

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note



### Background information

Labour migration is an established feature of ASEAN labour markets. Intra-ASEAN migration is also rising, with 6.9 million intra-regional migrants accounting for two-thirds of the region's total international migrant stock (UN DESA, 2017). Within ASEAN, the Philippines, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR are net-sending countries while Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam are net-receiving countries.

The ASEAN Community has established far-reaching initiatives towards regional integration built around three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. ASEAN leaders have signed two instruments to establish a regional framework for cooperation on labour migration, namely the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 2007 (Cebu Declaration) and the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 2017. The key ASEAN body leading the implementation of these instruments is the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW). A range of regional partners are involved in migration governance, including the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE), ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC), and the Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers (TFAMW).

Despite steps taken to ensure the rights of migrant workers in ASEAN, migrant workers are still subject to exploitative conditions including underpayment, unsafe workplaces, debt bondage, and human trafficking. Prior to migration, migrant workers are vulnerable to recruitment related abuses due to governance gaps and their relatively weak bargaining position. During employment, many migrants work in sectors with inadequate labour protection and legislative enforcement. Domestic workers in private households and migrants working in the fishing industry, men and women in agriculture and construction, fill jobs unattractive to nationals and are among the least protected and lowest paid.

The poor working conditions that migrant workers face are often further compounded for women migrant workers, where gender disparities in the labour market remain prevalent. Women migrant workers often have little choice but to migrate irregularly, in part due to government bans and restrictions on women's mobility in the region. This often leads to women migrant workers being employed in occupations that remain outside the legal protection mechanisms. It is likely that the number of women migrant workers is underestimated and that women migrant workers may be more susceptible to violation of their rights, to unfair and even harmful practices and abuse.

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

### ASEAN at a glance

 Population: ≈ 634 million

 Labour Force: ≈ 325 million

Sources: ASEANstats, 2016; ILOSTAT, 2017.

### Intra ASEAN migration

Total: 6.9 Million

Sources: UNDESA, 2017.

### Main countries of origin for intra-regional migration

Myanmar: 2.2 million

Indonesia: 1.3 million

Malaysia: 1.2 million

Lao PDR: 0.9 million

Cambodia: 0.7 million

Sources: UNDESA, 2017.

### Main programme activities: October-December 2019

On International Migrants Day 18 December, TRIANGLE in ASEAN and ILO / UN Women Safe and Fair project launched a study on [Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand](#). The study reveals that despite migrant workers' positive contribution to both countries of origin and destination, public attitudes towards them remain unfavourable in destination countries. The study, which surveys 4,099 nationals in four countries, is a follow-up to an earlier survey by the ILO in 2010. The study was launched at the [International Conference to Commemorate International Migrants Day](#) at the Chulalongkorn University. Its release attracted extensive media attention in the region and globally.

ASEAN Employers Confederation (ACE) launched its [Employers' Resource Platform](#) on 18 December to support national employers' organizations and their member enterprises in promoting fair migration, practising and implementing fair recruitment and employment practices. The website, which is still undergoing some redevelopment, also includes an [ACE Forum](#) for online discussion among employer organisations and businesses.

Data collection has been completed for the TRIANGLE in ASEAN **pilot to measure SDG indicator 10.7.1** on recruitment costs of migrant workers in Viet Nam. As per guidelines developed by the ILO and World Bank, a short module on SDG 10.7.1 for returning migrant workers was included in the Viet Nam Labour Force Survey in Q4 2019. Results of the data analysis will be available by Q2 2020.

TRIANGLE in ASEAN launched a **pilot on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) on housekeeping for returning migrant domestic workers** in Cambodia. This pilot aims to improve 50 returning migrant domestic workers' access to hotel housekeeping jobs, through retraining and helping them pass the Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC) certificate II (Level 1) through RPL assessment. The pilot is implemented in partnership with the National Committee for Tourism Professionals (NCTP), in collaboration with Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agency (ACRA), Manpower Association of Cambodia (MAC) and two assessment centers Pour en Sourire d'Enfant (PSE) Institute in Phnom Penh and École Paul Dubrule in Siem Reap.

Several reports and tools were published by TRIANGLE in ASEAN in October-December 2019:

- **ILO's General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs** were translated and published in [Khmer](#), Lao, [Myanmar](#), [Thai](#) and Vietnamese by TRIANGLE in ASEAN. Translations were necessary to enable country level

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

dissemination of these key documents that inform the work of the ILO and its constituents globally on promoting and ensuring fair recruitment.

