

Concept Note

Project Launch and Seminar on Employment Policies and Strategies in Southeast Asia

Contributing to a human-centred recovery to achieve social justice and decent work

Launching of the project “Promoting the Global Development Initiative with a Focus on South-South Cooperation in Employment in ASEAN” (ProSSCE-ASEAN) and interactive workshop for policymakers on employment policies, employment services and entrepreneurship.

24 and 25 July 2023 | Bangkok, Thailand
Hotel Shangri-La, meeting room: The Garden Gallery

► **General Background**

Countries in the ASEAN region recognize employment deficits as a constraint on economic performance and their capacity to develop in a sustainable and inclusive way. Some of the main employment challenges include labour market segmentation (informal employment), youth employment, skills mismatch, underemployment, economic structural changes and gender inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities and poverty in the ASEAN region¹, posing additional challenges to policymakers. While some policy measures helped to protect workers and enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic, recovery remains uneven and incomplete. The compounding, ongoing effects from rising food and fuel price inflation, global financial turbulence, high public debt burden and disruption of global supply chains are complicating the recovery. At the same time, long-standing labour market challenges persist in terms of both the quantity and quality of employment.

In addition, ASEAN countries are also facing important challenges such as demographic change, greater international labour migration, enhanced trade integration, technological disruptions in the world of work, and climate change and the transition to the green economy. These dynamics accelerate the urgency of promoting decent jobs – especially for women, youth, informal workers and other vulnerable groups – while prioritizing the need to enhance productivity and working conditions.

In this context, strengthening, adapting and implementing comprehensive employment policy frameworks is an important part of a sustainable solution towards a human-centred recovery. This includes policies and strategies that promote employment services and entrepreneurship as well as other measures. The ILO together with the China Ministry of

¹ B. Malay and P. Baisakh, *COVID-19: Impact on Inequalities in Asia*, 2022; ASEAN and Asia Foundation, *ASEAN Rapid Assessment: The Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods across ASEAN*, 2020.

Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish cooperation based on the ILO's goal of promoting decent work. Framed in this context, the ILO and MOHRSS have joined efforts to develop the project "[Promoting the Global Development Initiative with a Focus on South-South Cooperation in Employment in ASEAN](#)" (ProSSCE-ASEAN). Through this project, the ILO and China aim at providing technical support and policy advice to ASEAN countries in areas such as employment policy formulation and implementation, capacity building, employment diagnostics, monitoring and evaluation of employment policies, as well as employment services and entrepreneurship development, through the implementation of a South-South approach, promoting learning and exchange of practices between China and ASEAN countries.

The ProSSCE-ASEAN project builds on existing ILO work in the Asia and Pacific region and follows an approach of South-South technical cooperation (SSTC). The SSTC approach accelerates peer learning and sharing of good practices among developing countries which face similar challenges in terms of policies and institutions. As well, the SSTC approach focuses on results, with interventions that directly benefit ILO constituents, contribute to national ownership and support sub-regional, regional and inter-regional processes, including multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) and building networks of experts and policymakers. The ProSSCE-ASEAN project promotes good practices from ASEAN countries and from China, creating a unique network of practitioners that can share information, good practices and lessons learned on employment policies, employment services and entrepreneurship.

The ProSSCE-ASEAN project prioritizes efforts to a) carry out research and contextual analysis to validate employment priorities for target ASEAN countries; b) support the development of employment policies and strategies to contribute to a human-centred recovery, with a focus on gender, youth, just green transition, digitalization, and informality; c) support the implementation of employment policies and strategies, including pilot projects to increase high quality employment outcomes; d) strengthen public employment services and entrepreneurship development; and e) undertake knowledge sharing of lessons and experiences and promote peer learning of employment policies and strategies in the region.

In order to promote the sharing of good practices and stimulate peer learning among practitioners in ASEAN countries, the ProSSCE-ASEAN project will organize a two-day seminar to discuss the major employment challenges across the ASEAN region, and how a new generation of employment policies and strategies can contribute to a human-centred recovery, sustainable development and more equitable and just societies.

► Objectives of the Event

- Promote the exchange of experiences between policymakers and experts on the challenges and opportunities of employment policies to enhance the human-centred economic recovery.

- Introduce the ProSSCE-ASEAN project, its main components and the actions through which the project will support policymakers in the region to design and implement employment policies that contribute to a human-centred recovery, including through promotion of public employment services and entrepreneurship development in ASEAN countries.
- Increase understanding of the principles and best practices for designing effective national employment policies and innovative strategies that support the economic recovery and promote job creation in ASEAN countries, including in the context of informality, digital transformations and just climate transition.
- Establish a regional network of employment experts and policymakers.

