**Trade Union Development Cooperation Network Meeting in the Asia Pacific Region**

**3rd, 4th and 5th December 2014, Bangkok, Thailand**

**Objectives of the meeting**

1. To consolidate the networking in the Asia Pacific region as a key strength for the achievement of our trade union advocacy objectives around development policies;
2. To share the results achieved so far by the TUDCN, involving the organisations in the Asia Pacific region in the TUDCN work on “advocacy” and “partnerships”;
3. To jointly discuss and delineate future planning for the AP development network in the next couple of years.

**Wednesday 3rd December**

**Opening**

**Suzuki Noriyuki, General Secretary of ITUC-AP** opened the meeting welcoming the participants and introducing the context in the region with respect to inequality.

This was followed by a [video on the TUDCN](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/distant/html/watchvyRLkmbf927.html) and an introduction by **Diego López, from the TUDCN secretariat,** on the origins of the Network and its work.

**Parayarikkal Haridasan, from ITUC-AP**, presented the policies and program of the ITUC-AP in the region in accordance with the three strategic goals of the ITUC.

**Participant’s presentation**

Following the opening session the participants in the meeting presented each other describing their organisation and functions, the work they have done in development cooperation and the expectations from the meeting. The main expectations form participants were: to learn on development cooperation and the TUDCN; elaborate a work plan for the TUDCN; exchange experiences; establish partnerships; consolidate networking; listen to good practices; organise work in the region.

**Setting the scene on socio-economic policies and challenges in the AP region**

**Sukti Dasgupta, Senior Economist at the ILO Regional Office in Bangkok** gave an overview of the situation and challenges in the AP region. She highlighted the strong economic growth, the growing middle class and relatively low unemployment rates in the region, but noted that these have not been accompanied by inclusion and labour standards. This brings up the challenges of tackling informality, social protection, working poverty, low wages, gender disparities, low ratification of ILO Conventions, migration and vulnerability. She also mentioned the new context as of 2015 with the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community which will create new opportunities, but could also increase inequalities and vulnerability. In this context some ideas for action were put forward to manage structural change, promote shared prosperity and improve cooperation and dialogue.

**Working Groups on Socio-Economic Policies and Challenges in the AP Region**

The afternoon session was undertaken in two working groups in which the following questions were discussed:

* What are the key issues to be addressed for an inclusive development model?
* What are the main strategies to be pursued (reference models in the AP Region)?

After the group work the conclusions of the discussion of each group were presented in plenary.

The **key issues to be addressed** for an inclusive development model were identified to be:

* Informal economy.
* Low wages.
* Social protection.
* Low union density, collective bargaining, freedom of association.
* Migration.
* Unemployment.
* Gender inequality.
* Low ratification of ILO core conventions.
* Precarious work.
* Labour law.
* Inequality.

And the **main strategies to be pursued** for each key issue:

* Informal economy: organising the informal economy workers through mapping, capacity building, awareness raising and mobilising.
* Low wages: putting pressure on governments for a national minimum wage (which should not be lower than the standard living wage); equalling tripartite representation; building the capacities of union representatives in tripartite remuneration bodies; having correct data and statistics for negotiations. (Reference models: Indonesia, Mongolia and Cambodia).
* Social protection: putting pressure on governments for social protection, especially for poor or informal sector workers. (Reference models: Indonesia and Mongolia)
* Low union density, collective bargaining and freedom of association: organising informal, migrant and domestic workers; organising in supply chains; ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions. (Reference models: Mongolia, Indonesia, Cambodia and Philippines).
* Migration: creating employment opportunities in the emitting country; mobilising unions for networking between sending and receiving countries; making the protection of migrant workers a priority for unions.
* Unemployment: promoting industrial policy; vocational and skills training; employment facilitation. (Reference models: Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Singapore).
* Gender inequality: empowering women; increasing participation of women in national unions’ decision making bodies; pushing governments to ratify ILO conventions 100, 101, 183. (Reference models: Australia).
* Low ratification of ILO core conventions: pressuring governments through lobbying, conferences and campaigning; using the ILO model for enhancing ratification and implementation.
* Precarious work: improving occupational health and safety; organising; limiting the work that can be outsourced. (Reference models: Indonesia, Japan and Fiji).
* Labour law: insisting on governments’ amendment of labour law for the benefits of the workers.
* Inequality: putting forward conditional cash transfers for poor families; collective bargaining; wage laws; progressive taxation. (Reference models: Indonesia, Philippines).

**Thursday 4th December**

**Challenges in the Asia Pacific Region around Development Cooperation**

The second day started with a panel of four speakers on the challenges in the AP Region around development cooperation.

