

► TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note Thailand



April – June 2025

Key developments

Following the collapse of the State Auditor Building, which was under construction at the time of the Myanmar earthquake in March 2025, there were a significant number of fatalities and injuries, including among migrant workers. The **Thai Ministry of Labour (MOL) announced in early April a [compensation package of up to 2 million Thai Baht \(US\\$ 61,140\) for the families of the deceased](#)**. Injured workers are also entitled to medical and rehabilitation support under the Social Security Fund. MOL emphasized that all affected workers, regardless of nationality, will be treated equally under Thai law. On 9 May, Italian-Thai Development Plc (ITD) and its Chinese partner - the project's contractor - announced the disbursement of [humanitarian compensation](#) to the families of the deceased and injured among the initial group of 21 victims. They emphasized that this support was purely humanitarian and would not affect any ongoing or future legal proceedings. On 13 May, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration concluded its search and rescue operations, reporting [89 confirmed deaths, nine injuries and seven individuals pending forensic identification](#).

Recent border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia, including a fatal military exchange in May 2025, **have led to tightened border controls, checkpoint closures and new trade restrictions** between both countries. After the leak of a phone call in which Prime Minister Paetongtarn appeared to speak in a subservient manner to Cambodian Senator Hun Sen, a series of [retaliatory actions](#) between the two countries was triggered, including bans on imports and cultural products. Cambodian authorities estimated that by mid-2025 (before the start of the conflict), approximately 1.2 million Cambodian migrant workers, both documented and undocumented, were residing in Thailand. Nearly 500,000 were registered as documented migrant workers in various sectors in Thailand as of June 2025 (DOE). Confirmed reports by the [Cambodian General Department of Immigration](#) indicated that about [5,400 workers were returning daily](#) through all border checkpoints at the peak in late June 2025. However, numbers remain uncertain and contested. It is difficult to estimate numbers of returns of Cambodian migrant workers, given the rapidly evolving situation, data disparities and political sensitivities.

Border closures and heightened security, however, have disrupted border crossings and [raised concerns about discrimination and job security among Cambodian workers](#). Amid the rising tensions, in mid-June, [Senate President Hun Sen called on Cambodian workers in Thailand to return home](#), warning they could be at risk due to the presence of Thai military forces and ultranationalist groups. Although the Thai government officially [dismissed these claims](#), the warning prompted the [return of large numbers of Cambodian migrant workers](#) to Cambodia. One border entry reported [around 400-600 Cambodian workers](#) leaving Thailand each day after the call to return.

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The border closure **has had a significant impact on Cambodian migrant workers**, particularly daily and seasonal workers employed under the Section 64 (or border employment) scheme. As of May 2025, there are approximately 29,900 workers from Cambodia under the border employment scheme. Workers under this scheme are required to renew their visas on a monthly basis. Meanwhile, at the request of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT), the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA) informed its 124 members that starting from 16 June, the sending of migrant workers under the MoU with Thailand should be suspended. MOLVT justified this measure citing the situation at the border, and ACRA warned members that the MOLVT may sanction, and even revoke the license of agencies found to be sending workers after the date. Thailand's economy heavily relies on Cambodian migrant workers who [contribute significantly to various sectors](#). Without them, economic losses could be substantial. Their continued presence is also critical for Cambodia, as sudden mass returns could strain its weaker domestic job market and social protection systems, as well as reduce remittances into the country.

On 17 June, [Thailand's National Wage Committee](#) — comprising representatives from employers, workers and the government — reportedly voted to raise the minimum daily wage in Bangkok to 400 Thai Baht, effective 1 July 2025. This wage increase also applies to employees in four- and five-star hotels and entertainment venues nationwide. The decision is expected to benefit more than 700,000 workers.

Main programme activities

On 20 April, TRIANGLE and the PROTECT programmes facilitated a **visit for the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms Siobhan Mullally, to TRIANGLE partners** HomeNet and the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand. Ms Mullally observed a training for domestic worker leaders and engaged in discussions on working conditions, migrant domestic workers' documentation issues, and the lack of support from the Myanmar military authorities' embassy in Thailand, ahead of her upcoming report to the UN General Assembly.

