

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note



### ASEAN (April - June 2019)

**Key partners** ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM)  
ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC)  
ASEAN Confederation of Employees (ACE)

**Focal point** Anna Engblom, Senior Programme Manager,  
[engblom@ilo.org](mailto:engblom@ilo.org), +66 2 288 2245

## Background information

Labour migration is an established feature of ASEAN labour markets. Intra-ASEAN migration is also rising, with 6.9 million intra-regional migrants accounting for two-thirds of the region's total international migrant stock (UN DESA, 2017). Within ASEAN, the Philippines, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR are net-sending countries while Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei Darussalam are net-receiving countries.

The ASEAN Community has established far-reaching initiatives towards regional integration built around three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. ASEAN leaders have signed two instruments to establish a regional framework for cooperation on labour migration, namely the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 2007 (Cebu Declaration) and the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 2017. The key ASEAN body leading the implementation of these instruments is the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW). A range of regional partners are involved in migration governance, including the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE), ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC) and the Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers (TFAMW).

Despite steps taken to ensure the rights of migrant workers in ASEAN, migrant workers are still subject to exploitative conditions including underpayment, unsafe workplaces, debt bondage, and human trafficking. Prior to migration, migrant workers are vulnerable to recruitment related abuses due to governance gaps and their relatively weak bargaining position. During employment, many migrants work in sectors with inadequate labour protection and legislative enforcement. Domestic workers in private households and migrants working in the fishing industry, men and women in agriculture and construction, fill jobs unattractive to nationals and are among the least protected and lowest paid.

The poor working conditions that migrant workers face are often further compounded for women migrant workers, where gender disparities in the labour market remain prevalent. Women migrant workers often have little choice but to migrate irregularly, in part due to government bans and restrictions on women's mobility in the region. This often leads to women migrant workers being employed in occupations that remain outside the legal protection mechanisms. It is likely that the number of women migrant workers is underestimated and that women migrant workers may be more susceptible to violation of their rights, to unfair and even harmful practices and abuse.

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

### ASEAN at a glance

 Population: ≈ 634 million

 Labour Force: ≈ 325 million

Sources: ASEANstats, 2016; ILOSTAT, 2017.

### Intra ASEAN migration

Total: 6.9 Million

Sources: UNDESA, 2017.

### Main countries of origin for intra-regional migration

Myanmar: 2.2 million

Indonesia: 1.3 million

Malaysia: 1.2 million

Lao PDR: 0.9 million

Cambodia: 0.7 million

Sources: UNDESA, 2017.

### Main programme activities: April – June 2019

On 4 to 5 April, TRIANGLE in ASEAN, in close collaboration with the Bureau for Workers' Activities and the Bureau for Employers' Activities, supported the [“Second Joint Dialogue between the ASEAN Trade Union Council \(ATUC\) and the ASEAN Confederation of Employers \(ACE\)”](#) on labour migration in Manila, the Philippines (W11:M23). The Joint Dialogue discussed labour mobility, mutual recognition of skills, social protection for migrant workers, ethical and fair recruitment of migrant workers, and the protection of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle. The meeting also discussed the 2017 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant and adopted a [joint statement](#) at the end of the meeting, calling for the involvement of ATUC and ACE in the implementation of the Consensus and its Action Plan.

The [“Workshop on strengthening the capacity of labour officials in the prevention and investigation of trafficking in persons and improving coordination with criminal law enforcers in ASEAN”](#) (W37: M42) took place in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR on 27 to 28 May. This workshop was an activity under the ACMW Work Plan 2016-2020 and the ASEAN cross-sectoral Bohol TIP Work Plan 2017-2020. The workshop resulted in adoption of **Proposed Actions on improving cooperation between labour inspectors, recruitment agency regulators and anti-trafficking police**, with concrete recommendations on sharing of information, data and evidence; coordinating investigation actions; application of concurrent sanctions; facilitating referrals; coordinating strategic planning; mandating more effective sanctions; and carrying out ASEAN studies on inter-agency platforms and legal

mandates, procedures and sanction regimes of labour inspectors, recruitment agency regulators and anti-trafficking police.

On 30 to 31 May and 1 June, TRIANGLE in ASEAN supported the participation of a delegate from Malaysia to the **Workshop on SDG indicator 10.7.1 Measuring recruitment costs** in Istanbul, Turkey, organized by the ILO and the World Bank. This is part of TRIANGLE in ASEAN's contribution to the development of the global methodology for measuring SDG indicator 10.7.1: Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination, under the custodianship of the ILO and the World Bank.

TRIANGLE in ASEAN, in partnership with Philippines-based NGO Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, hosted a three-part series **“Save Smart Training of Trainers: Gender-Responsive Financial Literacy Training for Migrant Workers and their Families.”** The trainings took place in May and June in Vientiane, Lao PDR (W13: M6), Mandalay, Myanmar (W17: M2), and Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

(W13: M14). The trainings provided Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) staff and partners with an overview of setting migration and financial goals, borrowing and getting out of debt, saving and investing, sending remittances, managing an income, and managing finances upon returning home. Given women and girls generally have less access to migration and financial information, this training series specifically addressed financial education for women and girls. The trainings also served to test and validate the **Save Smart: Financial education training manual** and complementary **Financial planner** developed by TRIANGLE in ASEAN and Atikha. As a training of trainers, the participants now have the skills and knowledge to share the training in their own MRCs and have devised plans of action to bring financial literacy into their MRCs.

