

Newsletter of Home-based Workers in Southeast Asia

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TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING INFORMAL WORKER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

How can strengthening informal worker participation in social dialogue mechanisms serve as a a way forward towards positive changes in social protection policies and programs?

Researches done at ASEAN level as well as at national level by country homenets in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines sought to answer this question.

Commissioned by the Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), the general objec-

tive of the compendium of researches is to present the institutional landscape underpinning social dialogue arrangements with a view to understanding the possibilities, barriers, and limitations to participation in inclusive social dialogue for organizations representing workers in the informal economy, especially women workers.

Social dialogue, as defined by the ILO, includes "all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy." Although social dialogue is considered to be of great importance and an end in itself, the fact is informal workers do not yet have a full seat at the table. They are often excluded from tripartite mechanisms that involve trade unions representing workers, government, and employers. When these mechanisms



Assessing Legal Regulation for Subcontracted Homeworkers in the Philippines





The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world to have a specific regulation for homeworkers who do subcontracted work. Between the 1970s to mid-1990s, there was a rise in subcontracted work to

homeworkers, especially in the garment sector, due to the export promotion strategies. Then, specific laws and regulations recognized homeworkers. Informal Workers (PATAMABA), the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) issued Department Order No. 5 regulating the working conditions of industrial homeworkers. The basis for issuing the Department Order was the recognition of industrial homeworkers in the Labou Code of 1974 and the powers given to DOLE for issuing specific regulations for the welfare and protection of homeworkers.

The regulation contains provisions to register homeworker organizations, subcontractors, contractors and employers, set standard piece rates through time and motion studies, oblige employers to make immediate payments and create dispute resolution mechanisms.

Was the regulation useful to homeworkers?

E Workers are either de jure or de facto exclusive of workers outside of the formal employment relationship: Their occupation or sector of work may not be recognized under labour law
Not permitted by law to establish member-based organizations and register as trade unions

INFORMAL ECONOMY WORKERS ARE MISSING IN SOCIAL

DIALOGUE SPACES

In 1992, following advocacy by the National Network of



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from p. 1 ... Legal regulation for subcontracted homeworkers



PATAMABA and Homenet SEA jointly conducted a research to understand the experience of homeworkers with the law and the challenges and opportunities for strengthening its implementation.

Between March 23 to

27, a WIEGO and Homenet SEA team visited the Philippines and together with Homenet Philippines and PATAMABA, conducted field visits. We visited homeworkers in Taytay, Rizal and Valenzuela City, Bulacan, to understand the challenges of homeworkers contracted under domestic and global supply chains.

We also met with officials from DOLE to understand how they are working on the implementation of Department Order No. 5 and generally, to get to know more about the working conditions of homeworkers. We conducted a workshop with leaders of subcontracted homeworkers and home-based workers to analyze the degree to which the regulation aligned with the ILO's Home Work Convention (C177) and the challenges and opportunities for strengthening its implementation.

The workers in Taytay and Valenzuela City, mainly women, work in the garment, footwear, notebook-making, and umbrella-making sectors. The women do the work, in addition to their childcare and household work. They do not have written contracts with the sub-contractors or contractors; the agreements are verbal and are usually made with the immediate subcontractor/contractor.

Some of the sub-contractors themselves are also homeworkers and small groups of women (5-10) work from their homes. These subcontractors bear the electricity charges and machine costs. Overall, the amount of work is evolve into tripartite plus arrangements, they are more likely to be represented, together with civil society organizations. But even if they do reach the table, the women among them are often left behind.

The researches involved focus group discussions with wage and self-employed informal workers, key informant interviews with leaders of informal workers' associations, major trade unions, employers' groups, labor departments and ministries; and validation workshops.

Results of both the subregional and country-level researches are scheduled to be published by November.

unpredictable as it varies with the orders. Some of the workers said they have backaches and blurry vision as a result of the work they do. The main demand of the workers is to have a higher income for their work.

From the meetings and conversations that we had, initial analysis shows that the Department Order has not been used as a tool to advance the rights of the homeworkers, either in terms of setting updated piece rates or for dispute resolution. The last known complaint taken to DOLE was in the 1990s. There has been very limited implementation of the Department Order in the past three decades.

