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Finally, it goes without saying that it would be difficult to execute an event of this magnitude without the dedication of ILO and FAO staff who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

List of acronyms

AIPP	Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact
AsiaDHRRA	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
APCD	Asia-Pacific Development Center for Disability Persons
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ADG/RR	Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
EWS	Early Warning System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAO HQ	FAO Headquarters
FOs	Farmers Organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PWD	People with Disability
FAORAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, FAO
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SPFs	Social Protection Floors
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit

Executive summary

The Regional Consultation on “Social Protection, Rural Employment and Food Security” was organized by FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, on 8-9 October 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The consultation was attended by sixteen (16) countries from Asia region totaling around 70 stakeholders representing ministries of agriculture, social welfare and labour. The representatives of major non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/civil society organizations (CSOs), and leaders of rural communities/institutions from seventeen countries of Asia region have attended the meeting. The UN Agencies also were present and contributed to the technical discussions.

The meeting aimed at sharing country experiences and enhancing the understanding and knowledge of the role of social protection and rural employment, and its linkages with agriculture, food security in improving nutrition and rural livelihoods, and to identify and agree on policy options and priority actions to be implemented at country levels and region towards eradicating poverty and hunger.

The meeting provided fora for sharing country experiences, including issues, policy interventions, and lessons learnt. Technical specialists presented selected case studies on linking social protection with rural employment and food security. The key issues and challenges related to social protection, rural employment, agriculture and food security were discussed and identified.

The meeting identified key issues affecting the advancement of social protection and its contribution to rural employment and food security, and concluded with recommendations for follow up actions at country and regional levels, which are:

The key issues inhibiting synergies among social protection, rural employment and food security

Policies, institutions and governance

- Lack of policy coherence among different policies, which negatively affecting synergy among social protection, rural employment and food security
 - Lack of a binding national development strategy for social protection
 - Weaknesses in policy implementation
- Inadequate coordination of social protection at country level (policies and programmes as designed and implemented by different ministries)
 - Lack of common understanding of what social protection comprises among different ministries;
 - Inadequate harmonization that would be directing with a clear conception for social protection;
 - Lack of consolidation of national policies and overlapping programmes managed by different government agencies;
 - Community councils and civil society organizations are not fully utilized by all ministries for consultations;
 - Lack of accountability mechanisms for implementing agencies;
 - Poor coordination between partners;
 - General lack of recognition of the role of organized rural women in social protection;

- Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
 - Social security laws are not implemented adequately;
 - Coverage for social security is not universal;
 - Lack of common set of relevant monitoring indicators across different programmes that can be measured and shared across relevant institutions
- Gaps in coverage and targeting - some people not covered especially in rural areas
 - In particular, targeting and prioritization must cover the first 1000 days of life covering pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 2 years of age. Nutrition criteria including stunting (low height for age) would need to be considered in selection, targeting and prioritization of beneficiaries
- Insufficient regional collaboration coordination – among countries of the region (e.g. through ASEAN, SAARC, APEC, etc.)
- Lack of a coordinating body and policy for integrated social protection programmes (existing SP programme to be integrated).
- Lack of bottom up approach to voice local concerns that can influence policy decisions.

Financial constraints

- Insufficient allocation of funds and mobilization of resources.
- Weakness of existing management system.
- Lack of financial sustainability of programmes.
- Social protection is generally considered as recurrent expenditure rather than as an investment.

Knowledge/skills

- Lack of capacity to design, mainstream, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes related to social protection and rural employment.
- Inadequate capacity in translating policies into programmatic action at all levels.
- Lack of sufficient acknowledgement of traditional knowledge on food and care.
- Weak capacity to implement social protection, rural employment in synergies with other rural development and food security programmes at local level, ensure integrated and coordinated delivery of services.

The key points for priority actions and recommendations

National level

Policies, institutions, governance and financial resources

- Undertake reviews and mapping of existing policies and strategies involving social protection, rural employment, food security and nutrition (charting out what exist and identify gaps, needs and scope for complementarities and synergies).
- Reformulate or develop multi-sectorally defined national policies for social protection in consultation, as appropriate with multiple stakeholders.
- Promote food-based nutrition enhancing agriculture approaches and include an agricultural production effort as a central component of a nutrition linked to the overall food security strategy.

- Raise awareness and advocate on the importance of social protection as an investment and promote its linkages with rural employment, agriculture and food security to policy makers and programme implementers.
- Conduct national policy dialogues related to social protection ensuring participation and representation of all stakeholders.
- Social protection floor to be integrated in the UNDAF -social protection to be delivered by ONE UN.
- Establish/strengthen coordinating body for all SPs at national and decentralized levels with well- structured and coordinated system at grassroots level.
- Establish the most effective and evidence-based targeting and monitoring system to ensure SP related support and investment reaches the most vulnerable in the society.
- Establish a strong monitoring system and accountability system.
- Costing of national social protection systems and allocate sufficient financial resources in national budgets.

Knowledge/skills

- Identify most vulnerable groups in society through studies and analysis for targeted interventions.
- Promote the dissemination of success case studies/ best practices which demonstrates practices linking social protection, rural employment, food security and nutrition.
- Identify needs to strengthen capacities to design, implement, monitor and evaluate social protection programmes.
- Provide technical support and training to better target the social protection, including developing indicators.
- Strengthen community based organizations, especially rural women, and develop capacity to support implementation of social protection programmes at local levels.

Regional level cooperation

- FAO and ILO to intensify their collaboration and joint efforts on social protection and food security.
- Promote south-south cooperation, exchange of knowledge, lessons learned and good practices for all aspects of SP among member countries in the region and in other regions.
- Enhance collaboration in organizing SAARC: Social Security meeting, early November (Nepal), in preparation to the SAARC meeting (FAO and ILO could support SAARC to exchange the experience of ASEAN in the development of SP strategy and plan of action, which have recently been developed).
- Promote synergies with sub-regional initiatives such as ASEAN SP and support the strengthening/integration of SP as it applies to rural employment and food security.
- Disseminate case studies/best practices at regional level.
- Formulate guidelines for the preparation of integrated national social protection, rural employment and food security policy/strategy.
- Organize similar regional consultation or forum periodically and review progress against priority actions/recommendations agreed.

I. Background

Despite strong economic growth in recent decades, Asia and the Pacific region remains a home to 60 percent of the world's undernourished people with inadequate access to nutritious and safe food with around 162 million stunted children, representing two third of the world's undernourished children. Around 80 percent of farmers are smallholder farmers who provide the majority of foods for this region. It is estimated that 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihoods. Poor rural households in developing countries are specially exposed to frequent economic, man-made and natural risks and shocks that threaten their livelihoods.

According to the latest revised estimates released by FAO, WFP and IFAD, the proportion of the chronic hunger in Asia declined from 23.7 percent in 1990-92 to 12.7 percent in 2012-14, making it possible to achieve the MDG1 target of 12 percent by 2015 by doubling the efforts. However, it should be noted that our goal is not just to reduce the proportion to 12 percent, but our ultimate goal remains to achieve "0" for eradicating poverty and hunger. The people in the bottom of 12 percent are most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Without supporting them through combined targeted approach and social protection measures, the world would not be able to achieve social stability, equitable growth and sustainable development. Hence our efforts for achieving food security, nutrition and eradicating hunger should be closely associated with and combined by various social protection interventions. Different social protection measures such as social safety nets including conditional cash transfer, various social and agriculture insurance schemes, rural employment generating schemes, etc. can ensure that the most marginalized are reached and supported.

Toda, only 20 percent of the world's population enjoys full social protection, and 30 percent is partially covered and 50 percent has no social safety net. Many of excluded people are small-scale, subsistence farmers, landless agricultural workers, pastoralists, fishers or forest-dependent people residing in rural and remote disadvantaged areas and generally working in the informal sector. These people are often highly exposed to risks and poorly equipped to face both human induced and natural shocks. The main challenge is therefore for governments reaching those in need and ensuring that the most deprived and vulnerable people in rural areas are targeted.

Social protection policies aim at reducing social and economic risk and vulnerability and alleviating extreme poverty and deprivation, taking into account different risks and vulnerabilities throughout the lifecycle. By ensuring predictability and regularity, social protection instruments enable households to better manage risks and engage in more profitable livelihood and agricultural activities. When directed towards women, they are not only empowered, but households' welfare is also improved because of women's priorities for food and nutrition and their children's education and wellbeing.

Social protection and rural employment mechanisms can provide means to poor and low-income households to overcome financial constraints and better managing risks, with positive impacts on food production, value chain development and on-farm, off-farm and non-farm level investment in agriculture and related sectors. It can stimulate the local economy, with positive effects on agricultural production, rural employment and poverty reduction. Most importantly, social protection enhances the development of human capital with long-term beneficial impacts on livelihoods.

Social protection offers a suite of policy options to complement agriculture and to ensure the right to food, with a view to preventing poverty-induced hunger and undernourishment. Livelihoods

support and protection offered through agriculture and food security interventions seeks to strengthen production capacities and/or generate income, which can be leveraged to promote dietary diversification, and ultimately, to achieve improved nutrition outcomes, provided explicit nutrition outcomes are defined. Social protection can support investments in productive assets, including agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, feeds, tools, fertilizers) and services (e.g. cash/vouchers for veterinary services). It can also extend insurance to mitigate risks and production shortfalls (e.g. weather index insurance, livestock insurance). Index-linked livestock insurance schemes are a means to reach the poorest livestock keepers, who are both the most exposed to risk and the least likely to have access to traditional insurance providers.

Social protection may also take the form of livestock or asset transfers. In terms of nutrition, livestock-oriented social protection schemes have the potential to play a positive role in promoting the healthy consumption of animal food products, rich in protein and selected micronutrients. These types of social protection schemes not only can reduce vulnerability but can also “encourage poor households to take greater risks for higher return on investments”. Public works programmes compensate labour in support of building, maintaining and improving infrastructure (e.g. irrigation/water systems, terracing, feeder roads, market places and/or food storage facilities) that improve food production (availability), and which in turn, can lower and/or stabilize food prices, and therefore improve food access and stability. Measures need to be taken to ensure that programme participants are fit for manual labour, acknowledging that some of the individuals to which such support appeals may be in a weakened state, including malnourished. Moreover, the potential nutritional benefits of participating in these programmes may be offset by the physical demands of labour characteristic of the public works.

It can increase food expenditure, food consumption and dietary diversity via food, cash and voucher transfers and price subsidies, smoothing consumption during lean seasons and/or periods of crisis. In particular, cash transfers support greater food choice, placing nutritious foods within economic reach with the potential to improve complementary feeding among young children as well as the diets of older household members. Social protection can also boost demand of local food and food products in markets through home-grown school feeding programmes, livestock transfers as well as cash and voucher transfers, in spite of seasonal price variations which may otherwise place these foods out of economic reach. These schemes can be particularly helpful for net-food buyers who generally tend to be the ultra poor. Agricultural support conferred by social protection programmes can also help impoverished and nutritionally vulnerable persons via the income pathway, whereby increased yields can provide additional household income, which can be directed to increased food consumption (hopefully supporting greater dietary diversity), health services and/or health environment improvements. For these reasons, agriculture-oriented social protection programmes are considered to be both pro-poor and pro-growth.

