

# ► TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note Viet Nam



## January – June 2024

### Key developments

On 1 January 2024, a **bilateral agreement between Viet Nam and the Republic of Korea on social insurance** came into effect. This is the first such agreement between the two countries and Vietnam's first bilateral social insurance agreement. It will protect the social insurance rights of workers from both countries, and it avoids duplicate social insurance contributions as it allows workers to aggregate their participation time in both Vietnam and the Republic of Korea for retirement benefits.

The **Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA)** issued a circular **02/2024/TT-BLĐTBXH, dated 23 February 2024**. It amends several clauses of a previous circular **21/2021/TT-BLĐTBXH, dated 15 December 2021**, particularly related to labour contracts and recruitment conditions. The new circular gives more details about workers' contracts depending on destination and sector of work. The circular also outlines what documents are necessary from recruitment agencies to prove their compliance with the laws of destination countries. Importantly, the circular limits the service fees that can be charged under these contracts. No charges are permitted for the following categories: skilled workers who migrate to Japan, domestic workers who migrate to other South East Asian and East Asian countries, and agriculture workers who migrate to Australia.

Since the beginning of 2024 and up to 19 June, **more than 78,000 regular Vietnamese workers moved abroad** (including more than 23,700 women). This is 62.4 per cent of the Government-set target of 125,000 workers in 2024. Japan remains the leading destination for Vietnamese workers (with more than 40,500 workers in 2024), followed by Taiwan (China), with more than 27,000 workers and the Republic of Korea with about 5,500 workers. Viet Nam and Australia signed an [agreement to send 1,000 Vietnamese workers to Australia](#) to work in the agricultural sector, starting in 2024.

The [United States 2024 Trafficking in Persons report](#) was released on 25 June. Viet Nam was upgraded to Tier 2. The report concludes that the Government of Vietnam does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but has demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, which led to the rating upgrade.

### Main programme activities

On 16 and 17 January, TRIANGLE supported **two outreach events in Ha Tinh province for 55 migrant workers** (all men) preparing to work in the Republic of Korea in the fishing sector. The events provided the potential migrant workers with key information, such as on the working and living conditions on the fishing vessels in the Republic of Korea, including labour rights, occupational safety and health and how to obtain legal assistance in case of grievances. The participants

expressed their appreciation for the information shared at the outreach event, particularly the sharing of experiences by 11 return migrant workers who had worked in the Republic of Korea previously.

On 21-22 March and 5 April, three **training courses on the relatively new Law on Contract-Based Overseas Workers (No.69, 2020) and its sub-laws** were organized in Ha Tinh province. In total, 139 participants (W:66; M:73) participated in the training, representing the leaders of 50 commune committees and labour officials. The main objective of the training was to enhance the knowledge of the new law and sub-laws relating to regulation of recruitment agencies, rights of migrant workers, recruitment costs and related fees, sanctions for law violations and other topics. Following the trainings, participants reported a better understanding of their responsibilities in implementing the regulatory framework.

In April, Thanh Hoa, Quang Ngai and Ha Tinh MRCs organized **four information dissemination events on safe and regular migration**. The events were attended by 344 potential migrant workers (W:120; M:224) who were provided with information about procedures for regular migration, their labour rights during recruitment, the official costs for migration, legal requirements for employment contracts, and how to access assistance in case their rights are violated.

On 25-26 April, TRIANGLE supported the **MRC in Quang Ngai to deliver a training on financial literacy** for 28 prospective women migrant workers in Duc Pho district. The training included decision-making whether to migrate, setting financial goals and planning, preparing themselves and their family members to cope with separation, amongst other topics. In addition, the ILO supported the MRC to carry out two community dialogues in Binh Chau commune and Binh Son district with 64 returned migrant workers (W:8; M:56). Many of the returnees raised concerns about finding new jobs, starting businesses, and reintegrating with their families and communities upon return. Many were forced to use up their savings because they could not find new livelihoods quickly enough, leaving them no better off financially than before they had left.

