

Launch of ILO-EU Social Protection Studies in Cambodia

Somadevi Angkor Hotel, Siem Reap province, Cambodia

28 May 2013, 17:00-19:30 hours

Introductory Remarks by Mr. Maurizio Bussi, ILO Bangkok

Excellency Sann Vathana

Ambassador Jean-François Cautain, European Union Delegation to the Kingdom of Cambodia;

Participants and distinguished guests;

It is my pleasure to launch here in Siem Reap – the cradle of Cambodian culture – the publication of the ILO and EU's joint studies on social protection and employment in Cambodia.

Over the past 3 years this project has assessed SP and employment situations in 3 countries – Cambodia, Honduras and Burkina Faso – and developed important recommendations for promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Throughout, the process has been rooted in social dialogue and benefitted from the active participation of government, workers' and employers' organisations, as well as civil society and development partners. Their contributions have closely informed the conclusions and recommendations presented in these studies, and also helped to mobilise a broad base of support for their effective implementation.

Scope of Cambodian studies

In Cambodia the project has supported 3 diagnostic studies examining the national situation regarding employment and social protection; an exercise to estimate the cost of implementing the National Social Protection Strategy; and a roadmap towards the effective integration of employment and social protection policies.

In addition, two training events were carried out in November 2011 and November 2012 to build the capacity of relevant stakeholders and to support the development of these studies.

Taken together, the studies have provided a comprehensive set of analytical and technical tools which will closely inform future policy and programming in this area.

EU-ILO links

These studies have come at a time when the ILO and EU have both taken the lead in moving forward the SP and employment agendas at the global level. This is best exemplified by the ILO's SPF recommendation which was adopted at the ILC in June 2012; the Commission's communication on SP; and the discussions on employment at the ILC in 2010.

Indeed, these actions have helped to highlight the close links between the ILO's decent work agenda and the EU's "Agenda for Change", both of which call for a new social and economic paradigm which emphasises inclusive and equitable growth; for a more just and sustainable framework for human development; and for a more coherent and approach to policies and programming in this area.

The ILO's decent work agenda emphasises four interlinking elements: 1) job creation; 2) guaranteeing rights at work; 3) extending social protection; 4) promoting social dialogue. All four are mutually supportive and are best approached by combining measures such as entrepreneurship, minimum wages, public investment in skills and active labour market policies that increase the quality and quantity of jobs.

Going forward/ recommendations

In Cambodia, the pertinence of the ILO's DW agenda and the EU's 'Agenda for Change' is underlined by the fact that Cambodia's economic growth rate, averaging 9.9% a year from 2002 to 2008, – while impressive – is not sufficiently benefitting enough of the population; and growth in the economy is not being adequately translated into jobs, opportunity and prosperity for all Cambodian people.

The studies which we are jointly launching today provide tangible recommendations on how this can be turned into a reality:

First, the development of a National Employment Strategy (NES), which will provide a foundation for the creation decent job opportunities; improve productivity and help to move workers from the informal to the formal sector.

Second, the effective implementation of the social transfers planned in the National Social Protection Strategy. The targeted approach would cost between 1.2 and 2.3 per cent of GDP per year, whereas a more ambitious scenario would cost between 5 and 7 per cent of GDP per year.

Third, through the provision of a Social Service Delivery Mechanism (SSDM) which will provide a 'one stop shop' for social protection and employment services and ensure a coordinated, and integrated delivery of services to a broader range of people.

Last, through the further development of mandatory social insurance, including the effective implementation of a health insurance system and pension scheme for workers in the formal sector.

Concluding Remarks

Thanks are therefore due to everybody here today who contributed to these studies.

Deepening and accelerating economic growth and opportunity will not be possible without healthy, capable and engaged citizens who are guaranteed a basic level of education, healthcare and income support.

It is therefore vital that we secure the necessary political and financial commitments at a national and sub-national level to make these recommendations a reality.