Agriculture interventions provide opportunities for building strong social networks through farmers associations, cooperatives, producer groups, farmer field schools, etc. Not only can these groups strengthen informal social protection practices (neighborly, amicable assistance), they can also play a key role in improving the nutritional status of group members and their families, if sensitized and empowered. Such groups can be sites for nutrition education and social marketing (e.g. promotion of: exclusive breastfeeding; good complementary feeding; consumption of biofortified foods; among others). These groups can also be leveraged to raise awareness of the early signs of malnutrition and to obtain insight as to who is malnourished, where, as well as to foster a sense of responsibility at the community level, help capacity development and create motivation for developing social services. Some programs have a strong community-orientation (e.g. apply

community-based conditionality or support community projects/improvements), thereby promoting reinvestment in local communities and fostering community empowerment.

Social protection alone may not be enough to sustainably lift rural households out of poverty, agriculture policies and programmes combined with rural employment strategies can be used to complement social protection as part of a rural poverty reduction. Therefore, coordinated efforts between social protection, rural employment and agriculture are needed to increase efficiency, improve policy coherence and institutions and subsequently produce a harmonized response that sustainably lifts rural households out of poverty.

There is a clear need to forge links and promote greater policy coherence and synergies between social protection, rural employment, food security, agricultural development and rural poverty reduction. To achieve their desired developmental impact, social policies will need to go hand-in-hand with agricultural and rural development policies. It is also crucial that different sectors of the government work together to deliver social protection successfully.

II. Introduction

As noted above, the purpose of the consultation was to share country experiences and enhance their understanding and knowledge of the role of social protection and rural employment, and its linkages with agriculture, food security in improving nutrition and rural livelihoods, including identifying and agreeing on policy options and priority actions to be implemented at country and regional levels towards eradicating poverty and hunger.

The two-day event brought together approximately 70 participants from 17 countries in Asia and the Pacific including Ministers and senior level officials of the Ministries of Agriculture, Food Security, Labour and Social Welfare/Social Protection. The consultation was also attended, by representatives of leading regional and national CSOs and NGOs, as well as other UN and development agencies (WFP, ILO, UNICEF).

The proceedings of the consultation succeeded in engaging the participants in intense and active discussions, fruitful exchange of strategies, information on good practices and lessons learnt, a professed heightened the role of social protection in poverty and vulnerability reduction jointly with rural employment, and food security. The participants reached agreement on policy options and priority actions at country and regional levels for promoting social protection and its linkages to rural employment, agriculture and food security.

The consultation was designed along five sessions structured along a mix of panel presentations, break-out working groups, and plenary reports and exchanges, as outlined in the agenda, (Annex 2). Highlights of the presentations, comments and discussions of each session are documented in the following.

III. Opening session

Welcome remarks

The consultation commenced officially with welcome remarks delivered by Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto, *Regional Director of ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*, followed by the opening address from Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, *FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*.

Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto has welcomed the participants and highlighted the long standing collaboration between FAO and ILO in working together on issues related to child labour in agriculture, human and food security in conflict zones, and on green production, together with other UN agencies. Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto recognized the linkage between social protection, rural employment and food security as a central priority for many of the countries, which has been reflected in policy debates and initiatives that are taking place in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.

He reminded the audience that social protection is a human right, not a luxury product. Everyone without exception is entitled to basic social guarantees: access to essential health care; access to education, health and nutrition for children; basic income security for people of working age in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity, working accident and disability; and income security and protection for older persons.

Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto recalled that most of the social security systems worldwide cover only those in formal employment. Statistically, four out of five persons worldwide, or 80 percent of the world's population, have no support when economic shocks not of their making terminate their jobs and their income; no reserve when their income is eaten up by poor health and costly health care; no assistance to give their children a better start in life; and no reserve if they grow old before having grown rich. Around 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas and are dependent directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods. These poor rural households are especially exposed to natural or man-made environmental disasters and economic shocks that threaten their livelihoods. Being the majority, the rural populations lack access to essential care, education, vocational skills, and decent and productive working opportunities, and let them vulnerable to even minor adverse changes in their fortunes.

Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto also referred to the seminal report released by International Labour Organization and the Asian Development Bank jointly with the ASEAN Secretariat on the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and its potential impact on labour markets and socioeconomic development. The report finds that by 2025, the AEC could spur growth in the ASEAN economy by seven per cent and create 14 million additional jobs. It will change the structure of economies, drive innovation and could double productivity in the coming decade. But these overall gains will not be distributed evenly. While some sectors will flourish, others are likely to see job losses. Those workers without the right skills may not be able to seize these new opportunities. In addition, Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto noted that enhanced productivity may bring higher incomes for some, such as the high-skilled, but could bypass the majority and exacerbate inequality.

He stressed the crucial role of social protection in addressing and mitigating the risks of this development, by compensating for the short-term loss of income and facilitating access to education and skills, with positive impacts on the overall productivity of the workforce and economic growth in the longer term. The importance of social protection alongside economic integration was acknowledged by the ten ASEAN Member States during the adoption of the Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection in October 2013.

Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto pointed out that in order to ensure greater synergies between social protection, rural employment, and food security, and concrete action needs to be taken and outlines two policy priorities that are critical to this end.

The first priority is the realization of nationally defined social protection floors. The Social Protection Floor Initiative was one of the responses to the financial, economic and job crisis adopted by the United Nations in 2009. Since then the concept of guaranteeing a minimum Social Protection Floor to all, has been endorsed globally, notably at the 2012 International Labour Conference with the unanimous adoption of a recommendation on Social Protection Floors. Given its universality, it thus extends to the rural areas that typically lack basic social services and benefits. For the underdeveloped rural areas, a minimum guaranteed income security and guaranteed access to food and nutrition increase life quality and enable the poor to take economic risks to diversify and improve their livelihoods. When social transfers are in place, poor households are likely to first increase food consumption and quality of nutrition, in particular of their children. The cost of achieving a SPF in countries like Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia or Mongolia would not cost more than six per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which makes SPF affordable.

The second priority is to promote local development, decent work, and sustainable poverty eradication of rural communities. In Cambodia, major obstacles that hinder the functioning of markets, such as the lack of transport infrastructure that isolates regions, make local producers dependent on costly middlemen at all stages of the production process. ILO's work in the Asia and the Pacific region focuses on empowering local producers and advancing their bargaining position along the value chains. This is possible by linking them directly to markets, improving contractual relationship with buyers, and introducing technologies that meet market demands and sustainability requirements. In promoting such rural development initiatives, ILO strives to foster the principles of decent work in agriculture and related sectors, protecting basic rights at work and improving access to social protection and public services.

In conclusion, Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto underscored that the meeting's findings will guide our continued ILO-FAO cooperation for together pursuing support to countries of Asia and the Pacific to ensure that social protection, decent work and food security become a reality for all.

Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, *Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*, greeted all participants and thanked to ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for collaborating for this meeting. He has reminded that in the world there are around 805 million people chronically undernourished. The prevalence of undernourishment has fallen from 18.7 to 11.3 percent globally and from 23.4 to 13.5 percent for developing countries, much of this progress has been recorded in Asia. Around 63 countries have reached the hunger target of MDG-1 and 25 countries have achieved the more stringent WFS target. This demonstrates that the hunger target of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the proportion of undernourished people in developing countries by 2015 is within reach if there is political will.

Despite strong economic growth for the last couple of decades, Asia and the Pacific is still home to the majority of the world's undernourished and poor, estimated at 526 million people, which is over 65 percent of the world's total hungry and undernourished. Within the same region Eastern and South-Eastern Asia have made impressive progress in reducing poverty and under nutrition over the past three decades, while progress has been limited in Southern Asia. While the region is on track to achieve the MDG hunger goal, the real goal is to eradicate hunger in the remaining 12 per cent of the region's vulnerable population. Many of these poor are small-scale, subsistence farmers, landless agricultural workers, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities residing in rural and remote disadvantaged areas and generally working in the informal sector.

Mr Hiroyuki Konuma pointed out that this heightened vulnerability of the poor is to a large extent also due to the decades of under-investment in agriculture and rural areas and in particular in small-

holder agriculture, which is fundamental for the livelihoods of the majority of the poor as well as lack of adequate social protection. Addressing the immediate and underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition will require a variety of actions across a range of sectors, in particular the effective implementation of social protection that are targeting the most vulnerable people, in close synergies with agriculture production, productivity and rural development.

Mr Hiroyuki Konuma noted that social protection programmes have proven successful in addressing issues relating to food security and rural development, as well as enhancement of small holder productivity and rural employment. Social protection not only provides direct income security to poor and vulnerable households, but also, if adequately designed, simultaneously foster: i) agricultural productivity and market access of smallholder producers (through instruments like cash transfers, input vouchers, input trade fairs, weather-indexed and other insurance schemes for smallholder farmers and pastoralists); ii) food and nutrition security (including cash transfers, school feeding, agricultural input vouchers or food subsidies); iii) human capital and skill development (cash transfers conditioned to children's education or maternal and child health care); and iv) job creation and diversification of rural livelihoods (such as cash and food-for-work programmes).

However, he underlined that social protection alone may not be enough to sustainably lift rural households out of poverty, agriculture policies and that programmes combined with rural employment strategies can be used to complement social protection as part of a rural poverty reduction. Therefore, coordinated efforts between social protection, rural employment and agriculture are needed to increase efficiency, improve policy coherence and institutions and subsequently produce a harmonized response that sustainably lifts rural households out of poverty.

He underscored that moral injustice of the hunger paradox, social exclusion and gender disparities, which continue to plague this region should not be tolerated in the 21st century and a call for concerted action is long overdue. Social protection is not only about catching those falling off the economic development ladder but also offers significant opportunities to address food security, hunger and malnutrition by promoting and protecting agriculture and other livelihoods (urban as well as rural) as well as meeting the basic needs of the disadvantaged groups. Social protection is certainly an important element of a broad policy and strategy to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

Mr Hiroyuki Konuma recalled that past experience has shown that misplaced emphasis and misguided policies and strategies can lead to very opposite of intended outcomes and become a drain on meagre national resources, impede progress and crowd out the private sector, eliminate incentives and discourage investment. The experience of late 1970s and 1980s, which gave rise to even more damaging policies are very much in the back of our minds.

He has highlighted that learning from each other, exchanging experiences and knowhow are important factors to avoid mistakes and minimize the risk of failure. The purpose of this gathering is to exchange experiences with policies, strategies and instruments of social protection in support of agriculture development, rural employment and food security. In the face of daunting challenges and the moral injustice, this consultation will chart the broad contours of the way forward to address these challenges as well as identify modalities and means for collaboration, cooperation and exchange of experiences among participating countries and their international partners like FAO, ILO and others.

In conclusion, Mr Hiroyuki Konuma emphasized that this consultation will serve as the basis for future dialogue, exchange of good practices and facilitate wider collaboration and support for the conceptualization, design and implementation of effective, sustainable and long-term social protection policies as an integral part of coherent agriculture development, rural employment and food security policies and strategies.

Keynote address

Mr Rob Vos, *Coordinator Strategic Programme on Rural Poverty Reduction and Director Social Protection Division, FAO HQ*, has addressed key elements of social protection. He has highlighted that almost 75 percent of the world population has no or insufficient access to any form of social protection, the majority of which leaves in rural areas. Around 75 percent of all poor people live in rural areas and are heavily reliant on the primary sector (agriculture, fisheries, forestry) and natural resources, which represent the main asset of the rural poor and provide a safety net in times of crises. It is estimated that about two thirds of the world's undernourished lives in South and East Asia, if China and India are included and 20 percent if China and India are excluded. South and East Asia (including China and India) are also used to be home to 75 percent of the world's poor (with incomes below poverty line of \$1.25 per person per day measured at purchasing power parity). Moreover, the region is facing increasing challenges related to employment. It is projected that the region will have insufficient employment growth, mostly pressing in rural areas and for youth.

