

► What have we achieved?

2024–2025 results snapshot

The EU-funded PROTECT project (2024–27), implemented by the ILO, UN Women, UNICEF and UNODC, works to ensure decent work and reduce vulnerabilities for women and children in labour migration across South-East Asia.

The project operates at three interconnected levels: strengthening laws and regional frameworks; improving institutional protection and accountability; and expanding access to services, voice and empowerment for women migrant workers and children.

PROTECT achievements in ASEAN, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia:

- Laws and frameworks strengthened
- Institutions better equipped to prevent and respond to abuse and child rights violations
- Cross-border justice cooperation operationalised
- Tens of thousands of women and children in the context of migration reached with services and empowered with knowledge and skills
- Migrant women increasingly organised and influencing policy

Strengthening laws, policies and regional frameworks

- **14 draft gender and labour sensitive laws and policies** received technical input from the project.
- **Eight regional and national gender responsive labour migration related laws**, policies and operational frameworks have been adopted with technical support from the project
- **23 policy recommendations** from labour knowledge products were formally submitted to the competent bodies to strengthen regulatory frameworks.
- **Two bylaws** were developed strengthening protection for children in the context of migration, one concerning the reintegration of repatriated children from Thailand to Cambodia and another on alternatives to immigration related detention of children in Thailand.

Result - National legislation and regional labour migration frameworks are aligned with international standards and responsive to the realities faced by women migrant workers and children.



Key information

Overall objective:

To protect the rights of women migrant workers and migrant children in South-East Asia

Geographic scope:

Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and across South-East Asia

Duration:

4 years
(1 January 2024 - 31 December 2027)

Budget:

US\$19.06 million, funded by the European Union (EU) (€17 million)

Implementation:

ILO, UN Women, UNICEF and UNODC, led by the ILO

Building stronger institutions and accountability mechanisms

- ▶ **Nearly 3,000** government officials, employers, recruitment agents, unions and CSO staff trained in gender-responsive labour migration
- ▶ **31 institutions** are now implementing protection strategies for women migrants and children. Institutions have introduced coordinated, multi-sector mechanisms to improve protection and referral systems for migrant women and children
- ▶ **740 service providers**, including social workers, teachers, interpreters and shelter staff, have strengthened their capacity to support migrant children using child-sensitive and rights-based approaches.
- ▶ **28 state and non-state actors** have been supported in labour migration and human rights work.

Results - legal reform is matched by effective implementation by labour and women ministries, social services, justice systems and civil society.

Justice and accountability

- ▶ **108 trafficking cases** were prosecuted with strengthened institutional support.
- ▶ **Seven government agency practice changes** introduced to address corruption linked to trafficking.
- ▶ **4,926** victims and potential victims of trafficking provided with legal aid by a regional network of legal aid service providers



Expanded protection and services for women migrant workers

- ▶ **PROTECT** increases access for women migrant workers and children to essential services such as information, legal aid, referrals and counselling.
- ▶ Migrant Worker Resource Centres have expanded significantly, with **12 centres** now providing counselling, legal aid, skills training and referrals across Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.
- ▶ Nearly **7100 women migrant workers** have received safe migration and GBV-related information and services, trainings and skills' development.
- ▶ **648 women migrants** received legal support through a regional network of legal aid service providers.

Strengthening voice, participation and empowerment

Results - Women are safer and more empowered when they are organised and engaged in decision-making and children are empowered through structured participation and capacity building initiatives.

- ▶ **667 women migrant** networked into more than 12 worker associations and peer networks.
- ▶ **429 women migrant leaders** have enhanced their leadership and advocacy capacities, strengthening their ability to organise, conduct outreach and engage in policy dialogue.
- ▶ **Nine advocacy interventions** undertaken by migrant women's networks to influence policy design and decisions.
- ▶ Recommendations from women's rights organisations were reflected in **three laws and policies**.
- ▶ **84 children and youth** were empowered through four adolescent-led webinars "Migration Learning Series" and a regional campaign "Migration through the Eyes of Children", whereby children and youth on the move shared their stories and solutions for addressing the challenges that they have faced during their migration journey.



Protecting children in the context of migration

Results - strengthened child protection systems while expanding direct support.

- ▶ **Nearly 3,700 children** have received protection services, case management and access to specialised support, including education.
- ▶ **More than 20,000 migrant children have been registered** or documented through strengthened national systems, enabling greater access to legal identity, education, healthcare and other essential services.
- ▶ **4,115 children** in the context of migration were reached with awareness-raising on the prevention of risks before and during migration and provided with child protection services.
- ▶ **760 stateless children** received legal support in Thailand.





Yana – From exploitation to justice advocate

Yana, a migrant domestic worker from East Java, migrated to Malaysia in 2024 after her business collapsed. Promised factory work, she was instead placed in domestic work where her passport and phone were confiscated, and she worked long hours without rest nor salary. When she tried to leave, recruitment agencies demanded large payments. “I had no salary, no money and no way out. I felt trapped,” she recalls.

Through a community gathering organised by PERTIMIG, a migrant worker association of Indonesian migrant workers supported by PROTECT, Yana accessed shelter, legal information and referrals, and support to contact her embassy. After returning to Indonesia, she filed a trafficking case, which is ongoing. “I will continue to fight, for my justice and for other migrant women.” Her story highlights the role of community networks in enabling access to justice and empowerment.



Soun Sreymom – From migrant worker to community leader

Soun Sreymom, from Kampong Speu, migrated for over a decade between Cambodia and Thailand, facing unsafe conditions, unpaid wages and isolation. After returning to Cambodia, she joined a peer network of women migrant workers supported under PROTECT.

Through leadership training, she now facilitates dialogues on safe migration, labour rights and prevention of violence against women. She also uses participatory photography to raise awareness in her community. Alongside her work as a kindergarten teacher, she promotes informed migration and gender equality. Her story shows how community-based approaches strengthen women's agency and safer migration pathways.



Melada – From invisibility to leadership

Melada, a 15-year-old Myanmar student in Mae Hong Son, Thailand, grew up without full legal status, limiting her mobility, education and opportunities. Despite strong academic performance, she was unable to travel or access scholarships.

Through the Mobile Classroom programme supported under PROTECT, she gained legal literacy and, with support, obtained a Type 0 ID card, improving access to services. Now School President, she aspires to become a designer and environmental innovator. Her story demonstrates how legal identity and access to information can transform exclusion into opportunity.



AA – From death sentence to renewed protection pathway

AA, an Indonesian woman trafficked under false promises of work, was coerced into transporting narcotics and sentenced to death in Malaysia. In 2024, PROTECT supported outreach to women on death row, improving access to legal information and review processes.

Following the abolition of the mandatory death penalty, her sentence was commuted to 30 years. She has since regained contact with her family, accessed medical care, and pursued recognition as a trafficking victim, with ongoing efforts toward repatriation. Her case highlights the importance of coordinated legal assistance and cross-border, survivor-centred approaches.



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