

Myanmar (July - September 2019)

Key partners	Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) Labour Exchange Offices (LEOs) Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF) Network of labour organisations and civil society,
Target sites	Yangon, Mandalay, Dawei, Kyaing Tung
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Background information

Labour migration has long been an important livelihood strategy for the people of Myanmar. By migrating, families and their communities have been able to survive periods of severe economic hardship and stagnation. It is thought that as much as 10 per cent of the labour force is working abroad, with over 3 million Myanmar migrant workers employed in Thailand and Malaysia alone (ILO, 2015). According to the World Bank, an estimated US\$2.754 billion was remitted by migrants in 2018, approximately 3.9 per cent of GDP, which does not include the millions that are informally remitted through brokers or hand carried back home to family members.

An established policy framework to manage the immense labour migration flows is yet to be developed in Myanmar. As a result, migration remains largely laissez-faire and inequitable, divided between regular migrants who typically head to more developed economies within Asia and the Middle East via formal recruitment and irregular migrants who travel clandestinely to work in neighbouring middle income countries. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) is mandated to manage labour migration from Myanmar and regulate the 273 licensed overseas employment agencies.

Because of the expensive, complex, and time consuming procedures required for formal recruitment through licensed agencies, most migrants continue to seek out the assistance of unlicensed brokers or go abroad independently. The social networks that facilitate these movements were established long before any management systems had been developed to regulate labour migration. The involvement of unscrupulous actors and the lack of accurate and impartial information frequently also places migrants at risk of becoming victims of abuse and exploitation.

As Myanmar emerges from its long period of isolation from the international community, new jobs are becoming available both within the country and abroad. Old systems of job matching that included brokers, smugglers, returned migrants and local leaders may no longer be able to navigate the formal procedures of legal migration and are being superseded by licenced recruitment agencies. In 2016, the Government reported that approximately 1.9 million Myanmar workers had been deployed officially to 16 destination countries. In 2019, according to the Government, Myanmar is sending workers to 18 destination countries through 273 licensed overseas employment agencies. In this newly emerging model of recruitment within Myanmar, potential migrants often do not know who to trust or how to make use of the more formal services offered, and their lack of know-how leaves them once again vulnerable to excessive fees and other forms of abuse.

Myanmar at a glance

 Population: 52.9 million

 Labour Force: 25.4 million

Migrants in Thailand

493,744 MOU migrants
(Women=197,614 / Men=296,130)

652,507 registered migrants
completing nationality verification
(Women=288,672 / Men=363,835)

Permission to work until 31st March
2020 or 1st November 2019: 713,941
(Women=309,883 / Men=404,058)

Permission to work as fishers (1 year):
809

25,680 migrants under border
employment
(Women=15,297 / Men=10,383)

Source: Department of Employment, Ministry of
Labour, Thailand (August, 2019)

Migrants in other destination countries

Malaysia: 138,492 migrants
(Women=22,605 / Men=115,887)

Source: The Public Sector Open Data Portal, Malaysia,
data.gov.my (October 2018)

Main programme activities: July - September 2019

From July to September, the **Mawk Kon Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC)** reached a total of **1,191 potential migrants** (W700: M491) through various trainings and counselling services on safe migration at the MRC, by phone, social media, and through community outreach.

From July to September, **six Labour Exchange Office (LEO) MRCs** reached a total of **19,871 potential migrants** (W8,540: M11,331) through community trainings and counselling services on safe migration at the MRC, by phone, and through community outreach.

From July to September, the Code Compliance and Monitoring Committee (CCMC) of the **Code of Conduct for Members of Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation** conducted six committee meetings. CCMC is developing detailed monitoring guidelines for Japan and Malaysia to monitor and rank the signatories to the Code on their compliance.

On 11 July, TRIANGLE in ASEAN conducted a training of **Ethical Recruitment and Monitoring Mechanism of the Code of Conduct** to 73 licenced overseas employment agencies in Yangon. The training built capacity of recruitment agencies to increase compliance with the Code and promote ethical recruitment practices for migrant workers.