Poor rural households are constrained by limited access to resources, low agricultural productivity and poorly functioning markets. In the absence of social protection systems or other risk sharing arrangements, poor rural households are forced to cope in ways that further increase their vulnerability and undermine their future income generation capacity such as, for example, overexploitation of the natural resources they depend on. By ensuring predictability and regularity, social protection plays five roles to reduce poverty and food insecurity in the rural areas:

- provides direct **income support** with immediate impact on **food security and poverty reduction** at the individual household level;
- supports farmers and other households in overcoming liquidity constraints and enabling them to engage in more **risk-taking activities** and investments which lead to **more profitable activities** and improved livelihood;
- enhances **human and social capital**;
- stimulates local **economic development** with positive impact on **employment**;
- makes effort towards more sustainable management of **natural resources**.

Mr Vos emphasized that in the rural settings, social protection is not sufficient to graduate poor and vulnerable out of poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, integrated approaches have proved to be more effective in achieving significant food security and poverty reduction in rural areas.

He also mentioned that social protection programs form an essential part of any overall development and poverty reduction strategy, encompassing a wide range of policies that fall under social safety nets, insurance, and even labor market support. Political commitment towards comprehensive large-scale integrated approaches is gaining momentum in all the regions of the world. In Asia, at the seventh ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, the Ministers adopted the Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (2011-2015), which recommends an integrated approach to sustainable rural

development and rural economic growth, which includes social protection and food security and nutrition as a key components.

He has stressed that social protection programmes should be linked to productivity-enhancing measures that can sustainably improve farm incomes and nutrition as well as provide more jobs, and to the supply of social and public services (education, health, etc.). Careful design of social protection policies, implementation and monitoring is required in alignment with food, nutrition, agriculture and rural development policies.

In the aftermath of the food, fuel and financial crises in 2008, social protection was put high on the regional agenda. Since then, many countries of the region have shifted from reactive approaches to comprehensive universal coverage solutions capable of strengthening resilience to shocks. Most Asian countries use social safety nets of some kind, intended to protect vulnerable groups from deprivation. The share of GDP allocated to social protection varies across countries but is still low compared with other regions.

Mr Vos emphasized, that social protection is no panacea. By itself it will not suffice to provide sustainable ways out of poverty and food insecurity and malnutrition, as it does not address the structural causes of these problems. In rural settings, social protection will need to be embedded in broader agricultural and rural development strategies for a more lasting and transformative impact.

Ms Celine Peyron Bista, *Chief Technical Advisor on Social Protection, ILO ROAP*, complemented to the presentation of first key note speaker. She has recalled the High Level Committee on Programmes of the UN Chief Executives Board, held in April 2009 and adopted the Social Protection Floor as one of its Joint Initiatives to face the financial and economic crisis and to accelerate recovery. The Social Protection Floor Initiative brings together ILO and FAO, as well as the other UN agencies and international financial institutions, to join efforts for supporting countries in extending social protection. At its 101st session (2012), the International Labour Conference adopted the Recommendation concerning National Floors of Social Protection, 2012 (No. 202) which reaffirms the role of social security as a human right and as a social and economic necessity.

She explained that Social Protection Floors (SPFs) are nationally-defined sets of basic social security guarantees that enable and empower all members of a society to access a minimum of goods and services at all times. They aim to prevent or alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.

The social protection floors should comprise at least the following basic social security guarantees: (a) access to a nationally defined set of goods and services, constituting essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality; (b) basic income security for children, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services; (c) basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and (d) basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons. Such guarantees can be achieved through contributory or non-contributory schemes, either means-tested or universal.

Ms Celine Bista stressed that the SPFs are part of the effort to develop national social protection strategies. Such strategies should (a) prioritize the implementation of social protection floors as a starting point for countries that do not have a minimum level of social security guarantees, and as a

fundamental element of their national social security systems; and (b) seek to provide higher levels of protection to as many people as possible, reflecting economic and fiscal capacities of countries, and as soon as possible. Social security extension strategies should be consistent with, and conducive to, the implementation of the social, economic and environmental development plans of countries.

She clarified that given the universality of social protection floors, coverage extends to rural areas, as being identified as part of the most vulnerable population with currently no or very limited access to social services and benefits. Both social protection transfers in cash and in kind allows for rural development. On one hand, social protection increases consumption of local agriculture products and thus allows for better nutrition and food security, and, on the other hand social protection improves capabilities of rural workers through better access to education, vocational training and employment programmes.

IV. Session 1 Thematic Presentations: Targeting the most vulnerable - key issues and challenges for strengthening synergies between social protection with agriculture, food security and nutrition, and rural development

Social protection and rural employment: support to small holder farmers and the role of farmer organizations

Ms Marlene Ramirez, *Secretary-General, AsiaDHRRA*, explained that safety nets are institutionalized services provided by government to the most vulnerable members of the society to help them recover from shocks or to provide them with opportunity to start-off or catch up with the rest and meet some of the basic needs. She has highlighted that basic health and crop insurance are most commonly heard and used, including the conditional cash transfers.

While some farmers in some countries or within a country may have benefitted from these, however at large majority of poor and small holder farmers remain unreached. It is therefore important that smallholders and farm workers to be recognized on their roles in their communities and to be organized for supporting different social protection programs that do not easily reaches the poorest of the poor. To be able to claim their rights to resources and spaces that are needed to institutionalize access to basic benefits that are due them. There remains a clamor for an enabling environment in support of empowering this very important sector in most of our countries in the region. But there are also many working models to learn from that both government and CSOs.

The farmers' organizations at different levels should be fully utilized by government in the provision of social protection services as there are many examples and on-going efforts by FOs along this, where some only need scaling up and mainstreaming to be able to expand their reach. An apex cooperative in the Philippines now is being used by the government in channeling CCT funds to participants. FOs can be tasked in identifying farmer participants to social protection programs because they have the info on the ground, they understand the local dynamics, and have own governance structures, not be as vulnerable to vested interests of certain individuals or political groups. Through the livelihoods and economic projects managed by their own organizations or cooperatives, they can create rural employment that directly benefits the member farmer, their families, and their own organizations.

Ms Ramirez noted that the governments have to view FOs as partners in development and not as mere beneficiaries of services. AsiaDHRRA as a regional network and an agri-agency carries a mandate of directly financing and providing technical assistance to FOs.

Social inclusion for persons with disabilities in agriculture sector

Mr Ryuhei Sano, *General Manager, Asia-Pacific Development Center for Disability Persons (APCD)*, has highlighted that Asia and the Pacific region is home to almost 650 million persons with disabilities with some 40 percent of the region's 4.2 billion people affected by disability directly or indirectly because they or a family member is living with some form of disability, the majority of them living in rural areas.

Food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition remain a major challenge in Asia and have a direct impact on avoidable disabilities. Numerous social, physical and financial barriers encountered by persons with disabilities make their inclusion into society difficult and employment even more so. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities often continue to face discrimination, social exclusion and extreme poverty because of society's misperception and ignorance. Agribusiness is one of the world's major income-generating sources for the poor and vulnerable households and offers rural employment opportunities with a wide range of activities suitable for persons with different capabilities, skills, interest and aptitudes.

With the launch of the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy "Make the Real Right" for Persons with Disabilities, member countries are committed to the achievement of the regional vision of an inclusive society that ensures, promotes and upholds the rights of all persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, with its first goal, to reduce poverty and enhance work and employment prospects, especially for those in rural areas.

Mr Sano has presented the case studies conducted in seven ASEAN countries, clearly presents evidence-based achievements of women and men with disabilities already and successfully involved in various agribusiness sectors, either self-employed or as employees, who have surmounted barriers and prove that persons with disabilities are fully capable of managing and working in agribusiness generating sustainable income for themselves and their family while contributing to the viability of the agribusiness.

If people with disabilities and their families are given appropriate support in terms of accessibility devices and disability-friendly environment, including the financial credits, the people with disability could be an asset to some agriculture related activities.

Promoting food security and the right of indigenous peoples

Ms Joan Carling, Secretary General, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), has highlighted that there are at least 350 million indigenous people around the world. Asia is home to two thirds of the world indigenous people's population. While indigenous peoples are five percent of the global population, they comprise fifteen percent of the global poor. Hunger and poverty is increasingly a major problem for indigenous peoples. This is largely the result of their dispossession of their lands, territories and resources including the protection of their traditional occupations and livelihoods, systematic discrimination of their culture and cultural heritage, and lack of access to basic social services and employment among others.

The presentation emphasized that the traditional food systems, practices, and knowledge, including the access to nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate traditional foods by indigenous people need to be acknowledged, protected and enhanced. Likewise, their traditional and sustainable livelihoods

and occupations are intrinsically linked to their food security and cultural heritage. These need to be accounted in defining social protection measures and programs for indigenous peoples.

The case studies conducted in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, Nepal and Thailand on “Shifting cultivation, food security and livelihoods of indigenous peoples” was presented. The case studies have reaffirmed that shifting cultivation is playing a significant role in providing livelihoods and ensuring food security to millions of indigenous peoples as part of a landscape approach to forest and agricultural management. It demonstrated that indigenous women perform 70 percent of the work related to shifting cultivation and are very knowledgeable on the seeds, nutritional and medicinal uses and values of many plants and animals among others. They also practice food preservation of surplus products from their fallow area, forest and rivers as part of the food security of indigenous communities. Indigenous women are thereby indispensable in the food security of indigenous peoples.

Ms Carling discussed that the engagement of indigenous peoples in commercial agriculture in a regulated manner to meet their basic needs is also increasingly playing an essential role in the economic development and food security of indigenous peoples. As lands become scarcer for shifting cultivation and other forms of sustainable livelihoods for indigenous peoples, adaptation through sustainable agricultural production is becoming increasingly the alternative option for many indigenous communities under a dual economy system. Support for income-generating activities of indigenous women and men could include promoting access to training, to financial resources and market facilities. Ensuring access to land and natural resources is crucial, including through measures for the effective recognition and protection of land rights and sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Targeted actions and programmes relating to social protection, food security and rural development benefiting indigenous peoples should be put in place in order to overcome persisting patterns of exclusions and discrimination. Such measures and programmes should be developed with the effective participation of indigenous peoples, both indigenous men and women to ensure its relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness from the perspectives, aspirations and needs of indigenous peoples.

Integrated approach for rural development: support to local entrepreneurship and public employment programmes

Mr Charlie Bodwell, *Senior Enterprises Development Specialist, ILO ROAP*, presented an integrated approach for local entrepreneurship development through: technical capacity building; access to information, markets and productive inputs; entrepreneurship and management training and financial literacy and services; and advocacy, networks and voice. The presentation highlighted the importance of locally built capacity which can be more effective in terms of impact and cost and better tailored to the specific needs of the targeted communities. Entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises provide an alternative pathway to income and employment generation for the poorest and most disadvantaged communities and play a key role in economic development. In South and East Asia, there are 245-296 million medium to small holder enterprises, which provide 50 percent - 95 percent of domestic employment. However, workers and operators of these enterprises are generally underserved because they are often difficult to reach for traditional training approaches which require resources and capacity that cannot be sustained at scale. Instead, this bottom-up approach empowers communities through interactions amongst themselves and hands-on, practical activities.

