

Thailand (July - September 2019)

Key partners	Ministry of Labour Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT) State Enterprise Workers' Relations Confederations Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) HomeNet MAP Foundation
Target sites	Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Mae Sot
Focal point	Ms Kuanruthai Siripatthanakosol, National Programme Coordinator (NPC) kuanruthai@ilo.org

Background information

Over the last two decades, Thailand has become a key destination for migrant workers from neighbouring countries, and increasingly from further afield in ASEAN. As of August 2019, there were 2,877,144 registered migrant workers in Thailand (Ministry of Labour, 2019). Women and men migrant workers make a substantial contribution to Thailand's economic performance. According to a study by the ILO and OECD, migrants were responsible for 4.3 - 6.6 per cent of Thailand's GDP in 2010, while representing 4.7 per cent of the employed population (ILO/OECD, 2017). These migrants are predominately employed in low-skilled jobs, including fishing, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work, and other services. Thailand is also a country of origin for migrant workers. In 2018, 115,654 Thai nationals departed for work abroad (Department of Employment, 2018).

Despite transitioning from being a net sending to a net receiving country during the 1990s, Thailand's labour migration governance framework has remained largely ad hoc. In 2002 and 2003, the Royal Thai Government signed Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) on employment cooperation with the governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Myanmar, which established a channel for regular labour migration to Thailand from neighbouring countries. However, only a small proportion of migrants have up to recently entered Thailand through the MOU process due to the complicated, lengthy, and expensive procedures involved. In 2015 and 2016, Thailand revised the MOUs to broaden cooperation on labour issues, including skills development and social protection, and signed a new agreement with Viet Nam.

During 2016 to 2018, Thailand developed a more comprehensive legal framework to manage labour migration in parallel with the implementation of the MOU processes. While the MOU channel and the border employment scheme remained the two formal channels for migrant workers to enter Thailand, the government allowed irregular migrants already working in Thailand to come forward and formally register through the so-called regularization procedures. During the period, 1,187,803 migrant workers came forward and completed their regularization process. Overall, an increased number of migrant workers have been recruited through these formal channels from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar. The Government of Thailand has announced that with the new legal framework, low-skilled migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam will only be recruited through MoU channels or border employment. No further amnesty measures will be granted.

Thailand at a glance

 Population: 68.9 million

 Labour Force: 39.1 million

Migrants in Thailand

Total number of documented workers: 2,877,144

977,624 MOU migrants
(Women= 417,135/Men=560,489)

Myanmar = 493,744 (48%)
Cambodia= 311,290 (34%)
Lao PDR=172,481 (18%)
Vietnam = 109 (0.001%)

765,100 National Verification migrants
(Women= 339,656/Men= 425,444)

Myanmar= 652,507(85%)
Cambodia= 64,273 (9%)
Lao PDR= 48,320 (6%)

58,775 seasonal workers
(Women= 29,856/Men= 28,949)
Myanmar= 25,680 (9%)
Cambodia=33,095 (91%)

1,075,645 NV 2018 (Women
474,135/Men 601,179)
Myanmar = 713,941
Cambodia = 304,660
Lao PDR = 57,044).

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration,
Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour,
Thailand (August 2019)

Main programme activities: July - September 2019

On 31 July, programme implementing partner the Human Rights and Development Foundation organized a meeting on the development of **the Migrant Workers Assistance Centre handbook for referral mechanism procedures** in Mae Sot (selected as a pilot area). 10 participants (W5: M5) from the Department of Employment, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Social Security Office, Immigration Bureau, and the Thai Police attended. TRIANGLE in ASEAN will coordinate with the Ministry of Labour to finalize handbooks for all ten Migrant Workers Assistance Centres in Thailand.

On 9 September, programme partner the Migrant Working Group organized a **Policy Dialogue on the Implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers**. Migration issues including migrant workers' access to social protection and the fair recruitment agenda were discussed. (W36: M18)

From 10-11 September, TRIANGLE in ASEAN facilitated the **labour inspection training for labour inspectors** organized by the ILO Ship to Shore Project and the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labour. Topics covered included forced labour indicators and labour inspection for hard-to-reach sectors such as agriculture and domestic workers. (W46: M16).

On 13 September, TRIANGLE in ASEAN and the Ministry of Labour co-organized [the National Preparatory Meeting for the 12th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour \(AFML\)](#) to present progress made in implementing past AFML's recommendations and to discuss and finalize national recommendations for the upcoming 12th AFML. The meeting resulted in [14 recommendations](#). (W16: M15)

Upcoming activities and key dates (October - December 2019)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
October	Information-sharing on recruitment fees and other related costs	Bangkok	Government, employers	To share and discuss international definitions of recruitment and other related costs and to discuss a work plan toward the adoption of a secondary law constituting recruitment fees and other related costs.
November	Validation workshop of the findings of the gap analysis on the Thai legal framework vis-à-vis the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (C.189)	Bangkok	Tripartite partners, civil society, other stakeholders	To discuss findings and propose plans and activities for policy advocacy.
November	Workshop to validate the findings of the research on employment and working conditions in Thailand's agricultural sectors	Bangkok	Tripartite partners, CSOs, other stakeholders	To present research findings and discuss relevant activities.
December	Project Advisory Committee Meeting	Bangkok	Project Advisory Committee and observers	To present progress of 2019 work plan and to discuss and endorse 2020 work plan.
December	International Migrants Day (IMD)	Bangkok	Tripartite partners, civil society, other stakeholders	To celebrate IMD and to launch the joint ILO/UN Women publication on public attitude towards women and men migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

Media Coverage

Date	Title	Media source
5 September	Thai factory probed by Starbucks	Bangkok Post
9 September	Thailand to promote Migrant Worker's Rights under the ASEAN Consensus	Matichon
12 September	Thailand orders garment factories to compensate workers after illegal wages expose	Thomson Reuters Foundation
13 September	MOL to promote the protection of migrant workers	Ministry of Labour

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