Terms of reference

Research study on labour migration and its impact on women’s empowerment in Viet Nam

I. Background and justification:

1.1 TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme:

The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme extends the cooperation between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the governments of Australia and Canada, on protecting migrant workers and enhancing development opportunities. TRIANGLE in ASEAN aims to ensure that the benefits of labour migration are equally realised by men and women migrant workers, employers and governments. In shifting emphasis towards leveraging the development potential of migration, TRIANGLE in ASEAN aims to shape labour migration opportunities to support inclusive and sustainable growth in the ASEAN Economic Community. TRIANGLE in ASEAN focuses on delivering in six countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) and engages institutionally with ASEAN. The outcomes of TRIANGLE in ASEAN are:

- Protection:
  Migrant workers are better protected by labour migration governance frameworks.

- Development:
  Policies and programmes leverage the potential of women and men migrant workers to contribute to and benefit from economic and social development.

- Mobility:
  Labour mobility systems are gender-responsive and increase the efficiency of labour markets in the ASEAN region.

To achieve this, TRIANGLE in ASEAN supports the private sector, governments, regional bodies and social partners to create a suite of policies, tools and tested initiatives that contribute to increasing the proportion of positive migration experiences and successful reintegration of migrant workers. Additionally, the programme expects to increase the efficiency of the regional labour market, with employers able to fill jobs with the right people and in a more timely manner; it also aims to increase the proportion of regular migration and reduce exploitation, thereby ensuring a more stable environment for economic growth.

TRIANGLE in ASEAN recognises women’s economic empowerment as a key strategy for economic growth and that gender inequalities and discrimination are perpetuating policies and practices that are not only unjust but also limit the extent to which migration benefits individuals, communities, countries and the region as a whole. The success of the programme depends on ensuring equitable opportunities for women that will contribute to a broader and fairer distribution of socio-economic gains. Three core priorities for the programme are the promotion of migrant women’s economic empowerment, ending of violence against migrant women, and promoting migrant women’s voice in decision making and leadership roles.
Therefore, TRIANGLE in ASEAN has developed a “twin track” approach in order to both mainstream gender equality in programming as well as focus specifically on women’s empowerment, recognizing the multiple disadvantages women face. This will enhance women’s access to protected and profitable migration options and improve women’s ability to harness the full benefits from their work.

1.2 Research background

There are approximately 520,000 Vietnamese migrant workers currently overseas; most are young men and women from rural areas who obtain low-skilled employment in manufacturing, construction, fishing, agriculture, domestic work, and other service industries. The number of Vietnamese migrant workers abroad has increased considerably in recent years. In 2016, more than 126,000 Vietnamese migrants went abroad for work through licensed recruitment agencies, including a growing proportion of women migrants (36 per cent) – the largest number on record.1 Further unknown numbers of Vietnamese people migrate for work irregularly.

The main destination countries for Vietnamese workers have traditionally been the more developed economies of East Asia, including China (Taiwan), South Korea, Malaysia, and Japan. However, in recent years the range of countries has become increasingly diverse, including significant flows of workers to the Middle East, Northern Africa, Europe, and other low and middle income states in Asia.

Migration for work is actively encouraged by the Vietnamese government as a formal state policy,2 and this is enabled in part through formal annual labour migration targets.3 Among the Vietnamese population, migration is often understood to be a significant opportunity to improve the financial circumstances, livelihoods of workers and their families, and skills for obtaining better paid jobs on return, and often does so.4 However, it also carries significant risks for workers, including financial, social and personal challenges, which can have impacts not only during the migration journey, but also on return to Viet Nam. These challenges also regularly extend beyond the migrants themselves, to their families and communities.