Addressing gender inequalities through social protection: What prospects for rural women's economic empowerment? An analysis through the lens of women's land rights

A presentation by Ms Clara Mi Young Park, *FAO Regional Gender Officer, FAO RAP*, placed gender equality and rural women's economic empowerment on the agenda of the consultation. Through the lens of women's access to land and productive resources, Ms Park emphasized the role of SP in operating socially transformative changes that can not only protect but also empower rural women and marginalized subgroups of the rural poor. In spite of the key role that women play in agriculture and rural livelihood and well-being in the region, gender inequalities in access to land and productive resources are widespread. Such inequalities are also compounded by other social differences, including age, ethnicity, class, religion and caste that shape the capacity to cope with shocks and vulnerability of different people. Only by taking these differences into account in the design and implementation of policies and programs can SP measure be effective in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable. Finally, the presentation emphasized the need to explore more closely the socially transformative potential of SP and the linkages between land-related measure and rural women's economic empowerment.

The impact of social protection on child nutrition and poverty reduction

Ms Dorothy Foote, *Nutrition Specialist*, with inputs from Mr Gaspar Fajth, *Regional Adviser, Economic and Social Policy, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office*, presented on the impact of SP on child nutrition and poverty reduction. Her presentation highlighted that despite regional progress in reducing "chronic hunger", chronic child malnutrition (stunting) persists at very high levels in the region, and notable progress on reducing stunting has only been made in countries which have made targeted investments in poverty reduction. Child malnutrition has wide-ranging consequences, including reduced learning and earning potential of children into adulthood: stunted children are not only short for their age, their brains also do not develop as many neuron connections as well-nourished children. Stunting is 2-6 times as likely to occur in the poorest quintiles of society. Anemia is another form of malnutrition that reduces productivity of adults, particularly in the agriculture and industrial setting. Reducing the high rates of stunted children requires focus on the most vulnerable and a broad range of interventions, it cannot be accomplished by the health sector alone. The conceptual framework for malnutrition identifies three main pathways to undernutrition: household food insecurity, inadequate care, and unhealthy environment/lack of services. The four components of SP (social transfers, programmes to access services, support and care, and legislation) all have the potential to improve nutrition through the three pathways. Ms Foote presented evidence whereby SP programmes in various countries have improved diets (quantity and quality), improved nutritional status, increased utilization of health services, reduced maternal mortality, increased enrollment rates and decreased dropouts of disadvantaged girls. The following actions were therefore recommended for policy makers:

- Promoting Integrated Social Protection (SP)
 - Increase coverage with focus on reaching the most vulnerable;
 - Integrate nutrition, gender, food security and health in long-term SP programmes, interventions, and legislation;
 - Support SP to achieve nutrition objectives: train staff and community workers on appropriate nutrition practices;
 - Target communication and practical nutrition messages to families with pregnant women and young children
- Promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture
 - Support efforts to diversify production of small farmers;

- Increase equitable access;
- Include nutrition objectives and indicators

In these ways, Social Protection and nutrition-sensitive agriculture combined with improved health services can break the cycle of malnutrition, providing long-term benefits to society such as greater human capital and stronger economic growth, for generations to come.

Social protection and rural employment through small-scale agribusiness and value chain development

Dr Rosa Rolle, *Senior Agro-Industry and Post-Harvest Officer, FAO RAP*, delivered a presentation, titled Supporting Social Protection and Rural Employment through Small-scale Agribusiness and Value Chain Development. By providing concrete examples from an FAO project, the presentation highlighted the benefits of social mobilization in supporting vulnerable individuals in establishing organized groups and engaging in agri-business activities and in local agriculture value chains. The project benefitted migrant women in particular. Through their participation in organized groups, women beneficiaries were able to access skills training, infrastructure and productive assets such as food preservation and processing equipment which contributed to enhanced income generation, food security and stabilization of their livelihoods, as well as to increased self-reliance and self-esteem

V. Session 2 Panel Discussion - sharing country experiences on effectively linking social protection with agriculture, rural employment and food security

The Panel discussion was conducted in a talk show format where countries were asked to share specific aspects of their experiences. Most of the discussions focused on a number of key areas, namely, policy, institutional arrangements, targeting, finance, sustainability and M&E. The participating representatives were divided into two main groups as follows:

Group 1: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mongolia and Indonesia

Group 2: Cambodia, China, Japan, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Timor Leste

The following are some of the key areas discussed among participants in a highly participatory and enthusiastic manner. The group discussions afforded sufficient time and space for each country to share their experiences.

Policy

Except in the case of Cambodia and Bangladesh, where a comprehensive social protection policy agenda and strategies have been developed, there seems to be no coherent national social protection policy or strategy in most countries. Various elements of social protection are spread among different entities with no coordination or a coherent agenda. Bangladesh has managed not only to develop a comprehensive social protection policy and strategy but also a detailed plan of action complete with institutional arrangements and specific deliverables. Cambodia, on the other hand, has developed a comprehensive and coherent policy but lack a plan of action and means of delivering the policy.

Some countries argued that lack a comprehensive policy may owe to lack of SP comprehension among policy makers and hence the need for advocacy and making SP part of a national agenda that can receive its fair share of financing and is enforced. SP in Pakistan is enshrined in the

constitution, which paves the way for specific SP instruments to be implemented. Whereas, there is no such legally or politically binding documents exist in other countries to facilitate the conceptualization, planning and implementation of SP instruments.

Institutional Arrangements

Except in the case of Bangladesh, most countries reported that lack of coherent institutional arrangements at national level to coordinate policy and strategy and at sub-national levels to implement did not exist. Afghanistan reported that only disaster management for policy and programme was coordinated across ministries under the chairmanship of the vice president. Similar arrangements might be necessary to address the issue of policy and programme fragmentation and incoherence at national level.

The participants also stated that every line ministry makes separate arrangements at sub-national and grassroots levels to coordinate and implement specific programmes and activities. Rarely if ever the institutions, in particular at community level, overlap among line ministries. This usually causes significant confusion and breeds inefficiencies. Nepal and India have addressed these issues to a certain extent through the creation of District and Village Development Committees. These experiences and more efforts are needed to ensure coherent and coordinated approaches to SP and other development planning and implementation.

A number of countries emphasized the need to develop the necessary skills with regard to policy analysis, programme design, monitoring and implementation at all levels. Vietnam, Timor Leste and Afghanistan placed particular emphasis on capacity development at grassroots level where it is needed the most.

Targeting

The participants shared a number of instruments where specific targeting modalities and means were discussed, in particular those that reach the most vulnerable and food insecure. Targeting criteria and institutional arrangement experiences were highlighted through a number of very specific programmes that the participating countries have been implementing. Most notable among the experiences shared were: the Village Resilience Programme and Sustainable Food Gardens in Indonesia, the Poverty Alleviation Fund in Nepal, Vocational Training for the rural labour in Vietnam, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Benazir Income Support Programme and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund in Pakistan as well as a number of food and cash for work and education in a number of countries.

Each one of the aforementioned programmes had adopted a specific set of targeting criteria with the main goal of reaching the poorest members of the society. Some other non-targeted programmes were also mentioned such as the strategic grain reserves in Afghanistan and Nepal as well as price transportation and other subsidies for staples in a number of countries (Maldives, Nepal, Indonesia, India and others). It was, however, suggested that most countries for lack of a binding national policy and strategy did not have the mandate to target specific population groups by design but rather each programme had to have its own set of criteria for targeting, which may not always cover those in need.

Finance

It was noted that even in countries where legislation or specific national policies and strategies exist to protect specific socio-economic or ethnic groups, the political-will did not always exist to allocate resources from the national budget to finance social protection instruments. Except in the case of Bangladesh, Indonesia and India, most SP-related programmes did not enjoy a reliable budget allocation on a medium to long term basis. Indeed some programmes are externally financed and very little if any allocation is made from the national budget, which does not bode well for financial sustainability.

The focus of the discussion was more on fair distribution of national budget as a priority and seeking partnership with international partners to fill the gaps.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Results based monitoring was heavily emphasized not only to ensure successful implementation of a particular instrument but also to enhance accountability, show results and encourage further resources to SP-related interventions. In this regard, the smart card SP payment systems in Pakistan was highlighted, which allowed for beneficiary monitoring, financial accountability and transparency at all levels. Some countries acknowledged that leakage and misappropriation are major concerns for policy makers when it comes to targeting and delivering support to beneficiaries in particular cash and near cash instruments to eligible households.

Monitoring systems in Indonesia and in Bangladesh were specifically discussed. The former related to specific programmes only while the system in the latter attempted to monitor the SP policy and strategy as well as specific instruments.

In addition to the aforementioned instruments, experience with crop and other insurance schemes were also highlighted and some countries, in particular Afghanistan, showing keen interest to learning more from experiences in other countries.

VI. Session 3

The participants were grouped into three breakout groups. The groups discussed a range of key questions:

1. What are the key issues inhibiting synergies among social protection, rural employment and food security? You may wish to highlight key issues under the following areas:

- a) Policy
- b) Institutions/Governance
- c) Knowledge/Skills
- d) Finance/Resource
- e) Inter-sectoral coordination/synergies (e.g. social protection, rural employment, food security)
- f) Others

2. What are priority actions to address the constraints and issues? Please suggest options and actions on the respective main issue (a-f) identified in 1 above.

The working group summaries were presented at the plenary leading to the identification of key challenges and recommendations for actions to address these (see Annex 3).

VII. Session 4

The participants identified the key issues and discussed at the plenary the key issues policy options and priority actions at country and regional levels for promoting social protection and its linkages to rural employment, agriculture and food security. The participants agreed with the following key issues and recommendations:

The key issues inhibiting synergies among social protection, rural employment and food security

Policies, institutions and governance

- Lack of policy coherence among different policies, which negatively affecting synergy among social protection, rural employment and food security
 - Lack of a binding national development strategy for social protection
 - Weaknesses in policy implementation
- Inadequate coordination of social protection at country level (policies and programmes as designed and implemented by different ministries)
 - Lack of common understanding of what social protection comprises among different ministries;
 - Inadequate harmonization that would be directing with a clear conception for social protection;
 - Lack of consolidation of national policies and overlapping programmes managed by different government agencies;
 - Community councils and civil society organizations are not fully utilized by all ministries for consultations;
 - Lack of accountability mechanisms for implementing agencies;
 - Poor coordination between partners;
 - General lack of recognition of the role of organized rural women in social protection;
- Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
 - Social security laws are not implemented adequately;
 - Coverage for social security is not universal;
 - Lack of common set of relevant monitoring indicators across different programmes that can be measured and shared across relevant institutions
- Gaps in coverage and targeting - some people not covered especially in rural areas
 - In particular, targeting and prioritization must cover the first 1000 days of life covering pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 2 years of age. Nutrition criteria including stunting (low height for age) would need to be considered in selection, targeting and prioritization of beneficiaries
- Insufficient regional collaboration coordination – among countries of the region (e.g. through ASEAN, SAARC, APEC, etc.)
- Lack of a coordinating body and policy for integrated social protection programmes (existing SP programme to be integrated).
- Lack of bottom up approach to voice local concerns that can influence policy decisions.

