

Mekong
Migration
Network
(MMN)

2014 ANNUAL REPORT





Annual report prepared by Mekong Migration Network
Cover design and layout by Shreyas Ravishankar (shreyas.ravishankar@yale.edu)
Photos courtesy of MMN members

Email for general enquiries: info@mekongmigration.org

Chiang Mai Office












P.O. Box 195, Chiangmai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand
Phone/Fax: 66-(0)53-283259

Hong Kong Office

c/o Asian Migrant Centre
4 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: +85223120031, Fax: +85224162611

Website: www.mekongmigration.org

Table of Contents

About MMN		4
MMN Steering Committee		5
MMN Secretariat		6
MMN Members		7
Acknowledgements		8
Messages from the Steering Committee		9
Overview of Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion in 2014		10 to 15
Achievements in 2014		16 to 34
Conclusion		35
Secretariat Calendar 2014		36 to 38
Acronyms		39

The Mekong Migration Network (MMN) is a Subregional network of civil society organisations, research institutes and mass organisations that are committed to working together to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and their families in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). As a network, MMN conducts joint advocacy, information monitoring and research, capacity building and networking.

MMN celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2013. MMN emerged from a collaborative action research project that the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) along with over 20 collaborating organisations carried out in 2001—2003 to assess the issues, needs and responses on migration in the GMS. As a result, the first edition of the *Resource Book: Migration in the GMS* was published in 2003, highlighting gaps in responses and laying out comprehensive recommendations for policy reforms.

In October 2003, over 30 civil society organisations in the GMS along with interested advocates met in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and agreed to formally establish a network to collectively monitor the information on migration in the region and conduct research, advocacy, capacity building and networking. MMN was conceived as a way to fill the gaps identified by organisations in the region, including a lack of cross-border collaboration among civil society organisations in the GMS concerned with promoting and protecting migrants' rights. These participants became the founding members of MMN and developed the MMN Terms of Partnership, which explains the nature and mechanisms of MMN. The founding members also nominated members to the MMN Steering Committee, which has become instrumental in decision-making and coordinating members. As a result, MMN has become a crucial organisation linking migration advocacy efforts spanning across the GMS.

MMN's work is deeply rooted in the belief that "migrants' rights are human rights," meaning that the fundamental human rights enshrined in the UN international human rights instruments, standards and treaties apply to all migrant workers. Under this vision, members are committed to advocating for the rights of all migrants in the GMS without discrimination and work towards MMN's central goal of promoting the welfare, well-being, dignity and human rights, with a special emphasis on labour rights, women's rights and family rights, of all migrants in the GMS. Member organisations also strive to strengthen the advocacy of migrants' rights by building mutual support and solidarity among migrants and their advocates within the GMS.

Mr. Sokchar Mom

Legal Support for Children and Women, Cambodia

In 2014, Mr. Mom replaced Ms. Vichuta Ly as a member of the SC representing MMN members in Cambodia and the chairperson of the SC.

Ms. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet

Center for Research and Consultancy for Development (CRCDD), Southern Institute of Sustainable Development (SISD), Vietnam

During this period Ms. Tuyet continued to serve the SC representing MMN members in Vietnam.

Ms. Wai Hnin Po

Foundation for Education and Development (FED), representing Burmese communities in Thailand

During this period, Ms. Wai Hnin Po continued to serve the SC representing Burmese in Thailand.

Mr. Brahm Press

Raks Thai Foundation, Thailand

During this period, Mr. Press continued to serve the SC representing MMN members in Thailand.

Ms. Kabmanivanh Phouxay

National University of Laos, Laos

During this period, Ms. Phouxay continued to serve the SC representing MMN members in Lao PDR.

Ms. Han Jialing

Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Centre (MWEAC), China

During this period, Ms. Han Jialing continued to serve the SC representing MMN members in China.

Ms. Reiko Harima

Regional Coordinator (on behalf of the Secretariat, non-voting member)

Ms. Harima continued to serve the MMN as the Regional Coordinator and sat in the SC.

