

## **Expert Meeting**

**On**

### ***Building Social Safety Nets for Employment - Strategies in Asia -***

***21-22 February 2011***

Toki Messe  
Niigata, Japan

Draft Agenda

#### **Concept of the Meeting**

Asian countries have been making rapid economic growth in recent years, but persistent poverty and growing inequalities remain. The two past economic crises have revealed the need for adequate social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations from calamity, particularly in financial crises. In response, a number of international organizations including the ILO, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank took the initiative to promote social safety nets in Asian countries. Although differing in history, culture, religion and stage of development, many countries have made efforts to strengthen their social safety nets. However, the overall picture is still far from attaining the goal of providing adequate safety nets for all.

Social safety nets provide protection from short-term and emergency risks. Social safety net programmes vary considerably depending on the risks to be covered, such as the ones which may affect individual households (i.e. illness, disability or unemployment), ones which may affect communities or regions (i.e. floods or famine), or ones that may affect countries (i.e. global financial crisis). Among those, preparations for the risks of illness and certainty of ageing, namely health insurance and pensions have progressed substantially in their coverage. On the other hand, social safety nets for employment, which provide temporary income security and help for getting re-employed, remain underdeveloped in many countries.

Employment is the key to the quality of life and provides the most sustainable route out of poverty by facilitating social mobility and promoting opportunities. It also enables nations to become sustainably developed. Social safety nets for employment also provide human security, as does Japanese ODA, in improving people's lives by ensuring their employment.

The importance of social safety nets for employment is higher than ever in a globalizing world, in which the Asian region has become more integrated and interdependent. Events in recent years have shown that a crisis can rapidly spread across economies and have a dramatic adverse impact on the entire regional and global economic system and on employment. Moreover, strong and inclusive social safety nets for employment can help smooth transition of workers when structural changes are needed.

Ensuring employment opportunities and independence for all adults is one of the goals of social development. Social safety net programmes in employment should serve this goal. Safety net programmes should not be limited to providing income security for the unemployed, but work as a spring-board to reintegrate them into labour market. The programmes include not only unemployment insurance, but also job matching, job-search assistance and vocational training.

The target of social safety nets for employment is not limited to formal workers. During the economic crises, the approach of programs in job creation was implemented in many countries, including labour intensive public works, subsidies to small and medium sized enterprises for maintaining employment, entrepreneurship programmes by social fund/micro credit in communities and the expansion of public sector employment in the medical and education sectors. Those programmes covered both informal and formal workers. Adequate policy interventions are required for job-losers, no matter whether they are in the formal or informal sectors.

This Expert Meeting aims to identify key elements for the promotion of social safety nets for employment. The first part of the meeting will cover an overview of the evolution of social safety nets in Asian countries; and defining the concept of social safety nets. The second part will focus on safety nets for employment, review different types of safety net programmes taking examples from the response to the crisis. Particular attention will be paid to promoting unemployment insurance combined with active labour market policies, for which the challenges, strategies and the role of tripartite partners will be identified.

The outcomes of the Meeting are to be distributed as background information in the Special Session which will be organized by the MHLW on 12 April, in conjunction with 15<sup>th</sup> Asian and the Pacific Regional Meeting to be held in April 2011 in Kyoto.

### Monday 21 February 2011

09:00 – 09:30            Registration

#### **OPENING SESSION**

09:30 – 9:50

#### **Opening Remarks**

-Mr. Taro Muraki

Assistant Minister for International Affairs, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

#### **Remarks**

-Mr. Shinichi Hasegawa

Representative, ILO Office in Japan

09:50 – 10:10

#### **Introduction to the Meeting**

- Mr. Shojiro Yasui

Deputy Director for International Cooperation on Labour  
International Affairs Division  
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

10:10 – 10:40

#### **Tea/Coffee Break**

## **SESSION 1: Overview of the Evolution of Social Safety Nets for Asian countries**

10:40– 11:20 **Concepts of Social Safety Nets**

“Safety nets” are said to owe their origin to the net to protect a performer of aerial acrobatics in a circus. The definition of social safety nets seems to vary widely; however, there is a consensus that the programmes of the nets cover short-term or emergency risks, which may affect individual households (i.e. illness, disability or unemployment), communities or regions (i.e. floods or famine), or countries (a global financial crisis). This session aims to clarify key concepts to understand what social safety nets are.

