

Myanmar (July – September 2016)

Key partners Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES)
 Labour Exchange Offices (LEOs) (Mandalay, Kyaukse, Myingyan, Meiktila, Dawei)
 Myanmar Overseas Employers Agencies Federation (MOEAF)
 Network of Labour Organisations and CSOs, Myanmar

Target sites Yangon, Mandalay, Dawei, Kyaing Tung

Background information

Labour migration has long been a livelihood strategy for people of Myanmar; through migrating internally and internationally, the families and home communities of migrants have been able to survive periods of severe hardship and economic stagnation. From a recent study conducted by the ILO, the prime motivation for migrants departing from Myanmar was the promise of higher wages (as reported by 50 per cent of respondents) but unemployment and underemployment were also important considerations. Remittances sent home from migrants have provided the basic necessities for families, especially food, water, clothing and accommodation. Most migrants have had to migrate spontaneously, not having the luxury of time or savings to invest in migration plans. This has resulted in migrants crossing borders without documents, being picked up by brokers at the border and sometimes taken into work that they had not chosen, in conditions that are often substandard and being tied to the employer through their lack of legal status and fear of arrest.

As Myanmar emerges from its isolated position and a prolonged period with little investment or dynamism in the economy, new jobs are now becoming available both within the country and abroad. Old systems of job matching which included brokers, smugglers, returned migrants and local leaders may no longer be able to navigate the formal procedures to legal migration and are being superseded by recruitment agencies. The Government reported to the ILO Fair Migration General Survey concerning the migrant workers instruments (February 2016) that approximately 1.9 million Myanmar workers had been 'legally dispatched' to 16 foreign countries. In this new system, potential migrants often do not know who to trust and how to benefit from these new structures, and their lack of know-how leaves them once again vulnerable to extortionate fees and corruption.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) is mandated to manage migrant worker issues and regulate the 224 licensed overseas employment agencies, 67 of which recruit workers for Thailand.

According to the World Bank's Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, Myanmar migrants remitted US\$3.5 billion to Myanmar in 2015, which was 4.8 per cent of the country's GDP. Western Union's inbound service showed most transfers originated in Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, the US, and Pakistan.

Myanmar at a glance

 Population: 51 million

 Labour Force: 33.9 million

Migration from Myanmar

Main countries of destination

Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Korea, UAE, Qatar, Japan, Jordan.

Number of overseas migrants in Population Census (2014)

2,021,910 (W788,545:M1,233,365)

Memoranda of Understanding concluded

Thailand, Republic of Korea

Migration to Thailand

168,129 (W62,886:M105,243)
MOU migrant workers (July 2016)

872,036 (W375, 205:M496,831)
migrant workers from Nationality Verification process (July 2016)

454,268 extended during the April 2015 registration at One Stop Service Centre (436,154 workers: 18,114 dependents) and 30,479 newly registered fishers

(No gender disaggregation available)

659,730 insured by MOPH (October 2015)

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand.

Main activities (July - September 2016)

- The Rakhine Women's Union (RWU) organised the second women-only training from 13 - 15 September on the topics of labour migration and trafficking, violence against women and related national protection law for women, women's rights, safe migration and labour rights. It was attended by 28 women community leaders, return migrants and youth activists in Sittwe, Rakhine State. The Northern Shan State Baptist Convention, and Women's Department organized two similar trainings on 15 July 2016 and 12 August 2016 with 47 women religious leaders, community leaders, return migrants workers and women leaders from different townships of Northern Shan State.
- The National Project Coordinator attended a pre-departure training for Malaysia at the government training centre (21-22 July) to conduct an assessment of the curricula. MOEAF provided training for nearly 359 workers.
- On 18-19 July, the NPC assisted with training enumerators for the TRIANGLE II baseline survey. The NPC also participated in data collection in Mandalay (Meiktila and Myaingyan) and Shan State (Keng Tung).
- As part of the ILO-UN Women project on 'Preventing the exploitation of women migrant workers in ASEAN,' research was carried out on the 'Effects of policies restricting women's labour migration in ASEAN'. The research consultant met with MOLES, MOEAF, the Singaporean Embassy and returned Domestic Workers.
- The ILO supported the launch and signing ceremony for the MOEAF Code of Conduct for recruitment agencies on 19 August 2016. So far, 94 Overseas Employment Agencies have signed the Code of Conduct to promote fair and ethical recruitment practices.
- During July-September, civil society organisations conducted five safe migration trainings for 150 potential migrants (W94:M56).
- The MRC managed by Mawk Kon provided support services to 746 (W520:M226) migrants and their families, through community forums, individualized counselling and outreach activities.