At the same time, the Vietnamese economy continues to develop. Viet Nam’s Gross Domestic Product has increased from $USD6.472 billion in 1990 to $USD193.599 billion in 2015, some of the fastest growth in the world and reflective of economic reforms which have transformed Viet Nam into a lower middle income country.5 This rapid domestic development is increasingly providing new economic opportunities for many Vietnamese within Viet Nam. However, this rapid development has not been consistent across the country, with substantial numbers of Vietnamese working in the agricultural sector not benefiting from development to the same extent as those in urban areas. About two thirds of Viet Nam’s labour force is found in rural areas, but wages on average remain considerably lower for

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1 Department of Overseas Labour.
2 See, e.g., Law on Vietnamese Guest Workers, No. 72/2006/QH11 (2006), art 5. Among other things, the law relevantly provides that creating favourable conditions for qualified Vietnamese citizens to work abroad, and encouraging the sending of workers to high-income markets, are state policies on Vietnamese guest workers.
3 Department of Overseas Labour.
4 See, e.g., ILO & International Organization for Migration (IOM), forthcoming. TRIANGLE in ASEAN baseline survey (Bangkok).
these workers compared with workers in urban areas. This can have a significant impact on many workers’ decisions to migrate, particularly where there is the potential for higher wages abroad.

Development has also not been consistent between women and men. The most recent Labour Force Survey in Viet Nam shows that across multiple skill levels and in both rural and urban areas, women continue to be paid noticeably less than men, despite high participation by women in the labour force, particularly in rural parts of the country.

The interplay between the issues of migration for work, and domestic development, is important to consider – and particularly so for women. The ILO has previously undertaken research in Viet Nam both on women’s labour migration as well as on broader gender issues within Vietnamese society. This had included a study about migrant domestic workers, and a study on the impact of Viet Nam’s economic development on migration policy. Research by other organizations on the same themes includes a 2012 UN Women study titled “Women in International Labour Migration from Viet Nam: A Situation Analysis”; and a 2015 study by the Institute for Social Development Studies titled “Social Determinants of Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Findings of a research study between 2012-2015”.

Recent consultations conducted by the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and TRIANGLE in ASEAN showed that systemic discrimination against women and preference towards men reduced the benefits of labour migration for women. For example, many women could not afford the high costs involved in getting a well-paid job abroad, and had limited autonomy regarding their migration and the use of remittances. One divorced woman shared that she was under pressure to migrate after her marriage broke down, not only because she had to earn money to support her children, but also to escape from discrimination and prejudice from her community against divorced women. Some women also blamed themselves, and were blamed by their family and community, for the breakdown of their marriages, or for any negative things which happened to their children and their family. Domestic workers (mainly women) spoken with during the consultations also stated that they were restricted from calling home and were forbidden from having mobile phones, and also had their documents withheld.

The VGCL consultations also showed that many return women migrant workers continue to face particular difficulties in reintegration within their families and communities. Most women spoken with said that they felt there was an emotional distance with their kids and their husbands, even three years after returning. Some women, especially domestic workers, said that their marriage was broken, and they felt very lonely after return as their husbands seemed not to understand how hard it was to live and work abroad for their family.

7 Ibid, pp 8, 35-7.
Despite these apparent challenges, the number of Vietnamese migrant workers abroad has increased in recent years, and Vietnamese women migrant workers have had more opportunities to migrate. While there is some acknowledgement that the causes and impacts of migration are gendered, there is still a lack of comprehensive information on labour migration and its impacts on women’s empowerment. This research aims therefore to provide a comprehensive investigation of to what extent migration benefits Vietnamese women in a way that enhances women’s empowerment and addresses gender inequality. The research will also explore what factors enable or prevent women from gaining access to the development benefits of migration, having positive migration experiences, and having a successful return and reintegration. This information will serve as evidence for policy and programme development that supports the enhancement of women’s empowerment, or the benefits they could gain from migration.

II. Objectives

The study has the following aims:

- To explore and better understand the links between migration abroad for work and social, economic and personal development in Viet Nam, with a particular focus on labour migration as a means of achieving women’s empowerment.
- To examine whether, and how, migration abroad for work empowers women; this includes understanding what differences it contributes to in terms of economic, social and personal development, but also in which circumstances and ways it is empowering for women.
- To evaluate and inform review of the legislative framework which governs migrant work in Viet Nam – particularly the review and revision of Law 72/2006, which encourages migration as a general state policy, but also future evaluation of the government’s law and policy regarding support for migration from disadvantaged areas reflected in Decision 71/2009.

III. Audience for study findings

Apart from the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme itself, which will use the research findings to help guide future programme activity, the study’s target audiences will include the Vietnamese Government – specifically the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, and the Department of Overseas Labour. The recommendations presented in the study will help to form an important part of the messaging on these issues, with the aim of influencing government policy and law review and development. As key stakeholders in labour migration issues, who themselves have a role in influencing law and policy change, VGCL, the Viet Nam Association of Manpower Supply, and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry will also be audiences for the research. Other international organizations, non-government organizations, other governments (including those of labour migration destination countries for Vietnamese workers), and research institutions are also targets.

