

## **Viet Nam** **ILO** supports **fair migration agenda**

Viet Nam supports ILO agenda for fair migration and the organization's efforts in combating forced labour, Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Pham Thi Hai Chuyen addressed the 103rd International Labour Conference in Geneva in June.

The head of the Vietnamese delegation highlighted the achievements Viet Nam has made to ensure safe labour migration, which include law improvement, a Code of Conduct for recruitment agencies and bilateral and multilateral agreements to support workers.

She also said that forced labour is strictly prohibited in the laws and a master plan to enhance the capacity of labour inspectors

by 2020 has been adopted as an important step in the fight against forced labour.

In her speech, the minister appreciated ILO technical support in bringing the country's labour legislation framework in line with the international standards. It includes Viet Nam's ratification of the ILO Convention on Maritime Labour, and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, the adoption of the revised Labour Code and Employment Law and the drafting of the revised Law on Social Insurance, revised Law on Vocational Training, Law on Occupational Safety and Health and Minimum Wage Law.

On this occasion, the Vietnamese govern-

ment delegation paid a courtesy visit to ILO Director-General Guy Ryder and Minister Chuyen had a meeting with Deputy Director General Sandra Polaski.

During her meeting, the Vietnamese minister expressed appreciation for the initial results of Better Work and its expansion to the north and asked for ILO support on a capacity-building programme for labour inspection. In response, the ILO Deputy Director General said she was pleased that Viet Nam would be one of the three pilot countries for the Area of Critical Importance on improving compliance through labour inspection. In this context, she proposed that the ILO would consider technical support to establish an occupational safety and health training centre as requested by the Government.

The Vietnamese delegation also included President of Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, Dang Ngoc Tung and representative of Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance.

## **Child labour campaign launched at 2014 Football World Cup**

As billions of people followed the opening of the 2014 FIFA Football World Cup in Brazil on 12 June, the ILO launched its 2014 Red Card to Child Labour Campaign.

With 168 million children in child labour worldwide, the ILO used the iconic red card symbol to signal that child labour is something that is unacceptable.

Together with international footballers and celebrities, Viet Nam national football team striker Le Cong Vinh held up the Red Card and joined the ILO campaign.

In Viet Nam, an estimated 9.6 per cent of children aged 5-17, or 1.75 million Vietnamese children, are child labourers. The main findings from the first National Child Labour Survey launched in March showed that two in every five child workers are under 15 of age.

Most child labourers live in the countryside, work in agriculture and are unpaid family workers.

About one-third of the child workers, or nearly 569,000 children, have to work an average of more than 42 hours per week, which affects their schooling.

"Child labour deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity, and is harmful to physical and mental development," the Vietnamese famous footballer said in a message that was broadcast on the national television during the first week of the World Cup.

The 2014 World Day Against Child Labour, also on 12 June, drew the attention to the role of social protection in keeping children out of child labour and removing them from it.

Poverty and shocks play a key role in driving



children to work. Therefore, social protection that ensures access to health care and income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a main income earner, is significant in combating child labour.

*Congratulations to journalists Le Van of Tuoi Tre (Youth) newspaper and Vu Le Trang of Vietnam Television VTV4 on winning the first prize and special prize on Labour Code of the 2013 national Labour-Employment Media Award. After the award ceremony was held by the Viet Nam Journalists' Association with ILO support in late April, ILO Viet Nam chats with the two winners.*



## **Le Van: I hope the award will continue and expand**

*How did you feel when the winner of the first national Labour-Employment Media Award was announced?*

I was really surprised and of course happy. Winning the award is an honour to any journalist. I would like to thank the Viet Nam Journalists Association and the ILO for the prize. I hope the award will continue and expand in the future so that journalists can have a new corner to share our views on labour and employment issues in Viet Nam.

*Your articles on work safety are really interesting and deliver important messages. Could you share your thoughts when reporting those miserable lives?*

Thank you for your recognition. There were two things that struck me deeply. First, I spent nearly one month in different hospitals in HCM City to record cases of work-related accidents. It would be life-time obsession for me after witnessing serious injuries caused by the carelessness of both workers and employers. The second thing was

the pain and loss of those workers and their families.

*What are the biggest challenges for a journalist to report labour and employment issues?*

The first challenge is traced back to journalists themselves. How much they are into the topic decides whether they have enough incentives to break different barriers to well complete their task.