Key developments

- Myanmar and Thailand signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and an Agreement on the employment of migrant workers and border migrants on 23 June 2016. The MOUs have not been released publicly but the information provided suggests that the major developments are that migrants completing four years of work in Thailand will only have to return to Myanmar for 30 days (reduced from three years). In the MOU on border migration, migrants crossing the border for work will be issued with a 30-day pass, while tourists will be issued with a 6-month visa but will not be allowed to work.
- The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) informed the media that they intend to address the situation of undocumented domestic workers overseas.

- A multi-stakeholder coalition has provided support to hundreds of migrants who were repatriated after being held long-term in Malaysian detention centres because they did not have the funds to pay for their journey home.
- MOLIP released the executive summary of the Labour Force Survey, including data on migrant workers.
- The latest official data on Myanmar migrant workers from the Department of Employment in Thailand suggests a worrying trend of reduced access to employment opportunities for women migrants.

Upcoming activities and key dates (October – December 2016)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
Oct	9 th AFML Preparatory Meeting	Nay Pyi Taw	MOLIP, state and regional government representatives, employer and worker representatives, MOEAF, CSOs	To discuss implementation of AFML recommendations and prepare inputs for this year's theme which is "Better Quality of Life for ASEAN Migrant Workers through Strengthened Social Protection."
Oct	Training on ethical recruitment and gender-sensitive protection of women migrant workers (UN Women collaboration)	Yangon	Recruitment agencies, CSO and worker representatives, MOEAF	To support recruitment agencies in assessing progress on ethical recruitment and prepare action plans for revising internal policies and processes to make further progress.
Oct - Dec	Meetings to communicate and share ideas between women's groups	Rakhine, Shan, Yangon	Women's groups	To develop women leaders who are empowered and knowledgeable about migrants' rights and women rights.
Nov	Safe migration trainings by Labour Exchange Offices	Mandalay Kyaykse Meiktila Myingyan Dawei	LEO MRCs	To ensure local communities are aware of the MRC services offered through the LEOs and to provide information on safe migration.
Nov	Safe Migration awareness campaign in Shan New Year	Keng Tung	Mawk Kon MRC	To improve understanding about safe migration and the services available to migrants and to create a space for sharing of migration experiences among returnees.
Dec	International Migrants Day	Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon	MOLIP, relevant government agencies, media, worker and employer representatives, international agencies	To raise awareness about the rights of migrant workers among stakeholders.

Media

Date	Title	Media source
20 July 2016	Embassy forms team in bid to better protect migrants in Malaysia	MM Times
21 July 2016	Nearly 70 Myanmar workers repatriated from 'hell' of detention in Malaysia	MM Times
20 Aug 2016	Over 100 overseas employment agencies signed Code of Conduct of Recruitment Agencies	7 Day Daily
19 Aug 2016	About 100 overseas employment agencies signed MOEAF's Code of Conduct	News Eleven
19 Aug 2016	MOEAF's Code Of Conduct: Over 120 Local Overseas Employment Agencies Signed	Myanmar International TV Channel
19 Aug 2016	Signing Ceremony of MOEAF's Code of Conduct	Myanmar Radio and Television
22 Aug 2016	MOEAF members sign code of conduct	MM Times

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