

# ▶ TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note Cambodia



## October – December 2023

### Key developments

During this quarter, Thailand's Ministry of Labour issued two announcements granting special permissions to Cambodian, Myanmar, Lao and Vietnamese migrant workers. The first announcement in mid-November, which took effect retrospectively from 1 October, gives migrant workers from the four countries, whose employers had undertaken the first step to put their names on a registration list, the right to continue to live and work until 30 September 2024. The second announcement, effective as of 14 November 2023, concerns migrant workers who entered under the Memorandum of Agreement, and whose work permits were expiring on 31 December 2023, the right to continue to work in Thailand until 30 April 2024, with the possibility to extend their stay in Thailand until April 2025.

The [National Policy on Migrants' Health and its accompanying Strategic Plan for 2022-2030](#) were launched on 4 December. The Policy will contribute to ensuring that universal health coverage is extended to all, including migrant workers. For the last two years, TRIANGLE has been engaged with IOM and the Ministry of Health in consultations, providing technical inputs and reviews to the Policy and Strategic Plan.



The Cambodian **Global Compact on Migration (GCM) National Implementation Plan (NIP) for 2023–2024** is nearing finalization. The NIP takes a whole-of-society approach to labour migration governance. Together with the UN Migration Network in Cambodia, TRIANGLE provided technical inputs to the NIP at a Technical Consultative Meeting on 1 November, co-hosted by the Cambodian Government's National Committee for Counter-Trafficking (NCCT) and IOM. NCCT accepted TRIANGLE's inputs to the revision, which related to missing elements around disability inclusion, the principle of non-refoulement, social protection, migration data and the inclusion of workers' and employers' organizations. The 54 senior and technical tripartite plus officials (W:17; M:37) discussed the role of leading and coordinating government agencies, inter-agency collaboration and national resource allocation for a sustainable NIP implementation. The NCCT agreed to consolidate the inputs provided and submit the NIP for final endorsement by the Deputy Prime Minister during the first quarter of 2024.

Similarly, a new **5-year National Strategic Plan to Counter Human Trafficking 2024–2028** is also nearing completion. On 13 November, TRIANGLE joined the National Committee for Counter-Trafficking stakeholder consultation on drafting the Plan. The consultation focused on strategic priorities for Cambodia, including strengthening public and private sector partnerships and collaboration to develop, amend and implement laws, policies, and legal procedures to protect rights of trafficked persons and migrant workers. ILO posited that labour migration links to climate change, data, digitalization,

gender, and disability inclusion be incorporated actions in the draft plan and suggested inclusion of workers' and employers' organizations.

## Main programme activities



A woman trainee undergoing skills training and Recognition of Prior Learning at the Battambang Institute of Technology on 12 October © ILO

During the first and second week of October, **46 migrant returnees** who had worked in Thailand's construction sector (W:6; M:40) underwent an assessment of their skills, qualifications and experience. TRIANGLE, with other ILO projects, supported the **Recognition of Prior Learning** initiative implemented by the Battambang Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training in collaboration with Battambang Institute of Technology, Directorate General for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DGTVET) and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT).

On 25-26 October, ILO partnered with the **National Trade Union Council (NTUC)** to hold a two-day training workshop for 45 NTUC members (W:10; M:35), representing various trade unions throughout Cambodia. Held in in Kampong Cham, the training built the capacity of members on labour rights for women, youth and migrant workers, including international labour standards, labour migration governance, migrant membership in unions, complaint handling and freedom of association and collective bargaining. It will improve the collaboration between ILO and NTUC to implement the Cambodia Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP, see below for more information). Participants were able to discuss key challenges faced by migrants and agreed on the next steps for actions by unions. The TRIANGLE-supported Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC) Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) shared their experiences, while the National Union Alliance Chamber of Cambodia (NACC) presented their successes handling legal cases for migrants and accessibility to social security benefits for Cambodian returnees.

On 21 November, the Association of Cambodia Recruitment Agencies (ACRA), with support from TRIANGLE, held a **'writeshop' style meeting between the [Code of Conduct \(COC\) Assessment Committee](#) and ten private recruitment agencies** who agreed to pilot the COC assessment. This meeting was a space for the agencies to start filling in the self-assessment, clarify meaning of each checklist indicator and ask for help if needed, particularly related to developing or reviewing their HR policies and internal regulation in order comply with the checklist requirements. The self-assessment checklists will be completed by end of January 2024.

