

GMS TRIANGLE Project International Migrants Day 2013

International Migrants Day, celebrated on 18 December, marks the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. On the occasion of International Migrants Day in 2013, ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Navi Pillay released a joint statement:

“Today we pay tribute to 232 million migrants worldwide who have left their homes in search of a better and more dignified life for themselves and their families. Migrants make significant and essential contributions to the economic, social and cultural development of their host countries and their communities back home. But too often these contributions go unrecognized, and instead the public debate is dominated by xenophobic attitudes and discrimination, both in and outside the workplace.”

The statement also emphasised the need to raise awareness of migrants’ positive social and economic contributions to society, and advocated for the creation of multi-stakeholders campaigns to end negative and inaccurate public messages and to promote tolerance and respect for migrants; and for the collection and dissemination of data on the positive contributions that migrants make to the development of both their host countries and home communities.

Global activities undertaken by ILO Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT)

Campaign messaging was centred around the phrase, “I Am A Migrant and I contribute to development.” The online community was encouraged to share photos, stories and videos about their migration history and how migrants make a positive contribution to development in their communities. A series of cartoons were developed by ILO Artworks and the Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT) to address ‘Migration Myths’. These included: do you know the difference between illegal and irregular?; migrants’ have the right to social security benefits; migrants fill important skill gaps; and the number of migrants is growing in line with the growth of the world’s population.

The ***Saphan Siang*** (Bridge of Voices) campaign promotes better understanding between Thais and migrant workers by increasing public awareness on the issues faced by migrant workers, their positive contribution to Thailand’s economy and society, and their right to equal protection under the law and in practical access to support services. The campaign seeks to achieve this goal by creating opportunities for interaction between Thais and migrants. The campaign was initiated by the ILO, with support from ESCAP, IOM, and World Vision.

The ILO GMS TRIANGLE project together with UN agencies and civil society organizations launched the **Migration Works** campaign in Malaysia in December 2012. The campaign, focusing on youth, aims to address some of the misconceptions about migration and migrant workers in Malaysia, by informing the public about the positive contribution migrants make and changing attitudes.

Thailand

To celebrate International Migrants Day, in December 2013, UNITE Thailand and the *Saphan Siang* campaign hosted a workshop for high school and university students. Students participated in workshops on the themes of 'Migration and development' and 'Migrant workers and social inclusion/exclusion in Thailand,' presented by experts from the IOM, ILO and Thammasat University. Students were able to engage in the complex issues of labour migration trends in Asia, Thailand's evolving labour market needs, and migrants' labour rights and access to social services.

In the afternoon, the students debated on the motion: 'Thailand offers sufficient protection measures for migrant workers'. The debate was incredibly well researched on both sides, with the 'government' arguing that Thailand offers sufficient protection measures to legal workers, and that there is a comprehensive registration process in place for migrants to gain legal status, while the 'opposition' responded that registration is inefficient, as it entails a long and complex process that leaves migrants in a vulnerable position. The opposition concluded that international law in regards to protection and access to services must be realized in practice in Thailand.



Students participating in the *Saphan Siang* event in Bangkok

Workshop participants also participated in an interactive presentation by MTV EXIT about the exploitative situations that some migrant workers may find themselves in in Thailand, including being vulnerable to human trafficking; quizzes about the work of the IOM in the migrant communities of Ranong and Mae Sot; and viewed the *Saphan Siang* 'A Positive Image' photo exhibition. The event also served as the launch for the *Saphan Siang* Youth Ambassador program, a volunteer program that will match university students with NGOs to work on a migrant worker assignment for a period of six months. The event received positive feedback from the university and school groups, and was featured in a number of significant media outlets including Channel 7, Channel 5 and ASTV; FM92 and 101.5; and ThaiRath, Matichon, and Daily News.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

In Lao People's Democratic Republic, the ILO GMS TRIANGLE project partnered with the Lao Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, UN Women, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) to organize a mini marathon and other awareness activities on 14 December. More than 1000 people attended, including government staff from various ministries, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, Lao Women Union, Lao Youth Union, recruitment agencies, migration networks, embassies, police, soldiers, and students and teachers from schools, universities and occupational training institutions. Her Excellency Madame Pany Yathotou, the



Opening ceremony for the mini marathon in Vientiane

President of the National Assembly, cut the ribbon to commence the event, and the opening statements were provided by Madame Onchan Thammavong, Minister of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Mr Douglas Fosskett, Head of Office of IOM Vientiane.