Financial constraints

- Insufficient allocation of funds and mobilization of resources.
- Weakness of existing management system.
- Lack of financial sustainability of programmes.
- Social protection is generally considered as recurrent expenditure rather than as an investment.

Knowledge/skills

- Lack of capacity to design, mainstream, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes related to social protection and rural employment.
- Inadequate capacity in translating policies into programmatic action at all levels.
- Lack of sufficient acknowledgement of traditional knowledge on food and care.
- Weak capacity to implement social protection, rural employment in synergies with other rural development and food security programmes at local level, ensure integrated and coordinated delivery of services.

The key points for priority actions and recommendations

National level

Policies, institutions, governance and financial resources

- Undertake reviews and mapping of existing policies and strategies involving social protection, rural employment, food security and nutrition (charting out what exist and identify gaps, needs and scope for complementarities and synergies).
- Reformulate or develop multi-sectorally defined national policies for social protection in consultation, as appropriate with multiple stakeholders.
- Promote food-based nutrition enhancing agriculture approaches and include an agricultural production effort as a central component of a nutrition linked to the overall food security strategy.
- Raise awareness and advocate on the importance of social protection as an investment and promote its linkages with rural employment, agriculture and food security to policy makers and programme implementers.
- Conduct national policy dialogues related to social protection ensuring participation and representation of all stakeholders.
- Social protection floor to be integrated in the UNDAF -social protection to be delivered by ONE UN.
- Establish/strengthen coordinating body for all SPs at national and decentralized levels with well- structured and coordinated system at grassroots level.
- Establish the most effective and evidence-based targeting and monitoring system to ensure SP related support and investment reaches the most vulnerable in the society.
- Establish a strong monitoring system and accountability system.
- Costing of national social protection systems and allocate sufficient financial resources in national budgets.

Knowledge/skills

- Identify most vulnerable groups in society through studies and analysis for targeted interventions.
- Promote the dissemination of success case studies/ best practices which demonstrates practices linking social protection, rural employment, food security and nutrition.
- Identify needs to strengthen capacities to design, implement, monitor and evaluate social protection programmes.
- Provide technical support and training to better target the social protection, including developing indicators.
- Strengthen community based organizations, especially rural women, and develop capacity to support implementation of social protection programmes at local levels.

Regional level cooperation

- FAO and ILO to intensify their collaboration and joint efforts on social protection and food security.
- Promote south-south cooperation, exchange of knowledge, lessons learned and good practices for all aspects of SP among member countries in the region and in other regions.
- Enhance collaboration in organizing SAARC: Social Security meeting, early November (Nepal), in preparation to the SAARC meeting (FAO and ILO could support SAARC to exchange the experience of ASEAN in the development of SP strategy and plan of action, which have recently been developed).
- Promote synergies with sub-regional initiatives such as ASEAN SP and support the strengthening/integration of SP as it applies to rural employment and food security.
- Disseminate case studies/best practices at regional level.
- Formulate guidelines for the preparation of integrated national social protection, rural employment and food security policy/strategy.
- Organize similar regional consultation or forum periodically and review progress against priority actions/recommendations agreed.

VIII. Session 5

Closing remarks

His Excellency, Honourable Minister, Hari Prasad Parajuli, Ministry of Agricultural Development, has expressed his deep gratitude to the organizers. In his remarks, he has highlighted the importance of the meeting and that the recommendations of the meeting will be an instrumentals and important guidelines for many countries in the region in conducting social protection activities. He appreciated the opportunity for sharing experiences and lessons learned on social protection and rural employment for food security. He underscored that the Social Protection alone cannot achieve the poverty and should be implemented in close synergies with income security through creating the enabling environment for rural employment.

Ms Celine Bista on behalf of ILO acknowledged the excellent collaboration between ILO and FAO over the course of several months in organizing this regional consultation. She reiterated the significance of social protection, and encouraged the participants in their respective roles as national leader to continue their good efforts in addressing rural poverty. She reaffirmed ILO's commitments to support countries across the Asia-Pacific in achieving the latter goal.

Mr Rob Vos, FAOHQ, has thanked the participants and underscored the excellent cooperation that had prevailed over the duration of the conceptualization, design and implementation of the event with ILO staff. He has also stressed the importance of operationalizing/implementing the recommendations of this regional consultation.

Mr Konuma, ADG/RR of FAORAP, reiterated the importance of addressing hunger and poverty. He has acknowledged participants including ministers and other senior government officials, NGOs and CSOs for their contributions and active engagement in sharing of experiences that support social protection programmes. Finally, he has emphasized the critical importance of national leadership and onus in undertaking the follow-up actions agreed upon and outlined in the Outcome recommendations.

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Despite strong economic growth in recent decades, Asia and the Pacific region remains a home to over half a billion undernourished people with inadequate access to nutritious and safe food and around 162 million stunted children, representing two third of the world's undernourished children.

In Asia and the Pacific Region, around 80 percent of farmers are smallholder farmers who provide the majority of foods for this region. Around 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas who are dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihoods. Poor rural households in developing countries are specially exposed to frequent economic, man-made and natural risks and shocks that threaten their livelihoods.

According to the latest revised estimates released by FAO, WFP and IFAD, the proportion of the chronic hunger in this region declined from 24.1 percent in 1990-92 to 13.5 percent in 2011-13, making it possible to achieve the MDG1 target of 12 percent by 2015 by doubling the efforts. However, it should be noted that our goal is not just to reduce the proportion to 12 percent, but our ultimate goal remains to achieve “0” for eradicating poverty and hunger. The people in the bottom of 12 percent are most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Without supporting them through combined targeted approach and social protection measures, the world would not be able to achieve social stability, equitable growth and sustainable development. Hence our efforts for achieving food security, nutrition and eradicating hunger should be closely associated with and combined by various social protection interventions. Different social protection measures such as social safety nets including conditional cash transfer, various social and agriculture insurance schemes, rural employment generating schemes, etc. can ensure that the most marginalized are reached and supported.

Social protection policies aim at reducing social and economic risk and vulnerability and alleviating extreme poverty and deprivation, taking into account different risks and vulnerabilities throughout the lifecycle. By ensuring predictability and regularity, social protection instruments enable households to better manage risks and engage in more profitable livelihood and agricultural activities. When directed towards women, they are not only empowered, but households' welfare is also improved because of women's priorities for food and nutrition and their children's education and wellbeing.

Social protection and rural employment mechanisms can provide means to poor and low-income households to better cope with, and overcome financial constraints and better managing risks, with positive impacts on food production, value chain development and on-farm, off-farm and non-farm level investment in agriculture and related fields. It can stimulate the local economy, with positive effects on agricultural production, rural employment and poverty reduction. Most importantly, social protection enhances the development of human capital with long-term beneficial impacts on livelihoods.

There is a clear need to forge links and promote greater policy coherence and synergies between social protection, rural employment, food security, agricultural development and rural poverty reduction. To achieve their desired developmental impact, social policies will need to go hand-in-hand with agricultural and rural development policies. It is also crucial that different sectors of the government work together to deliver social protection successfully.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this consultation are to share country experiences and enhance their understanding and knowledge of the role of social protection and rural employment, and its linkages with agriculture, food security in improving nutrition and rural livelihoods, and to identify and agree on policy options and priority actions to be implemented at country levels and region towards eradicating poverty and hunger.

Outputs

- Country experiences, including issues, policy interventions, and lessons learnt shared among participants.
- Key issues and challenges related to social protection, rural employment, agriculture and food security identified.
- Selected case studies on linking social protection with rural employment and food security presented.
- Policy options and priority actions at country and regional levels for promoting social protection with its linkages to rural employment, agriculture and food security, and their effective linkages and synergies discussed and agreed.

Participants

The meeting is expected to be attended by Ministerial level participants including senior officials from the ministries of agriculture and social welfare of Asia and the Pacific countries. In addition, it will bring technical experts and partners of Social Protection Floor, and other development partners. The total expected number of participants is around one hundred.

Date and Venue

The Consultation will take place on 8-9 October 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Tentative Programme

DAY 1	
08.00–09.00	Registration
09.00–10.00	<p>Opening session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome remarks by <i>Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto, Regional Director, ILO ROAP</i> Opening Address by <i>Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAORAP</i> <p>Keynote address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linking social protection, agriculture , food security and rural employment by <i>Mr Rob Vos, Director of Social Protection Division, FAO</i> Strategies for strengthening the social protection and rural employment in developing countries by <i>Ms Celine Peyron Bista, CTA of Social Protection Programme, ILO</i>
10.00–11.00	<p><u>SESSION I</u></p> <p>Thematic Presentations: Targeting the most vulnerable - key issues and challenges for strengthening synergies between social protection with agriculture, food security and nutrition, and rural development (15 minutes each maximum) (Moderator: <i>Mr Rob Vos, FAO</i>)</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social protection and rural employment: support to small holder farmers and the role of farmer organizations – <i>Ms Marlene Ramirez, Secretary-General, AsiaDHRRA</i> Social Inclusion for persons with disabilities in agriculture sector – <i>Mr. Ryuhei Sano, General Manager, APCD</i> Promoting food security and the right of Indigenous Peoples – <i>Ms Joan Carling, Secretary-General, AIPP</i> <p>Open discussion</p>
11.00–11.15	Coffee break
11.15-12.30	<p>Thematic Presentations: Targeting the most vulnerable - key issues and challenges for strengthening synergies between social protection with agriculture, food security and nutrition, and rural development - continue (15 minutes each maximum)</p> <p>(Moderator: <i>Ms Nomindelger Bayasgalanbat, FAO</i>)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated approach for rural development: support to local entrepreneurship and public employment programmes – <i>Mr Charlie Bodwell, Senior Enterprises Development Specialist, ILO</i> • Addressing gender inequalities through social protection: What prospects for rural women’s economic empowerment? An analysis through the lens of women’s land rights – <i>Ms Clara Mi Young Park, Gender Officer (Rural and Social Development), FAO</i> • The Impact of Social Protection on Child Nutrition and Poverty Reduction” –<i>Mr Gaspar Fajth, Regional Adviser, Economic and Social Policy, UNICEF</i> • Social Protection and Rural Employment through small-scale agribusiness and value chain development – <i>Ms Rosa Rolle, Senior Agro-Industry and Post-Harvest Officer, FAO</i> <p>Open discussion</p>
12.30-13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 17.00	<p><u>SESSION II Panel discussion</u> Sharing country experiences on effectively linking social protection with agriculture, rural employment and food security <i>(Moderators: Ms Celine Peyron Bista, ILO, and Mr Aziz Arya, FAO)</i></p>
18.00 – 20.00	Reception hosted by Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, ADG/RR, FAORAP
DAY 2	
09.00 – 09.30	<i>Recapture from 1st day discussion by Mr Aziz Arya, FAO</i>
09.30 – 12.30	<p><u>SESSION IV – Breakout Working Groups to discuss key issues and recommendation for promoting synergy between social protection, rural employment and agriculture and food security*</u></p> <p><i>Group 1 – Facilitators (Mr Aziz)</i> <i>Group 2 – Facilitators (Ms Celine)</i> <i>Group 3 – Facilitators (Ms Clara)</i> <i>Group 4 – Facilitators (Ms Nomin)</i></p>
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 –15.00	<p>Feedback from Working Groups <i>(Moderator: Ms Clara Park, FAO)</i></p>
15.00-15.30	Coffee break
15.30-16.30	<p>Plenary Discussion on policy options and priority actions at country and regional levels for promoting social protection and its linkages to rural employment, agriculture and food security <i>(Chair: Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, FAO)</i></p>

16.30-17.00	<p>Closing Session</p> <p>The closing remarks should also reiterate the strategic directions the plenary came up with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing remarks by <i>Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto, Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</i> • Address by <i>Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, FAORAP</i>
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** Key Questions for Breakout Working Groups (participants will be grouped into four groups, which will asked the same questions)*

1. What are the key issues inhibiting synergies among social protection, rural employment and food security? You may wish to highlight key issues under the following areas:

- a) Policy
- b) Institutions/Governance
- c) Knowledge/Skills
- d) Finance/Resource
- e) Inter-sectotal coordination/synergies (e.g. social protection, rural employment, food security)
- f) Others

2. What are priority actions to address the constraints and issues? Please suggest options and actions on the respective main issue (a-f) identified in 1 above.

