TRIANGLE II Quarterly Briefing Note

Myanmar (January-March 2016)

Key partners	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES)
	Labour Exchange Offices (LEOs)
	Myanmar Overseas Employers Agencies Federation (MOEAF)
	Confederation of Trade Unions of Myanmar
	Mawk Kon
Target sites	Yangon, Mandalay, Dawei, Kyaing Tung
Focal point	Ms Wai Hnin Po, National Project Coordinator (NPC) pow@ilo.org, +95 1 566 538

Background information

Labour migration has long been a livelihood strategy for people of Myanmar; through migrating internally and internationally, the families and home communities of migrants have been able to survive periods of severe hardship and economic stagnation. From a recent study conducted by the ILO, the prime motivation for migrants departing from Myanmar was the promise of higher wages (as reported by 50 per cent of respondents) but unemployment and underemployment were also important considerations. Remittances sent home from migrants have provided the basic necessities for families, especially food, water, clothing and accommodation. Most migrants have had to migrate spontaneously, not having the luxury of time or savings to invest in migration plans. This has resulted in migrants crossing borders without documents, being picked up by brokers at the border and sometimes taken into work that they had not chosen, in conditions that are often substandard and being tied to the employer through their lack of legal status and fear of arrest.

As Myanmar emerges from its isolated position and a prolonged period with little investment or dynamism in the economy, new jobs are now becoming available both within the country and abroad. Old systems of job matching which included brokers, smugglers, returned migrants and local leaders may no longer be able to navigate the formal procedures to legal migration and are being superseded by recruitment agencies. The Government reported to the ILO Fair Migration General Survey concerning the migrant workers instruments (February 2016) that approximately 1.9 million Myanmar workers had been 'legally dispatched' to 16 foreign countries. In this new system, potential migrants often do not know who to trust and how to benefit from these new structures, and their lack of know-how leaves them once again vulnerable to extortionate fees and corruption.

The most frequent intended destination country for women and men migrant workers is Thailand because of the low costs involved, close proximity for those living in border areas and ease of migrating. Myanmar is expanding the labour market for migrants to apply for jobs. Currently, Myanmar dispatches migrant workers to Thailand, Malaysia, Macau (SAR), Japan and Singapore and have recently made an agreement with the UAE. Migration to the Republic of South Korea is through a government-to-government system.

MOLES is mandated to manage migrant worker issues and regulate the 224 licensed overseas employment agencies, 67 of which recruit workers for Thailand.

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Myanmar at a glance

Population: 51 million

Labour Force: 33.9 million

Migration from Myanmar

Main countries of destination

Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Korea, UAE, Qatar, Jordan.

Number of overseas migrants in Population Census (2014)

2,021,910 (W39%; M61%)

Memoranda of Understanding concluded

Thailand, Malaysia, Republic of Korea

Migration to Thailand

143,461 MOU migrant workers (February 2016)

909,916 migrant workers completing Nationality Verification (February 2016)

659,730 insured by MOPH (October 2015)

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Adminstration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand.

Main activities (January – March 2016)

- On 7 January, the Technical Officer attended the preparatory meeting for the bilateral Thai-Myanmar meeting and provided input.
- A training was held on 28-29 January with staff (W7: M8) of the four Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) housed in LEOs to develop a plan of activities for the year.
- On 22 February, a consultation was held with 21 new parliamentarians (W5: M16) to brief them on migration issues and discuss policy responses. Participants included members of the Parliamentarian Committee on Domestic and Overseas Labour.
- TRIANGLE II held consultations and concluded agreements with civil society and labour organizations to deliver safe migration trainings to potential migrants and develop spaces for migrant women to share experiences and become leaders in Shan State, Yangon and Rakhine State.
- The Technical Officer presented on the Living Wage and ran daily workshops at the 15th Annual Women Exchange Get together in Chiang Mai (5-9 March), which was attended by 120 Myanmar migrant women. Key note speakers were Selma James, author of Sex, Race and Class and the Power of Women; and Nina Lopez of Global Women Strike.
- TRIANGLE II held the Migration Stakeholders Meeting (14-15 March) with tripartite constituents to obtain input on activities in Myanmar and approval of the work plan for 2016.
- Staff of TRIANGLE II visited three training centres for migrants to observe trainings and promote the use of the Pre-Departure Training Curriculum (PDTC) developed during TRIANGLE I.
- TRIANGLE staff provided support to the family of a migrant who died in a workplace accident during a meeting with the Thai embassy to finalise the procedures to receive compensation from the Social Security System.
- On March 25, thirty-five members of the Overseas Employment Agencies Federation signed the Code of Conduct on Overseas Employment at a meeting co-hosted by MOLES and the ILO.

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Upcoming activities and key dates (April – June 2016)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
April-June	Hold monthly meetings with civil society and labour organizations	Yangon	Network of CSOs and LOs	To review implementation of safe migration trainings and provide updates on policy developments.
April-June	Meetings to communicate and share ideas between women's groups	Rakhine, Shan, Yangon	Women's groups	To develop the approach for activities on empowerment of women

Key developments

- On 1 April Myanmar's first civilian President in over half a century was confirmed and the new National League for Democracy (NLD) led government came to power.
- The new government has decreased the number of ministries, including the merging of the labour and migration ministries. The new Ministry responsible for labour migration management in Myanmar will be referred to as the Ministry for Immigration and Manpower.
- n 2015, LIFT opened a funding window on migration (about US$18m) in recognition of migration as an adaptive response to shocks, stresses (including climate change) and economic opportunity. LIFT engaged the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the ILO as the two lead technical partners to build more evidence-based information on labour migration, and to enhance policies on internal and international labour migration. The LIFT funding will dovetail with the TRIANGLE II project in several areas.

Media

Date	Title	Media source
8 January 2016	Seminar on migrants in Thailand	RFA Myanmar
14 January 2016	The origins of Myanmar migrant worker misery	Human Rights Watch
8 March 2016	Benefits of protecting migrant workers	Myanmar Times

The **TRIANGLE II** project extends the cooperation between the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and **Australian Department Of Foreign Affairs and Trade** on protecting migrant workers and enhancing development opportunities. **TRIANGLE II** 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 leverating the development potential of migration, **TRIANGLE II** aims to shape labour migration opportunities to support inclusive and sustainable growth in the ASEAN Economic Community. **TRIANGLE II** focuses on delivering in six countries **(Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam)** and engages institutionally with **ASEAN**.

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