

Questions in existing household surveys related to informal sector, informal employment and social protection: **Asia**

**Table 1 — Questions on social protection, employment in the informal sector and informal economy**

| Concepts and Indicators/ Regions and countries | Informal sector  | Informal employment  | Social protection   | Working conditions   |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Asia</b>                                    |  |  |   |  |
| Bangladesh                                     | <b>LFS 2002-03</b><br>Legal status: private Informal sector        | <b>Decent Work Indicators Pilot Survey 2005</b><br>No written contract   | <b>LFS 2002-03</b> (benefits by the employer)<br><b>HIES 2005</b><br>(section on safety nets programmes: set of 23 questions)   |  |
| Indonesia                                      |  |  | <b>SUSENAS 2005</b><br>(any guarantee/health insurance for the patient and which financing; does the household has a JPK/health card/poverty card?)   |  |
| Nepal  | <b>NLFS 2008</b><br>Registration, size, legal status               | <b>NLFS 2008</b><br>Does employer pay social security contribution? Benefit of paid leave or compensation for unused leave | <b>NLSS 2003</b><br>(for paid employees only: contribution to a provident fund, pension, subsidised medical care)   |  |
| Pakistan                                       | <b>LFS 2006-07</b><br>Legal status, size, accounts                 |  | <b>LFS 2006-07</b><br>For employees, number of days entitled/availed for vacation, sick leave?  | <b>LFS 2006-07</b><br>11 questions on occupational injuries/diseases and check with household head |
| Sri Lanka                                      | <b>LFS 2008</b><br>Size, account, registration, short legal status |  | <b>LFS 2008</b><br>Does employer contribute to a provident fund or pension scheme? entitlement paid vacations, leave encashment   |  |
| Thailand                                       | <b>LFS 2006</b><br>Size, incomplete legal status                   |  | <b>HSES 2007</b><br>Does household member get following welfare or medical services: government, universal health coverage, medical card, private?<br><b>LFS 2006</b><br>Wounded, sick or accident from work? Who pays for hospital care? |  |
| Vietnam  |  |  | <b>VHLSS 2006</b><br>Have health insurance or free health care certificate? Who paid for it?  |  |

## Some comparative results and examples of questions from selected Asian countries

Surprisingly, there is not much information on social protection coverage in Asia. Practically none of the household surveys carried out in the region collect data from the employed persons in order to know whether or not they are contributing or covered by social security or health insurance. 5 out of the 7 countries examined for this note collect information on the informal sector (Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, among which 3 according to the international standards). Three countries collect information on social protection from the paid employees only (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka). Most countries collect information on social protection through the household members (i.e. on total population): it could be possible to identify the employed members of the household with social security coverage, but this cross-checking is not done in the published reports and even the macro-statistics on the number of population covered is not always available.

India, Pakistan and Thailand have made many efforts in order to measure informal sector employment in the late 1990s for the former, in the early 1990s for the latter. Since the mixed/combined household/establishment survey in 1999, India has not continued to collect information on the informal sector and there was no attempt to introduce a new set of questions in the regular household survey. Pakistan on the contrary, pursued its efforts and statistics on informal sector employment defined along the lines of the international definition are regularly published in the labour force reports.

**Thailand** annually publishes statistics on informal employment, based on an incomplete definition of informal sector employment (the size of the establishment in which the person is employed in the private sector, without identifying the non corporate enterprises). However Thailand, with its annual Health and Welfare Survey, measures the population who have health insurance, according to the type of insurance: universal coverage card (UC), social security/worker compensated fund (SSS), civil servants benefits scheme (CSMBS), health insurance covered by employer, private health insurance, and other ([More](#)).

In 2007, the whole population of Thailand benefitted of health insurance thanks to the universal coverage card (See table 2). The total number of insured persons by type of medical coverage is higher than the total population because some categories of persons may have two types of coverage (private insurance for example). This same year, informal sector employment represented 62.7% of total employment, and 50.9% of non-agricultural employment, which is approximately the same level recorded in the 1990s and at the beginning of the years 2000 (51%). If we take all types of health insurance coverage (except the universal card) as a proxy of the number of insured workers, the ratio is at 43.5%.