► Agenda

Day one

Time	Activity
10:00–10:20	<p>Opening ceremony</p> <p>Ms. Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific</p> <p>Mr. Wang Shaofeng, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Security, China</p>
10:20–10:25	Group photo
10:25–10:30	Introductory video (*)
10:30–10:45	<p>Challenges in the global labour market and the role of employment policies to foster a human-centred recovery: The South-South approach</p> <p>Keynote address: Mr. Sangheon Lee, Director of Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods Department, ILO</p>
10:45–12:00	<p>High-level panel: <i>Challenges in the regional labour market and the role of employment policies to foster a human-centred recovery.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Sangheon Lee, Director, Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods Department, ILO • Mr. Atty. Benedicto Ernesto R. Bitonio, Jr., Under Secretary of Labor Relations, Policy and International Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Republic of the Philippines. And Chair of the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) 2022-2024 • High-level representative of Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS), China • Director of the Department of Employment. Ministry of Labour of Thailand • Ms. Feixia Li, Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department, ILO <p>Moderator: Mr. Graeme Buckley, Director, Decent Work Technical Support Team, Bangkok, ILO</p>
12:00–13:00	Lunch
13:00–14:15	<p>Priority employment challenges, policy responses and gaps in ASEAN countries</p> <p><i>Presentation of the preliminary findings of research on “Major employment policy challenges and gaps in ASEAN countries”</i></p>

	<p><i>Presentation of the ASEAN Employment Outlook 2023 (TBC)²</i></p> <p><i>Presentation and introduction to the “Promoting the Global Development Initiative with a Focus on South-South Cooperation in Employment in ASEAN” (ProSSCE-ASEAN)</i></p> <p>This session will integrate the exploration and discussion of employment challenges in ASEAN countries in light of the COVID-19 recovery, along with highlighting policy responses and gaps. Through the presentation of the preliminary findings of research on “Major employment policy challenges and gaps in ASEAN countries” this session aims to reflect on the employment priorities of the ASEAN countries. In addition, this session aims to reflect on the employment priorities of ASEAN countries, considering global and regional policy frameworks such as the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the ILO Global Call to Action for Human-centred Recovery. Furthermore, the session will present the latest ASEAN Employment Outlook, covering major trends and challenges in the region.</p>
14:15–15:30	<p>Thematic Panel 1: Promoting the Transition to Formality for Inclusive Employment³</p> <p>The session will examine the challenges and opportunities associated with tackling informality and promoting formalization in ASEAN developing countries. The discussion will focus on how integrated employment and labour market policies in line with global frameworks, including Recommendation 204, can support the formalization of informal economies, promote social protection for workers, and ensure that decent work opportunities are available to all, including women and other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Makiko Matsumoto, Employment Specialist, ILO, Decent Work Technical Support Team, Bangkok, ILO</p>
15:30–15:45	Coffee break
15:45–17:00	<p>Thematic Panel 2: Harnessing the Potential of Digital Transformations for Inclusive Employment: Challenges and Opportunities</p> <p>The session will examine the challenges and opportunities associated with the digital transformations in the labour market, including its potential impact on employment, including on entrepreneurship. The discussion will explore the potential positive and negative consequences of digital technologies on employment, such as job displacement, growth of employment in the digital platform economy, and impacts on inequality in the ASEAN region. Through the exchange of country experiences, participants will have a deeper understanding of the challenges and risks, as well as opportunities associated with digitalization in the ASEAN region.</p> <p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Diego Rei, Employment Specialist, ILO Country Office for the Indonesia and Timor-Leste (CO-Jakarta)</p>
17:00–17:10	Main lessons and take-aways from day 1
18:00	Dinner reception

² To be consulted and confirmed with the ASEAN Secretariat (ASCC Department), Labour and Civil Service Division.

³ Structure of the thematic panels: The moderator will introduce the session, followed by 15 minutes country presentation by each of the speakers, the presentations will be structured around the guiding questions provided by the organisers in the script of the session, which will be prepared by the ILO/ProSSCE-ASEAN.

Day Two

Time	Activity
8:30–9:45	<p>Thematic Panel 3: Empowering ASEAN Youth for a Resilient Future: The Role of Employment Policies and Employment Services in Facilitating Transitions to Decent Work</p> <p>The session will examine the employment challenges facing youth in the labour market in the ASEAN region, including challenges related to entrepreneurship. The session will explore current trends and opportunities for youth employment in the region and discuss policy adaptations required to respond to the current scenario, including developments and innovations in the areas of employment services.</p> <p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Felix Weidenkaff, Youth Employment Specialist, ILO, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok</p>
9:45-10:00	Coffee Break
10:00–11:20	<p>Thematic Panel 4: From Start-ups to Job Creation: Unlocking the Employment Potential through Entrepreneurship and by empowering MSMEs in Southeast Asia</p> <p>This session aims to shed light on the pivotal role that entrepreneurship, particularly Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), plays in harnessing employment potential in Southeast Asia. By fostering a vibrant start-up ecosystem and empowering MSMEs, this panel seeks to explore how job creation can be catalysed, aligning with the principles of decent work, the Agenda 2030, and driving sustainable economic growth. MSMEs are the backbone of Southeast Asian economies, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation, and inclusive development. By understanding the unique challenges and opportunities that MSMEs face in the entrepreneurial landscape, the discussion will identify strategies to support their growth and expansion, thereby unlocking the full employment potential of the region.</p> <p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Sergeant Kelvin, Job Creation and Enterprise Development Specialist, Decent Work Technical Support Team, Bangkok, ILO</p>
11:20–11:45	Moving forward and charting the path ahead
11:45–12:00	<p><i>Closing remarks</i></p> <p>Ms. Panudda Boonpala, Deputy Regional Director, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, ILO</p>
12:00–13:30	Lunch

► Participants

Representatives from Ministries of Labour of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. representatives from ATUC, representatives from ACE and the ASEAN Secretariat.