

Nearly 10% youngsters aged 5-17 in child labour, first national data show

An estimated 9.6 per cent of children aged 5-17 in Viet Nam are child labourers, showed the main findings from the first National Child Labour Survey launched in Hanoi in March.

There are 1.75 million Vietnamese children, with two in every five of them under 15 of age, working in situations that fit the definition of child labour adopted for this report. That is work undertaken by children below the appropriate legal minimum working age set by Viet Nam's national laws and the ILO's guidelines.

Most child labourers live in the countryside, work in agriculture and are unpaid family workers.

Carried out in 2012, the survey indicated that about one-third of the child labourers, or nearly 569,000 children, have to work an average of more than 42 hours per week. Working long hours affects their schooling as most of them do not attend school.

"The number of children in special circumstances, including early working children is a

challenge," said Vice Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Doan Mau Diep. "Viet Nam has been doing our best to take preventive measures and interventions to protect those children and create a healthy environment for every child."

The concept of child labour does not cover all working children. As households stills play a big role in the economy and the labour forces remain underdeveloped in Viet Nam, the Government allows children of some certain age groups to do some types of work with certain amount of time that does not affect their health, schooling and development.

According to the national survey, one in every six Vietnamese children is engaged in economic activities, with more boys working than girls. About one-third of the working children work due to necessity and one-fourth choose to work because of high payment.

"Child labour should be eliminated as it deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and is harmful to physical and mental development," ILO Viet



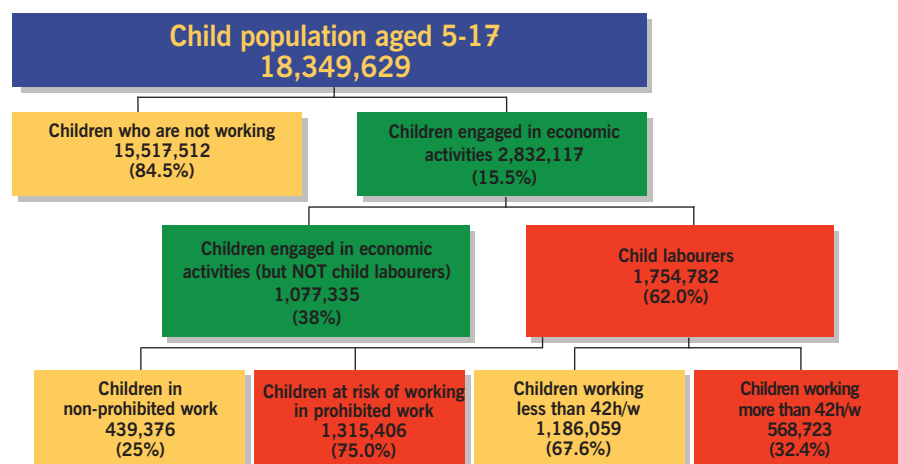
Nam Country Director, Gyorgy Sziraczki, said. "This is a process which takes time. By having the first national data on child labour, in addition to education laws that specify compulsory secondary education, Viet Nam is showing its determination to fight child labour, especially its worst forms."

Lower than world's average

The rate of child labour in Viet Nam is lower than the world's average and very close to the regional figure.

The latest ILO report Global Child Labour Trends estimated for 2012 that 168 million children aged 5-17 worldwide are child labourers, accounting for about 10.6 per cent of the child population. The rate is 9.3 per cent for Asia and the Pacific.

The Viet Nam National Child Labour Survey 2012 is the first one of its kind for the country. With ILO technical support, the survey of 51,000 households was carried out by the General Statistical Office (GSO) and the report was prepared by the Institute for Labour Sciences and Social Affairs.



Media is as essential as air for human life

What is the changing role of the media in Viet Nam in general and in the world of work in particular?

The first newspaper in new Vietnamese – the official language of Viet Nam – was Gia Dinh Newspaper, which made its debut 150 years ago, in 1865. It marked a milestone in Vietnamese journalism. Then the Youth (Thanh Nien) newspaper, founded by Vietnamese communist and revolutionary leader, Nguyen Ai Quoc, on 21 June 1925, laid the ground for the revolutionary press and became an inspiration for Vietnamese youth to contribute to the revolutionary path which resulted in the national independence. Since then, Viet Nam's revolutionary press has dramatically developed as a pioneer in the “cultural and ideological battle” and considerably contribute to the country's development.