On 16 June, TRIANGLE in ASEAN drafted the OpEd [An aging Asia increases the demand for domestic workers. But what about their rights?](#) as the main regional activity to recognize the Domestic Worker's Day. The OpEd was picked up by several larger news outlets including [South China Morning Post](#), [The Daily Star \(Bangladesh\)](#), [The Philippine Star](#) (front page news), and [Singapore Straits](#).

ATUC, through its Implementation Agreement with TRIANGLE in ASEAN, is also conducting **national-level workshops on the priorities of AFML recommendations and ATUC inter-union agreements on migrant workers**. Workshops include advocating for migrant workers' rights, portability of social protection, portability of trade union membership and ratification of C.189, training affiliates on the ATIS 2.0 database of migrant workers' complaints, and supporting the formalization of Youth and Women's Committees. Focal points, youth, and women representatives in Indonesia and Myanmar were trained this year on implementing the ATUC action plan and priorities, and follow-up activities by the trained representatives have already taken place, including advocacy, education and awareness activities. Planning is underway for similar trainings in Malaysia and Cambodia. Representatives in Thailand completed a baseline survey on youth and women in trade unions.

Promotion of the [SaverAsia portal](#) has been integrated as part of the SaveSmart financial literacy training programme. The Save Smart Training of Trainers workshops enabled MRC staff and partners to guide their migrant worker clients in using SaverAsia portal. Discussions on the design and technology options for the **SaverAsia app** are ongoing between TRIANGLE in ASEAN and Developing Markets Associates (DMA), and the app is expected to be launched in late 2019.

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

### Upcoming activities and key dates (July - September 2019)

Date	Event	Location	Partners	Purpose
July-September 2019	AFML national tripartite preparatory workshops	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam	Governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations, civil society	The national preparatory meetings allow stakeholders to take stock of progress implementing recommendations of previous AFMLs, and discuss 12 <sup>th</sup> AFML theme and sub-themes and prepare recommendations for AFML delegates.
27-28 August 2019	Workshop on Reintegration Programmes for Returning Migrant Workers	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Government of Indonesia; ASEAN Secretariat; ACMW Focal Points	This workshop is an activity under the ACMW Work Plan 2016-2020, led by Indonesia. It will enable knowledge-sharing and collaboration on return and reintegration good practices for the ASEAN region, promote cooperation on bilateral and regional levels, and facilitate the development of the ASEAN Guidelines on Effective Return and Reintegration.
27-28 August 2019	5th Technical Meeting of Focal Specialists on International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) in ASEAN	Bangkok, Thailand	AMS focal point specialists on labour migration and statistics; ASEAN Secretariat Statistics Division	The meeting will brief focal specialists on the new ILMS data collection templates issued by ILOSTAT, and validate the draft Analytical report on the ILMS database in ASEAN prepared by TRIANGLE in ASEAN.
24 September 2019	AFML regional employers' organizations, workers' organizations, and CSO preparatory meetings	Bangkok, Thailand	Regional employers' organizations, workers' organizations, CSOs	These three meetings, for employers' organizations, workers' organizations, and CSOs respectively, allow regional representatives to take stock of progress implementing recommendations of previous AFMLs, and discuss and prepare recommendations for 12 <sup>th</sup> AFML theme and sub-themes.

## TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note

25-26 September 2019	ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML)	Bangkok, Thailand	Government of Thailand; ASEAN Secretariat; AMS governments; employers' organizations; workers' organizations	Annual tripartite forum to discuss, share experiences, and build consensus on the protection of migrant workers' issues under this year's theme on the future of work and migration; includes adoption of recommendations.
27 September 2019	Regional Programme Advisory Committee (RPAC) meeting	Bangkok, Thailand	TRIANGLE in ASEAN advisory committee	Meeting to gather technical and strategic guidance for the programme and ensure alignment with ASEAN priorities and regional frameworks.

### Media coverage

Date	Title	Media source
14 June	<a href="#">Aging Asia to need more domestic helpers</a>	The Philippine Star (OpEd written by TRIANGLE in ASEAN)
16 June	<a href="#">Ageing Hong Kong needs more help. Its helpers need more rights</a>	South China Morning Post (OpEd written by TRIANGLE in ASEAN)
16 June	<a href="#">A rapidly ageing Asia means a rapidly growing need for domestic workers, but what about their rights?</a>	The Daily Star Bangladesh (OpEd written by TRIANGLE in ASEAN)
16 June	<a href="#">Rapidly Aging Asia Needs More Domestic Workers; What About Their Rights?</a>	Scitech & Digital News (OpEd written by TRIANGLE in ASEAN)
16 June	<a href="#">More domestic workers needed, but do more to protect their rights</a>	Singapore Straits Times (OpEd written by TRIANGLE in ASEAN)

**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**).