ILO Regional Tripartite Meeting on Lifelong Learning in Asia and the Pacific:
Bangkok, 8 – 10 December 2003
Draft Information Note

1. Introduction

"A critical challenge that faces human society at the start of the twenty-first century is to attain full employment and sustained economic growth in the global economy and social inclusivity. The ILO’s framework of decent work addresses both the quality and quantity of employment and provides a basis for new education and training policies and strategies. Human resources development, education and training contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society." (Conclusions of the General Discussion on HRD and training, 2000 International Labour Conference, para.1)

There is a widespread perception in the region that globalization and economic integration are making learning and training policies even more important. A well-trained work force is key to provide domestic firms with a competitive edge, and workers require higher level of skills to adapt to accelerating technical and market changes. At the same time, however, the increase in precarious and casual forms of labour contracts reduces the incentives that both firms and workers face to invest in developing and acquiring new skills. Education and training policies cannot alone address this paradox. Their effectiveness and success depends on a number of policies that structure the incentives firms and workers have to demand and supply skills. They should go hand-in-hand with economic, employment and other policies to establish, in an equitable manner, the new knowledge and skills-based society in the global economy. Appropriate fiscal policies, social security and collective bargaining are among the means to distribute these economic gains on a fair and equitable basis, and constitute basic incentives to invest in training. In this context, the development on knowledge and skills cannot be a one-off effort but needs to be a continuous or lifelong process. The new Human Resources Development and Training Recommendation, expected to be adopted at the 2004 International Labour Conference, should provide effective guidance for future education, training and lifelong learning policies to assist member states deal with these complicated issues. The ILO’s Decent Work Strategy, together with its Global Employment Agenda, provide the framework for the discussions at this meeting.

The need for lifelong learning arises from this increasing pace of economic change, in technologies, in product and labour markets, and the presumed concomitant increase in the rate of depreciation of knowledge and skills. The traditional view of initial education and vocational training, as providing most or all of the skill required for an entire lifetime, has become obsolete. In its place, individual skills require continuous upgrading, and a higher probability of needing retraining, in association with technical change, promotion and redundancy. Another attribute of lifelong learning is the importance attached to learning and skills acquisition that occurs outside educational institutions, in informal rather than formal settings. A major challenge, however, is to develop new approaches to lifelong learning which makes it a reality for all. In the context of the world of work, the approaches to lifelong learning place particular value on learning that occurs after compulsory education, and on adult learning in particular. Universal coverage is seen as desirable: all individuals are to be involved in lifelong learning. Instead of restricting post-secondary learning to a small elite, it is today expected to involve the entire adult population.

Individuals are increasingly expected to take greater responsibility for organizing and funding their own learning, instead of leaving it entirely to employers and government. Individuals must take the initiative and organize their own learning. Non-elite groups who traditionally have had little access to learning opportunities are expected to receive a greater share of public resources for education and training. New alliances and forms of collaboration between different institutions and social partners will be required if lifelong learning for all is to become a reality.

An important innovation that entered the training systems during the nineties was the increased emphasis on skill recognition, based on competency standards and qualification frameworks. The development of a national qualifications framework is in the interest of enterprises and workers as it facilitates lifelong learning, helps enterprises and employment agencies match skill demand with supply, and guides individuals in their choice of training and career. In the Asia and Pacific region, there is still a great deal of diversity among training institutions on the approaches to defining competencies and setting up competency standards as part of a qualifications framework. Even more critical is the issue of accreditation and evaluation of competencies. Despite the difficulties experienced in some countries, there are good examples of skill recognition and qualification systems in the region. The ILO’s Asia and Pacific Skill Development Programme (APSDEP), for example, has been developing a new regional model for skills development, called Regional Model Competency Standards. These model standards are intended to assist those countries which do not have a skills standards system to develop their own systems, using the model framework. It will also provide a common basis for countries to discuss skills standards and the mobility of skilled labour in the region.

The present meeting brings together expertise from governments and the social partners, and also researchers and practitioners, to exchange national and international experiences in promoting the development of lifelong learning. It will also assist ILO’s member states, and the APSDEP institutions and partners, to develop the
knowledge and skills required for improved performance and to provide women and men with greater opportunities to secure decent work.

2. Objectives of the Meeting

   These objectives are framed within the context of improving productivity and promoting decent work:
   
   • To review, exchange and disseminate national, regional and international experiences of lifelong learning policy reforms which: support increased investment in learning and training; promote the development of national skill recognition systems; and exploit the potential of new learning and training technologies.
   • To facilitate new alliances and forms of collaboration among the different institutions and partners of APSDEP and to strengthen its networks.

   The meeting will focus on innovative policies and programmes that promote lifelong approaches to learning for the development of workforce knowledge and skills in response to changes in the labour market; specifically it will address (i) the establishment of national and regional skills recognition systems and qualifications frameworks; (ii) the introduction of policies and mechanisms that promote greater investment in lifelong learning by enterprises and individuals; and (iii), the development and application of new training technologies to support lifelong approaches to learning. The meeting will also consider the respective roles of government and the social partners in promoting lifelong learning and making it a reality for all.