In the workshop, the following actions were identified for the ways forward:

- Decent work advocacy: Ensure decent work for homeworkers including bargaining, organizing, fair wages, and safe conditions of work. Social protection was identified as a priority. Additionally, to ensure decent work, it was decided that we should push for having inspectors to monitor the rights of homeworkers.
- C 177 Ratification: Advocating for the ratification of C177 was also identified as one of the next steps. A mapping exercise was conducted in the workshop comparing the Department Order and the C177. Even though the Department Order covers a lot of rights for subcontracted homeworkers, they still fall short of providing maternity protection. There are also presently no mechanisms in place for regulating occupational safety and health nor for updating piece rates.
- **Identifying homeworkers:** There is very little information available about the existing homeworkers, the brands they work for and the areas they are working in. Mapping homeworkers was identified as a priority: both within Homenet Philippines as well as nationally. It was decided to identify the subcontracted homeworkers within the network as well as push for a national-level identification of subcontracted homeworkers.

Photo: A home-based worker in Thailand (photo courtesy of **HomeNet** Thailand)



Homenet Lao

Rolls out SSE training, monitors results



4)

HomeNet Lao, on 2 February, conducted social solidarity economy (SSE) training for nine home-based worker (HBW) groups, consisting of 29 participants, 27 women and two men.

The training consisted of an assessment of the knowledge and practice related to SSE of the homebased workers groups, introduction of key concepts, and discussion of the principles and core features of SSE.

These include agreeing to work together with the aim of managing economic activities together, joint ownership and management of businesses by SSE organizations with a membership base, sharing of profits and creation of positive change for society throughout the supply chain (from producers to consumers), joint social activities of common interest, and production that takes into account health and environmental safety standards

The trainers emphasized to HBW members that they must pay attention to learn these SSE core features and implement them in their own work as groups to bring benefits to their members and to develop and improve their lives.

HomeNet Lao leaders monitored the implementation of the SSE core features among two low-income groups in Hai Teng village and Pak Band village in Sangthong district. These groups have an organizational structure, with members engaged in production resulting in change. The monitoring revealed the following practices which are changes resulting from the SSE training:

- 1) There is a joint investment in the purchase of raw materials for production;
- 2) If there is a joint sale of goods, 10 percent of the profit from the sale will be deducted to add to the working capital; another five percent will be added to the year-end dividend of the savings, which will later be deducted as a welfare fund to help take care of members (or their families) in case of illness, childbirth or death;
- 3) The groups have joint savings. Loans at a low interest rate of 1.5 percent per month are granted

for working capital within the group;

At the end of the year, dividends will be distributed based on shares for members.

HomeNet Lao Members apply for voluntary social security



The Association for the Promotion of Out-of-System Workers together with the Capital Social Security Service Office and the National Social Security Agency released information on the voluntary social security law and opened facilities for mobile social security cards to five groups of HBW members, 85 of whom decided to apply.

Currently, HNL's HBWs members who have joined the voluntary social security membership number 235. They are entitled to receive the following benefits:

- 1. Health insurance subsidy
- 2. Subsidy for childbirth
- 3. Sickness allowance
- 4. Subsidy for unemployment
- 5. Pension subsidy
- 6. Death allowance
- 7. Support for family members

These subsidies and allowances are of great benefit to HBWs members, in case of illness, childbirth and accidents during work, helping HBWs realize the right to social protection

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION - Homenet Indonesia



HOMEWORK-ERS ACCESS SOCIAL PRO-TECTION



Before the formal introduction of the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), most groups of home workers had carried out social economic activities for many years through cooperatives and joint business groups with the aim of providing mutual benefits for members, the environment and the parties involved in these activities.

It is a good that Homenet Southeast Asia brought the name SSE for these socio-economic activities together with its features so that improvements can be made. This effort became stronger and sharper after the traing from Homenet Southeast Asia and Homenet Philippines held in collaboration with the Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), plus there is a comparative study with home worker groups running SSE initiatives in the Philippines.

The results of this year's training and evaluation related to the implementation of SSE were discussed with all board members and group leaders in several places where groups of homeworkers are just starting to form economic groups, including cooperatives based on SSE in several provinces.

