

# ILO workshop aimed at improving how journalists cover labor issues

BY SAM RITH

**TURIN, Italy**—Government officials from labor ministries, trade unionists and professional journalists from 24 developing countries took part in a weeklong training course “Communicating Labor Rights” sponsored by the International Labor Organization (ILO) at its headquarters, the International Training Centre (ITC) in Turin, Italy.

The training course aimed to equip media professionals with the knowledge and skills they need to raise public awareness about internationally-recognized labor rights and their relevance to local labor and social issues, said Federica Bertolino, an ITC officer.

“The goal is to generate better information on labor rights by making it easier for journalists to use the information provided by the ILO,” said Bertolino.

By the end of the course, participants should be able to determine when and how to refer to the international labor standards in their coverage of labor and social affairs and better use ILO databases and documents



The participants for the training course were from Albania, Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Grenada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Zimbabwe and included *The Cambodia Weekly's* Sam Rith (far left, front row).

to help them research stories on labor and social affairs, said Bertolino.

Through the accurate dissemination of information, it is hoped the public will take a greater interest in labor issues and help to put an end to

the worst violations of labor rights, she added.

Prabhakar Ghimire, business correspondent for Nepal's *Himalayan Times*, said he appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the ILO's

work such as international labor standards, labor rights and other social issues.

Nithiphat Wattanasuwakul, who works in the Thai Labor Ministry's Public Relations office, said he was happy to have a chance to participate in a training course offered at an internationally renowned training center.

Nithiphat said he had learned a great deal and also made valuable media contacts that he hoped would help him keep the public more informed about labor issues in Thailand.

Azhar Habib, a member of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Union at Panasonic Manufacturing Human Resources, said the training would improve how he and other union leaders articulate their message to the press.

“To strengthen labor rights and make conditions for workers safer and more harmonious, trade unions, the media as well as government officials have to cooperate with each other,” said Azhar, adding that in his opinion most of the reports on labor issues in the press today is imbalanced.

## Photograph competition launched to mark United Nations Day of Disabled Persons

The International Labor Organization, Disabled Peoples' International and Irish Aid have launched an Asia-Pacific photograph competition under the theme “Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities” to raise awareness of the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons Dec. 3.

The competition aims to raise awareness about people with disabilities and their right to decent work, according to a press release. Photographs must include disabled people in their work environment and may include people who are self-employed. Photographs must also be linked to the concept of “decent work or of people advocating for their right to decent work,” the release noted, adding that “decent work is productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.”

ILO Director General Juan Somavia has defined decent work as “work that meets people's basic aspirations, not only for income, but for security for themselves and their families, without discrimination or harassment, and providing equal treatment for women and men with and without a disability.”

“The International Labor Organization is working to raise awareness of disabled people's contribution to

the workplace and their rights to decent work, particularly in light of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the General Assembly last year. This is the first human rights convention of the 21st century and marks a major step forward for disabled persons in all aspects of life, including work,” said Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO regional director.

“We hope this photo competition will bring new and positive awareness and put human faces to the millions of disabled persons who contribute to their countries' workforce and economy every day. There is a huge untapped potential of disabled persons,” added ILO senior specialist in disability Debra Perry.

Saowalak Thongkuay, regional development officer for Disabled Peoples' International said the “competition is an excellent opportunity to promote the rights of disabled people to work and show that they are also capable of contributing. With more than 400 million disabled people, of which, about 250 million are of working age, this is not an insignificant group.”

Entries for the competition will only be accepted in digital format and must have a file size of no less than 1

megabyte. Photographs should be no more than 2 years old, and must not have won prizes in any other photographic competition. Submissions must include a caption explaining the disability of the subject and the link to “decent work”.

Judging will be carried by a panel of experts comprised of leading photographers, disabled people as well as representatives from the ILO, Disabled Peoples' International, employers and trade unions. Judges will give equal weight to pictures of people with physical disabilities and non-physical disabilities. More information on the competition, submission form and full terms and conditions are available via the competition Web site at [www.jigsaw-communications.com/ILO](http://www.jigsaw-communications.com/ILO).

The competition is open to residents of the Asia-Pacific region who are over the age of 18. A prize of \$1,000 will go to the winner. Entries will be received until Nov. 21. Contest entries should be submitted via the competition Web site at [www.jigsaw-communications.com/ILO](http://www.jigsaw-communications.com/ILO) or by mail to: International Labor Organization Photograph Contest, Jigsaw Communications, 32 Sukhumvit Soi 19, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand. Winners will be announced Bangkok Nov. 29. (CW)

## Asian productivity surge to boost global economy: ILO

**GENEVA**—Rising productivity levels in Asia are a boon and not a threat to the world economy, as growing prosperity spurs a demand for products made elsewhere in the world, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

East Asia has seen the fastest growth in productivity levels, which have doubled in the decade to 2006, the ILO said in its “Key Indicators of the Labor Market” report. Output per worker was up to one-fifth of the level of industrialized countries in 2006, from one-eighth in 1996.

Some commentators in industrialized countries fear that rising Asian productivity will damage their own markets but the ILO painted the picture of a “virtuous circle” as growing productivity boosts prosperity and thus demand for other products.

“Some see the impressive growth of productivity in Asia and South East Asia as a threat, but let me stress that it is in fact a positive trend for the world economy,” said ILO employment executive director Jose Salazar-Xirinachs.

“As their middle classes grow, they earn more money, they consume more goods and services, so these regions will become consumers for goods and services produced in Western countries and in the rest of the world,” he added.

The US remained the most productive economy in 2006 in terms of labor productivity per person. (AFP)