Viet Nam's revolution is of the people, by the people and for the people who mostly are workers. Therefore, since its start, the Vietnamese press has been fighting for the rights and benefits of workers, including farmers, and blue and white-collared workers. Most of social associations and groups today have their own newspapers to reflect their thoughts and wishes and serve as a forum for their benefits. As part of its roles, the press also fight against negative practices and praise good examples to make the society better.

How would you expect the Media Award to contribute to employment and labour issues?

I would like to thank the ILO for supporting the Association to organize the annual Media Award on Labour and Employment. Although the co-operation has just begun, it is a good start because this specific media award will create a useful “playground” for journalists who serve their people and workers.



The ILO has been supporting the Viet Nam Journalists Association to organize the annual Media Award on Labour and Employment to shed light on labour and employment issues in the country and recognize journalistic works. On this occasion, the association's Standing Vice Chairman, Ha Minh Hue, shares his thoughts about the roles of the press today.

Every day, more than 800 media organizations in Viet Nam run many articles on labour and employment, production, businesses, new issues of the market economy and problems between workers and employers in foreign direct investment enterprises, as well as labour issues across the globe. The press also writes about the enforcement of the Labour Code and the life of workers. Therefore, the introduction of this specialized media award will encourage journalists to spend more efforts writing in-depth, quality stories for submission, thus

join hands with the ILO to complete its missions in the world of work.

What do you think about journalists as a job in Viet Nam in the context of economic downturn and new trends of journalism?

The press, especially the print, is experiencing a difficult time due to economic situation and the vibrant development of digital communication and multi-media not only in Viet Nam but also around the world. It is forecast that traditional newspapers will die while online newspapers will be dominant, even though the functions of journalism, which are information and communication, remain the same. Under any circumstances, the press will have to exist, because it is as essential as air for human life. No one can imagine how their life would be when waking up in the morning without news, whether it is in the form of print, broadcast or online.

The media is quickly adjusting itself to the fast development of information technologies. However, information technologies go with risks due to abuse and deliberate spreading of wrong information. In the world of work, wrong information can result in huge consequences.

Therefore, to help the press better adjust with the changing conditions, it is important to have a research on this profession and how to improve journalists' skills and income so that they can live on their job. Viet Nam is in the course of international integration and the press is also heading that way.

Northern garment industry to benefit

From **Better Work programme**

Better Work Vietnam – a programme aiming to improve the export industries' performance and competitiveness – begins its expansion to the north of the country in March.

Better Work Vietnam is part of a global joint programme between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It works by coaching, training and assessing factory conditions to help bring businesses in line with Viet Nam's laws and core international labour standards.

The move to the North comes following a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), the ILO and the IFC in February.

Under this MoU, Better Work Vietnam will be run in the capital city of Hanoi and surrounding provinces during the 2014-19 period, apart from its primary location in HCM City and its surrounds.

Over the next five years, the programme will also expand services to the footwear industry where there exists high demand



from buyers, enterprises and stakeholders.

Since its start in Viet Nam in 2009, Better Work has reached nearly 300,000 workers in more than 200 apparel factories in the south, equivalent to a quarter of Viet Nam's garment exporters. More than 50 international buyers and retailers have subscribed to the programme.

According to MoLISA, as the country eyes deeper economic integration and increased international trade, made-in-Viet Nam products need to meet requirements of importers and customers, including working conditions, to be able to access developed markets like the US, Canada and the EU.

ILO Viet Nam Director, Gyorgy Sziraczki, said Better Work can help secure Viet Nam's status among the world's most attractive sourcing destinations for apparel production.

"Viet Nam can differentiate itself in the international market on more than cheap labour by improving the working environ-

ment, giving workers a voice and boosting productivity," he added.

Better Work Vietnam assessment reports have found consistent improvements in factories that are part of the programme. Three fifths of them have expanded their employment, around 65 per cent have seen a rise in their sales and 75 per cent have had an increase in order size.

"Profits are higher in Better Work Vietnam factories with better working conditions and relationships with international buyers are strengthened," said IFC Regional Manager for Viet Nam, Cambodia, Lao and Myanmar, Simon Andrews. "We want to replicate these achievements in Hanoi and surrounding areas so that more workers can benefit from improved working conditions and more factories can strengthen their operations and provide sustainable jobs to local communities."

