

# Newsletter



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## SPOTLIGHT

### Labour ministers commit better job policies

Labour ministers from Asian and European countries agreed on the need for policies to foster employment and create decent jobs at the 4th ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference, which put the focus on young people and other vulnerable groups.

Addressing the event in Hanoi in October, new ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Yoshiteru Uramoto said the deterioration of job prospects should be addressed urgently as "it is starting to feed social tension around the globe".

The conference ended with the [Hanoi Declaration on Employment and Social Protection](#), which highlighted the ILO Decent Work agenda as "an important tool to achieve a more decent life for all".



### MoU signed to improve labour statistics

Viet Nam's labour statistics will be improved in the next four years under a memorandum of understanding signed between the General Statistics Office (GSO) and the ILO in Hanoi in October.

The 2012-16 MoU aims to strengthen capacities of data producers, providers and users of labour and employment statistics for evidence-based policy making.

Vice Minister of Planning and Investment Cao Viet Sinh emphasized the importance of enhancing statistical work to ensure the quality of growth as a task "more urgent than ever".

The MoU, part of the One UN plan that covers the same period, confirmed the cooperation between ILO and GSO in improving the quality of labour data production in labour force surveys, occupational wages, informal sector, child labour and school-to-work transition surveys.

### Teaching should become a decent job

How to make teaching a decent job that deserves its noble status in the society was a main theme at this year's celebration of the Vietnamese Teachers' Day in November.

The event entitled "Role and status of teachers in building an inclusive, creative and sustainable learning society" was co-organized by the ILO, the UNESCO and the Viet Nam Association for Learning Promotion in Hanoi.

"In Viet Nam, teachers are well-respected... but many of them are underpaid and working conditions are poor," said ILO Viet Nam Country Director Gyorgy Sziraczki.

According to Vice Minister of Education and Training Nguyen Thi Nghia, Vietnamese teachers particularly face great challenges in trying to eradicate illiteracy and universalize quality education.

### Rural youth needs employment support

Vietnamese young women and men in rural areas need better work skills, more recruitment information and effective employment services to access quality jobs, heard the Rural Youth Employment Forum held in the northern province of Phu Tho in October.

The ILO event, which was part of the One UN consultation process for the post-2015 development agenda, gave more than 100 young delegates an opportunity to deliver their messages to policy-makers.

"Young people, women and men, are tremendous opportunities of rural areas," said Loretta Deluca, Geneva-based ILO Rural Employment and Decent Work Programme coordinator. "Team work among institutions, employers, workers and youth is key to overcome challenges and achieve more jobs and better jobs for them." ■

# Enhance job opportunities for people with disabilities

Viet Nam has lost 3 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product as the result of the involuntary exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market. The ILO has called for investment in more effective inclusion strategies that can yield returns to society and benefit everyone.

More than 15 per cent of Viet Nam's population has a disability, according to the General Statistics Office.

Despite their willingness to work and their capacity to contribute effectively and productively at work places, many people with disabilities are prevented to do that by barriers which result in their under-employment, unemployment or labour market inactivity.

"This is a terrible waste of potential," said Geneva-based ILO Lead Expert on Disability, Barbara Murray. "It is important to remove barriers against women and men with disabilities, not only for the benefit of those individuals and their families, but also their communities and the wider society."

According to 37-year-old hearing-impaired Nguyen Tuan Linh, with the national Law on Disability, the State wants to help people with disability integrate into the community but "local governments think and do differently".



**The ILO is partnering with Irish Aid to promote employment opportunities for this less advantaged group, as part of a 2012-13 programme worth more than US\$250,000.**

**On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, the ILO, the Irish Embassy and the Irish Aid announced six grants worth nearly US\$6,000 to the Hanoi Law University students researching the Law on Persons with Disability. They will also continue their \$10,000 support over the teaching of the law next year.**

Due to the exclusion of people with disabilities from the labour market, one in every four households with a family member with disability lives below the poverty line, according to the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census.

Mr Linh said people with disabilities have inadequate access to education and training, which makes it more difficult for them to get a job.

According to the United Nations Population Fund, literacy rates for people with

disabilities in Viet Nam are only 73 per cent in urban areas and 63 per cent in the countryside.

Vice chairwoman of Hanoi Deaf People's Association, Vu Thuy Linh, said it's important to develop special curricula and teaching materials for children with impairments so that their education can start at an early age, allowing them to have a normal development.

Meanwhile, for the ILO specialist Murray, there is no single way to help people with disabilities in Viet Nam achieve more and better employment.

It requires a combination between widespread consultation in action planning, and explicit promotion of employment opportunities for this disadvantaged group, including laws, policies and their effective implementation.

