



Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance (DIILM) Feb 2016 – June 2021

INTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: BACKGROUND

It is estimated that almost one fifth of the population in Myanmar has moved once in their lifetime, with roughly equal numbers of men and women.¹ People migrate for better job opportunities and as a means to diversify their family income.² Internal migration has been steadily growing in Myanmar. Reflected by rising urbanization, and stimulated by development of industrial zones drawing workers. Until the Covid-19 pandemic, Myanmar had experienced relatively high economic growth, and poverty reduction. However, informal employment remains very high, at 84 per cent of the workforce, meaning all workers face significant decent work deficits.³

Despite the contribution internal migrants make to economic development in Myanmar, those who work in the informal sector continue to face challenges that constrain the potential benefits of migration; including, difficulties accessing social security due to the itinerant nature of internal migrants and the prevalence of work in the informal sector not covered by social security. While internal migrants working in sectors protected by the labour laws can join unions and have access to support mechanisms; those in the informal sector lack a safety net of established social connections and can be isolated and afraid to make complaints when facing exploitation. In addition, internal migrants may pay recruitment costs, as well as bear the cost of moving. Finding appropriate and safe accommodation in the destination area is often named as one of the most problematic issues of migrating internally. To promote decent work for internal migrants, the DIILM project has carried out the following activities.

Strengthening knowledge, awareness, capacity and coordination of national stakeholders

DIILM conducted a series of workshops and trainings for key stakeholders nationally and in States and Regions to identify key areas for policy development in relation to the governance of internal migration with particular emphasis on addressing abusive recruitment practices and developing recruitment policies, which provide for accessible, fair and safe migration for labour for internal migrants.

¹ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. (2016). *Thematic Report on Migration and Urbanization* (2016) of the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census.

² Enlightened Myanmar Research (EMR) and World Bank (WB). (2016). *Livelihoods and Social Change in Rural Myanmar*, Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring (QSEM) Series Round Five Report, commissioned by Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT).

³ 2017 Annual Labour Force Survey

- In 2017, the project conducted trainings on Internal Migration, attended by a total of 437 (278W:M159) state and regional government officials, local recruitment agencies, labour organizations and local CSOs in Patheingyi, Keng Tung, Yangon, Sittwe, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay. The trainings explored the scale, trend and impacts of internal migration in Myanmar and aimed to identify the gaps in policies and services concerning internal migrant workers.
- Building on these workshops, the project developed the concept of twinning places of origin and destination of internal migrants to strengthen coordination and linkages to support the mobility and safety of internal migrants. A workshop was held in Yangon as a place of destination and in Patheingyi, Ayeyarwaddy Region as a place of origin. Participants having better understanding of the economy and work sectors of the places of origin and destination could ameliorate forward planning for skills development of migrants and safer migration.
- The project then organized a twinning study tour to Yangon for Regional Parliamentarians, labour officials, Anti-trafficking police, labour organizations and CSOs from Ayeyarwaddy Region in early 2018. The study tour included visits to a garment factory, factory workers' dormitories, Mingladon Labour Exchange Office and Immigration Office and labour organizations and CSOs. The aim of the study tour was to create greater understanding of the issues facing internal migrants and to make the migration more beneficial for both areas of origin and destination.

Recommendations to improve outcomes of internal migration from workshops, consultations and the study tour⁴

Policies and services in areas of origin

- Labour Exchange Offices in places of origin could establish close links with Labour Exchange offices in areas of destination in Myanmar to provide detailed information about jobs availability, working and living conditions and to provide more employment services to returning migrants recognizing the skills learnt through migration.
- In addition, Labour Exchange Offices could help verify job opportunities advertised by recruitment agencies and brokers.
- Considering the extensive use of informal brokers by jobseekers within Myanmar, MOLIP in consultation with workers and employers organizations, could seek to regulate brokers in line with the Private Employment Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and accompanying Recommendation 188.
- The Donor community could develop programmes to assist returned migrants to start up small businesses.

Policies and services in areas of destination

- The government should hold consultations with relevant experts; employers and workers associations and affected populations during the planning phase of industrial zones. Plans should

⁴ These recommendations were developed prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.

include space and resources for local administrations in industrial zones to develop safe public areas for workers to relax on days off.