On 22 November, TRIANGLE's partner **Gender and Development for Cambodia**, held a series of village gatherings **with 21 women migrant group members** in communities of Bar Phnom district, Prey Veng province, to plan their **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign**. Women migrant group members are empowered to lead the process and communicate with local duty bearers and supporters. They agreed on action messages to mobilize community participation in organizing events. Women's group representatives engaged in the monthly local community meeting organized by the Bar Phnom Commune Council, speaking with 67 participants (W:23; M:44). Women's group members were able to present their progress, ongoing work and challenges. They requested greater support and collaboration from all local stakeholders for capacity building of local government officials, as well as more outreach and information dissemination to migrants.

On 30 November, TRIANGLE's partners, **National Employment Agency and the MRC in Kampot province, worked with the Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training (PDOLVT) to hold a one-day career fair**, which included migration outreach in Chhuk District for 357 local residents and authorities. The event aimed to give community members access to local employment opportunities, as well as pre-migration counselling on working conditions abroad. The career fair effectively facilitated potential workers, prospective migrants and employers to direct hire and interview workers including migrant returnees who have skills in construction, industry, manufacturing and agriculture for employment by local firms in Kampot and Kampong Som province nearby Kampot.

On 12 December, TRIANGLE partnered with MOLVT to hold the **Annual Cambodian Programme Advisory Committee (PAC)** with tripartite-plus implementing partners and stakeholders from national and sub-national levels. Partners in Cambodia had the opportunity to review activities and results from 2023 and to provide inputs and validate the proposed workplan for 2024. The proposed workplan was endorsed in principle by the PAC and is now subject to final endorsement from the Labour Minister. 43 partners and stakeholders (W:10, M:33) attended the meeting.

On 12-13 December, **three migrant women's group meetings** were organized in communities of Bar Phnom district, Prey Veng province by TRIANGLE's partner Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC). These were part of GBV campaign activities to identify successes and challenges in promoting solidarity among women through community events. A total of 230 community members (W:132; M:98) attended the events to learn about empowerment of women and girls, ways to amplify their collective voice and how to take action to stop all forms of GBV and discrimination against women and girls. In the meetings, 56 women participated and shared their learning, actions and planning for next steps.

**A policy dialogue on Enhancing Access to the Complaint Receiving Mechanism for All Migrant Workers** was organized by TRIANGLE partner Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW) on 18 December. It aimed to increase awareness to enable effective operation and accessibility of the Complaint Mechanism; to identify the regulatory and administrative hurdles that impair migrant workers' access justice and remedy; and to develop advocacy action points to increase access to justice for migrant workers, especially those in irregular situations. The mechanisms for non-judicial proceedings for all under the Ministry of Justice and the Complaint Mechanism for Migrant Workers are identified as an alternative and effective mechanism for access to justice and compensation.

On 20 December, the Kampong Cham Department of Labour and Vocational Training, together with TRIANGLE, organized a **one-day training on labour migration and dispute resolution for migrant workers** with 47 government and non-government partitioners (M: 33, W:14). The training aimed to enhance participants' understanding of labour migration governance frameworks, International Labour Standards, labour rights, and fair labour migration. The participants will apply the learning from this training in their work to support and assist migrant workers.



National International Migrants' Day (IMD) Celebration on 22 December 2023. © ILO

On 22 December TRIANGLE co-organized the **National International Migrants' Day (IMD) Celebration** themed "Enhancing Regular Pathways for Labour Migration through Governance, Skills Development and Certification for Cambodian Migrant Workers". The event promoted safe and regular migration; honoured the dedication and significant contributions of migrant workers to their families, communities and society; highlighted the challenges migrant workers face; and advocated for a better protection of the rights of migrant workers. TRIANGLE partnered with IOM, MOLVT and the ILO Ship to Shore Rights Southeast Asia programme to organize the event in Phnom Penh. The IMD celebration was presided over by

H.E Heng Sour, Minister of Labour and Vocational Training. It was attended by 223 participants from government-, and non-government agencies, employers’ and workers’ organizations, civil society, former migrants and local stakeholders. Two former migrant workers, one woman and one man, returning from Thailand and Japan also spoke at the event.