MMN Secretariat offices are located in Hong Kong and Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Secretariat in HK was established at the time of the launch of MMN and has been hosted by the AMC since that time. The Secretariat office in Chiang Mai was established in 2008 and was hosted by the MAP Foundation until 2011. In November 2011, following the earlier decision by the MMN SC, MMN registered its Secretariat in Thailand as the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood (Foundation for MMN). The newly established foundation's board then became in charge of overseeing the administration of MMN's function in Thailand, while MAP Foundation continues to assist the Secretariat as an advisor.

MMN Secretariat Team 2014

Reiko Harima

MMN Regional Coordinator, 2003 to date

Omsin Boonlert

MMN Research and Advocacy Officer, April 2011 to date

Hkun Sa Mun Htoi

MMN Information and Advocacy Officer, September 2011 to date

Pranom Somwong

MMN Advocacy Convener, 2012 to 2014

Tineke Baird

Project Officer (Australia Young Ambassador for Development program), August 2013 to July 2014

Estelle Cohenny-Vallier

Embracing Diversity Project officer, November 2013 to September 2014

Pachara Sungden

Embracing Diversity Project officer, March to September 2014

Daotong Kam-Ai

Capacity Building and Advocacy Officer, March to June 2014

Ratchaklao Kanchanawaha

Administration Officer, 2012 to October 2014

Interns and Volunteers

Casey McCarthy Intern, June to July 2014

Gabrielle Curtis Volunteer, May 2014 to date

Veronika Dvorakova Intern, January to April 2014

Alix Dunleavy Intern, February to May 2014

Sayamon Srisompetch Intern, February to April 2014

Mary Slattery Volunteer, July to October 2014

Charlotte Gautier Volunteer, October 2014 to January 2015

Phawika Rueanno Intern, December 2014 to February 2015

Ché Singh Kochhar-George Volunteer, January 2014 to date

Regional

Asian Migrant Centre (AMC)

Burma/Myanmar

88 Generation Peace and Open Society
(Labour Department)

Labour Rights Defenders and Promoters
(LRDP)

Cambodia

Cambodian Women for Peace and
Development (CWPD)

Cambodia Human Rights and Development
Association (ADHOC)

Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)

Coordination of Action Research on AIDS
and Mobility (CARAM)-Cambodia

Legal Support for Children & Women
(LSCW)

Banteay Srei

China

Migrant Workers' Education and Action
Research Centre (MWEAC)

Ruili Women and Children Development
Centre

Association for Women's Capacity Building
and Community Development in Yunnan

Women Migrant Education Research
Professional Association

Yunnan Health and Development Research
Association

Lao PDR

Faculty of Social Sciences, National
University of Laos

Lao Women Union

Thailand

MAP Foundation

Thai Action Committee for Democracy in
Burma (TACDB)

National Catholic Commission on
Migration (NCCM)

EMPOWER Foundation

Federation of Trade Unions-Burma (FTUB)

Foundation for AIDS Rights (FAR)

Foundation for Women (FFW)

Friends of Women Foundation (FOW)

Foundation for Education and Development
(formerly Grassroots HRE)

The Human Rights and Development
Foundation (HRDF)

Institute for Population and Social Research
(IPSR), Mahidol University

Maryknoll Thailand - Office for Migrants at
Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok

The Mekong Ecumenical Partnership
Program-Christian Conference of Asia
(MEPP-CCA)

Pattanak Foundation

Peace Way Foundation

Raks Thai Foundation

Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)

Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association
(YCOWA)

Studio Xang

Vietnam

Center of Research and Consultancy for
Development (CRCD), Southern Institute of
Sustainable Development (SISD)

Education & Psychology Association - Ho
Chi Minh City

The Applied Social Work Center

Research Center for Management and
Sustainable Development (MSD)

Acknowledgements

MMN would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the MMN members who have tirelessly worked to advance the rights of migrants, the MMN Steering Committee members, who contributed their expertise in realising MMN's goals and strengthening the network, and all the staff members, interns and volunteers of the Secretariat.

MMN would also like to acknowledge the warm support and contributions of the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood, which was registered in November 2011 to manage MMN operations in Thailand. The Asian Migrant Centre, the initiator of the network in 2001, has continued to host the network's Secretariat in Hong Kong and contributed its expertise in carrying out regional work.

