

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL NETWORKING

NEWSLETTER (March 2011)

Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the annual Global Employment Trends report for 2011, providing the latest global and regional estimates of employment situation and analysis of country-level issues and trends in the labour market. This report discovered that weak recovery in jobs was likely to continue in 2011, especially in developed economies, and stood in stark contrast to the recovery seen in several key macroeconomic indicators.

ILO found that the global unemployment rate was stood at 6.2% in 2010 versus 6.3% in 2009, well above the pre-economic crisis rate 5.6% in 2007, and estimated that the figure was hardly to revert to pre-crisis level in 2011. Uneven recovery in labour market was found in worldwide, with continued rise in unemployment in developed countries, versus a steady to slightly improvement in developing countries. The global employment-generating capacity declined continuously, showing many countries were found inability to generate sufficient jobs to absorb growing working-age population.

The report also indicated the challenges in youth unemployment and vulnerable employment. Youth unemployment rate was discovered severely understated as of discouragement in job seeking among youth by the crisis. Incidence of vulnerable employment remained broadly unchanged since 2008, and the working poverty rate at US\$1.25 level was increased, which were greatly different from steady and significant average decline compared with pre-crisis years. Although the productivity growth slightly recovered in 2010, delayed labour market recovery also led to the lag between productivity growth and resumption in real wages growth in some countries, and could threaten the future recovery prospects.

In South-East Asia and the Pacific, unemployment rates decreased on average during the crisis, some countries even dropped to a lower level than pre-crisis years, but vulnerable employment and youth unemployment were great challenges to the region. Labour market in East Asia recovered quickly compared with other regions around the world, still youth unemployment was a major challenge. South Asia had

the highest rate of vulnerable employment in the world, in which gender-based inequities in the labour market remained a primary concern.

Despite downside risks were predominant in 2011 under the recovery of global economy, ILO predicted that there was still little improvement in recovery of labour market. It was essential for governments to put in place policies related to labour market and labour productivity and strengthen the international cooperation to forge employment generation and jump-start a sustainable jobs recovery.

The Youth Employment Challenge in Asia and the Pacific

At the 14th ILO Asian Regional Meeting, ILO constituents concluded that, to realize the Asian Decent Work Decade, it is important to promote the chance of decent work and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men through the transition from school-to-work.

Young people aged 15-24 account for one-fifth of labour force in Asia and the Pacific but lead to almost half of the region's' jobless. Those employed may need to face unfavourable working environment: working poor, long hours, poor working condition, no protection against the risk, short-term and precarious contracts with not much prospects for the future, etc. Existence of child labour also leads to young unemployment and underemployment, as the demand for certain types of labour is met by children who should not be working. Other youth employment challenges include spread of HIV/AIDS, cross-border and rural to urban migration. Youth employment challenges have multiple causes: demographic changes, economic and employment environment, difficulties occurred when young people transit from school to the work.

To achieve growth and prosperity ad well as better political governance across Asia and the Pacific, it is crucial for young people to have greater access to decent employment early in their working life. On the one hand, young people and their families will have greater chance to get out of poverty; on the other hand, they can avoid falling into a vicious cycle of poor employment conditions and threats. In the coming decade, providing equal job quality and opportunities for young women compared with young men and creating decent jobs for millions of young labour market entrants are important in improving youth employment. Nevertheless, improving youth employment cannot be divorced from achievement of Decent Work for all.

Domestic workers: Towards an International Convention?

In 2010 International Labour Conference, the ILO made a historic decision that placed “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” on the agenda, aiming to set standards through a new Convention and an accompanying Recommendation for domestic workers.

There are today millions of domestic workers, mainly are women and migrant workers. Though they act as an important role in the labour force and enable others to improve their living standards, they often have long working hours, low wages and inadequate health insurance coverage. Some of them are even exposed to physical and sexual harassment and violence and abuse. They are usually found insufficiently protected by legislation or not protected at all, since in many countries, there are no relevant ordinances and legal norms for inspectors to enforce them.

Therefore, 2010 International Labour Conference proposed to develop ILO instruments to provide domestic workers with sufficient protection needed.

In recent years, some governments tried to address these issues for improving the legal protection for domestic workers. Employers’ organizations and trade unions attempted to associate in some countries in regulating the employment conditions for the domestic workers and promoting the adoption of the international standards. The better employment environment with international legal standards let domestic workers benefit from the full range of protections and rights related to decent work.