Messaging about the event and about safe migration was promoted through national TV, radio and newspapers. The MOLSW also plans to produce a 45 minute documentary about the event, including interviews with Ministry staff and key international organizations concerned with migration, as well as returned migrants and victims of human trafficking.



Photograph from the exhibition at the Migration Works event, Malaysia

Malaysia

In Malaysia, International Migrants Day was celebrated under the Migration Works campaign, at White Box Gallery, Kuala Lumpur on 17 December. The event included a photo exhibition, mural painting, the launch of a PSA teaser, and a dramatic performance on 'reflections of migrants' reality in Malaysia.' The PSA profiles a domestic worker, a security guard and a waiter, and challenges the audience to think beyond the job titles of migrants, and to recognize the significant contributions that migrants make to Malaysia's economy and society.

The event demonstrated the high-level commitment to issues facing migrant workers in Malaysia, through the presence of several parliamentarians, the UN Resident Coordinator, SUHAKAM (the Malaysian Human Rights Commission), the Malaysian Bar Council's Sub Committee on Migrants, NGOs, Malaysian Trade Union Congress, Malaysian Employment Federation, recruitment agencies, and youth. The event provided an important public forum for the SUHAKAM representative to openly campaign for the creation (or legalisation) of a body to protect migrant workers, either through a union or an association. The event received a significant amount of media coverage, including a comprehensive article posted in The Star, Korea Herald, and the Jakarta Post, as well as a news story on KiniTV (available here: <http://www.kinitv.com/video/307408>)

Cambodia

On 16 December 2013, the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) officially launched eight *prakas* (ministerial regulations) which supplement Sub-Decree 190 on Sending Workers Abroad through Private Recruitment Agencies. The eight *prakas* strengthen the existing protection mechanisms for migrant workers, and set standards for private recruitment agencies, the recruitment process, pre-departure orientation training and a process by which migrant workers can lodge complaints. Through support from the ILO GMS TRIANGLE project, the MOLVT and Provincial Departments of Labour and Vocational Training (PDOLVT) will provide training on the new *prakas* to local officials and village and commune leaders.



MOLVT and ILO GMS TRIANGLE participate in a televised panel discussion on safe migration in Cambodia

The MOLVT organized a round table discussion on migration and trafficking issues that was broadcast through state television (TVK) on 17 and 18 December. The panel, made up of MOLVT, recruitment agencies, Winrock International, trade unions and the ILO GMS TRIANGLE Project, discussed the means by which people become victims of trafficking, and who is at a higher risk; and the international legal framework for the protection of migrant workers, including the most recent ILO standards that address vulnerable migrant worker industries including fishing and domestic work. The ILO GMS TRIANGLE representative discussed the project's ongoing collaboration with the MOLVT to empower migrant workers with knowledge about their rights, and to work towards developing more streamlined and safer recruitment practices and complaints mechanisms.

Viet Nam

On the occasion of International Migrants Day, together with MTV EXIT and in collaboration with the Ho Chi Minh Central Youth Union, the ILO GMS TRIANGLE Project organized a public event promoting access to reliable information on costs and legal recruitment channels for safe overseas employment, in the Thanh Ba and Phu Ninh districts in the northern province of Phu Tho. The event promoted the services provided by the Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) at the Phu Tho Employment Service Centre, and facilitated dialogues on the issues of labour exploitation and human trafficking with returned migrant workers, the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), police, local authorities, banks, and recruitment agencies.

Evaluation from participants indicated that those in attendance had significantly increased their knowledge on safe and legal migration processes, with 79 per cent reporting that they now knew the recruitment process and how to check the legitimacy of recruitment agencies; 91 per cent indicating



Speakers at the International Migrants Day event in Phu Tho, Viet Nam

that they knew current regulations relating to brokerage charges and refund; and 85 per cent were aware of where to get support while working and living abroad. The events were widely attended and published by the mass media both at the national and provincial level. The events were aired on national television stations VTV1 and VCT14 in addition to the Phu Tho provincial television channel. Similar events are planned in the northern and central provinces of Bac Ninh, Quang Ngai and Thanh Hoa throughout February 2014.

Also in Viet Nam, the ILO GMS TRIANGLE project published an article in a number of Vietnamese newspapers, entitled 'How will ASEAN regional integration affect labour migration in Viet Nam?' The article outlined how ASEAN economic integration and migration flows have focused primarily on skilled labour, through the introduction of Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs), and that this leaves the contribution of low- and semi-skilled workers in the shadows. The article addressed the issue that taken in isolation, the emerging ASEAN economic community does not sufficiently address social issues including safe migration, protection from exploitation, access to skills training, and welfare provisions for workers.