On 29 April, **Australian Ambassador to ASEAN Tiffany McDonald and First Secretary Mariam Diakite, Australian Mission to ASEAN, visited the Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) in Bang Bon, operated by HomeNet**. The Ambassador learned about TRIANGLE's support to HomeNet, the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand's advocacy, as well as Bang Bon MRC services. The Ambassador heard directly from Zarni, a migrant domestic worker leader who volunteers to answer the MRC phone helpline, as well as from migrant workers who have received services from the MRC. Social media posts of the visit are available at [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

On 30 April, **the Thailand Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) met to review the programme's 2024 achievements and 2025 work plan**, and to gather input on priorities beyond 2025. Members agreed to continue focusing on social protection, migration, and recruitment policies, while emphasizing simplification, reduction of costs to recruit, register or regularize migrant workers, and inclusion of Thai outbound workers. They also supported expanding efforts on skills development and semi-skilled migration pathways. On disability inclusion and online scams, participants called for clearer focus areas and further consultation. TRIANGLE's workplan for the rest of 2025 programming was approved. In total, 44 persons (W:27; M:17) attended the meeting.

On **1 May, TRIANGLE joined the Thailand May Day Rally**, led by the State Enterprises Workers Relations Confederation (SERC), and joined by a few hundred migrant workers, including those from the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand. The workers' collective recommendations this year included an increased minimum wage for all, and mandating living wages. In Chiang Mai, TRIANGLE's partner, MAP Foundation and their Migrant Domestic Worker Group in Chiang Mai joined the Northern Labour Network in Thailand for a demonstration and an organized street an exhibition for the public to learn about the labour movement in Chiang Mai and their struggles. Around 300 workers joined the activities. Of those, 45 were migrant workers from MAP-organized groups.

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On 2 May, TRIANGLE joined the **Mahidol University Social Lab: Caring for Work/ Working for Care: Thai and Migrant Workers in Long-Term Care**. TRIANGLE presented findings from the upcoming TRIANGLE -Chulalongkorn University report forecasting the home-based care demand for the elderly in Thailand.

On 27 May, at the invitation of the Department of Employment (DOE), **TRIANGLE delivered opening remarks at a workshop convened to enhance the operations and strengthen partnerships of the DOE Migrant Workers Assistance Centers (MWACs)**. TRIANGLE also presented preliminary findings from an ongoing joint DOE-TRIANGLE assessment of MWAC operations during the period 2020–2024, which were shared for validation and



A DOE Migrant Workers Assistance Center (MWAC) workshop to enhance the operations and strengthen partnerships on 27 May © ILO

feedback from MWAC staff. Among the key findings was a lack of systematic capacity-building support for MWAC staff, particularly those tasked with delivering frontline services to migrant workers and managing complex complaints. Building on these findings, TRIANGLE facilitated a participatory session aimed at fostering peer learning and open dialogue. Experienced MWAC personnel were invited to share insights and good practices, while staff from the 20 newly established MWACs were encouraged to raise questions and identify areas where further support is needed to enhance their capacity. The workshop was attended by a total of 69 MWAC officials (W:38; M:31), from the 30 MWACs across the country and 6 from DOE

headquarters.

On 29 May, TRIANGLE had [a technical meeting with the DOE Director-General and team](#) to raise concerns about **protection gaps for migrant workers under the Cabinet Resolution (CR) of 24 September 2024**, particularly those from Myanmar facing delays and security issues due to required engagement with Myanmar military authorities. The DOE team, led by the Director-General, informed TRIANGLE that a new Cabinet resolution is expected to remove steps involving Myanmar military authorities. Importantly, the Director-General agreed to issue a Directive ensuring that migrant workers under both the 24 September CR and the upcoming CR would not bear service fees or other costs if licensed recruitment agencies assist them. TRIANGLE followed up with a letter and draft information materials

for DOE's review. Once the Directive is issued, TRIANGLE will support broad dissemination through MRCs, constituents, and partners.