MMN would like to express our special thanks to Mr. Sokchar Mom, Ms. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet, and Ms. Wai Hnin Po who have selflessly worked to strengthen the MMN as a network that can be a force for change. They have treated fellow members of the MMN just like brothers and sisters, regardless of age, nationality or gender. Following the completion of the term, they handed over the tasks to the new members of the Steering Committee who were elected in March 2015. We look forward to the active contribution of the new Steering Committee as well as the continued support from the member of the previous Steering Committee in the coming years.

During the reported period, MMN saw an expansion of partnerships. We are especially excited to welcome new members from Burma/Myanmar. All the members and partners from Burma/Myanmar have brought renewed energy and ideas to the network. Having strong members and partners in Burma/Myanmar has also provided us with a wide range of new strategies that we are excited to pursue.

Last but not least, MMN would like to thank all the supporters who have made it possible for us to continuously strengthen our advocacy work. Supporters of MMN in 2014 were the following: Open Society Foundation (OSF), Oxfam, Toyota Foundation, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD) and the Diakonia Foundation.

And to all others not named here but who have contributed their time, expertise, and efforts, MMN would like to extend our gratitude.

Reiko Harima
Regional Coordinator
Mekong Migration Network



Messages from the Steering Committee

It is my great pleasure to present you all with the outcome of the Mekong Migration Network toward the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers in the region countries.

MMN has achieved much success in the year 2014 in terms of protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers both at the national and its sub-regional level. However, problems still persist in the region in terms of policy changes, discrimination, lacking of recognition of the contribution and social support for migrant workers, so the vital work that MMN performs will continue to be needed in the foreseeable future. The successes of MMN could not be achieved without the stalwart support of its members at the national level, the commitment by the Secretariat staff and volunteers, and the financial and technical support by the donors.

Finally, I am pleased to present you the 2014 annual report of MMN.

Thanks!

Sokchar Mom
Chairperson of MMN SC 2013-2014



For year by year participating in MMN, from the dawn of the network establishment up till now, I feel so happy to be a small part of the GMS family. The feeling of belonging is one of the best ones of my work and my life. It is so warm, so intimate, that we are a family whose members share common, universal values of human rights, including workers' rights, migrant workers' rights, women's rights and children's rights, with diversified cultures, social and economic systems. What I have been contributing to MMN, what I have been getting from other MMN members and associates, and even funding/supporting agencies, are enriching my work and my organization (CRCD, SISS) and the people I am working for.

Saying thanks cannot express what I am feeling and owing, however, I would like to say thanks to all.

Dr. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet
Member of MMN SC 2003-2014



Since the Mekong Migration Network was launched in 2003, MMN has continuously strived to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers and their families. New members of the Steering Committee were elected during the General Conference held in March 2015. On behalf of the new Steering Committee, I would like to affirm our full commitment towards achievement of the MMN's vision.

In solidarity,

Htoo Chit
Chairperson of MMN SC 2015



Overview of Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion in 2014

The GMS comprises Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Yunnan and Guangxi provinces of China. Migration in the region takes place mainly through informal channels, making it difficult to estimate accurate numbers of migrants. Gaps in political and economic development throughout the GMS are key drivers of interregional migration. Thailand's period of relatively high economic growth makes it the main destination country for migrants from poorer countries, like Cambodia, Burma and Lao PDR, with an estimated 3-4 million migrants in the country. Similarly, China's recent economic prosperity has led to an increase of two-way movement across the borders between the Yunnan province and Burma, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

Migrant workers are employed in various sectors, including agriculture, fishing, construction, manufacturing, domestic work, entertainment industries, and mining to name but a few. Although migrant workers are the backbone of economic and social development in the region, they continue to be denied many essential rights, benefits and labour protections. The absence of policies or mechanisms to assist migrants to integrate into the local communities, in conjunction with poor living and working conditions, and the widespread criminalisation and discrimination against migrants, leads to migrant populations living in social isolation.



