

CONCEPT NOTE
Inter-Sectoral Consultation on
The Development of a Plan of Action for the Implementation of the
ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection
2-3 October 2014, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Background

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) integration planned for 2015 will remove trade barriers, nontariff barriers and introduce free labour mobility for skilled labourers in ASEAN Member States. ASEAN integration is also a good opportunity for better coordinated social security among its Member States. Indeed, the expected economic changes call for a comprehensive response by ASEAN Member States, especially with regards to the role of social protection. ASEAN Leaders have recognised this need for reinforcement of the social protection systems, by adopting the **ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection** at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in 2013. As stated, to achieve growth with equity and “integration with a human face”, ASEAN Member States declared to enforce adequate social protection measures, expand social insurance to the informal sector and social assistance to the unemployed and vulnerable groups. They also pledged to carry out evidence-based national assessments of the social protection delivery systems in the respective ASEAN Member States, in order to identify a number of concrete actions to improve the quality, coverage, and sustainability of social protection. ASEAN Member States, guided by Royal Government of Cambodia, are now developing a plan of action for the implementation of the Declaration.

Social protection is recognised as a universal Human Right, as defined in articles 22, 25 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and formalised by the ILO in the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202). The Social Protection Floor (SPF) promotes nationally defined strategies to protect a minimum level of access to social services and transfers for all. Especially in rural areas, ASEAN Member States can improve the realisation of this human right, by ensuring the following four basic guarantees:

1. Access to essential health care, including maternity care, at a nationally defined minimum level that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality;
2. Basic income security for children at a nationally defined minimum level, including access to nutrition, education, care, and any other necessary goods and services;
3. Basic income security at a nationally defined minimum level for persons of active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in the case of sickness, unemployment, maternity, and disability; and
4. Basic income security at a nationally defined minimum level for older persons.

Given the universality of the SPF, social security would extend to the rural areas and working age people that currently lack of these basic services and transfers. A social protection floor allows for rural development, as the virtue is incremental. For the underdeveloped rural areas, a minimum level of income security and therefore improved access to food and nutrition, betters the rural livelihood. With the enhanced level of health and education, the gate is opened for overall rural economic and social development.

With regards to nutrition, the effectiveness of the SPF lies with its integration of basic income transfers and services, such as the integrated provision of e.g. micronutrient supplementation with nutrition education and health programs. With the SPF averting malnutrition, children are enabled to acquire full cognitive capacity and their likelihood of being sick is decreased. In term of economics; adhering to this human right allows for a better life cycle development. Achieving this would improve labour insensitivity, hence for enable overall economic growth.

Indeed, ASEAN Member States recognise this necessity of food security. During the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand (2009), the Leaders committed to adopt the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS). This commitment called for increased cooperation among ASEAN Member States in addressing food security in the region. Since the implementation of the AIFS Framework, gradual yet significant improvements in access and availability of food have already been achieved. With the recent adoption of the Declaration on the Strengthening of Social Protection, improved coordination of the two frameworks will enable more sustainable poverty reduction and socio-economic development in the rural areas.

The Southeast Asian region is frequently hit by natural disasters, such as typhoon, floods, earthquakes, Tsunami, volcanic eruption. People were killed or injured. Schools, farms, fishing boats and properties were damaged. The 2004 Tsunami alone devastated communities in 12 Asian countries and killed more than 225,000 people. Social assistance is more important than ever before in post-disaster recovery period to allow affected people to stand on their feet again. Timeliness and responsiveness of schemes are critical. As a response, a legally-binding document named the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed to promote regional cooperation. Implementation of AADMER is currently on-going under the coordination of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM).

Social Protection Technical Consultation

Taking in consideration this increased need to put the declaration into practice, a multi-sectoral consultation is required to come to a coordinated plan of action. Thus, the proposed **objectives**:

1. To prepare a draft plan of action to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection (this plan of action will subsequently be finalised by the relevant ASEAN sectorial bodies through appropriate procedure facilitated by the ASEAN Secretariat);
2. To foster a regional cooperation/coordination platform for ASEAN sectorial bodies (including SLOM, SOMSWD, SOMHD, SOMRDPE, ACDM, SOM-AMAF¹) on social protection.

The consultation is expected to develop a Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection. Therefore, it is crucial that there will be wide participation of ASEAN Member States at the appropriate level of representation.

Invited Participants

1. Representatives of ministries in charge of social welfare, labour, health, poverty reduction, food security, disaster management, development planning, and finance from ten ASEAN Member States will be invited. Invitations will be channelled through the focal points of SOMSWD, SLOM, SOMRDPE, SOMHD, ACDM, and SOM-AMAF from ten ASEAN Member States.
2. Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat.
3. Representatives of ILO, FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, WHO, ADB, World Bank.
4. Representatives of International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) (issue of social protection of vulnerable groups), HelpAge International (issue of ageing society), Asia DHRRA (issue of poverty reduction)
5. Representative of Trade Union and Employer Association

Partner Organization

The meeting will be organised by the Royal Government of Cambodia represented by the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), in collaboration with FAO, UNICEF, ILO, ASEAN secretariat.

Proposed budget and schedule:

The roundtrip economy-class airfare and hotel accommodation of one sectoral focal point/representative from each ASEAN Member State will be covered by the organiser. The total funded delegates per country will be officials representing SOMSWD (1), SLOM (1), SOMRDPE (1), SOMHD (1), ACDM (1), SOM-AMAF (1), development planning (1), and finance (1). The technical consultation is proposed to take place on 2-3 October 2014 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

¹ SLOM: Senior Labour Officials Meeting; SOMSWD: Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development; SOM-AMAF: Senior Officials Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry; SOMHD: Senior Officials Meeting on Health and Development; SOMRDPE: Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication; ACDM: ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management.