3. Specific outputs of the Meeting

   The specific output of the meeting will be a Common Understanding on the Key Policy Challenges on Lifelong Learning in Asia and the Pacific. The participants in the meeting will benefit in a number of ways: they will have increased awareness of international and regional approaches to lifelong learning; they will have a strengthened capacity to plan and implement national policies and programmes on lifelong learning; and, they will have a greater understanding of constraints and innovations on lifelong learning and training policy from the perspective of policymakers and the social partners in the region. There will also be a strengthened network of APSDEP partners through the interactions and discussions in the meeting. The outputs of this meeting will be an important input into the National Plans of Action for Decent Work for member states in the region.

4. Workshop structure and methodology

   The workshop will be organized in four technical sessions with a tripartite panel discussion at the start of each session. During the panel discussion, the ILO team and the resource persons will make presentations. The social partners on the panel will act as discussants and provide their comments. A question and answer session will follow. The participants will then be divided into three mixed working groups, which will deal with a series of specific questions related to each theme. This process will be repeated in each technical session. A system of rotating the chairpersons of the working groups, on a tripartite basis, will be devised to facilitate a greater involvement of all participants. The ILO’s Asia and Pacific Skill Development Programme (APSDEP) will act as the Secretariat for the Meeting.

5. Participants

   Participants will be invited from 15 countries in Asia and the Pacific: Australia, Bangladesh, People’s Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The meeting is designed specifically for senior officers in Government, Employers’ and Workers’ Organizations, dealing with human resources development and training, to participate in analytical discussions on lifelong learning policies and programmes.

6. Country papers

   Each country is invited to prepare a brief paper for the meeting in collaboration with the social partners. The length of the paper should be no more than 12-15 pages, A4 and single-spaced. The paper should briefly describe:
   
   □ Government policies, programmes and strategies, including recent reforms (where appropriate), on lifelong learning approaches for developing the knowledge and skills of the workforce
   □ Incentives, funding mechanisms and partnerships that support and encourage investments in lifelong learning by enterprises and, where possible, quantitative figures of the investments made by enterprises and the public sector
   
   The country papers should be sent by e-mail to the ILO at prayoonsri@ilo.org by 20 November 2003 at the latest.
7. **Travel**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) will provide each eligible international participant (excluding observers) a round trip airline ticket by the economy class and most direct route from his/her duty station, where the invitation was sent, to the host country (Thailand). However, if participants purchase their own ticket, they will be reimbursed during their stay in Bangkok, on presentation of the original official invoice or receipt, the actual amount paid by them up to the maximum rate of the economy class and most direct route. No daily allowance will be paid beyond the period specified. It is emphasized that any deviation in the journey made by the participants when joining or leaving the Meeting will be at their own expense. Appropriate visa or visas needed for the journey must be secured well in advance of the Meeting. Participants will need to arrive in and depart from Bangkok on 7 December and 11 December 2003 respectively.

8. **Passports, Visas and Health Documents**

All those participating should ensure, prior to departure from their home country, that they have all the necessary travel and health documents including a valid passport and necessary visas to enable them to enter and remain in the host country for the duration of the Meeting and also to all countries through which they will pass. The cost of passport, visas, vaccinations or inoculations and health documents cannot be met by the ILO.

9. **Sickness or Accidents**

In case of sickness or accident during the Meeting, participants should endeavour to notify the Meeting’s management immediately. Participants are advised to obtain insurance coverage, either at their own expense or at the expense of their nominating organisation, for sickness, accident, or temporary disability, death and third party risk covering the entire duration of the Meeting and the journey to and from the host country. The ILO accepts no responsibility or liability for such contingencies. It is essential that nominees are medically fit to participate fully in the Meeting.

10. **Hotel accommodation, Venue and Daily Allowance**

A single room hotel accommodation including breakfast will be booked for each international participant at the Amari Watergate Hotel, 847 Petchburi Road, Pratunam, Rajthevi, Bangkok 10400, Thailand, Tel: (66 2) 653-9000, Fax: (66 2) 653-9045, where the Meeting will be held.

Upon arrival at the Bangkok International Airport, participants are requested to proceed directly to the Hotel. There are two counters for limousine service at the arrival hall of the airport. The cost of the limousine from the airport to the hotel will be about Baht 650 (about US$15). International participants (excluding observers) will be paid a daily allowance of Baht 4,830 to defray the costs of other meals and miscellaneous expenses. The participants will in turn pay directly their local transport, travel, airport taxes, telephone calls, and any other incidental costs they incur at the Meeting or during their journey. Under no circumstances, the ILO shall be responsible to meet expenses other than those specified above. The participants are therefore requested to travel as scheduled and not to make any other hotel arrangements.

11. **Language**

The meeting and all documentation will be in English, and no interpretation is being provided.

12. **Contact Address**

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