Summary of working group discussions

Working Group 1	
Policy	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of specific coherent policies - Lack of coordination and monitoring mechanism <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review existing policies taking stock of what exist, identifying gaps and needs - Awareness among policymakers - Identifying successful policies and arrange exchange programmes - Reformulation of appropriate policy for SP
Institutional arrangement	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No proper coordination mechanism at national level - Commitment of political will at all levels <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying existing mechanisms at national level - Involvement of NGOs, private sector and other stakeholders - Strengthening capacity at different levels - Involvement of stakeholders and ensuring of ownership
Financial constraints	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate allocation of funds - Weakness of existing management system - Weakness of monitoring and accountability <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy of fair allocation of budget - Review successful systems of the region, adopt and adapt to national context - Establishment of strong monitoring system and accountability
Skills/know-how	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of capacity to formulate and translate and implementation policy into actions at all levels <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify capacity need and capacity availability - Making available appropriate service provider - Seeking support from international organizations
Working Group 2	
Policy	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social security laws are not implemented adequately - Policies are not consolidated - Gaps in coverage for social security is not mandatory - Lack of regional integration among countries of the same region <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulation of a social protection strategy - Current SP policies are livelihood based - SP should also have a long term vision
Institutional arrangement	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a specific institution responsible for social protection - Inadequate systems for efficient implementation at decentralised levels - Community councils are not utilised by all ministries

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of mechanisms to voice local concerns – that can feed into policy making - Lack of accountability mechanisms for implementing agencies - Lack of coordination among development partners and with receiving countries <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish one coordinating body for SP at the top level with good coordination at the grassroots level - Strengthen community bodies through capacity building/ elections
Financial constraints	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of financial sustainability of programmes - SPs are considered recurrent expenditure <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilize resources from each sector in a more efficient and effective way - Consider social protection expenditure as an investment - Review social protection expenditure and expenditure needs - Assess fiscal space for social protection expenditure
Others	<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider social protection floor in the UNDAF and to be delivered by ONE UN - Study the demographic changes in SP (e.g. aging population) - Strengthen coordination between development partners and government - Move from non-contributory to contributory measures
Working Group 3	
Policy	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impediments - Insufficient coordination – policy developed by different ministries - Inadequate harmonization of social protection - Lack of understanding of social protection by different ministries - Duplication of efforts by different ministries - Lack of coherent policies that integrate different aspects of SP <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political commitments - National policy and strategic plan shall be developed - well designed policy documents with identified SP instruments that would integrate also political bias - Coordination agency – there is a need for such national authority that would coordinate the work of different ministries - National dialogue to identify the policy gaps and implementation issues to set up missing SPF gaps – participation and representation of all - National development plans and strategies shall be shifted to SP - Ownership by the political leadership - The financial allocation, legislation
Institutional arrangement	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governing committee to oversee the implementation responsible for the policy dialogue – synergy of policies - Many ministries are in charge of implementation – for some countries there is even no a ministry/agency in charge of SP - Weak or no Accountability Framework - Overlapped programs by different institutions - Lack of program implementation - Weak capacity to implement programs at local level <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry or Department at national level having coordinating role

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accountability framework - Vertical institutional arrangement
Financial constraints	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited financial allocation - Scattered finance <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the Government budget – whether there is enough space for effective and sustainable SP program - Prioritize and focus the SP programs - Coordinate the SP programs to amalgamate the finances for targeted programmes - Reduce administration costs - Sensitize MoF and the local authorities supported by international organizations - Fiscal sustainability to ensure that the SP program is not adversely affecting the fiscal sustainability by the support of international organizations - Mobilize potential resources (from companies, NGOs, local authorities, donors)
Skills/know-how	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited skills at all level including stakeholders: provincial and local - Continues capacity building at all level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation strategies (targeting approach) - Monitoring and Evaluation <p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The best experience sharing, learning - Exchange knowledge visits by study visits (South – South Cooperation) - Multisectorial knowledge exchange through support of regional and multilateral organization - Knowledge sharing by community experience - To learn the SP policy targeted to women, PWD, indigenous people - Capacity building in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy formulation - Implementation strategies - M&E
Others	<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countries should comply with regional frameworks related to SP - International organizations support policy formulations and conduct the policy dialogues is needed - Pilot programs and replicate good practices on SP including for indigenous communities and other marginalized groups

OPENNING REMARKS

By

Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto

Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
International Labour Organization

delivered at the

**Regional Consultation on
Social Protection, Rural Employment and Food Security**
Millennium Hilton Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

**His Excellency, Honorable Minister Mr. Hari Prasad Parajuli, Ministry of Agricultural Development of Nepal,
Honourable Senior Officials of the Ministries of Agriculture and Social Welfare,
Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization,**

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to address this Regional Consultation on Social Protection, Rural Employment and Food Security. I am sincerely grateful for the initiative of Food and Agriculture Organization to invite the International Labour Organization to this important meeting.

First, let me take this opportunity to commend the long standing collaboration between FAO and ILO. We have been working together on issues related to child labour in agriculture, most recently in Lao PDR; we are also jointly implementing a project on human and food security in conflict zones in the Philippines, and on green production in Viet Nam, together with other UN agencies; just to name a few examples.

Clearly, addressing the linkage between social protection, rural employment and food security is a central priority for many of our countries. This has been apparent in policy debates and initiatives that are taking place in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.

But before we move on, what do we mean by ‘social protection’? Social protection is a human right, not a luxury product. Everyone without exception is entitled to basic social guarantees: access to essential health care; access to education, health and nutrition for children; basic income security for people of working age in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity, working accident and disability; and income security and protection for older persons.

Today, most of the social security systems worldwide cover only those in formal employment. Statistically, 4 out of 5 persons worldwide, or 80 percent of the world’s population, have no support when economic shocks not of their making terminate their jobs and their income; no reserve when their income is eaten up by poor health and costly health care; no assistance to give their children a better start in life; and no reserve if they grow old before having grown rich.

In Asia and the Pacific Region, around 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas and are dependent directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods. These poor rural households are especially exposed to natural or man-made environmental disasters and economic shocks that threaten their livelihoods. Being the majority, the rural populations lack access to essential care, education, vocational skills, and decent and productive working opportunities, and let them vulnerable to even minor adverse changes in their fortunes. The global economic crisis in 2008-09 combined with food and fuel crises highlighted this vulnerability very well.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Just two months ago, the International Labour Organization and the Asian Development Bank jointly with the ASEAN Secretariat released a seminal report that looks closely at the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community and its potential impact on labour markets and socioeconomic development. Our report finds that by 2025, the AEC could spur growth in the ASEAN economy by 7 per cent and create 14 million additional jobs. It will change the structure of economies, drive innovation and could double productivity in the coming decade. But these overall gains will not be distributed evenly. While some sectors will flourish, others are likely to see job losses. Those workers without the right skills may not be able to seize these new opportunities. In addition, enhanced productivity may bring higher incomes for some, such as the high-skilled, but could bypass the majority and exacerbate inequality.

With this development, social protection will play a crucial role by compensating for the short-term loss of income and facilitating access to education and skills, with positive impacts on the overall productivity of the workforce and economic growth in the longer term. The importance of social protection alongside economic integration was acknowledged by the ten ASEAN Member States during the adoption of the Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection in October 2013.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

To ensure greater synergies between social protection, rural employment, and food security, we need to take concrete action. Let me outline two policy priorities that are critical to this end.

The first priority is the realisation of nationally defined social protection floors. The Social Protection Floor Initiative was one of the responses to the financial, economic and job crisis adopted by the United Nations in 2009. Since then the concept of guaranteeing a minimum Social Protection Floor to all, has been endorsed globally, notably at the 2012 International Labour Conference with the unanimous adoption of a Recommendation on Social Protection Floors. Given its universality, it thus extend to the rural areas that typically lack basic social services and benefits. For the underdeveloped rural areas, a minimum guaranteed income security and guaranteed access to food and nutrition increase life quality and enable the poor to take economic risks to diversify and improve their livelihoods. For example, when social transfers are in place, poor households will first increase food consumption and quality of nutrition, in particular of their children. And social protection floors are affordable. The cost of achieving a SPF in countries like Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia or Mongolia would not cost more than 6 per cent of GDP.

The second priority is to promote local development, decent work, and sustainable poverty eradication of rural communities. In Cambodia, major obstacles that hinder the functioning of markets, such as the lack of transport infrastructure that isolates regions, make local producers dependent on costly middlemen at all stages of the production process. ILO's work in the Asia and

the Pacific region focuses on empowering local producers and advancing their bargaining position along the value chains. This is possible by linking them directly to markets, improving contractual relationship with buyers, and introducing technologies that meet market demands and sustainability requirements. In promoting such rural development initiatives, ILO strives to foster the principles of decent work in agriculture and related sectors, protecting basic rights at work and improving access to social protection and public services.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

While today we are gathering for the Asia and Pacific regional consultation on social protection, rural employment, and food security, it also marks just the beginning of a long journey. The meeting's findings will guide our continued ILO-FAO cooperation for together pursuing support to countries of Asia and the Pacific to ensure that social protection, decent work and food security become a reality for all.

I wish you fruitful discussions in the coming two days.

Thank you.

WELCOME ADDRESS

by

Hiroyuki Konuma

Assistant Director-General and
FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

delivered at the

**Regional Consultation on
Social Protection, Rural Employment and Food Security**
Millennium Hilton Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

**Your Excellency, Honorable Minister Mr Hari Prasad Parajuli;
Ministry of Agricultural Development of Nepal;
Your Excellency, H.E. Marcos da Cruz;
Vice Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Timor-
Leste;
Mr Yoshiteru Uramoto, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific;
Excellences;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this important event, which is organized in collaboration with the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The main purpose of this gathering is to share experiences and chart the way forward for linking Social Protection with Rural Employment and Food Security. I wish to thank all of you for taking time off your busy schedules to attend this meeting. I wish to convey my special thanks to Mr Uramoto and ILO colleagues for valuable partnership.