On 16 August, the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme and the Developing Internal and International Labour Migration Governance project (DIILM) jointly organized the **Myanmar National Preparatory Meeting for the 12th AFML** carrying the theme “Future of Work and Migration” in Nay Pyi Taw. The meeting was opened by high level officials including U Myo Aung, Permanent Secretary of MOLIP; Ms. Eileen Steward, Counsellor (Head of Cooperation), Embassy of Canada to Myanmar, Mr. Donglin LI, the ILO Liaison Officer, and the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT). The meeting took stock of progress of stakeholders in implementing previous AFML recommendations and discussed recommendations for the 12th AFML, resulting in **12 draft recommendations**. (W40: M49)

On 28th August, TRIANGLE in ASEAN supported a **training on “Media and Migration”** in Myitkyina, Kachin State. The training focused on how to report on migration issues in the media and how to best improve collaboration between government, CSOs, and media in providing accurate and useful information to migrant workers. The training was jointly organized by Yay Kyi Ya Radio, BBC Media Action, and the ILO DIILM project funded by LIFT. 26 participants (W11:M15) from the Ministry of Labour and other relevant departments, civil society, labour organizations, and key media organizations attended.

From July through September, TRIANGLE in ASEAN supported the Myanmar translation of “**ILO General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and Definition of recruitment fees and related costs**”. The publication will be available in the fourth quarter of 2019 and will be distributed to government and relevant stakeholders.

On 28 September, **272 licensed overseas employment agencies signed the Code of Conduct** for the members of the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF) in Yangon as part of promoting ethical recruitment practices in Myanmar. This means that 272 out of the current 300 overseas employment agencies are now signatories to the Code of Conduct.

Upcoming activities and key dates (October – December 2019)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
October to December	Distribution of information and service provision on migration issues at MRCs	Mawk Kon MRC, Keng Tung Mandalay LEO MRC, Myingyan LEO MRC, Meiktila LEO MRC, Kyaukse LEO MRC, Dawei LEO MRC, Taunggyi LEO MRC	Potential women and men migrant workers	To provide support services and information to potential migrant workers.
October to December	Women's Business Meetings	Northern Shan State	Women community leaders, returned migrant workers	To empower women community leaders.
October to December	Finalization and printing of migrant workers outreach and information materials	Yangon	National staff	To distribute relevant information on labour migration to government, service providers, project partners and relevant stakeholders.
October to December	Second round of monitoring and ranking of Code signatories (agencies sending workers to Japan)	Yangon	Code Compliance and Monitoring Committee	Code compliance monitoring.
October to December	Career Counselling and Employment Opportunities training	Yangon	MRC staff, CSOs, labour organizations	To build career counselling capacity of MRC staff to enhance service provision to migrant workers.
December	International Migrants Day Event	Yangon	Potential and returned migrant workers and their family members, CSOs, labour organizations	To recognize the contribution of migrant workers.

Media coverage

Date	Title	Media source
2 July	Vehicle carrying Myanmar migrant workers catches fire	Eleven Myanmar
11 July	Human Traffickers “target youth with bad reputations”	Myanmar Times
26 July	Exodus of workers grows as living costs rise in Myanmar	Myanmar Times
27 July	Mekong SEZs commit to promoting ‘decent work’ for women migrant workers	Mizzima
28 July	77 more illegal Myanmar migrant workers repatriated to homeland from Thailand	Xinhua
2 August	Authorities to take action against illegal recruitment agents	Eleven Myanmar
16 August	Preparatory Meeting: Myanmar National Tripartite Preparatory Meeting held	Myanmar International TV
19 August	MIGRANT WORKERS RETURN: 225 MYANMAR MIGRANT WORKERS RETURN HOME FROM THAILAND	Mizzima
19 September	Thailand says it has 600 remains of Myanmar workers	Myanmar Times
22 September	Social protection for migrants highlighted at CLMYV forum	Mizzima

TRIANGLE in ASEAN extends the cooperation between the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, the **Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** and **Global Affairs 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** engages institutionally with **ASEAN** and focuses on delivering in six countries (**Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam**).