Homenet Indonesia members have also approached the regional governments and legislative councils to obtain support for the implementation and strengthening of economic groups based on SSE. The support provided by the legislative councils varies, including registration, product development and online marketing training, etc.

The next plan of members in all provinces and Homenet Indonesia is to lobby and advocate regarding the implementation of SSE to regional governments and other stakeholders, including the National Government. Social protection is a human right. In Indonesia, homeworkers are able to access Health Insurance widely but it is still rare for them to access Employment Social Security.

Almost all home workers have free Health Insurance, where the contributions are paid by the Government. This is because of the persistence of home workers in fighting to become contribution-free participants through inclusion in Social Welfare Data.

Regarding Employment Social Security in Indonesia, previously the Government focused more on formal workers. Since 2020, BPJS (Social Security Administering Body) has begun to concentrate on inviting informal workers to become Employment Social Security participants.

The government and the Employment Social Security Agency are appealing to all homeworkers to take part in Employment Social Security. This is the result of continuous dialogue by Homenet Indonesia members with the Government so that the Social Security Administration Agency becomes aware of the existence of homeworkers.

The current contribution amount for Employment Social Security participation per month is IDR. 16,800 for work accident and death coverage, if the participant wants to get old age or pension coverage, the contribution increases by IDR 20,000 to become IDR. 36,800. Even though there is a reduction in the amount of contributions for informal workers, for homeworkers this is still too high considering that their income is not large. Homeworkers asked for relief to to be able to access as Contribution. Free Participants as is the case with Health Insurance.

From the results of the dialogue between homeworkers and the Government, many homeworker leaders were recruited as volunteers by the Social Security Administering Agency in the Shield program, which is tasked with raising awareness regarding Employment Social Security.

Facing the Challenges of Online Marketing

By: Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan and Zone C. Narito

Almost a year after Homenet SEA products were launched in the Homenet SEA website, an assessment identified several challenges: the high inflation rate and the resultant spiraling cost of raw materials, the lack of market and the need for capacity building for online marketing as well as for boosting the current online marketing platform.

For those who are into developing new products which answer the needs of the market, there is a big demand for packaging and labeling know-how, which comes with enhancing business skills and crafting strategic business plans.

How can these challenges identified in the assessment be initially addressed? Under the leadership of Poonsap Tulaphan, Homenet SEA conducted a webinar on "Product

Development and E-Commerce" on April 18.

Zone Narito moderated the segment on product development which featured as resource person Akiko Waters, a US-based lifestyle brand creator who works with brands "that are values-based and define success by putting people and planet first." Akiko gave ideas on how to make products new and different, getting feedback from customers, doing market testing, drawing ideas from the internet, and deciding on the design.

Lisa R. Bruan, a college lecturer and consultant of PATAMABA who also served as resource person for the webinar, focused on the need to know the customer segment which will determine the appropriate product packaging. As she emphasized, "Beyond making a good first impression on your customers, packaging expresses the message and values you want to put out about your



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO GROWING YOUR ARTISAN

Product development is like fertilizing the seeds of your business.

BUSINESS.

Chaporn Chulindra.

By creating new and improved products, you attract more customers and keep them coming back for more.

Product development keeps your business fresh in a competetive market, ensureing you new customers and even more importantly your return customers always have a reason to come back, leading to more sales, growth and success.

on opportunities provided by online marketing, and explained how to use Shoppee and Lazada as online marketing channels. She pointed out how to get ready for the emarketplace by having products with strong selling points and visual appeal. She highlighted the advantages of exploring multiple selling channels, having a clear budget and building alliances. Dary Soung belongs to the staff of Khmum e-

commerce, a platform in Cambodia which is not only marketing products but is also providing loans to producers who have good sales on the platform.

The session on Digital Marketing featured three resource

Pinyaphat, a Thai e-comerce consultant, gave information

person: Pinyaphat Kittihiranpas, Dary Soung, and

Chaporn is a Homenet Thailand Brand staff member who provided examples of strategies for successful online marketing, such as use the well-known platforms instead of the limited shopping system in our own website, increasing the product price to cover the fee on each platform, prescheduling posts, using Hashtags, always including the price and link to the shop, providing details of interesting content, and tapping Influencers and customer testimonials.

