

Experts' Meeting on Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in ASEAN

4 July 2017

Kappa room, 6th floor, Pullman Bangkok King Power, Bangkok, Thailand

Background

In the ASEAN region, as elsewhere in the world, migrant workers are often excluded from tax-funded social protection schemes and inadequately covered by social insurance schemes that are mostly limited to formal employment¹. They stand at risk of losing their social security entitlements in their home countries, while at the same time encountering restrictive qualifying conditions and practical barriers (e.g. documentation, language, access to information, among others) in host countries to effectively access national social protection systems.

In 2015, the total stock of international migrants in ASEAN was over 9.7 million and approximately 18.8 million ASEAN migrants were estimated to be living outside of their countries of birth. Intra-ASEAN migration is rising, with 6.5 million intra-regional migrants accounting for two-thirds of the regions total international migrant stock (UNDESA, 2015). Distinguishing migrant workers from this total migrant stock, ILO-collected data shows that seven ASEAN Member States² deployed over 2.1 million migrant workers in 2015.³ Much of intra-ASEAN labour migration is temporary and includes irregular migrants who are likely not be captured in these statistics.

The extension of social protection coverage to migrant workers is becoming more urgent as labour migration flows into and within ASEAN increases. According to the 2014 ILO-ADB study on the ASEAN Economic Community, the overall gains resulting from economic integration will not be distributed evenly - while some sectors will flourish, others are likely to see job losses. Migrant workers, workers without the right skills and workers in vulnerable employment may not be able to seize the new opportunities created by the ASEAN economic integration.

At the 23rd ASEAN Summit in Brunei Darussalam in October 2013, the ten ASEAN Leaders adopted a Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection which reaffirmed their commitment to improve social protection for migrant workers who were identified among the vulnerable groups still excluded from social protection coverage. The Declaration also echoes the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (Cebu, 2007) that acknowledges migrant workers' rights to equal social protection access.

In line with these two Declarations and the 2016-2020 ASEAN Labour Ministers' Work Programme, the ASEAN and the ILO have been collaborating at the regional and national levels to improve ASEAN migrant workers' access to social protection. Part of this engagement is the conduct of a regional study mapping the social protection coverage extended to ASEAN migrant workers, which is now being finalized. The ILO will also be providing technical support to the Government of Thailand to conduct a study on how to provide portable social security for migrant workers across the region.

¹ C. Peyron Bista; C. O. Boon, 2015: The state of social protection in ASEAN at the dawn of the integration (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

² Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam

³ ILO, 2015. Analytical report on the International Labour Migration Statistics Database in ASEAN: Improving data collection for evidence-based policy-making (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

Objectives

In support of the ILO and ASEAN priorities to provide equal access to social protection for migrant workers, the ILO's *TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme* will conduct an Experts' Meeting on Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in ASEAN. The 1-day meeting aims:

- To validate the findings of ILO's regional study on social protection coverage for migrant workers;
- To enhance understanding in and advocate for the extension of social protection to migrant workers;
- To provide inputs to the Thailand government's plans for conducting a study on portability of social security for migrant workers across ASEAN member State;
- To identify potential areas for ILO technical assistance to support portable social protection for migrant workers and establish an ASEAN technical working group for extending social protection to migrant workers.

Expected participants

- 10 experts, policy makers and/or practitioners (1 per ASEAN Member State) directly involved in social protection policy-oriented research, as well as the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection policies, schemes and programmes of ASEAN countries and worldwide
- Additional resource persons working on the ILO-supported studies on social protection in ASEAN
 - Professor Marius Olivier
 - officials from the Thai government
- ILO officials