Migrant workers in shrimp factory, Samut Sakorn province, Thailand

The largely informal nature of migration flows in the region has led many of the governments in the region to become focused on issues of national security, the prevention of undocumented migration, the end of trafficking, and the regularization of migrants' immigration statuses. The implementation of bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on Employment Cooperation, which Thailand signed with Burma/Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia in 2002 and 2003 was central in dictating policy reforms during the time of this report. The implementation of the MOUs took place in two processes. One is the Nationality Verification (NV) process, whereby undocumented migrants in Thailand could have their nationality verified by their countries of origin and obtain a temporary passport and work permit.

In the other MOU process new workers are recruited from their own country through recruitment agencies. While these measures have increased the number of migrants who have legal status, it remains to be seen how they have impacted labour conditions, access to justice and/or quality of life of migrants. A large number of migrants have also fallen out of the regularization processes and continue to remain undocumented.

Meanwhile GMS governments continued to be pro-active in cooperation to prevent human trafficking, investigate and prosecute perpetrators, protect victims and build capacity to stop trafficking as demonstrated through the numerous agreements that have been signed, as well as through the implementation of Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT).

Simultaneously, border economic zones have emerged as an important part of countries' strategy for economic growth in the region by developing industrial zones that encourage foreign investors to invest along the border regions. To date, several such zones have been established or are in the process of being planned. These zones are typically characterised by poor infrastructure and limited access to trade unions and other services for workers, and thus potentially pose a risk to the rights of workers employed in the zones, including migrant workers. In case of Thailand, the government sees establishment of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as a strategy in keeping migrant workers along the borders.

All GMS countries, except China, belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which aims to promote economic growth, stability and peace in the region. Although member countries signed the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in 2007, there has been little success in establishing an implementation mechanism. As a result, the Declaration has had no real impact on how member countries tackle migration issues. While ASEAN is preparing for greater economic integration in 2015, only migrants in listed professions will be able to enjoy the benefits, which, along with freer movement in the region, are a distant reality for the majority of migrant workers who work at the bottom of economic structures.

2014 Overview



Burma/Myanmar

Since the formation of a nominally civilian government after the November 2010 elections and subsequent political reforms, there has been greater engagement on the part of the authorities on issues of migration. Although Burma/Myanmar signed the MOU on Employment Cooperation with Thailand in 2003, it was initially very slow to begin implementing the subsequent processes. This has drastically changed and since 2011, Thailand and Burma/Myanmar have established stronger bilateral collaboration in implementing the NV scheme, as well as recruiting workers through the MOU process. As of October 2014, there are over 1.7 million Burmese migrant workers who are registered through the MOU and NV processes.

There have also been greater efforts to reach out to their nationals working abroad, with the appointment of labour attachés in key destination countries in the GMS, Middle East, and East Asia, although there has been widespread criticism that

the labour attachés are not able to respond to the needs of migrant workers effectively and in a timely manner.

These developments have taken place alongside a large increase in the number of private recruitment agencies within the country. As of 2014, there were 202 licensed recruitment agencies active within Burma/Myanmar.

2014 also saw efforts towards the establishment of Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in areas of the country with high migration rates, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Once established, the MRCs will provide pre-departure orientation and job counselling to potential migrant workers, essential information to migrants in transit areas, and access to complaint mechanisms to report exploitation or abuses.

The political transition in Burma/Myanmar was also followed by changes in legislation. The Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES) is currently reviewing the Thai-Myanmar bilateral MOU on employment, as well as the 1999 Law Relating to Overseas Employment in coordination with stakeholders.

This year saw greater involvement of civil society in raising public awareness on cross-border migration issues, as well as advocating for the government to take a greater role in promoting and protecting the rights of its citizens working overseas and uplifting the socio-economic life of their families. The civil society organisations, labour organisations and trade unions in Burma/Myanmar founded a Myanmar CSOs Network for Migrants in 2014, which successfully organised the first civil society-led International Migrants Day in Yangon, Burma/Myanmar in December.