The webinar gave the opportunity for a rich discussion which each country Homenet can apply in practice. Home -based workers' groups can start with an e-market place that is easy for them to work on while at country level, the coordinator may need to try using multiple channels.



Home-Based Workers Practice Solidarity Saving Homenet

By Sinoeun Men



Homenet Cambodia has been strengthening the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) core features through a savings and loans model among home-based worker groups with acceptable and reliable management structures, and transparent monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Seven saving groups have been organized in three cities. The saving amount of each group ranges from 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 Riels (=750 USD to 2,500 USD) per year. Home-based workers can borrow money from their savings with 2% interest rate for an expansion of their business (stock raw materials, improve quality, and increase the capacity of production), market their products, and pay medical expenses and other emergency needs. Each savings group assumes overall responsibility for decisions commonly made, and gains more confidence in the process.

HNC provided training about the core characteristics of SSE to 26 home-based worker (HBW) leaders (92.30% are women) in three cities, and regularly monitor and coach them.

At least seven home-based group leaders sell products through their Facebook Page with the payment settled through mobile bank digital accounts. As HNC coordinator, I developed professional product photos for the HNSEA online market and HNI Bazaar online.



home-based Many workers have developed new products for display and sale at the local trade fairs organized by the Ministry of Royal Government of Cambodia as well as the private sector. They also supply to wholesalers and retailers in key markets in Cambodia; e.g., PubStreet market in Siem Reap City and Toul Tumpoung market in Phnom Penh Capital.

One HBW group exported a small number of products to Japan and USA markets during the fiscal year 2023-2024. HBWs also do the piecework (Hundreds of pieces or sometimes thousands of pieces) for several registered handicraft export companies that are members of the Artisans' As-



sociation of Cambodia (AAC).

However, the raw materials are scarce and available farther distances from home. Market demand remains low and the product's price is still lower than it had been before the COVID-19 Pandemic struck.

Japanese visitor was interested in Recycled products made by HBW in Phnom Penh City

After over a year, home-based workers realize that Solidarity Saving helps relieve them of the burden of high-interest rates. It gives them more confidence in saving as a means that can give them more opportunities to expand their self-

employment. Furthermore, Solidarity Saving attracts other home-based workers to join the existing groups.

Nevertheless, more efforts are needed to assist homebased workers in designing products, improving quality, competitive pricing calculation, marketing strategy, etc., in order to improve their working and living conditions.

HBW leader Sophea at a local fair in Phnom Penh City



DIALOGUE WITH LABOR MINISTER ON COST OF LIVING CRISIS



Forty representatives from Homenet Thailand Association and the Federation of Informal Workers (Thailand) conducted a dialogue with the Labour Minister on the cost of living crisis on March 24, highlighting the impact of the crisis on informal workers' livelihood and living conditions.

Informal workers have not fully recovered from the impact of Covid-19. Many of them return to and rely on informal lenders. Cost of raw material, utilities, and travel have risen, and consumers' purchasing power has weakened. The shift to online marketing and banking has been difficult for older informal workers who find it hard to adjust to the new technology.

The dialogue with the Labor Minister aimed to get support from government so that informal workers can cope with the economic pressure and technology dis-



Homenet Thailand Association and the Federation of Informal Workers (Thailand) joined the Bangkok Health Assembly at the Bangkok Metropolitan Office on April 2. At the assembly, participants discussed working conditions of homebased workers and other informal workers so that these can be improved towards the "co-creation of a city of opportunity, justice and well-being."



On March 4-15, four volunteers from 3M Impact, visited producers' groups and helped in the preparation of marketing strategies to increase competitiveness of Homenet Thailand Brand.







- Homenet Thailand



ruption. In general, the Labour Minister listened and showed his interest to continuously work with the Association and the Federation to help homebased workers and other informal workers overcome these difficulties. Proposals from the dialogue include special offer from Homeworkers Fund, inclusion of domestic workers in social security scheme under the same conditions as formal workers, and linking with other line ministries to find good solutions to return vending space to street vendors.