MAP Foundation commemorated Domestic Worker Day on 15 June in Chiang Mai, Thailand © MAP

On 15 June, TRIANGLE partner MAP Foundation, together with the domestic worker group in Chiang Mai, **commemorated Domestic Workers Day by hosting an advocacy event promoting domestic workers' rights to social security and the effective enforcement of [Ministerial Regulation No. 15](#)**. The event featured an exhibition highlighting the group's past activities and rights of domestic

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workers. Additionally, the group submitted a petition to representatives from the Social Security Office present at the event, calling for strengthened protections and access to benefits for domestic workers. A [short video clip](#) of the event (in Shan language) is available on MAP's Facebook page.

On 16 June TRIANGLE's partner **HomeNet and the Domestic Workers Network of Thailand** marked this year's **Domestic Workers Day with a campaign against the use of the term "servant" to describe domestic workers**. As part of the event, the Network also held elections for a new leader. Ms Kalyapha Prasopsuk and Ms Champa were re-elected to continue serving as the respective presidents of the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand (NDWT) and the Network of Migrant Domestic Workers in Thailand, a subgroup of the NDWT. TRIANGLE joined the event and was asked to provide a note about the collaboration between the ILO and the Network.

On 26 June, **TRIANGLE, on behalf of the ILO, participated in the UN Migration Team's event titled "Translating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) into Action in Thailand."** TRIANGLE delivered a presentation on Thailand's labour migration landscape and context. Participants included mid-level officials from various departments across 13 ministries ranging from agencies with which the TRIANGLE has regular engagement, such as the MOL and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, to those with whom engagement has been limited, including the National Economic and Social Development Council, the National Security Council, the Royal Thai Police, and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand.

► Upcoming activities and key dates (July – September 2025)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
18 August	Thailand's National Preparatory Meeting for the 18th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour	Bangkok	Tripartite partners and civil society	To review progress in implementing past AFML recommendations and discuss the theme of the 17th AFML
25 August (Samut Prakan) 4 September (Kanchanaburi)	Promoting the Inclusion of Migrant Workers in Thailand's Social Security System through Employers' Engagement	Samut Prakarn, Kanchanaburi	ECOT, employers, government officials	To strengthen employers' compliance with the Social Security Fund

► Media Coverage

Date	Title	Media Source
9 April	Migrant kids left behind	Bangkok Post
16 April	Thailand's auditing industry fails to protect migrant workers: activists	Radio Free Asia
23 April	Refugees from Myanmar facing deep food aid cuts	Deutsche Welle
9 May	Thailand's unwinnable war on scammers	East Asia Forum
15 May	High-rise collapse exposed Thai failure to protect laborers it needs for construction	Radio Free Asia
21 May	Back to school please	Bangkok Post
23 May	Human error blamed for beam tragedy	Bangkok Post
17 June	Thailand activates emergency measures for nationals in Israel amid escalating Iran conflict	Pattaya Mail

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20 June	20 Myanmar migrants nabbed in the Thai rubber plantation	The Thaiger
21 June	Cambodian migrant workers in Buriram want to stay, fear job loss if they return	Bangkok Post
23 June	Thailand closes its land border crossings with Cambodia	Radio Free Asia
28 June	Cambodian beggars deported and blacklisted after breaching Thai immigration checkpoint	The Nation
30 June	Thailand eases citizenship rules for children of long term migrants	The Thaiger

Thailand at a glance

Population: 71.8 million

Labour Force: 39.6 million

Source: ILOSTAT, 2024

Migrants in Thailand

Total number of documented workers: 3,789,961

693,304 MOU migrant workers

(Women = 334,704 / Men = 358,600)

Myanmar = 255,180 (37%)

Cambodia = 183,704 (26%)

Lao PDR = 254,420 (37%)

27,942 migrant workers under Section 64 (Border employment)

(Women = 14,621 / Men = 13,321)

Myanmar = 5,645 (20%)

Cambodia = 22,297 (80%)

1,963,846 migrant workers renewing documents under the 24 September 2024 and 4 February 2025 Cabinet Resolutions - referring to migrant workers who had been regularized by various previous cabinet resolutions and are now required to renew their work permit and visa under the procedures prescribed by these two cabinet resolutions.

