

Special Session

Organized by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan

On

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

12 April 2011

**Kyoto International Conference Center
Kyoto, Japan**

Draft Agenda

Concept of the Session

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 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 session aims to identify major challenges, explore future strategies and promote the roles of tripartite partners for building social safety nets for employment in Asia through the active discussions of the participating leaders.

Opening Session

19:00 – 19:20

Keynote Address

-H.E. Mr. Ristuo Hosokawa

Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

Discussion on Promotion of Social Safety Nets for Employment in Asia

19:20 – 20:10

Presentations

-Mr. Juan Somavia

Director General, ILO

-Dr. Surin Pitsuwan

Secretary General, ASEAN Secretariat

-Mr. Hiroyuki Nagumo

General Secretary, JTUC-RENGO

-Representative of CAPE

20:10 – 20:30

Discussion

This Session is coordinated by Ms. Aiko Douden .