Lastly, there was a recommendation for periodic meetings between the Association, the Federation and Ministry of Labour to follow up on the progress of what had been discussed.

To learn more about the report of the Impact of Cost of Living Crisis to Informal workers in Bangkok, Thailand, please go to <u>https://www.wiego.org/publications/shouldering-burden-impacts-cost-living-crisis-workers-informal-employment-bangkok</u>

Engaging in Community Action for Care Work and Maternity Protection Advocacy By Ma. Victoria de Jesus



Ten member affiliates of Homenet Philippines launched a series of community actions on maternity protection and unpaid care and domestic work advocacy in their respective cities, towns and communities.

The advocacy project seeks to show concrete action within households and by local govern-

ments to recognize, reduce, and redistribute the heavy unpaid care work that mothers, especially those who are pregnant or with babies are undertaking. In this sense, it also contributes to advocacy work on maternity protection.

Since the beginning of its implementation in January this year, through the partnership with Oxfam UK, Homenet Philippines and its affiliates have undertaken focus group discussions, meetings with men's organizations and male advocates, community meetings, and meetings with local government officials and Gender and Development (GAD) Councils to help ensure that the following objectives will be achieved:

- Engaging men, especially those organized to support women, in campaigning for and implementing a gender-balanced sharing of unpaid care work within households
- Pushing local government units and bodies to provide child care and child minding services to enable mothers with babies and young children to have time for productive work as well as for rest and wellness
- Providing accessible water and power sources, laundry and breastfeeding stations, community garden and community kitchen facilities that will reduce unpaid care work, and contribute to good nutrition, health, and wellness of both mothers and young children
- Developing community models of good practice that tie up care advocacy with maternity protection advocacy

Employing Social Solidarity Economy(SSE) at

the local level as the template for livelihood recovery activities of women in the informal economy, particularly pregnant women and young mothers who lost their work and income before or after childbirth.

• Changing men's and boy's attitudes to unpaid care work (from negative to positive), resulting in a readiness to share this work with women and girls.

The challenge for most of the area focal persons is to get men involved in the advocacy and eventually to organize themselves and to find a male leader who will lead them. Men engaging in the campaign are encouraged to join or organize MOVE or the Men Opposing Violence against Women (VAW) Everywhere, which also works for gender equality in general, including within the home. There are areas which find it difficult to mobilize men because most men (usually seasonal farmworkers and tricycle drivers) have to work even on Saturdays and Sundays.



Given this concern, the network has collaborated with the national president of MOVE to intensify efforts of organizing MOVE at the local level and to eventually provide men greater space for engaging in the care advocacy. On March 9, a webinar was conducted to orient the area focal persons about the MOVE, its vision, mission, goals, programs and current membership span. The webinar also shed light on the Early Childhood Care and Development systems, structures, programs, and services in the Philippines. The inputs and discussions identified concrete steps to recognize, reduce, redistribute, and reward care and domestic work through community-based education and campaign, networking and alliance-building, executive and legislative advocacy at the local government units.

Homenets Join the World Social Forum (WSF2024) By Boonsom Namsomboon (Homenet Thailand) and Primar Jardeleza (Homenet Philippines)



Many civil sociorganizaety tions, including country some homenets, sent representatives to the World Social Forum organized 15-19 February Kathmandu, in Nepal. Khun Boonsom Namsomboon represented Homenet Thailand, and Primar Jardeleza, Homenet Philippines were

among them.

The event is a global gathering aimed at fostering dialogue, collaboration, and exchange of ideas among diverse social movements, activists, and organizations. The WSF represents a platform for addressing pressing global issues and promoting social justice.

The Forum highlighted themes that are both current and urgent, among them : 1)Economic inequality and economic justice; 2) Labour, migration, modern slavery and trafficking; 3) Gender, sexuality and identities, and gender-based violence; 4) Democracy, human rights, authoritarianism, law and justice; 5) Education, health, social protection and equality; 6) Women, children, youth, adolescent, aging people and persons with disabilitie; and 7) Peace, conflict, war, occupations, displacement, and security.