### **Presentation**

-Dr. Juro Teranishi

Professor, Nihon University, Professor Emeritus, Hitotsubashi University

### **Discussion**

11:20 – 12:10 **Overview of the Evolution of Social Safety Nets in Asian Countries**

Social safety nets have been developed to compensate for the lack of mutual assistance in households or communities, thus the formation of social safety net programmes depend largely on the culture, history, religion and stage of development of each country. In addition, social safety net programmes can be categorized by the targeted risks such as individual risks, region-wide or nation-wide risks, and by funding schemes such as social insurance, provident funds or public assistance. This session aims to deepen our understanding of the factors affecting the development of the nets, and review the current situation of social safety nets in Asian countries in each category.

### **Presentation**

-Dr. Yasuhito Asami

Professor of Comparative Politics at Hitotsubashi University

### **Short Comment**

-Ms. Valerie Schmitt

Social Security Specialist, Decent Work Technical Team in Bangkok, ILO

### **Discussion**

12:10 – 14:00 Lunch Break

## **SESSION 2: Promotion of Social Safety Nets for Employment: Challenges and Strategy**

14:00 – 15:20 **Social Safety Nets for Employment - Policy Implication from the Experience of the Past Two Economic Crises -**

Social safety net programmes to respond to global economic crises have covered mainly loss of income by the loss of work for both hired and self-employed workers. The programmes include job creation approaches, such as labour-intensive public works, subsidies to small and medium sized enterprises for maintaining employment, entrepreneurship programmes by social fund/micro credit in

communities, and the expansion of public sector employment in the medical and education sectors; and also workers assistance approaches, such as unemployment insurance systems, public employment services, or public vocational training. This session aims to share the experience of the responses of Asian countries and international organizations to the past two economic crises, namely the Asian Currency Crisis in 1997 and the current economic crisis which started in 2008.

#### **Presentation**

-Ms. Sri Wening Handayani

Principal Social Development Specialist, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, Asian Development Bank

-Mr. Mukesh C. Gupta

Senior Specialist Employment Intensive Investments, Decent work Technical Team in New Delhi, ILO

#### **Discussion**

15:20 – 15:50 **Tea/Coffee Break**

15:50 – 17:10 **Challenges and Strategies for Promoting Unemployment Insurance and Active Labour Market Policies in Asia**

As a workers assistance approach, unemployment insurance combined with effective active labour market policies, such as employment service and vocational training, are effective tools for reintegrating the unemployed into the labour market. However, policy development in this area is relatively slow in Asia, with only a few countries introducing unemployment insurance after the Asian Currency Crisis. This session aims to critically re-examine the conventional concerns upon the introduction of insurance and explore strategies to establish an unemployment insurance system combined with active labour market policies.

#### **Part 1**

##### **Presentation**

-Mr. Noriyuki Suzuki

General Secretary, ITUC-Asia Pacific

-Mr. Fasihul Karim Siddiqi

Employers' Federation of Pakistan

##### **Discussion**

19:00 – 20:30 **Dinner**

hosted by Taro Muraki, Assistant Minister for International Affairs

**Tuesday 22 February 2011**

9:00 – 11:00 **Challenges and Strategies for Promoting Unemployment Insurance and Active Labour Market Policies in Asia**

#### **Part 2**

9:00 – 10:10            **Presentation**  
-Dr. Yasuhiro Kamimura  
    Associate Professor of Welfare Sociology and Compative Social Policy ,  
    Nagoya Univesity  
-Ms. Valerie Schmitt  
    Social Security Specialist, Decent Work Technical Team in Bangkok, ILO  
-Mr. Naoki Hamada  
    Former JICA expert

10:10 – 10:40            **Tea/Coffee Break**

10:40 – 11:30            **Discussion**

#### **CLOSING SESSION**

11:30 – 11:45            **Closing Remarks**  
-Ms. Chihoko Asada  
    Deputy Assistant Minister for International Affairs, Ministry of Health,  
    Labour and Welfare, Japan

12:00 – 13:00    **Lunch**