On 6 June, TRIANGLE supported the **Thanh Hoa MRC to organize training on financial literacy for 61 women migrant workers** who were due to travel to work as domestic workers in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan (China). A group of 5-6 women with experience working in Saudi Arabia as domestic workers shared about benefits and challenges of migration, goal setting and financial planning. The training helped women prepare themselves and their families to cope with separation and manage family finances. Challenges upon return and reintegration were also shared.



Training on Financial Literacy at Thanh Hoa on 6 June 2024.  
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in Japan.

On 7 June, TRIANGLE supported Thanh Hoa MRC to organize **training on Law 69 and six sub-laws for 81 leaders** from Thanh Hoa. The training helped participants to understand the regulations relating to the rights of migrant workers, responsibility of recruitment agencies and authorities in protection of migrant workers, recruitment costs and fees, complaint mechanism, sanctions on violations, management of recruitment agencies, and the data system to manage migration.

On 26 June, **Thanh Hoa MRC organized a Pre-migration Orientation and Financial Planning training for 57 potential women migrant workers** seeking for jobs mostly in agriculture in Taiwan (China), Korea, Greece and manufacturing

## ► Upcoming activities and key dates (July – December 2024)

| Date               | Event                                                                              | Location                                   | Attendees                                                                                                                           | Purpose                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September          | Training on Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (national level)              | Ha Noi                                     | Tripartite partners, MRCs, Women's organization, SOGIE and disability groups                                                        | Strengthen partners' knowledge and efforts toward gender equality and disability inclusion in practice. |
| September-November | Trainings on Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (district and commune level) | Phu Tho, Thanh Hoa and Ha Tinh             | Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), district labour management unit and commune leaders of People Committee | Strengthen partners' knowledge and efforts toward gender equality and disability inclusion in practice. |
| September (TBC)    | National Tripartite Preparatory Workshop for the 17th AFML                         | Hanoi                                      | Tripartite partners                                                                                                                 | Review progress in implementing past AFML recommendations and discuss the theme of the 17th AFML        |
| September-October  | Training on the New Legislation on Labour Migration (Law 69 and sub-laws)          | Bac Ninh and Phu Tho                       | Officials from DOLISA, district and commune authorities                                                                             | To reinforce the new legislation through introduction and training                                      |
| September-December | Training for Women Migrant Workers on Financial Literacy                           | Phu Tho, Thanh Hoa and Ha Tinh             | Potential women migrant workers                                                                                                     | Prepare women migrant workers and their families to cope with separation and manage family finances     |
| September-December | Information Dissemination on Law 69, Sub-laws and Labour Rights                    | Phu Tho, Thanh Hoa and Ha Tinh             | Women and men potential migrant workers                                                                                             | Enhance knowledge and efforts of migrant workers to migrate safely and legally, reducing risks          |
| October-December   | Job Fairs for Returnee Migrant Workers                                             | Ha Tinh Thanh Hoa and Phu Tho              | Women and men returnee migrant workers and enterprises looking to hire new workers                                                  | To support returnee migrant workers to find employment in Viet Nam                                      |
| October- December  | Community Dialogues with Returnee Migrant Workers                                  | Quang Ngai, Ha Tinh, Thanh Hoa and Phu Tho | Women and men returnee migrant workers and local labour authorities                                                                 | To identify issues and concerns raised by migrant workers and discuss solutions                         |

## ► Media Coverage

| Date       | Title                                                                         | Media source  |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 24 January | <a href="#">Vietnam, RoK deploy cooperation agreement on social insurance</a> | Viet Nam Plus |
| 1 February | <a href="#">Thousands in central Vietnam apply for South Korean jobs</a>      | Vn Express    |
| 4 March    | <a href="#">Vietnam's Labour Export: Economic Boon or Developmental Bane?</a> | Fulcrum       |
| 6 April    | <a href="#">Vietnamese labor export shifts towards Europe</a>                 | VN Express    |
| 19 June    | <a href="#">Japan to ease financial burden on Vietnamese migrant workers</a>  | Nikkei Asia   |
| 21 June    | <a href="#">Japan top receiver of Vietnamese guest workers</a>                | Viet Nam Plus |