The programme is supported by the governments of the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, USA and Australia.

New quarterly report shows positive signs in labour market

Viet Nam's first Labour Market Update was published in March, highlighting a 1.7 per cent rise in jobs in the last quarter of 2013 compared to the same period in the previous year.

The publication also showed other positive signs in the labour market, including increase in percentage of skilled workers, wage workers and labour income.

The quarterly, which aims to analyse new trends in the labour market for better labour and employment policy-making, was completed by MoLISA in coordination with GSO with ILO's technical and financial support.

Initiatives to put trade unions to the new height

Pilot programmes to strengthen the role and capacity of upper-level trade unions in the country's select industrial hubs were launched in the northern port city of Hai Phong in January.

The initiatives, which will be rolled out in Hai Phong, Da Nang, Binh Duong and Dong Nai by VGCL with ILO support, aim to give an emphasis to the

representation of the trade union in industrial relations, particularly in social dialogue and collective bargaining.

"With these initiatives in place, we hope to see significant improvements in the protection of workers and trade unions from employers' interference and discrimination across the country," VGCL Vice President Trần Văn Lý said.

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Viet Nam ratifies ILO Convention, showing strong commitment to work safety

Work safety now tops the priority list of Viet Nam's national agenda as the country has ratified ILO Convention on Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health, heard a MoLISA press conference organized in March to announce the ratification.

The new convention, known as Convention 187, aims to promote the continuous improvement of working conditions to prevent work injuries, diseases and deaths through national policies and programmes in line with international labour standards.

"Viet Nam's ratification of Convention 187 is significant," said MoLISA Vice Minister, Pham Minh Huan. He added that the move will help the law-making process in the area of safety and health at work in the coming time, especially as the country is going ahead with the draft Law on Work Safety and Health and joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.

According to ILO Country Director, Gyorgy Sziraczki, the ratification shows Viet Nam's efforts in striving for a "preventive culture" to make workplace safer and is part of a "process of improvement" which also involves employer-worker dialogues and better labour inspection.

"This sends out a strong signal to the world that made-in-Viet Nam products are produced in good conditions," he said. "It will result in better trades and competitiveness for Vietnamese enterprises."

Viet Nam is the third country in Southeast Asia and the fifth in Asia to ratify Convention 187, after Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea.

Convention 187 came into force in 2009 and has had 29 State members before Viet Nam's joining.

This marks the 21st ILO convention Viet Nam has ratified.



Upcoming events

- Workshops on results of baseline surveys of workers, enterprise unions and industrial relations in VGCL pilot participating companies, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, March and April
- Public event on youth with heritages and tourism development, Hue, April
- Training for recruitment agencies and provincial resource people on forced labour and anti-human trafficking, Hue, 17-19 April
- Workshop presenting findings and recommendations of public employment policy study, Hanoi, 23 April
- Public-private dialogue to promote corporate social responsibilities in equal opportunities for safe working environment, HCMC (26 April), Hanoi (28 April)
- Safety Fun Run 2014, Binh Duong, 27 April
- ASEAN Decent Work seminar, Hanoi, 28 April
- Labour and Employment Media Award Ceremony, Hanoi, 29 April
- Training on labour rights and industrial relations in entertainment industry, Hanoi, 29-30 April
- Workshops on results of baselines survey of industrial relations and human resources management in VCCI pilot participating companies, Hanoi, Hung Yen, Vinh Phuc, April
- Photo exhibition on people with disabilities at work, Dong Nai, 14-18 April
- Consultation workshop on draft Social Insurance Law and solutions for modern social insurance policies, Hanoi, 22 May
- New ranking of 50 recruitment agencies published, May
- Workshop presenting international definitions and indicators of sexual harassment at workplaces, Hanoi, May
- Better Work shared learning seminar on enhancing productivity, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, HCMC, 19, 20, 27 June
- Training for recruitment agencies on Pre-Departure Orientation Manual, June
- Workshop to finalise the Labour Code Guide Book, Hanoi, June
- Workshop on impact of career guidance programme on secondary school students, June
- Workshop to finalise Viet Nam's first Annual Industrial Relation Report, Hanoi, June

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