**Arun Kumar, from ACTRAV**, spoke about the challenges for trade unions in fostering inclusive development, bringing forward the importance of freedom of association and workers’ rights, as well as the promotion of ILO standards. He highlighted some features of the current development model being: shifts from development cooperation to free trade, increasing competition between unequal countries and a redistribution of income towards the rich countries. This implies an export-led development process in the Asian region which requires the suppression of wages, precarious work, rising inequality, decreasing rights for workers, etc. He noted that over-dependence on exports and Western markets should be reduced to develop domestic and regional markets, and the Decent Work Agenda should be put forward to promote recovery and sustainable economic development.

**Don Marut, from the CPDE**, presented the process of Development Effectiveness at the international level, from the declaration of Rome to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and outlined the increasing participation of CSOs in this process. He introduced the eight Istanbul Principles for Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Development Effectiveness and presented the CPDE (CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness). Unions, as labour sector, are part of the CPDE and can participate in the Asia Pacific region at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. He mentioned the specificity of middle income countries and their role as donors, as well as the challenge of having countries such as China and India on board.

**Parayarikkal Haridasan,** **from the ITUC AP**, started presenting the diversity of the region with respect to level of development, political structure and attitudes towards CSOs as well as the unionisation rate in different countries. He highlighted the predominance of the informal economy and precarious work and introduced the challenges of increasing union density, gender participation and reducing union fragmentation. He informed of engagement with regional organisations such as in the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) with the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC), in the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) through the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC). The consultation meeting with TUSSOs and GUFs was also mentioned as a necessity to exchange information, as well as the engagement with the ADB (Asian Development Bank), the PFD (Policy Forum on Development), the Post 2015 process, GPEDC, CPDE, OECD-DAC, IMF, World Bank, APEC-APLN, etc.

**Rekson Silaban, from KSBSI**, introduced the Post-2015 process and the role of unions in it, calling for greater participation in consultations with governments in this process and monitoring progress on the implementation of Busan commitments. He stressed that unions should engage with CSOs, coordinate with non-state actors and count on experts to make inputs to global debates. Unions have to keep on pushing to be recognised and involved in all the stages of debates and negotiations. He mentioned that national and regional unions should establish platforms to give inputs to national union leaders on key macro-economic issues and that the TUDCN can serve as a support to national unions on positions, partnerships, lobby strategies, good practices, etc. Finally, he concluded that it is also important to engage in South-South or Triangular cooperation to learn from good practices.

**Working Groups on Challenges in the Asia Pacific Region around Development Cooperation**

Following the panel, two working groups were constituted to deal with the following questions:

* Assessment and discussion on the presentations
* What are the key inputs for future orientations, priorities and added value for TUs in development cooperation?

The groups had a positive appreciation of the presentations and identified the **key inputs for future orientations, priorities and added value for TUs in development cooperation** to be:

**Orientations:**

* Capacity building for TUs (engagement in TUDCN).
* Tripartism and bipartism as a mechanism for engagement with government.
* Opening up engagement with CSOs.
* Establishing a TUDCN platform to share information.
* Promotion and involvement of young workers and women in policy making.
* Establishing focal points (specialist) for TUDCN at the national level.
* Engaging with regional, sub-regional CPDE structure.
* Conducting regular meetings of ITUC-AP TUDCN.

**Priorities:**

* Strengthening social dialogue.
* Promoting gender equality: participation and elimination of wage gaps
* Migration: establishing a migrant charter and promoting MoUs between sending and receiving countries.
* Organising: Engaging in policy making and planning, capacity building and awareness raising, mobilising.
* Promoting Decent Work.

**Introduction to the work of the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network: Results and Challenges**

The afternoon session started with a presentation by **Diego López, from the TUDCN secretariat**, on the results and challenges of the work of the TUDCN on advocacy and partnerships. He started by introducing the increasing role of the private sector in development and its consequences. This was followed by a highlight of the achievements in terms of **advocacy** on the post-2015 process, in the GPEDC, and with the OECD-DAC and the European Union. He mentioned the work that is being done with the CPDE and the importance of the creation and consolidation of regional networks to ensure voices from the South are present in global, regional and national debates which affect them. He then introduced the challenges with respect to policy making in the post-2015 process, Financing for Development, the GPEDC, the DAC and continued work on EU positions on development cooperation. The importance of maintaining and building alliances with CSOs and UN major groups, and the consolidation and creation of regional trade union development cooperation networks were also highlighted.