- The publication [Effective return and reintegration of migrant workers with special focus on ASEAN Member States](#) was prepared as a background paper for the ACMW Workshop on Reintegration Programmes for Returning Migrant Workers, held 27 to 28 August 2019 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The paper provided background and inputs to the development of ASEAN guidelines on effective return and reintegration, which are expected to be finalized in early 2020.
- **Labour migration: Inclusive terminology** glossary cards were developed in English, Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese to promote use of respectful language when talking about labour migration and migrant workers. The [English version](#) was published and disseminated on International Migrants Day 18 December, and other language versions will be launched soon.
- [The future of work and migration: Thematic background paper for the 12th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour \(AFML\)](#) was published. The background paper was prepared to encourage consideration of migration governance in the context of the future of work transition, and proposes recommendations on addressing some of the specific migration challenges within the future of work.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> edition of [ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour \(AFML\): Background information booklet](#) was published. The booklet provides an overview of the AFML process as a regional tripartite plus platform to discuss issues faced by women and men migrant workers from and within ASEAN.

### Upcoming activities and key dates (January-March 2020)

Date	Event	Location	Partners	Purpose
18-20 February	Save Smart Financial Education Training of Trainers	Hanoi, Viet Nam	MRC implementing partners (civil society organizations, workers organizations, governments), Atikha, Social Policy Bank of Vietnam (VBSP)	Capacitate MRC staff to provide basic financial literacy training and advice to migrant workers and potential migrant workers and promote SaverAsia.
18-19 February	Employers', workers' and civil society preparatory meetings for the ACMW workshop to develop Work Plan 2021-2025	Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam	ACE, ATUC, TFAMW	Support ACE, ATUC and TFAMW and their affiliates formulate priorities and proposals for the ACMW workshop to develop Work Plan 2021-2025.
19-20 February	ACMW workshop to develop Work Plan 2021-2025	Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam	MOLISA, ASEC, ACMW, ACE, ATUC, TFAMW, development partners	Support ACMW meeting to develop Work Plan 2021-2025 (19 Feb) and multistakeholder consultation on the Work Plan (20 Feb) hosted by MOLISA.

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

### Media coverage

Date	Title	Media Source
2 November	<a href="#">ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration</a>	Relief Web
17 December	<a href="#">Bridging the gap - steps to make migrant workers safe</a>	Malaysia Niki, Malaysia
18 December	<a href="#">What do Asians really think of migrant workers? You might be shocked</a>	South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, China
18 December	<a href="#">Migrant workers remain largely unaccepted: study</a>	Bangkok Post, Thailand
18 December	<a href="#">Making the most out of migration</a> By Jane Duke, Australia's Ambassador to ASEAN	DFAT blog, global
18 December	<a href="#">Public support for migrant workers going down, says survey</a>	Free Malaysia Today (FMT News), Malaysia
18 December	<a href="#">Backlash against migrant workers sparks slavery concerns</a>	Bangkok Post, Thailand
18 December	<a href="#">Backlash against migrant workers in Asia-Pacific sparks slavery concerns</a>	Devdiscourse, India
18 December	<a href="#">Migrant workers in Asia perceived as a cause of crime and poverty</a>	Asia News, Vatican
18 December	<a href="#">Public support for migrant workers going down, says survey</a>	MSN News, International
18 December	<a href="#">Backlash against migrant workers in Asia-Pacific sparks slavery concerns</a>	Thomson Reuters, International
18 December	<a href="#">What do Asians really think of migrant workers? You might be shocked</a>	MSN News, International
18 December	<a href="#">Backlash against migrant workers in Asia-Pacific sparks slavery concerns</a>	The Strait Times, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">Backlash against migrant workers in Asia-Pacific sparks slavery concerns</a>	Chiang Rai Times, Thailand
19 December	<a href="#">Over half of Singaporeans see migrant workers as 'cultural threat', and 3 in 4 think there's no need for them</a>	Business Insider, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">52% of S'poreans feel migration causes crime rate to go up: Survey</a>	Mothership, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">New survey finds fewer Singaporean employers view foreign domestic workers positively than in 2010</a>	Today, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">Singaporeans hold positive attitudes towards migrant workers: Survey</a>	The New Paper, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">Just 1 in 4 here sees need for migrant workers despite labour shortage</a>	The Strait Times, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">Survey flags attitudes to migrant labour</a>	The Strait Times, Singapore
19 December	<a href="#">Most support having better working conditions for maids</a>	The Strait Times, Singapore

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

19 December	<a href="#">Just 1 in 4 here sees need for migrant workers despite labour shortage</a>	The One World News, International
19 December	<a href="#">ILO releases dismal report on Malaysian attitudes towards migrants</a>	Free Malaysia Today (FMT News), Malaysia
19 December	<a href="#">Public support for migrant workers in M'sia, S'pore and Thailand decreasing</a>	The Star Online, Malaysia
20 December	<a href="#">1 in 2 Singaporeans think migrant workers increase crime rates, harm society: ILO-UN poll</a>	Yahoo News Singapore, Singapore

**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**).