(Women = 61,837 / Men = 72,630, excluding Myanmar)

Myanmar = 1,829,379 (93%; no gender breakdown for Myanmar available)

Cambodia = 130,395 (6.6%)

Lao PDR = 3,967 (0.2%)

Viet Nam = 105 (0.005%)

1,038,020 migrant workers newly registering under the 24 September 2024 Cabinet Resolution

(Women = 426,394 / Men = 611,626)

Myanmar = 892,399 (86%)

Cambodia = 109,892 (10.6%)

Lao PDR = 28,895 (2.8%)

Viet Nam = 6,834 (0.7%)

Migrant workers under the Thai cabinet resolutions have been regularized by invoking Section 63/2 of the Thai Royal

Ordinance "Concerning the Management of Employment of Migrant Workers". Each cabinet resolution outlines the eligibility of migrant workers to be regularized as well as details of the regularization procedures.

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand (May 2025).

TRIANGLE in ASEAN delivers assistance directly to migrant workers and their communities through three Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) in Thailand. They are managed in partnership with civil society organizations and are based in Bangkok (with HomeNet), Chiang Mai (with MAP Foundation), and at Mae Sot (with Human Rights and Development Foundation). In addition, TRIANGLE provides MRC-like services with the CSO Migrant Working Group (MWG).

Since the start of the programme up until the end of 2024, TRIANGLE in ASEAN provided direct services to 36,989 migrant workers (59 per cent women) and reached another 862,769 migrant workers (62.5 per cent women) with information services through Thai MRCs.

Background information

Over the last three decades, Thailand has become a key destination for migrant workers from neighbouring countries and increasingly from further afield across ASEAN. Women and men migrant workers make a substantial contribution to Thailand's economic performance. According to a study by the ILO and OECD, migrants were responsible for 4.3 - 6.6 per cent of Thailand's GDP in 2010, while representing 4.7 per cent of the employed population (ILO/OECD, 2017). These migrants are predominantly employed in low-paid jobs, including fishing, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work and other services. Thailand is also a country of origin for migrant workers. In 2024, DOE documented a total of 57,853 registering to depart Thailand to work overseas and a total stock of 136,058 Thai workers overseas (Department of Employment, 2024).

Transitioning from a net-sending to a net-receiving country during the 1990s, Thailand's labour migration governance framework has continually relied on bilateral agreements or cooperation with neighbouring countries. In 2002 and 2003, the Royal Thai Government signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on employment cooperation with the governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Myanmar, which established a channel for regular labour migration to Thailand from neighbouring countries. However, up until recently, only a small proportion of migrants have entered Thailand under the MOUs due to the complicated, lengthy and expensive procedures involved. In 2015 and 2016, Thailand revised the MOUs to broaden cooperation on labour issues, including skills development and social protection and signed a new agreement with Viet Nam.

During 2016–18, Thailand developed a more comprehensive legal framework, including the adoption of the Royal Ordinance Concerning the Management of Employment of Migrants to manage labour migration in parallel with the implementation of the MOU processes. The Royal Ordinance sets out that the MOU process is the only official channel for migrant workers in 'elementary' occupations to enter Thailand. However, Section 64 of the Royal Ordinance offers one exception, known as the border employment regulation, which allows employers to hire migrants in border areas on three-month visas. Yet, due to the porous borders of Thailand, the complicated, time-consuming and expensive MOU processes, and the limited functionality of the border employment scheme, many migrant workers enter Thailand irregularly.

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In response, and for the past two decades, the Royal Thai Government has been relying on periodic regularizations of migrants with irregular status, the use of which increased during and after COVID. This is accomplished (in part) by declaring amnesties. Many migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar have used these ad-hoc amnesties and registration windows to obtain legal status, though many others have continued to work irregularly, some due to the short registration window or the high corresponding fees for this registration.

Key partners

- Ministry of Labour (MOL)
- Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
- State Enterprise Workers' Relations Confederations (SERC)
- Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF)
- HomeNet Thailand
- MAP Foundation
- Migrant Working Group (MWG)

Target sites

- Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Mae Sot

Focal point

- Chonticha Tangworamongkon, National Project Coordinator, tangworamongkon@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)** until 2024) 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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