Today an estimated 805 million people are chronically undernourished, in other words go hungry every day. The prevalence of undernourishment has fallen from 18.7 to 11.3 percent globally and from 23.4 to 13.5 percent for developing countries, much of this progress has been recorded in Asia. Indeed, the proportion of chronic hunger in Asia and the Pacific has been reduced to 12.9 percent in 2014, against MDG no.1 Hunger Goal of 12.2 percent. The gap is only 0.7 percent which would likely be attained by next year.

In the total number, however, this region, despite strong economic growth for the last couple of decades, is still home to the majority of the world's undernourished estimated at 526 million people, which is over 60 percent of the world's total hungry and undernourished. Within the same region Eastern and South-Eastern Asia have made impressive progress in reducing poverty and under nutrition over the past three decades, while progress has been limited in Southern Asia. While the region is on track to achieve the MDG hunger goal, the real goal is to eradicate hunger in the remaining 12 per cent of the region's vulnerable population. Many of these poor are small-scale, subsistence farmers, landless agricultural workers, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities residing in rural and remote disadvantaged areas and generally working in the informal sector.

The UN Secretary General has launched Zero Hunger Challenge in 2012. Through concerted efforts of UN Agencies, Asia and the Pacific Region launched the Regional Zero Hunger Challenge, followed by country level launching in Timor-Leste in 2014.

It is widely accepted that this heightened vulnerability of the poor is to a large extent also due to the decades of under-investment in agriculture and rural areas and in particular in small-holder agriculture, which is fundamental for the livelihoods of the majority of the poor as well as lack of adequate social protection.

Addressing the immediate and underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition will require a variety of actions across a range of sectors, in particular the effective implementation of social protection that are targeting the most vulnerable people, in close synergies with agriculture production, productivity and rural development.

Social protection programmes have proven successful in addressing issues relating to food security and rural development, as well as enhancement of small holder productivity and rural employment. Social protection not only provides direct income security to poor and vulnerable households, but also how – when adequately designed – social protection schemes can simultaneously foster:

- agricultural productivity and market access of smallholder producers (through instruments like cash transfers, input vouchers, input trade fairs, weather-indexed and other insurance schemes for smallholder farmers and pastoralists);
- food and nutrition security (including cash transfers, school feeding, agricultural input vouchers or food subsidies);
- human capital and skill development (cash transfers conditioned to children's education or maternal and child health care); and
- job creation and diversification of rural livelihoods (such as cash and food-for-work programmes).

However, alone may not be enough to sustainably lift rural households out of poverty, agriculture policies and programmes combined with rural employment strategies can be used to complement social protection as part of a rural poverty reduction. Therefore, coordinated efforts between social protection, rural employment and agriculture are needed to increase efficiency, improve policy coherence and institutions and subsequently produce a harmonized response that sustainably lifts rural households out of poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The moral injustice of the hunger paradox, social exclusion and gender disparities, which continue to plague this region, should not be tolerated in the 21st century and a call for concerted action is long overdue. Social protection, as we all know, is not only about catching those falling off the economic development ladder but also offers significant opportunities to address food security, hunger and malnutrition by promoting and protecting agriculture and other livelihoods (urban as well as rural) as well as meeting the basic needs of the disadvantaged groups.

I am under no illusion to assume that social protection alone will be sufficient to address the daunting challenges of agriculture under-development, rural under and unemployment and food security in the region. However, it is certainly an important element of a broad policy and strategy to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

Past experience has also shown us that misplaced emphasis and misguided policies and strategies can go horribly wrong. It can be a drain on meagre national resources, can impede progress and crowd out the private sector, eliminate incentives and discourage investment – the very opposite of intended outcomes. The experience of late 1970s and 1980s, which gave rise to even more damaging policies are very much in the back of our minds.

Experience has also shown us that social protection and other policies do not have to go wrong. Learning from each other, exchanging experiences and knowhow are important factors to avoid mistakes and minimize the risk of failure. The purpose of this gathering as mentioned earlier is to exchange experiences with policies, strategies and instruments of social protection in support of agriculture development, rural employment and food security.

I shall not attempt to spell out the various aspects of social protection in relation to agriculture development, rural employment and food security, which I shall leave to the participating countries and organizations to discuss and share their experiences. In the face of daunting challenges and the moral injustice, I am hopeful that this consultation will chart the broad contours of the way forward to address these challenges. This gathering will hopefully also identify modalities and means for collaboration, cooperation and exchange of experiences among participating countries and their international partners like FAO, ILO and others.

I am confident that this consultation will serve as the basis for future dialogue, exchange of good practices and facilitate wider collaboration and support for the conceptualization, design and implementation of effective, sustainable and long-term social protection policies as an integral part of coherent agriculture development, rural employment and food security policies and strategies.

Thank you.

REMARKS

by

Hon. Minister Hari Prasad Parajuli
Ministry of Agricultural Development
Government of Nepal

delivered at the

**Regional Consultation on
Social Protection, Rural Employment and Food Security**
Millennium Hilton Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

**Respected Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I feel great honor and kind pleasure to have been invited in this important meeting that aims to solve the fundamental human problem of food security and associated issues such as rural employment and social protection. On behalf of myself and the Nepalese delegation, I take this opportunity to thank the organizer for enabling our participation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Asia is the hub for agriculture since Eastern culture, where human civilization was started. Until now, Asia is considered one of the highest rice growing continents. However, this is struggling with the hunger and malnutrition because of the lack of the trained manpower and infrastructure. Which I believe can be changed. It is possible with social awareness and protection and by increasing the productivity of the agriculture. Likewise, South East Asia is also one of the fertile areas for agriculture where, Nepal lies within this continent. As you may know this is naturally beautiful agrarian country.

Nepal is a small landlocked mountainous country where agriculture is an engine of the growth and development. This sector contributes about one third of Gross Domestic Production (GDP). This is characterized by a large number of smallholder family farms, which is almost less than a hectare. Directly and indirectly, over 65 percent of Nepal's population has engaged in this sector; however it struggles to produce an adequate supply of food for its citizens. The total population under hunger is about 26 percent, which cannot be underestimated. The magnitude of problem has aggravated due to limited access to improved seeds, new technologies, and market opportunities.

Productivity of major crops is significantly low compared to other South Asian nation. Per capita consumption of animal products (32 litres of milk, 7.5 kg of meat and 6.4 eggs per capita per annum) is among the lowest in the region indicating to an extremely alarming situation. Household food balance (result of food inflow, household production, household consumption and outflow) is negative. The price of the major grains, rice and oilseeds produced in the world has doubled, since 1975. Household food deficiency due to low agricultural productivity, inefficient food distribution system, poor infrastructure and lack of awareness among general public about healthy food habit are some of the development challenges of the country. This is a massive challenge as impacted by the urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change. The most food insecure group is also the victims of floods, droughts and other natural disasters as well as armed conflicts. Another

key group of people we need to focus on in the context of food security are both rural as well as urban poor, who produce little food and often lack the means to buy all they need.

The solutions to the challenge of food and nutritional insecurity are multifaceted. Improving agricultural productivity is one of the fundamental building blocks of the response. The Government of Nepal has made food and nutrition security as a national priority, through periodic as well as long term Agricultural Prospective Plan (APP). At this moment, Government of Nepal has been formulating Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) aiming to increase agriculture productivity and incomes of the smallholder farmers. With FAO and other Development Partners namely, USAID, IFAD, WFP and other donors, Government of Nepal has decade's long partnerships for agricultural development.

Today, only 20 per cent of the world's population has adequate social security coverage, and more than half lack any coverage at all. Along with other ongoing initiatives, Nepal is also committed to actively engage in social protection through addressing the hunger at all levels: global, regional and national. Nepal Government has widely recognized access to adequate social protection as a basic right for promoting human welfare. It is one of the four strategic objectives of the decent work agenda that define the core work of the ILO. This approach promotes social services in the areas of health, water and sanitation, education, food, housing, life and asset-savings information. FAO's global experience of working in agriculture has been instrumental in developing effective strategies and interventions for agriculture development in Nepal. On this way, within the food security priorities, the Government further agreed on different initiatives: i)"improving food security by investing in agricultural productivity, infrastructure, social protection and the enhancement of export market"; ii)"reducing the negative impacts of climate change and other environmental factors on vulnerable communities ". The Government of Nepal has strong belief that model of food sovereignty is the right way of sustainable agricultural development ensuring social protection. We all have recognized the role of family farming to achieve zero hunger by 2025.

I am very much glad for the opportunity of participating, where very important papers were presented, group discussions were held, which will give important guidelines and messages to all of us. Nepal will highly consider these findings and incorporate in future programs related to rural employment, food security and social protection. The outcome of the two days program will be highly useful to our country where this aspect has been greatly emphasized in recent days. As we know, Social Protection cannot be achieved in the poverty and measurable conditions of the people. That's why we have to ensure income security through creating the enabling environment for rural employment. The wellbeing thus will bring the happiness and create the protection of the community people. In fact, the improved income situation ends the gender and racial discrimination. Therefore, improving wellbeing through income and food security is the way towards Social Protection. I believe that, you are the experts and experienced person in this field, who has great role for designing the appropriate programs. The recommendations of this program will be an instrumentals and important guidelines for all of us in conducting social protection activities.

I, on behalf of the Nepalese delegation, would like to express sincere commitments for incorporating the recommendation in our future program. We will take these as a home message to our country. Finally, I would like to conclude by extending sincere thanks to the organizer. Hoping that we can be able to identify and forge meaningful actions and partnerships in future. That is why together, we can make a difference. I wish for the successful conclusion of the event.

I Thank You All.

List of Participants

COUNTRY/INSTITUTION	PARTICIPANTS
AFGHANISTAN	Dr. Javid Ahmad Qaem Director-General Planning and Programme Coordination Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Tel: +93 (0) 752041848; 0093 (0)795525525 Fax: + 93202510428 Email: javid.qaem@mail.gov.af
BANGLADESH	Dr Shamsul Alam Member General Economic Division, Planning Commission Ministry of Finance Tel: 88-02- 9180730 (307); Mobile: 01730075299; Fax: 88-02- 9129857(314) Email: sabau47@yahoo.com
	Mr Arun Kumar Malaker Joint Secretary (Administration -1) Ministry of Food Tel: 01718723196, 88-02-9549096 (Office) 8802-9611511 (Residence) Email: arun_malaker@yahoo.com
CAMBODIA	H.E. Dr. Vathana Sann Deputy Secretary General Council for Agricultural and Rural Development Council of Ministers Tel: 855(0)12 950 410 Email: yathana20@yahoo.com Mr. Prak Thaveak Amida Deputy Secretary General Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Tel: 855 17 227 746 Email: prak.amida.dsg@maff.gov.kh
CHINA	Dr. Lubiao ZHANG Director General and Professor Department of International Cooperation Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences Tel: +86-10-82109476 Fax: +86-10-62174060 Email: zhanglubiao@caas.cn
INDONESIA	Dr. Oetami Dewi Head of Cooperation Division Directorate of Social Protection Ministry of Social Affairs Tel/Fax: +62 21 3915253/314 7474 Email: utamid@yahoo.com Dr. Mei Rochjat Darmawiredja