He then moved on to introducing the **partnerships** work of the TUDCN and the [Trade Union Principles on Development Effectiveness](http://www.ituc-csi.org/trade-union-principles-and?lang=en), the [TUDEP](http://www.ituc-csi.org/tu-development-effectiness-profile?lang=en) (Trade Union Development Effectiveness Profile) tool and how it works. After this he spoke about Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) frameworks and their importance in the evaluation of capacity building strategies, as well as their relevance to shaping Trade Union Development Strategies that can contribute to organising. Finally he introduced the [Trade Union Development Projects Database](http://projects.ituc-csi.org/) and its functioning.

**Working Groups on “Advocacy” and “Partnerships” Work in the Asia Pacific Region**

Following the presentation, work was undertaken in two working groups to discuss the following questions:

* What are the key advocacy priorities in the AP region around development policies? How can we improve TU engagement in policy making? (key target institutions)
* How can we improve cooperation amongst TUs in the context of development cooperation programs? (Relations with TUSSOs? South-South cooperation?)

The **key advocacy priorities** in the AP region around development policies were established to be:

* Ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions
* Labour law reform
* Inclusive growth: wage led growth and minimum wages
* Freedom of association
* Decent work: Specifically job creation and employment policy; social protection; social dialogue.
* Organising: informal workers, domestic workers, migrant workers.
* Precarious work.
* Gender equality.

The ways for **improving engagement in policy making** were set to be:

* Capacity building.
* Trade union education.
* Skill development programs, having experts.
* Social dialogue.
* TU action and engagement: talk, write, lobby (parliament members, government and ministers), campaign, position papers, strike, demonstrate, etc.
* Engagement with CSOs.
* Tell others: publications, platforms, forums, media and social media.
* Networking with TUs at the sub-regional, regional and global levels.

The **key target institutions**:

* TUs
* Governments.
* Ministries of Labour.
* Tripartite Agencies.
* TUSSOs.
* CSOs.
* Employer organisations.
* World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank, UN group.

Ways of **improving cooperation amongst TUs** in the context of development cooperation programs:

* Tripartism.
* Union networks: information sharing, platforms, social media, meetings, discussions.
* Joint design, planning, implementation, evaluation of projects with TUSSOs, etc.
* North-South and South-South exchanges: particularly in social dialogue, social protection, gender, wages, organising, labour migrations.
* MoUs on migrant workers (between organisations in sending and receiving countries).

**Friday 5th December**

**Towards a TUDCN AP Work Plan**

The last day of the meeting started with a presentation by **Diego López, from the TUDCN secretariat**, on the working methodology of the TUDCN, its membership, features and structure. The aims and composition of General Meetings, Open Coordination Meetings, the Steering Committee and the different working groups and seminars were introduced. After this a presentation on the TUDCN work plan for 2015 followed.

**Working Groups towards a TUDCN AP Work Plan**

After the presentation working groups were set to come up with a work plan for 2015-2016 in which objectives, results and activities were set. The outcome of these discussions was:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** | **EXPECTED RESULTS** | **MAIN ACTIVITIES** |
| Establishment of TUDCN in AP region  Achieving Decent Work in policy making in AP region. | * Developing common approaches, common policy and improving networking. * Creating a strong TUDCN in AP. * Establishing a platform for information sharing. * Strong engagement with government in policy making for Decent Work. * Strong engagement with regional institutions (ADB, employers, etc.) | * Define orientations of TUDCN AP. * Exchange information and ideas. * Appointment of focal point/coordinator. * Regular meetings of TUDCN AP (see advocacy priorities for themes). * Lobby and advocacy work with governments and parliaments on trade union issues (binding instruments with multinationals, creating decent jobs, social protection, equal representation in tripartite bodies/social dialogue etc. (see advocacy priorities)). * Drafting of position papers. * Monitoring. * Meeting with NGOs/CSOs. * Building alliances with NGOs/CSOs. * Skills training. * Work in social media. * Seminars. * Publications. * Regional networking. |

In addition some themes were selected as possible themes for a meeting of the TUDCN in the AP region. These were: migrant workers, social protection, supply chains/multinationals, minimum wage, informal economy, gender equality, labour law reform, decent work.

**Conclusions and closure**

In the last session an evaluation by the participants was made in which there was a general satisfaction with the work that had taken place throughout the meeting and a willingness to continue with such fruitful experiences.

The initial expectations at the beginning of the meeting were mostly met and the objectives were overall reached. The next steps will be the official constitution of the TUDCN AP after the presentation of a resolution at the 3rd Regional Conference of the ITUC AP in May 2015; following this a TUDCN AP meeting will take place the second half of 2015. Organisations are welcome to participate in the TUDCN working groups and a representation from AP will participate in the next TUDCN General Meeting in Florence the 27th, 28th and 29th of April 2015, as well as the Open Coordination Meeting in September 2015 and any relevant seminars.