Critical indirect targets of the study will be migrants themselves, with the expectation that findings from the research will be both important and accessible to these individuals. This is based on an understanding that the findings of the research may have a significant influence on migrants’ decision-making prior to, during and on return from migration.
As a result, dissemination of findings to and among target audiences will be achieved through the sharing and launch of the research report, including through tripartite discussions on the study’s results and recommendations. Complementing this will be communications activity to the broader public using both mass media and social media channels, to ensure key messaging is shared with a broader audience and reflecting the importance of the messaging being understood among and supported by the broader public.

IV. Research scope and method

- The study will focus on women’s empowerment. The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme’s cross-cutting gender (WEGES) strategy identifies women’s empowerment as increased women’s participation, power, decision-making and advancement in all aspects of their lives, including economically, socially and personally. Building on this definition, economically, empowerment should be understood to include greater advancement in employment, productivity and skills, accessibility to financial and technical resources, consumption, property, business practice, income, and so forth. Socially, empowerment should be understood to include more positive roles and status within families and communities, as well as greater freedom to participate and raise their voice within communities. Personally, empowerment should be understood to include greater self-esteem and confidence within one’s own identity, but also increased knowledge, skills and capacity. Clearly reflecting the definition of women’s empowerment in the design, preparation and execution of survey activity will be critical to the success of the research.

- The study will apply a ‘mixed methodology’ approach, involving a desk review, a quantitative survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews, focusing on return migrant workers and non-migrating workers in comparable circumstances. Quantitative information will be from women only, while some qualitative interviews will be undertaken with men, to enable an examination of men’s attitudes towards women’s labour migration and their role in restricting or enabling women’s empowerment. As the study’s aim is to make direct comparisons between Vietnamese women who have migrated for work and those who have not, the selection of participants and the primary information collection should ensure it enables the isolation of migration as a factor influencing development. This will require careful initial definition through clear criteria determining who are eligible migrants and comparable non-migrants for the study.

- The study will have a sample size of at least 500 women, 400 of whom have migrated abroad for work and returned within the past two years, and 100 of whom have not migrated for work.

- The study will involve a five year comparison for all participants, requiring them to reflect on and consider their socio-economic circumstances at the time of surveying compared with five years prior. Because of this, it will be desirable to select return migrant participants, where possible, who both migrated for work and returned within the five year comparison period.

- As the study seeks to provide input into evaluating the legal and policy framework in Viet Nam, the research must operate to review the effectiveness of encouraging migration as a general state policy (reflected, for example, in Law 72/2006), as well as encouraging migration from designated poor districts (reflected in Decision 71/2009). It should also consider what changes to legal and policy settings are appropriate to better support return and reintegration of migrant workers.
Research activity will also include the participation of TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme staff where deemed necessary or desirable by the programme.

V. Geographical focus:

The study will be undertaken in the following provinces, consistent with the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme focus, and designated ‘poor’ districts in accordance with government labour migration policy. Specific districts and communes within these provinces are to be determined in the course of the study’s scoping (but will include some ethnic minority communities).

- Bắc Ninh
- Hà Tĩnh
- Phú Thọ
- Thanh Hóa
- Quảng Ngãi

VI. Key research questions:

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do women in Viet Nam benefit from labour migration?
2. What proportion of women migrant workers in Viet Nam have beneficial migration experiences?
3. What are the factors that enable or hinder Vietnamese women in benefitting from their migration? (particularly considering the social and financial costs, destination country, sector of work and legal status)
4. Does migration promote advancement of the status of women in Viet Nam?
5. Are Vietnamese women who migrate better off than non-migrants in terms of socio-economic status and empowerment?
6. How does the demographic profile of women affect the benefits they receive from migration, including age, marital status, motherhood, ethnicity, level of education, job skills and others?