- Safe, appropriate and affordable housing should be developed in areas with high intakes of internal migrant workers. In line with the ILO Workers' Housing Recommendation (No.115)⁵
- Systematic orientation sessions for newly arrived internal migrants should be made available including information and training on relevant occupational health and safety issues and rights and responsibilities in the workplace; as well as life skills including, gender and diversity sensitivity, and use of social media.
- Free, safe shelter for emergency situations should be made available especially for women since men can stay at monasteries free.
- Local administrations should be enabled to increase public services (health, transportation, sanitation, rubbish and recycling collection, etc) to correspond to the increase of population in industrial zones.
- Employers should organize safe transportation to and from the worksite for night workers.
- To increase employee retention, employers can provide incentives, for example annual bonus; incremental salary increase, career promotion opportunities. Companies could also allow workers to buy shares in the company, thus providing workers not only with a salary but also with a share of the profits.
- MOLIP could continue the mobile units issuing Citizenship Scrutiny cards set up during the election campaign to reach out to internal migrants, ensuring them the necessary documentation to gain access to social security as well as all other rights of citizens.

Policies and services in areas of origin and destination

- The Social Security Board could consider simplifying the process to move social security from one employer to another or one place to another so as to ensure continuity of benefits for workers.
- MOLIP could issue regulations to prevent discriminatory job recruitment practices for example prohibiting job adverts favouring a certain sex, age group, religion etc.
- MOLIP in coordination with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement should support the promotion of employment opportunities for disabled workers including legal requirements for employers to adapt workplaces accordingly.
- MOLIP and the Ministry of Education could increase adult education and distance learning opportunities; and diversify vocational training to correspond to job markets for women and men.

Strengthening national level and regional level legislation and policies that address the major issues of internal migrants

The Decent Work Country Programme (2018 – 2021), developed through consultations with tripartite partners in 2017 and adopted in September 2018, provides a framework through which to advance decent work and has been designed to contribute to Priority 5 of the Economic Policy of the Union of Myanmar to create employment opportunities for all citizens

⁵ Article 2 recommends that the objective of the national housing policy should be to promote, within the framework of general housing policy, the construction of housing and related community facilities, with a view to ensuring that adequate and decent housing accommodation and a suitable living environment are made available to all workers and their families.

(4.5.5), and it also contributes to the vision of the emergence of capable and skilled new generations and achieving balanced economic development across states and regions.

Priority 3 of the DWCP envisages that social protection coverage for all is progressively extended especially for vulnerable workers and populations. It recognises the very limited access to social protection experienced by those in the informal economy and the need to put in place a social protection floor as well as active labour market policy (ALMP) for the most vulnerable sectors of the labour force. To contribute to Priority 3 of DWCP, the ILO provided technical assistance in the revision of the Social Security Law with a view to progressively including more internal migrants in the coverage.

To ensure that national labour legislation supports increased skills recognition for internal migrants, the ILO also provided technical assistance and written comments in the revision of Employment and Skills Development Law and supported tripartite constituents in reviewing the law on a tripartite basis through the Technical Working Group on Labour Law Reform.

Publications

To provide policy recommendations to support the expansion of social protection coverage to more internal migrant workers employed in informal work sectors in Myanmar through legislative reform, DIILM developed and published [Extending the scope of social security to internal migrants in the informal economy: An analysis for Myanmar](#) in consultation with tripartite partners and other stakeholders.

Future activities

- To address decent work deficits of internal migrants in particularly vulnerable work sectors, the project has identified policy needs for ensuring decent work and safe migration for domestic workers (see [Update No. 2: Making decent work a reality for domestic workers](#)) and Artisanal and Small-scale miners (ASM). To feed into policy recommendations and future interventions in these work sectors, the project is providing technical comments on the draft Domestic workers bill and is developing a paper on the situation of internal migrants in the jade mining ASM.
- Priority 2 of the DWCP focuses on strengthening the application of fundamental principles and rights at work through improved labour market governance; with the consolidation of freedom of association, building the capacity of social partners and civil society organisations strengthening social dialogue at all levels and more effective dispute settlement mechanisms. To contribute to this Priority, the Project will provide technical assistance and support for strengthening the national Labour Disputes Settlement mechanism to enable disputes to be settled more effectively and fairly through capacity building trainings for union leaders and workers, including internal migrant workers.

The Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance in Myanmar (DIILM) (2016 - 2021) project works with tripartite constituents and civil society organizations in Myanmar to strengthen the legislative and policy framework governing labour migration. The people of Myanmar have long used migration as a survival strategy; for safe refuge and for livelihood. Improving labour migration governance can ensure a migration experience that is more beneficial for women and men migrants, and better contributes to the development of Myanmar. DIILM and the tripartite partners work to 1) support development of key legislation and policy; 2) promote decent work for all migrants including in the informal sector; 3) increase the coverage and the quality of services offered to migrants and 4) strengthen policy coherence.

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