**Table 2: Health and social security coverage and informal employment in Thailand in 2007**

| In thousands and %                              |                     |  |                            |
|---|---------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 2007  | Population coverage | 2007                                   | Informal sector employment |
| Population                                      | 63,243              | Total employment                       | 37,122                     |
| Population with health insurance                | 63,243              | Informal                               | 23,281                     |
| % covered                                       | 100%                | % Informal                             | 62.7%                      |
| Universal coverage card UC (1)                  | 48,437              | Workers with health insurance (2 to 6) | 16,139                     |
| Social security/worker compensated fund SSS (2) | 8,009               | % workers covered                      | 43.5%                      |
| Civil servant medical benefits scheme CSMBS (3) | 6,022               |  |                            |
| Private health insurance (4)                    | 1,449               |  |                            |
| Health insurance covered by employer (5)        | 280                 |  |                            |
| Other (6)                                       | 379                 |  |                            |
| Total 1 to 6                                    | 64,576              |  |                            |

Sources: TNSO (2008), **The Health and Welfare Survey 2007**, Bangkok.  
TNSO (2008), **The Informal employed persons Survey 2007**, Bangkok.

In **Pakistan**, the quarterly labour force survey measures the informal sector along the international standards of the 15<sup>th</sup> ICLS.

**Table 2: Informal sector employment in Pakistan 2001-2008**

| Years   | In % of non-agricultural employment |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 2001-02 | 64.6                                |
| 2003-04 | 70.0                                |
| 2005-06 | 72.7                                |
| 2006-07 | 71.9                                |
| 2007-08 | 72.8                                |

Sources: FBS (various years), **Labour Force Survey**.

In a country where 44.6% of the employed population is in agriculture, the ratio of 72.8% of the non-agricultural employment in the informal sector indicates that the social protection coverage is very low. The 2007-08 LFS also collected information from the paid employees on the number of days entitled or availed for vacation and sick leave in a year, but the results are not published. A section of the questionnaire was devoted to occupational diseases and injuries and an analysis of the results is in the report: 2% of the workers report such injuries/diseases; occupational injuries mainly occur in agriculture, construction and manufacturing and among own-account workers and paid employees. 13 causes of accident/disease are proposed in the questionnaire, 10 types of unsafe conditions, 10 types of accident, and 24 types of injuries/diseases. Location of the injury on the body is asked, who paid for the treatment, how long did the person take to resume work? The number of death by accident during past year is also asked to the household head.

**Sri Lanka** also collects and publishes information on informal sector employment, disaggregated by agricultural/non-agricultural sector. The size of informal sector is significantly lower than in Pakistan.

**Table 3: Informal sector employment in Sri Lanka 2006-2008 (in %)**

|                 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Total           | 61.6 | 61.9 | 60.2 |
| Agriculture     | 84.0 | 83.3 | 83.3 |
| Non-agriculture | 51.0 | 52.1 | 49.1 |

**Sources:** Department of Census and Statistics (various years), Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report, (with District and Provincial Data).

The Labour Force Survey includes a question for paid employees in order to know whether the employer contributes to a provident fund or pension scheme and whether the employee is entitled to paid vacations or leave encashment, but the results are not published.

**Nepal** is the only country in the region to collect information on informal sector and informal employment and follows the international standard definitions. The NLFS-II survey in 2008 measures informal employment, which includes the following:

- all own account workers without employees,
- all employers in the informal sector,
- all contributing family workers,
- all employees in informal jobs defined as not having paid annual leave or where the employer does not pay social security contributions for the worker).

**Table 4: Informal sector employment and informal employment in Nepal 2008**

|  | In thousands | %          |
|--|--------------|------------|
| Total employment (1)                     | 11,779       |            |
| Non-agricultural employment (2)          | 3,075        |            |
| Informal employment (3)                  | 11,332       | 96.2 (3/1) |
| Non-agricultural informal employment (4) | 2,655        | 86.4 (4/2) |
| Non-agricultural informal sector (5)     | 2,142        | 69.7 (5/2) |

**Source:** CBS (2009), *Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008 Statistical report*, Kathmandu, 220p.

More than 96% of the workers were informally employed in 2008, and more than 86% of the non-agricultural workers. These figures are good proxies for non-coverage with social protection.

In **Bangladesh**, the Household Income/Expenditures Survey 2005 is comprised of a section on social safety nets programmes. It includes 23 questions among which: which programme past 12 months? Since when? Reason for inclusion or non-inclusion? How much in cash and in kind? From whom was it received, Which period is the more effective? For which members of the household is it the more effective? How does it help?

Table 5 below synthesises the findings for the 4 countries:

**Table 5: Informal employment in Asia (2007-2008)**

|                                      | Nepal | Pakistan | Sri Lanka | Thailand |
|--------------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Informal employment                  | 96.2  |          | 60.2      | 62.7     |
| Non-agricultural informal employment | 86.4  | 72.8     | 49.1      | 50.9     |

**Sources:** tables 10 to 13 above.