VII. Ethical guidelines

The service provider should adhere to international best practices for conducting research on vulnerable populations, including the following standards:

1. The provider must ensure that all respondents understand the purpose of the survey and how the findings will be used.
2. The provider must obtain informed consent from respondents and notify them of their rights to confidentiality.
3. The provider must notify participants that they are free to stop the interview at any time.
4. The provider must be sensitive to cultural norms during interactions with respondents and their family members.
VIII. Timeline and deliverables

The consultancy is expected to be completed within a period of four (4) months from the date of the Service Contract signing. A tentative timeline is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scoping and finalizing of technical proposal for research</td>
<td>15-30 November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(with detailed methodology, implementation plan and assessment tools),</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>for approval by ILO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Desk review of relevant research material, and preparation for survey</td>
<td>1-14 December 2017</td>
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<td>activity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducting of survey activity/data collection in nominated provinces</td>
<td>15 December 2017-14</td>
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<td>January 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data analysis and preparation of a first draft of report (in English and</td>
<td>15 January 2018-14</td>
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<td>Vietnamese)</td>
<td>February 2018</td>
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<td>First draft report submission to ILO, for ILO input</td>
<td>15 February 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporation of ILO input into revision of report</td>
<td>1-14 March 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report and raw material submission to ILO (final report in English</td>
<td>15 March 2018</td>
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<td>and Vietnamese)</td>
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IX. The assignment

Working under the supervision of the National Programme Coordinator and the Regional M&E Project Officer, the RESEARCH INSTITUTION will carry out the research in Viet Nam.

TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme staff will:

- Collect and analyse secondary information on migration trends, support services, recruitment practices and training activities in target areas;
- Make background and contextual material available to the RESEARCH INSTITUTION;
- Provide technical inputs on the formulation of the questionnaires and the development of the sampling design and methodology;
- Select research sites based on where the programme carries out direct assistance interventions – decided in consultation with key stakeholders;
- Provide timely feedback and guidance where necessary.

The RESEARCH INSTITUTION will:

- Review the background and contextual material provided by the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme, and other relevant studies and resources;
- Prepare the first draft of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews; and provide inputs on sampling design and methodology so that findings are comparable across the country and over time; develop standardized tabulation formats and encoding requirements of the questionnaires;
- Conduct quantitative surveying of people in five target sites who are return migrants, as well as non-migrants;
• Conduct qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with return migrants, as well as non-migrants;
• Carry out data entry and analysis;
• Draft a summary report in Word format, outlining the key findings of the survey;
• Submit a revised version of the report reflecting comments from the ILO and key stakeholders;
• Provide the ILO with all data files in SPSS format, for additional analysis purposes;
• Communicate any questions, changes or challenges with the ILO in a timely manner.

X. Key skills and experience required

• Knowledge of women’s development and labour migration issues;
• Proven track record on and skills conducting research relating to these or similar issues;
• Clarity of analysis and written expression;
• Fluency in English and Vietnamese;
• Having strong work experience with government agencies, donors and/or the ILO is an asset.

XI. Budget and payment schedule

The budget for the study will include the professional fee, travel costs, allowance for interviewees and supply costs of the survey team. The payments will be made in Vietnamese currency with the mode of payment as follows:
• First payment: Forty per cent (40%) will be transferred to the bank account of the contracted consultant/s on submission of final data collection tools
• Second payment: Thirty per cent (30%) will be transferred to the bank account of the contracted consultant/s on submission of the first draft report
• Final payment: Thirty percent (30%) will be transferred to the bank account of the contracted consultant/s after submission of the final report to the satisfaction of ILO

XII. Submission of proposal

Interested research institutions are invited to submit their proposals to the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme (maximum four (4) pages) with the following details:
• Detailed methodology, sampling, work plan, and outline of intended report structure;
• Types of data sources;
• Budget estimate;
• Demonstrated experience and capacity – describing the institution and why they are qualified to undertake the study; and
• List of written / published evidence: similar assessment work done and published in Viet Nam.

All submissions must be submitted by email to thuy@ilo.org by 5:00pm 31 October 2017. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

XIII. Evaluation of proposal
Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with ILO regulations and criteria. Proposals will be scored against the criteria below. The scores will be tabulated and the proposals ranked based on the numerical scores received. Detailed screening results will not be released. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview and/or presentation of their proposal for final selection.

Criteria:

1. Technical proposal
   a. Research methodology
   b. Research institution and research team’s experience and capabilities
   c. References

2. Cost proposal