Another challenge is how to approach people. There are two types of people we have trouble talking to – workers who are shy and employers who avoid questions. Sometimes it is also difficult to approach the authorities on sensitive topics in management. These barriers require journalists to spend more time and efforts to be able to complete a story from an objective perspective.

*Will you continue writing about labour and employment? Can you share some of your plans?*

I will continue with this area and try my best to dig into more topics and stories of the life of workers in Viet Nam. It's my daily job!

I hope the ILO will continue to support workers who need help. I am now working on some stories about female workers facing difficulties. I hope people will read and comment on my articles.



**Vu Le Trang: 2012 Labour Code really gives workers a voice**

*You have worked on several interesting topics of the amended Labour Code so far. As a journalist, what are the most interesting things about this important law?*

In fact, what has obsessed me the most since I first joined journalism is slum-like accommodations for workers. That's why I expect a lot from the 2012 Labour Code because it really gives workers opportunities to raise their voice. Specifically, it is the new regulations on social dialogue. I hope that the law can better come into life.

*What do you think are the most important factors to turn such topics into an attractive TV story?*

I personally think in any case, a journalistic

work must have human faces and real life and these must be brought into the story in a way that best reflects the truths.

*In your opinion, how does a national press award on labour and employment mean to Vietnamese journalists?*

I think it's important to journalists. But the award should be expanded and reach tougher topics to find the real voices of workers which have never been heard before.

This is actually an incentive for me to look for the answers about young Vietnamese workers who leave farms and rice fields behind to work at factories. Who are they? What do they represent? What does their life reflect?

# Better co-ordination and good data needed for **minimum wage discussion**

Regional minimum wages could increase in 2015 in accordance with growth rate of Gross Domestic Products and inflation, employers' organizations have recommended.

The Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), Viet Nam Co-operative Alliance (VCA), Viet Nam Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Vietnam Garment and Textile Association (VITAS) and other sectorial associations sat down together in Hanoi in June to discuss "Employers' proposal on adjustment of minimum wages for 2015" at a workshop co-organized by VCCI and the ILO.

Regional minimum wages grew on average by 9.9 per cent in 2010, 30.1 per cent in 2012 and 15.2 per cent this year.

According to VCCI, the growth rate of regional minimum wages was equivalent to that of Consumer Price Index (CPI) in 2010-2011 but three times higher than CPI growth since 2012.

"The increase of minimum wages for 2015 should ensure both the actual salaries of workers and the production of enterprises," said VCCI Employers' Bureau Director Phung Quang Huy.

According to VCCI, minimum wage adjustment mostly affects garment, footwear and fishery industries. Increasing minimum wages by 10 per cent could increase enterprises' costs for salaries by over 17 per cent due to



increased allowances and other social benefits.

Representing employers' organizations at the National Wage Council are VCCI, VCA, Viet Nam Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, VITAS, and Viet Nam Leather and Footwear Association.

ILO Viet Nam's Chief Technical Advisor on Industrial Relations, Phillip Hazelton, said that it is important to enable and encourage joint and evidence-based discussion and interventions of key employers' groups on minimum wage adjustment.

The ILO encourages a stronger co-ordination role of VCCI in working with other employer's organizations on the National Wage Council and hopes that "different associations will be able to work more closely on joint studies and joint activities around this important area".

"We urge minimum wage adjustment proposals of employers' organizations and the trade union side to be based on the use of reliable statistics and sound data analysis, taking into consideration both social and economic criteria," Hazelton added.

Minimum wage is a single wage floor level below which employers cannot go legally.

The ILO suggests that the negotiations should look into the needs of workers and economic factors such as payment ability, productivity and competitiveness.

Regional minimum wages in Viet Nam are now proposed by the National Wage Council, which was established in 2013 and gave an equal voice to the Government, employers' organizations and trade unions.

Minimum wages for 2014 range from VND1.9 million (US\$90) to VND 2.7 million (\$129) per month depending on regions.

## Skills issues in Viet Nam – facts and figures

- An ILO research in 2013 shows that labour productivity in Viet Nam was among the lowest levels in the Asia-Pacific region where comparable data are available. Productivity in Singapore was nearly 15 times the level in Viet Nam, 11 times higher in Japan and almost 10 times higher in the Republic of Korea. Even among its middle-income ASEAN neighbours, sizeable gaps also exist. For example, Viet Nam's productivity was one-fifth the level in Malaysia and

two-fifths the level in Thailand.

