next phase of this project aims at facilitating and informing discussions on the Social Protection and Employment Strategies of Cambodia will be to complete the studies with the observations and recommendations received during the validation workshop. In early 2012, a third report will be prepared for Cambodia on how the social and employment policies existing in Cambodia or planned for Cambodia can be mutually strengthened.

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Press Release