Persons with disabilities should be given access to skills training and business development services to help them find a job or set up their own businesses, said Ms Murray, whereas employers should be encouraged to provide opportunities and reasonable environments to enable them to get and carry out their jobs ■



# Project extended to boost SME productivity

An ILO project to improve productivity and market-access for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and wood businesses has been extended one more year with additional funding of US\$220,000.

The Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) project, funded by the Swiss and Norwegian Governments, will be carried out by the ILO and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) HCM City until December 2013.

The programme has helped 14 enterprises in HCM City and its neighbouring provinces of Binh Duong and Dong Nai enhance the cooperation, safety and cleanliness at workplaces since 2011.

In the next phase, SCORE will focus on quality management, productivity, cleaner production and efficient human resources (HR) strategies, using practical tools and approaches developed by the ILO.

Administrative and HR manager at Binh Duong-based MIFACO Company Hoang



Xuan Tan said that work accidents have reduced by half since the home furniture manufacturer with more than \$10 million in yearly turnover joined SCORE last May.

According to VCCI HCM City deputy general director Nguyen Hong Ha, SCORE has been developing a network of local consultants and closely working with

associations, which guarantees its long-term sustainability.

Head of the Labour Directorate under the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Jean-Jacques Elmiger, said it's important to help SMEs reach the global production chain as they are "the heart of Viet Nam's economy" ■

## Women should be better protected at workplaces

The amended Labour Code is an important step to better protect women at workplaces but more need to be done to establish gender equality in practice, ILO Deputy General Director Sandra Polaski has said.

With ILO technical support, the new Labour Code, which will take effect in May 2013, for the first time prohibits sexual harassment at workplaces and better covers domestic workers.

The first-ever rapid study on sexual harassment at work carried out by Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) and ILO showed that most of the victims are women aged between 18 and 30. Many of them do not report the cases due to the "silence culture" and fear of losing jobs.

"Creating a safe mechanism for complaints by governments, employers and trade unions is one of the most

powerful things that can be done," said Ms Polaski.

While praising the Government for prohibiting this practice, ILO national project coordinator on gender issues, Nguyen Kim Lan, said the new law lacks the definition of sexual harassment at workplaces. "Without clear definitions, it would be difficult to enforce the law," she added.

Guidance decrees are also needed to bring new clauses covering domestic workers into life after this has been for the first time recognized as a job in the Labour Code.

The ILO recommended that clear definitions regarding contracts, work conditions and benefits, protection from child labour and pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence at work should be provided.

According to an ILO-MoLISA research launched last year, 46 per cent of surveyed households in Hanoi and HCM City hire domestic workers and 90.7 per cent of them are women. The research indicated that this group lacks decent work conditions and experiences complicated employment relations.

"Law enforcement is also a big issue for this group as domestic workers are mostly from the countryside, have poor educational background and work in a close space," said Ms Lan.

Ms Polaski recommended the Vietnamese Government improve public awareness and enhance law enforcement to guarantee that women will be better protected at workplaces.

"With the new Labour Code, Viet Nam has made a good start but it's clear that the Government has more work to do." ■

# New dialogue mechanism benefits workers and employers



A new management-union consultative mechanism set up at garment factories in the south this year has gained good results, improving labour standards and cooperation at work, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour has reported.

The bi-partite Performance Improvement Consultative Committee (PICC), which includes representatives of employers and workers' trade unions on an equal basis, has been established at about 50

factories in HCM City and the neighbourhood since March.

The mechanism, initiated and supported by Better Work Viet Nam – a partnership between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation, aims to solve problems identified from Better Work's factory labour standard assessment and counseling and develop good work relations through dialogues.

"We can see better law compliance in enterprises with PICC," said Vice Chairman of the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, Mai Duc Chinh. The organization has recorded improvements in working conditions, wages, welfare, occupational safety, labour hygiene and working hours in these factories.

PICC, which is re-elected every two years and meets once a month, benefits both managers and workers.

PICC meetings have resulted in "a big change", improved significantly workplace cooperation and raised workers'

awareness, said Duong Thuy Tu, managing director of HCM City-based Ando International, which owns two womenswear factories with nearly 900 workers.

"Before PICC, we used to have occasional meetings with the trade union but we never had a schedule, nor knew what it would be about in advance," she added.

According to head of the company's trade union Phan Ngoc Vuong, the new mechanism has "really upgraded trade union's activities and improved its effectiveness".

Worker Vo Kim Long also said he has been able to communicate better with the managers through PICC members who represent him and his colleagues. "It's an effective mechanism," said the 29-year-old.



The Better Work Viet Nam programme, funded by the Australian, Swiss and US Governments, has reached 184 factories with about 197,000 workers and plans to triple the number of supported workers in the next three years.

Nearly 50 international buyers and retailers are currently subscribed into the programme, which focuses on improving working conditions and competitiveness in the country's apparel industry ■



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