- One notable trend is the recent slowdown in productivity growth in Viet Nam. During the five-year period of 2002-2007, productivity increased on average each year by 5.2 per cent, among the fastest pace in the region. However, since the 2008 global economic crisis, annual productivity growth in Viet Nam has moderated to only 3.3 per cent.

- In a skills need survey with over 200 enterprises in tourism sector in central Viet Nam, all employers confirmed that graduates from vocational schools do not meet the requirements, mainly due to weak industry participation in skills training.

- By the end of 2014, the National Assembly of Viet Nam plans to pass the revised Law on Vocational Training which emphasizes industry participation through a tax incentive scheme for enterprises conducting training activities.

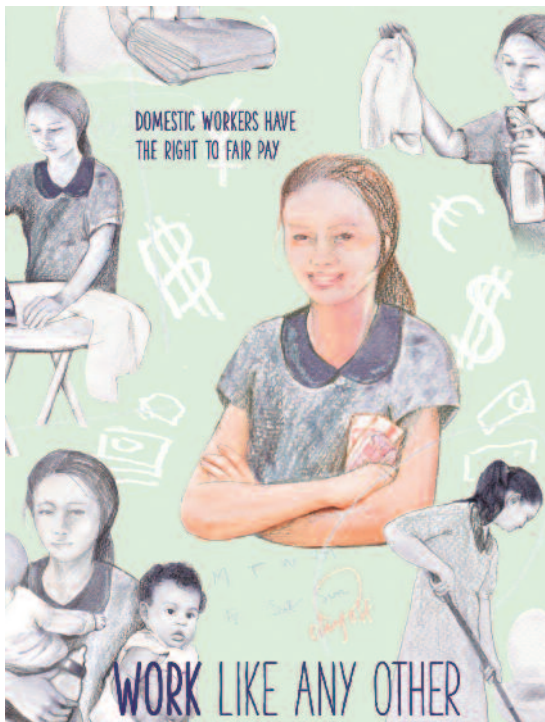


## “Live and Work”

A photo exhibition shedding light on the life and work of people with disabilities opened in the southern province of Dong Nai as part of the celebration of the Vietnamese Day for People with Disabilities on 18 April. A set of 25 moving stories of local workers with disabilities was told by renowned photographer Nguyen A. The event was organized by Dong Nai Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and Handicap International with supports from the joint ILO-UNDP-UNICEF project on disabilities and Irish Aids among other sponsors.



## Domestic work, work like any others



Decree 27 took effect in May to extend labour protection to domestic workers in Viet Nam. All domestic workers in the country now have the right to employment contracts, minimum wage, leave days, social and medical insurance, and access to dispute settlement mechanisms.

## Upcoming events

- Workshop on public employment content in a new employment decree, 27 June
- Launching of the Labour Market Update Quarter 2, Ha Noi, July
- Shared learning seminar for Better Work participating factories, HCMC, Binh Duong and Dong Nai, July
- Training of trainers on Pre-departure Training Curriculum from Viet Nam to Malaysia, July-August, and to Taiwan (China), September
- Hospitality training for service groups in community-based tourism, Quang Nam, 18-22 August
- National consultation workshop on Law on Vocational Training, Hanoi, 25 August
- Announcement of 2014 ranking of recruitment agencies, Hanoi, August
- Launching of School-to-work transition survey, August
- Training for Know About Business key facilitators in the south, August
- Youth with tourism jobs fair, Hoi An, 10 September
- Workshop on the development of a Code of Conduct on HIV issues in selected tourism businesses, Hoi An, 25 September
- Training for trainers in occupational safety and health in agricultural sector, Quang Nam (30 June – 3 July), Bac Kan, Hai Phong, Ha Tinh, Quang Ngai and Dong Nai (July – September)
- Training for resource trainers in career guidance, Hanoi, 2-5 July
- First meeting of VCCI's pilot programme on capacity building for provincial employers' organization, Vinh Phuc, 1-2 July
- Review of VGCL's pilot initiatives in union and industrial relations development, Hanoi, 3-4 July
- Seminar on complaint mechanism to address the grievances on recruitment of overseas migrant workers in Viet Nam, Hanoi, 6 July
- Workshop on the draft revised Law on Social Insurance, Thanh Hoa, 22 July
- Public-private partnership event promoting new tourism products for Dien Ban District, Quang Nam, 24 July

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