On 28-29 December, the TRIANGLE Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) in Battambang carried out **migration outreach events and provided counselling and information sharing for one hundred prospective migrant workers and authorities** (M:65, W:45) in the Daung International Border Check Point area. The events were organized to reach young prospective migrants and their families on the move to effectively share information on labour migration. The Battambang MRC successfully conducted these events in collaboration with local government authorities and the Immigration Police Office. The MRC provided migration tips, explained migration regulations and procedures, including necessary valid travel documents, and shared information about working condition and benefits in Thailand.

During the second half of 2023, CLC has included a drive to unionize workers through their MRC work, with 139 new members joining the union. CLC has also assisted 45 complainants (M:25, W:20) with legal aid, cases, of delayed recruitment and of non-deployment. Similarly, in 2023 NACC provided legal aid to help resolve 110 migrant workers’ grievances (W:65; M:35, including LGBT: 10, and persons with disabilities: 2). **US\$ 69,679 was awarded to migrant workers in financial compensation in these cases.** In addition, NACC provided other support services (counselling, training, information or outreach) to 671 migrant workers and their families (W: 365; M:306, including 29 LGBTQIA+ migrants and 5 migrants with disabilities). TRIANGLE has been supporting the CLC MRC in Prey Veng Province since 2016.

► **Upcoming activities and key dates (January – March 2024)**

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
15 January	Second consultation on the ASEAN Guidelines on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers	Siem Reap, Cambodia	Government of Cambodia (host), social security organizations, ministries of labour, employers’, workers’ and civil society organizations, ASEAN Secretariat, International Social Security Association	Review and finalize the text of ASEAN Guidelines on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers.
16-18 January	Training in the Negotiation of Social Security Agreements	Siem Reap, Cambodia	Government of Cambodia (host), social security organizations, ministries of labour, employers’, workers’ and civil society organizations, ASEAN Secretariat, International Social Security Association	Build capacity of ASEAN Member States to negotiate social security agreements to put the ASEAN Guidelines into practice.
31 January – 10 February (tbc)	ACRA meeting with ten recruitment agencies participating in the COC Assessment Pilot	Phnom Penh	COC Committee	To assess the checklist completion and COC compliance of ten pilot recruitment agencies for feedback, rating and improvement of COC implementation.

January - February (tbc)	Tripartite-plus stakeholder consultations on new Policy on Labour Migration (LMP)	Phnom Penh	MOLVT, ACRA, MAC, trade unions, civil society, UN agencies, DFAT, GAC	To review the zero draft policy and provide input.
28-29 March (tbc)	Capacity development for MRCs and implementing partners on gender equality and disability inclusion	Phnom Penh	MOLVT, PDOLVTs, MRCs, trade unions social partners	To enhance understanding and practices of MRC and implementing partners on TRIANGLE's Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Strategy.

► Media Coverage

Date	Title	Media source
5 October	Stricter checks: Governors told to beef up fight against cross-border crimes	Khmer Times
16 November	Migrant workers given extensions to stay in Thailand	Khmer Times
20 November	Minister of Labour recommends 10 points as a basis for discussing decent work in Cambodia in 2024-2028	Khmer Times
22 November	Unions told not to drag workers into illegal activities	Khmer Times
2 December	Promised (a short video documentary for education on migration)	YouTube
5 December	National policy and national strategic plan for migrant health 2022-2030 launched	Khmer Times
6 December	Labour officials unite to boost migrant worker protection	Phnom Penh Post
8 December	UK and allies' sanction human rights abusers	UK Government
13 December	Cambodia remains committed to UN Human Rights mechanisms	Khmer Times
18 December	Poipet rehabilitation centre aims to aid migrant workers	Phnom Penh Post
19 December	Ministry vows betterment of Cambodians working abroad	Khmer Times
20 December	Cambodian passports to be issued in Thailand, Malaysia, Japan next year	Khmer Times

## Cambodia at a glance

Population: 17.1 million Labour

Force: 9.42 million Source:

ILOSTAT, 2023

## Migrants in Thailand

MoU migrant workers = 149,271 (Women = 66,712 / Men = 82,559)

Section 64 (Border employment) migrant workers = 13,035 (Women = 5,992 / Men = 7,043)

216,942 migrant workers under the Cabinet Resolution on 7 February 2023 (amnesty programme) (Women = 97,323/ Men = 119,619)

Source: Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand (October 2023).