## Viet Nam at a glance

Population: 99.5 million

Labour Force: 55.9 million

Source: ILOSTAT, 2024

## Migrant workers in major destinations

Total: 508,172 migrant workers

Japan: 187,383 migrant workers

Taiwan (China): 144,349 migrant workers

Republic of Korea: 87,661 migrant workers

Source: Labour Force Survey 2022, International Labour Statistics Database 2024

## Migrant workers deployed through formal channels in 2023

Total : 160,000 migrant workers

Japan: 80,000 migrant workers

Taiwan (China) : 58,600 migrant workers

Republic of Korea: 11,600 migrant workers

Source: ADBI, ILO and OECD (2024)

TRIANGLE in ASEAN delivers assistance directly to migrant workers and their communities through five Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs). These MRCs are managed in partnership with government institutions and are based in Bac Ninh, Ha Tinh, Thanh Hoa, Phu Tho, and Quang Ngai (all with the Provincial Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs).

Since the start of the programme until the end of 2023, TRIANGLE provided direct services to 68,119 migrant workers (39 per cent women) and reached another 119,244 migrant workers (45.6 per cent women) with information services through Viet Nam MRCs.

## Background information

In 2023, Viet Nam sent 160,000 migrant workers abroad (2022: 143,000), with the top three destination countries for regular migration being Japan, Taiwan (China) and the Republic of Korea. Vietnamese migrant workers migrating to Japan and Taiwan (China) have made up over 80 per cent of regular labour migration for 2022-2023. Deployments have risen from 45,000 in 2021 to 160,000 in 2023 and have surpassed the pre-pandemic 2019 level of 152,500 (ADBI, ILO and OECD, 2024 and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2023). Significant numbers of migrant workers also travel to the Middle East, Northern Africa, Europe and middle-income countries in Asia. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Labour Cooperation was signed between Viet Nam and Thailand in 2016 but has yet to be implemented. It permits only employment in the fishing and construction sectors, where a relatively small number of Vietnamese migrants seek employment (ILO and IOM, 2017).

The Law on Contract-Based Overseas Workers (Law 69) was adopted in 2020 and is the overarching framework governing international labour migration from Viet Nam. Six sub-laws, which form the guiding normative documents for the implementation of Law 69, were signed in December 2021 and January 2022 and came into force in January and February 2022 respectively. Under the previous iteration of the law, a sizeable proportion of Vietnamese migrant workers still chose to migrate irregularly. Stakeholders, including Government, have expressed concerns about the number of Vietnamese workers overstaying their visas and becoming irregular in destinations such as the Republic of Korea, Japan and Taiwan (China). While irregular status increases the risk of exploitation, limits available assistance channels, and is punishable by fines and other sanctions in Viet Nam, it also may be less costly for migrant workers, in terms of time and money (ILO and IOM 2017).

Until the onset of COVID-19, the Vietnamese Government annually increased national and provincial labour migration targets and actively promoted labour migration as a means of employment creation, skills improvement and poverty reduction. In 2024, the annual target is 125,000 departing migrants. The Vietnamese Government has developed geographically targeted policies to encourage labour migration as a poverty reduction strategy. In 20 provinces, residents of designated 'poor districts' are eligible to apply for subsidies to facilitate working overseas. The incentives include loans and financial

assistance for language training, vocational skills training, health checks and other services. While effective at increasing migration from these areas, there are concerns that these policies encourage migration of the most vulnerable populations, including ethnic minorities who often have very limited education. According to the World Bank (2024), Viet Nam is one of the top receivers of remittances in the Asia-Pacific, with expected remittance inflows at US\$14 billion in 2023 (2022: US\$ 13.2 billion), accounting for 3.3 per cent of GDP (2022: 3.2 per cent).

- Key partners**
- Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA)
  - Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA)
  - Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL)
  - Viet Nam Association of Manpower Supply (VAMAS)
- Target sites**
- Quang Ngai, Thanh Hoa, Ha Tinh, Bac Ninh and Phu Tho provinces
- Focal point**
- Anna Engblom, Chief Technical Adviser, [engblom@ilo.org](mailto:engblom@ilo.org)

**TRIANGLE in ASEAN** extends the cooperation between the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, the **Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)** and **Global Affairs Canada (GAC)** on protecting migrant workers and enhancing development opportunities. **TRIANGLE in ASEAN** aims to ensure that the benefits of labour migration are equally realized 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**).



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