



► Protection of the rights of women and children in labour migration

Project brief



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

► Why this project matters

South-East Asia hosts more than 10 million migrants, nearly half of whom are women, and over one million children. Labour migration contributes significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction across the region. However, migration pathways often expose women and children to labour exploitation, violence, trafficking, forced labour and limited access to justice and services.

Women migrant workers are concentrated in low-wage and informal sectors such as domestic work, agriculture, manufacturing and construction, where decent work deficits and social protection gaps are common. Children in migration contexts, particularly those undocumented or separated from caregivers, face heightened risks of exploitation, detention and exclusion from essential services.

Uneven economic development, demand for low-wage labour and weak enforcement systems continue to drive vulnerabilities across migration corridors, including Cambodia–Thailand and Indonesia–Malaysia. Emerging trends, including trafficking linked to online scam operations, further increase risks.

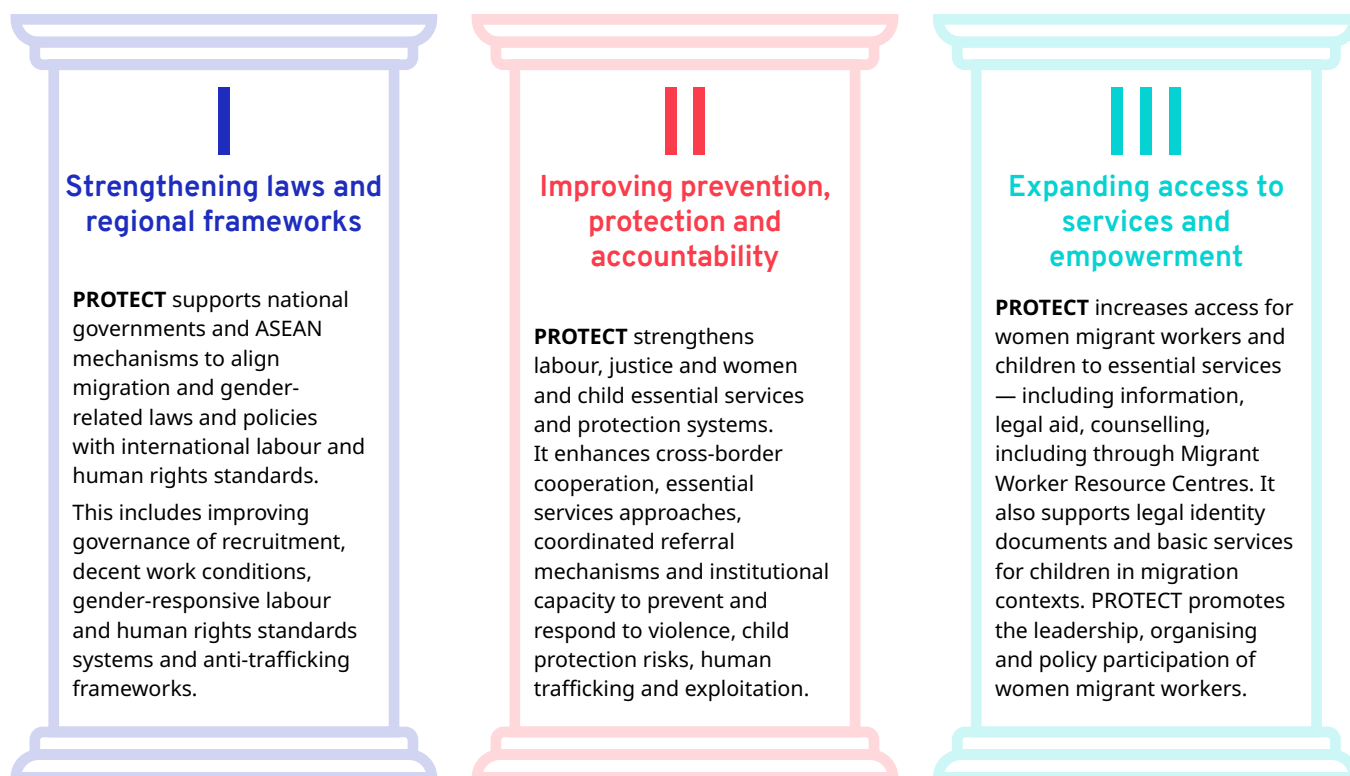
PROTECT addresses these challenges by strengthening laws, institutions and services to ensure safer and fairer labour migration.

PROTECT

Protection of the Rights of Women and Children in Labour Migration Project (PROTECT) is a joint project implemented by ILO, UN Women, UNICEF and UNODC, funded by the EU

► What PROTECT does

The project works across three mutually reinforcing pillars:



► Strategic approach



Corridor-based programming

The project reinforces cooperation along key migration corridors, particularly Cambodia–Thailand and Indonesia–Malaysia, while responding to disruptions affecting these pathways and emerging migration trends. It also addresses new and evolving risks, including trafficking for forced criminality linked to online scam operations, ensuring protection across origin, transit and destination contexts.



Multidisciplinary coordination

By combining expertise in labour standards, gender equality, child protection and anti-trafficking, PROTECT delivers coherent and rights-based responses.



Gender-responsive and child-sensitive lens

All interventions address structural discrimination and ensure protection systems are inclusive and responsive to the specific needs of women and children.

Who benefits

Primary beneficiaries include:

- Women migrant workers, particularly in low-wage and informal sectors
- Migrant children, including undocumented, stateless and separated children
- Survivors of violence and those at risk of trafficking and exploitation
- National and regional institutions responsible for labour migration governance and social partners



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