

Session 2

International Cooperation in Work Improvement

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Abstract

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was founded in 1919 to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon the decent treatment of working people. It became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946 and won the Nobel Peace Prize on its 50th anniversary in 1969. The ILO's target is to realize "Decent Work for All", by which women and men have opportunities to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. To this end, the ILO has developed four strategic objectives: to promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; to create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income; to enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.


The International Labour Office is the permanent secretariat of the ILO and the focal point for ILO's overall activities. The Labour Protection Department (PROTRAV) of the Office deals with issues relating to the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases, the promotion of workers' health and well-being and the improvement of working and employment conditions. It also assists constituents on matters relating to labour inspection as an essential element of good governance. The main activities of PROTRAV are: developing preventive policies and programmes to protect workers in hazardous occupations and sectors; extending effective protection to vulnerable groups of workers falling outside the scope of traditional protective measures; supporting ILO constituents to be equipped to address problems of workers' well-being, occupational health care and the quality of working life; documenting the social and economic impact of improving workers' protection and allowing policy and decision-makers to recognize the impact; and developing comparative analysis and technical cooperation tools aimed at assisting and encouraging ILO constituents to improve the conditions of employment of workers.

PROTRAV supports the ILO's work in establishing Conventions and Recommendations and other policy instruments; collects and provides information and data relating to labour protection; and undertakes technical cooperation projects with constituents, particularly in developing countries. Examples of these projects are shown in Table 1. Our technical cooperation work is designed to increase the constituents' ability to solve problems, gather information and provide technical and financial support in order to foster self-reliance. For such activities the ILO has carried out technical cooperation including activities in human resource development and the introduction of methodology to utilize local knowledge and technology. Recently, special emphasis is placed on adequately evaluating technical cooperation projects to ensure effective and sustainable activities.

Labour protection is one of the most essential issues to realize higher productivity, and better health condition and working life. It is more effective and less expensive if labour protection is planned and implemented at the early stage of the industrialization. Collaboration among the ILO, constituents, other international organizations, GOs, NGOs and researchers is essential to carry out effective activities for realizing the "Decent Work for All".

Table 1. Recent technical cooperation in the field of labour protection by ILO

Project	Countries (examples)
Development of labour laws and labour administration systems and suggestions on OSH administration	ASEAN countries, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Jamaica, etc.
Work improvement in neighbourhood development (WIND)	Viet Nam, Kirgizstan, Senegal, etc.
Work improvement in small enterprises (WISE)	Thailand, Viet Nam, Mongolia, etc.
Work improvement in informal economy	Thailand, Viet Nam, Mongolia, etc.
Improvement of labour inspection system and training of labour inspection trainers	Viet Nam, Cambodia, etc.
Managing emerging health-related problems at work (SOLVE)	Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, etc.
Surveys and recommendations on wages, working time, and work-family balance	Tunisia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, etc.

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