

## Quarterly Briefing Note

### GMS TRIANGLE Project: Lao PDR



International  
Labour  
Organization

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<b>Duration:</b>	June 2010 – June 2015
<b>Key Partners:</b>	Department of Employment and Skills Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao Women's Union (LWU), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
<b>Target Sites:</b>	Champassak, Savannakhet and Xaiyaboury
<b>Focal Point:</b>	Mr Kolakot Venevankham, National Project Coordinator (NPC) for Lao People's Democratic Republic, <a href="mailto:kolakot@ilo.org">kolakot@ilo.org</a> , +(856)21-251745

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#### Background Information

Although economic growth and structural transformation in Lao People's Democratic Republic has continued at a rapid pace, the transition out of agricultural employment has remained relatively slow, particularly given its limited contribution to GDP. Concurrently, the more rapidly growing sectors of the economy have not created enough jobs to make a considerable impact on the structure of employment. As a result, labour migration continues to represent an important livelihood option for the Lao workforce. A survey in 2006 found that approximately seven per cent of the population was migratory, with 74 per cent of migrant workers between the ages of 18-35.

The primary destination country is Thailand due to the higher wages on offer, as well as the cultural and linguistic similarities between the two countries. Over the last few years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of workers migrating for work regularly through the MOU between Lao PDR and Thailand. As of 2013, thousands of workers had migrated to Thailand legally under the terms of the agreement, with Champassak the largest sending province. In 2013 there was an over three-fold increase in the number of male migrant workers going abroad through legal channels, creating a notable gender disparity. However, recruitment agencies in Lao PDR estimate that as many as 40 per cent of regular migrants do not complete the full 24-month term of their contracts with registered employers.

**Population:** 6.4 million

**Labour Force:** 3.1 million

#### Migration to Thailand

- **Regular migrants entering through the MOU (October 2014):** 21,994
- **Migrants completed Nationality Verification (October 2014):** 33,013

Source: Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand 2014

A far greater number of migrants use irregular channels to find employment in Thailand. After the establishment of One Stop Service Centres, from June-October 2014, 213,689 workers from Lao PDR have registered in Thailand, compared to just 21,994 workers having migrated from Lao PDR through the MOU procedure over the past several years. The vast majority of migrants rely on information and support from friends and family members during the migration process and choose irregular channels because they are considered less complicated, faster, and cheaper than migrating through the MOU process. The protection of the rights of migrant workers and the facilitation of safe migration is an increasing priority for the Government of Lao PDR, with an expanded focus on in- and out-bound migration in the revised Law on Labour, which was promulgated in October 2014.

**Key Achievements in the Previous Quarter (October – December 2014)**

- Two refresher training workshops on the use of the Operations Manual on the Protection and the Management of Migrant Workers were held in Luang Prabang and Khammouane provinces on 20-21 November and 24-25 November respectively. Eight-five participants (14W: 71M) attended both workshops, with representatives from the three provincial departments. (MOLSW, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Public Security). The workshops expanded the number of officials trained in the use of the manual, and provided a forum for increased coordination at the provincial level among implementing officials. Participants exchanged ideas about challenges and opportunities in managing outbound and inbound labour migration, and the workshops were concluded with a discussion of future steps for continued cooperation and learning.
- The LWU finalized and printed 2,000 booklets with safe migration tips for women migrant workers and potential women migrant workers. The booklets provide information on the rights of women migrating from Lao PDR to Thailand for work, including specific information on the rights of domestic workers. The materials are being sent to provincial LWU officers to support the dissemination of safe migration messages to women and girls in target communities across Khammouane, Champassack and Savannakhet provinces.
- To mark International Migrants Day, GMS TRIANGLE supported the screening of the film *My Name is Saray* on Lao National TV. The film, with an introduction by a media expert on the significance of the film's safe migration message, was played four times on state television, reaching a national audience. The ILO Regional Director's opinion piece on fair migration was published in English and Lao print media, including the Vientiane Times, Vientiane Mai, and Passasonh newspapers.
- On International Migrants Day, MOLSW organized a meeting of over 400 participants. In attendance were officials from ministries concerned with migration issues, representatives from workers' and employer's organizations, staff from UN agencies and NGOs, as well as students, teachers and members of the public from around Vientiane capital. The Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Welfare and the ILO National Coordinator delivered speeches on the significance of International Migrants Day, and both speakers raised the need for greater awareness of the right of safe migration.
- The project supported MOLSW in holding the third meeting of the Network on Labour Migration, on 19 December in Vientiane capital. Thirty-two participants (24M: 8W) from Government, trade unions, employers' groups, recruitment agencies and international organizations met to discuss trends and policy developments in Lao PDR. With MOLSW chairing, labour migration stakeholders provided updates on activities and on trends and challenges for labour migration. Recommendations by the network included appointing a focal point for migration at the provincial level, and strategies on reducing the cost of migration through registered recruitment agencies.

**Main Activities in the Next Quarter (January - March 2015)**

- A training-of-trainers workshop on the Pre-Departure Training Curriculum (PDTTC) for workers migrating from Lao PDR to Thailand will be held from 14-16 January 2015. The Facilitators' and Participants' volumes of the manual will be printed for broad dissemination prior to the workshop.
- A Research Consultant and Data Collector will be appointed to undertake joint UN-ACT/ILO research into recruitment agency practices in January 2015.
- The Project Advisory Committee meeting for 2014 will be held in the first quarter.
- A sustainability workshop for staff from LFTU and MOLSW-run MRCs and Job Centre will be held in February 2015.
- The fourth network meeting on migration will be held in March 2015.