	<p>Executive Secretary Agency for Food Security Tel: 021 7804476 Email: meidarmawiredja@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Andriani Head of Labour Welfare Sub-Directorate Directorate of Work Requirements Analysis Discrimination Welfare DG of Industrial Relations and Social Security Workers Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration Tel/Fax: +62 21 5252982 Email: chenadri@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Dr. Winny Dian Wibawa Director General Agency for Food Security</p>
JAPAN	<p>Mr. Toru Adachi First Secretary Embassy of Japan in Thailand Tel: 02-696-3000 Fax: 02-696-3017 Email: toru.adachi-2@mofa.go.jp</p>
	<p>Ms. Chanyapach Unhajata Political Assistant Embassy of Japan in Thailand Tel: 02-696-3000 Fax: 02-696-3017 Email: chanyapach.u@bg.mofa.go.jp</p>
LAO PDR	<p>Mr. Phatnakhone Khanthamixay Deputy Director Division of Agricultural Technique and Mechanization Promotion Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperatives Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Tel: 856 20 55508315 Fax: 856 21 740243 Email: k_phat13@yahoo.com; phatnakhone.khanthamixay@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Thay SENGALOUN Deputy head of permanent secretary office Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Tel: 008562055 614029 Email: thaysengaloun@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Mixay Sengchanthavong Department of Skills Development and Employment Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Tel: +85620 22495959 Email: ml_sctv@hotmail.com</p>
MALDIVES	<p>Dr. Aminath Shafia Director General Agriculture & Forestry Division</p>

	<p>Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture Tel: (960) 333 9245 Fax: (960) 332 6558 Email: Shafia.aminath@fishagri.gov.mv</p>
	<p>Ms. Fathimath Shafeega Permanent Secretary Ministry of Law and Gender Tel: (960) 301 3017 Fax: (960) 301 3018 Email: shafeega@mlg.gov.mv</p>
MONGOLIA	<p>Mr. Agriunbold Magvansuren Senior Officer Crop Production Policy Implementation Department Ministry of Industry and Agriculture Tel: (976-51) 26-22-71 Fax: (976-11) 45-25-54 Email: ariunbold.mia@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Ms. A. Damiran Senior Officer Monitoring, Evaluation and External Audit Department Ministry of Industry and Agriculture Tel: (976-51) 26-22-71 Fax: (976-11) 45-25-54 Email: altanLitd@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Ms. Bolormaa Tsoodol Director of foreign cooperation division Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection Tel: +976 99022140 Email: bolormaa@yahoo.com</p>
NEPAL	<p>H.E. Hari Prasad Parajuli Minister Ministry of Agricultural Development Tel: 4211929 extn: 201 FaX: 977-01-4211935 Email: prameshjee@gmail.com</p>
	<p>Dr Yubak Dhoj GC Director General Department of Agriculture Ministry of Agricultural Development Tel: 5521232; 9851128129 Fax: 5524093 Email: yubakgc@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mr Narayan Prasad Kaphle Joint Secretary Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare Tel: 4200181; 9841518852 Fax: 4200116 Email: narayankaphle@yahoo.com</p>
PHILIPPINES	<p>Ms. Anna Abijuela</p>

	<p>Attache Agriculture Embassy of the Philippines Tel: +662 259-0139-40 Fax: +662 2592809 Email: bangkokpe@gmail.com</p>
PAKISTAN	<p>Dr. Hashim Popalzai Additional Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MONFS&R) Tel: 051-9203635 Fax: 051-9210616 Mobile: 0300-9560200 Email: hashimp@hotmail.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Rizwan Malik Director General Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Ministry of National Food Security and Research Tel: 92-51-9246418 Fax: 92-51-9246319 Email: rizzmalik@hotmail.com</p>
SINGAPORE	<p>Mr Tay Hui Mun Food Security Political Embassy of the Republic of Singapore in Thailand Tel: 02 2862111; 02- 286-1434 Fax: 02-287-2578</p>
SRI LANKA	<p>Mr. P.N.N. Jayanetti Ministry of Agriculture Tel: +0094 11 2868918 Email: nandalaljayanetti@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mrs. S.A.D.S. Subasinghe Additional Secretary (Developments) Ministry of Social Services Tel: +94 11 2877378 Fax: +94 11 2877711 Email: deepikasubasinghe@yahoo.com</p>
THAILAND	<p>Ms. Anan Lila Secretary-General Office of Agricultural Economics Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC)</p>
	<p>Mr. Witthaya Boodphedcharat Social Development Worker Senior Professional Level Bureau of Social Development Ministry of Social Development and Human Security Tel: 0 2659 6124 Email: wittaya6007@hotmail.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Madi Suwansiri Social Development Worker Professional Level Bureau of Social Development Department of Social Development and Welfare</p>

	<p>Ministry of Social Development and Human Security Tel: +66 0 2659 6125</p>
	<p>Ms. Rangsit Poosiripinyo Director Bureau of International Agricultural Economics, Office of Agricultural Economics (OAE), MOAC</p>
	<p>Ms. Kanjana Dangrunroj Policy and Plan Analyst Senior Professional Level OAE, MOAC</p>
	<p>Ms. Vinda Leumsombut Policy and Plan Analyst Professional Level OAE, MOAC</p>
	<p>Ms. Siriwat Suwannasri Economist OAE, MOAC</p>
	<p>Ms. Suchada Angkabkingkaew Policy and Plan Analyst OAE, MOAC</p>
TIMOR LESTE	<p>H.E. Marcos da Cruz Vice Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Phone: +67077045028 Tel: +67077045028 Email: mdacruz05@gmail.com</p>
	<p>Ms. Lopes Da Cruz Angela Maria Rodrigues Senior Officer Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Tel: +670 77154050 Email: hemeupe@yahoo.com</p>
VIETNAM	<p>Mr. Hoang Vu Quang Director of Rural Development Center Institute of Policy and Strategy Agriculture and Rural Tel: +84 (0) 914 930 862; +84 4 376 24463 Fax: +84 4 376 241 93 Email: hoangvuquang@hotmail.com</p>
	<p>Mr. Nguyen Tuan Anh Deputy Director General National Office for poverty reduction Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Email: tuananhck@yahoo.com</p>
ILO	<p>Mr Yohisteru Uramoto Regional Director ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, Thailand Tel: +66.2.288.17.10 Email: uramoto@ilo.org</p>

	<p>Ms Celine Peyron Bista Chief Technical Advisor on Social Protection ILO/Japan Project on Social Protection and Employment Promotion in Asia ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, Thailand Tel: +66.2.288.17.40 Email: bista@ilo.org</p>
	<p>Ms Cheng Ong Boon Social Protection Consultant ILO/Japan Project on Social Protection and Employment Promotion in Asia ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, Thailand Email: chengboon.ong@gmail.com</p>
	<p>Mr Charles Bodwell Enterprises Development Specialist, ILO Decent Work Team for East and South East Asia and the Pacific ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, Thailand Email: bodwell@ilo.org Tel: +6622882441</p>
	<p>Ms Baigalmaa Sanjjav National Project Manager ILO/Japan Project Promoting Social Protection and Employment Promotion in Mongolia ILO Country Office for Mongolia Email: sanjjav@ilo.org</p>
UNICEF	<p>Mr Gaspar Fajth Regional Adviser Economic and Social Policy UNICEF EAPRO Thailand</p>
	<p>Dorothy Foote Nutrition Specialist UNICEF EAPRO Thailand Mobile: +66 (0)85-257-0287 Tel: +66 (0)2-356-9258 Email: dfoote@unicef.org</p>
FAO	<p>Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Tel: (662) 6974310 Fax: (662) 6974499 Email: hiroyuki.konuma@fao.org</p>
	<p>Mr Rob Vos Coordinator Strategic Programme on Rural Poverty</p>

	<p>Reduction (SO3) Director Social Protection Division FAOHQ, Italy Tel: +39 06 57054550 Mobile: +39 3667892119 Email: rob.vos@fao.org</p>
	<p>Mr Aziz Arya South-South Cooperation Officer FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Tel: +66 2 6974307 Email: Arya.Aziz@fao.org</p>
	<p>Ms Clara Mi Young Park Gender Officer (Rural and Social Development) FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Tel: +66 2 6974261 Email: Clara.Park@fao.org</p>
	<p>Ms Rosa Rolle Senior Agro Industry and Post-Harvest Officer FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Email: Rose.Rolle@fao.org</p>
	<p>Ms Ginna Geal Consultant Partnership FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Tel: +66 2 6974234 Email: Ginna.Geal@fao.org</p>
	<p>Ms Nomindelger Bayasgalanbat Nutrition Officer FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific Thailand Tel: +66 2 6974140 Email: Nomindelger.Bayasgalanbat@fao.org</p>
	<p>Ms Verdiana Biagioni Gazzoli Social Protection and Coordination Intern FAO Cambodia Office Tel: (00855) 16268276 Email: Verdiana.BiagioniGazzoli@fao.org</p>
<u>NGO/CSOs</u>	<p>Mr. Baramée Chaiyarat General Secretary Assembly of the Poor Thailand Tel: 089-150-8084 Email: aop_t@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Ms. Lapapan Supamanta Technical Support Staff (interpreter) Assembly of the Poor Thailand</p>

	Tel: 089-150-8084
	Ms. Rhoda Gueta APC Secretariat Coordinator Philippines Tel: <u>+632-3793083</u> Fax: <u>+632-4565727</u> Email: <u>roda.gueta@gmail.com</u>
	Ms. LORELEI S. COVERO PANAP Philippines Tel: +63-2-411-1616 Mobile: +632 949 1984479, +632 916 3406514 Email: <u>lorelei.covero@panap.net</u> ; <u>lsc.panap@gmail.com</u> Skype: lorelei.covero
	Mr. P.Chennaiah Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Vruthidarula Union-APVVU A Federation of Unions of agriculture workers, marginal farmers & Fisher people India Tel+91 85 72 22 85 92 Fax: +91 85 230 804 Email: <u>apvvu98@gmail.com</u>
	Ms. Marlene D. Ramirez Secretary General AsiaDHRRA Philippines Email: <u>asiadhrra@asiadhrra.org</u>
	Dr Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk Sustainable Development Foundation Thailand Email: <u>ravadee@sdfthai.org</u>
	Ms. Joan Carling Secretary-General Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Thailand Tel: 66 053 380168 Email: <u>joan@aippnet.org</u>
	Mr. Ryuhei Sano General Manager Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) Thailand Tel: +66 2 354-7505 ext. 1202 Fax: +66 2 354-7507 Mobile: +66 84 875-2608 Email: <u>sano@apcdfoundation.org</u>
	Ms. Duangnarumol Dokruk Information and Knowledge Management Manager Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) Thailand Telephone: <u>+66 (0)2 354-7505 ext. 1206</u>

	<p>Fax: +66 (0)2 354-7507 Email: duangnarumol@apcdfoundation.org</p>
	<p>Mr Sawang Kaewkantha Executive Director Thailand Email: sawang@fopdev.or.th</p>
	<p>Meredith Wyse Strategic Development Manager East Asia and Pacific Regional Office HelpAge International Email: meredith@helpageasia.org</p>
	<p>Charles Knox Vydmanov Social Protection Advisor HelpAge International London Email: cknox@helpage.org</p>
	<p>Anne-Laure Hallaire Deputy Country Director HelpAge International Myanmar Country Office Email: anne.hallaire@helpagemyanmar.org</p>
	<p>Ms Ranee Hassarungsee Coordinator Social Watch Thailand Email: suiranee@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Mr Mads Korn Attaché (Cooperation) Delegation of the European Union Thailand Tel: +66 (0) 2 305 2600/2736 Fax:+66 (0) 2 255 9110 Email: mads.korn@eeas.europa.eu</p>