The 7 February 2023 Cabinet Resolution extends the deadline for migrant workers who have obtained a work permit, which expires on 13 February 2023 and have not completed visa renewal. The new deadline was 15 May 2023. The latest 8 August 2023 Cabinet Resolution is reflected in these figures.

## Migrant workers in other destinations

Japan: 20,561 migrant workers (Women=9,587 / Men=19,974)

Republic of Korea: 46,199 migrant workers (Women= 10,727/ Men=35,472)

Source: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (July 2023), Cambodian Embassy in Japan (August 2023)

TRIANGLE in ASEAN delivers assistance directly to migrant workers and their communities through eight Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) in Cambodia. These MRCs are managed in partnership with government institutions, trade unions and civil society organizations and, in each location, linked with an additional MRC in the local Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training. The MRCs are based in Battambang (with the National Employment Agency), Kampong Cham (with Phnom Srey Organization for Development), Kampot (with the National Employment Agency), and in Prey Veng (with Cambodian Labour Confederation). Two partners provide MRC-like services: Legal Services for Children and Women, Prey Veng and Phnom Penh Gender and Development for Cambodia.

Since the start of the programme until the end of 2022, TRIANGLE in ASEAN reached 46,274 migrant workers (53 per cent women) through Cambodian MRCs.

## Background information

Cambodia is a major country of origin for migrants, with over 1,100,000 citizens estimated abroad in 2020, 54 per cent of whom are women (UNDESA). In 2020, however, only 41 per cent of documented migrants, who registered with the Government to go abroad, were women (ILOSTAT). This lower percentage of women among documented outbound migrants suggests that there are a number of Cambodian women abroad who are either not working and/or who are migrating for work irregularly at a higher rate than men. Most Cambodian migrant workers seek work abroad due to a lack of domestic employment opportunities, high indebtedness and significant wage differentials. The primary destination for Cambodian migrant workers is Thailand, with workers commonly working in fishing, agriculture, livestock, construction, manufacturing or service sectors, including domestic work.

Only a small proportion of these workers use regular channels to migrate due to the high cost, considerable time investment and administrative complexities involved. According to a survey conducted by the ILO and IOM, less than a third of Cambodian migrants use regular channels to migrate, with the majority relying on social networks and unlicensed brokers (53 per cent) to go abroad (ILO and IOM, 2017).

After Thailand, the Republic of Korea receives the second-highest number of documented Cambodians leaving the country for work. Japan is the third most popular destination for regular Cambodian migrant workers, and migration is currently governed by a 2017 Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) signed by Japan and Cambodia, with a follow-on specific Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2018 in the prefecture of Ehime. Two new MoUs were signed in March 2023 with Malaysia for general workers and for domestic workers, with weaker protections for domestic workers, such as no right to minimum wage for domestic workers. Given the ILO's finding [high rates of forced labour](#) among domestic workers in Malaysia, heightened rights protections are critical. MoUs with the governments of Kuwait and Qatar were signed in 2009 and 2011, but no Cambodian migrant workers have been sent through these channels. A bilateral agreement on the deployment of domestic workers was also signed with Saudi Arabia in 2016. However, migration for domestic work continues to be contentious, with reports of abuse of domestic workers recorded in destinations where Cambodian domestic workers are employed.

The Cambodian Labour Migration Policy and Action Plan (2019-2023) outlines the Government's commitment to leveraging the benefits of labour migration for the country's long-term development. The policy is unique within South- East Asia in applying a holistic and multi-ministerial approach to labour migration governance.

- Key partners**
- Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT)
  - Provincial Departments of Labour and Vocational Training (PDOLVT), Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Battambang, and Kampot
  - Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC)
  - National Employment Agency (NEA)
  - Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW)
  - Phnom Srey Organization for Development (PSOD)
  - Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
  - National Union Alliance Chamber of Cambodia (NACC)
  - Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA)
  - Battambang Institute of Technology (BIT)
- Target sites**
- Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Battambang, Phnom Penh, and Kampot
- Focal point**
- Veth Vorn, National Programme Coordinator, [vorn@ilo.org](mailto:vorn@ilo.org)

**TRIANGLE in ASEAN** extends the cooperation between the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, the **Australian Government 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 realized 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**).



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