Workshop on Universal Social Protection

Homenet representatives joined the Asian Roundtable on Social Protection (AROSP) and other organizations in conducting a workshop entitled "Toward Universal Social Protection," which fell under the theme of "Health, Social Protection and Equality" on February 17 The workshop aimed to I) Share the findings and recommendations of the action research on Maternity Protection in the Asia Agri-Food sector; ii) Promote workers' voices and improve knowledge on the issue especially of the grassroots workers organizations' leaders; iii) Build further solidarity, collaboration, and networking toward ensuring maternity rights as universal social protection of women especially those engaged in the agri-food sector.

Many people were interested to join this workshop

which featured an Assembly on Universal Social Protection, Maternity Protection, Gender Equality, and Impact of Privatization on Public Services. These contents are very interesting but due to time limitation, speakers had difficulties completing their presentation.

To save on time, Khun Boonsom presented social protection benefits enjoyed by informal workers in Thailand, including universal health care coverage; child support grant; 15-year free education policy; fund for primary school lunches program; school milk nutrition grant; Equitable Education Fund (Conditional Cash Transfer) and Old-Age Allowance.

In the same workshop, Primar Jardeleza shared the good practices/experiences of the Manila Informal Workers Association (MAIWA) in the Philippines on community-based



organizing to advocacy for and access to Maternity Protection. The sharing focused on combining health, livelihood, and housing services with the practice of

Social Solidarity Economy (SSE).

Primar also shared the topic on Maternity Protection as Pathway to Feminist Economy on behalf of Chandra Firmantoko of the Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), who was taken ill. The sharing focused on the five dimensions of Social Solidarity Economy (SSE): 1) Socially responsible governance; 2) Edifying ethical values; 3) Ecological conservation; 4) Socio-economic benefits; and 5) Economic sustainability.

According to Primar, "The WSF widened my knowledge on global issues affecting all basic sectors of the global society. Global solidarity action from among the various sectors is very important towards achieving WORLD PEACE."

Khun Boonsom's remarked: " I was able to attend some workshops and I would like to share them. There was a workshop about the wars in Palestine, in Ukraine, as well as in Myanmar. Participants explained the difficulties of people especially women and children during the wars. Many people died while others were injured. How can we stop the war? "

HNSEA FACILITATES

2024 AROSP BIENNIAL MEETING AND ASEAN ADVOCACY TRAINING By JOSEPHINE C. PARILLA



Asia Monitoring Resource Center (AMRC) and Homebased Workers Network of South East Asia (HNSEA) jointly facilitated the conduct of the ASEAN Roundtable on Social Protection (AROSP) Biennial Meeting April 1-4 in Bangkok, a valuable opportunity in strengthening connections among its networks, revisiting principles, and developing a strategic roadmap for the next four years.

The meeting resulted in scaling up of the AROSP financial planning and the two-year action plan, with a focus on a Social Protection Campaign for Asia. Participants also elected the AROSP Steering Committee and Sub-regional Focal Points.

AROSP's Vision of "Universal Social Protection enjoyed by all, with engaged working people and citizens across Asia for living a life with dignity and prosperity", will be achieved through the AROSP Mission "to bring together marginalized workers organizations and allies, exchange information and experiences on social protection, and develop common strategies to bring out the voice of working people advocating for transformative social protection".

AROSP Vision and Mission strategies and approaches are anchored on the following: 1) Research Development and Knowledge Management; 2) Capacity-building; 3) Advocacy and Campaign; 4) Change Practices; and 5) Networking, Partnership and Collaboration.

The achievement of AROSP's vision and mission is expected to be supported by the utilization of the network's basic capital and connectedness as a common strength, including multi-point issues and focus; strong network, with unique capacities and grassroots organizations; capacity to become a leader network on Social Protection in the world; and experienced team in evidence -based policy advocacy.

Following AROSP Meeting, the ASEAN Advocacy Training equipped the participants from the member networks with skills and strategies needed to effectively advocate for universal social protection in Asia.

As one of the participants representing my membershipbased organization PATAMABA-Workers in the Informal Sector Enterprise (WISE) and the Homebased Workers Network of the Philippines (HNPhil), I found the AROSP meeting as a great opportunity to share and experience the collaborative work done by its member affiliates, and to know others we can work together with in the pursuit of better social protection in Asia.



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