Despite positive political reforms in the capital, conflicts in ethnic states continued. In 2014 Rohingya people continued to flee the country against a backdrop of violence, persecution, and harsh conditions of internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Arakan/Rakhine State. Each year tens of thousands pay human smugglers and traffickers to bring them to neighbouring countries by sea and land. However, hundreds perish during the journey due to starvation, dehydration and, often times, beatings and torture; and many are held captive for ransom or sold into the Thai fishing industry.

Meanwhile, the fighting between the Burmese military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) often flared up, while the Myanmar government has not so far been able to reach a peace agreement with the KIA. More than 100,000 people have been displaced in Kachin State since the civil war broke out in 2011, many of whom have fled to China in search of refuge, but have been facing harsh conditions there.

Cambodia



Cambodia has continued with the NV and MOU processes as per the MOU with Thailand. As of October 2014, there are over 880,000 Cambodian migrant workers who have a work permit to work legally in Thailand. Given limited economic opportunities and low wages in the country, outbound migration is likely to continue. To ensure that migrants go through regular migration channels, the government needs to simplify the regular migration process.

After the military coup in Thailand in May, up to 300,000 migrants returned back to Cambodia in fear of a military crackdown on undocumented migrant workers, which was one of the biggest human movements in Southeast Asia since the 1970s.

The sudden return of so many Cambodian migrants has caused local governments to re-evaluate their policies and goals in reference to migration.

Their new government policies are focused on promoting more legal migration, establishing more efficient procedures for legal migration and developing reintegration programs for returned migrant workers.

As part of those new policies, local authorities made efforts to increase the speed at which government offices can issue registration documents such as birth certificates and family record books, to help returning migrants get their documents in order before leaving the country once more. On June 20th Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen signed a sub-decree that lowered the normal fee for a passport from US\$124 to just US\$4 for students and migrant workers, an attempt to encourage its citizens to migrate through legal channels. However, there were still many hurdles facing ordinary migrants in the legal migration process, which is complicated and lengthy. Many migrants were still likely to pay an agent/broker to migrate informally.



Cambodian migrant returnee taking the van to their hometown, Poi Pet, Cambodia

With regards to inward migration, there are over 100,000 Vietnamese living in Cambodia. Estimates greatly vary with some reports citing as many as 750,000. Some live just into Cambodia at the borders, working as traders. Others move to fishing villages on the Tonle Sap River or to big cities like Phnom Penh.

In late 2014, reports emerged of Montagnard asylum seekers hiding in border jungles in Cambodia to avoid deportation. Since 2001, over 1,000 members of the minority Montagnard ethnic group have entered Cambodia fleeing political and religious persecution in Vietnam. However, the Cambodian government has treated

the Montagnards as ‘illegal migrants’ and forcibly repatriated many of them to Vietnam before they are able to have their claims for refugee status heard by the United Nations refugee agency. Human rights and refugee advocacy groups have strongly criticised Cambodia for failing to abide by its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and other international laws, an accusation strongly denied by the Cambodian government.



China

There are about 40,000 Burmese and 32,000 Vietnamese in China, according to government estimates. In Yunnan Province (part of the GMS), there are about 47,000 migrants total, 35,000 of whom are Burmese living in Ruili City. As a result of restrictions on the numbers of children that women are allowed to have, there are unequal numbers of men and women in China, and women from Vietnam and Myanmar move to China for marriage.

During this period, the Kachin refugees fleeing fighting between the KIA and the government forces have continued to enter China in search of refuge. They are facing shortage of food and aid in the makeshift camps with the UN officials not being allowed to cross to the Chinese side. Kachin refugees have not been welcomed into China and have faced deportation in some cases.



Lao PDR

The Lao PDR government continued with NV and MOU processes for workers going to or in Thailand, although due to the complexity and expense involved more workers continued to migrate without documents.

In conjunction with increased Chinese investment in the country in the last few years, the number of Chinese migrants working in Lao PDR is increasing. There are approximately 200,000 migrant workers in Lao PDR mostly employed in the construction sector, where Vietnamese and Chinese investors and contractors have said that they prefer to employ their compatriots because of their skills, ease of communication, and willingness to work harder and for lower salaries compared to the local workers.



Thailand

Thailand continued to rely on short-term policies in an attempt to both meet labour demands and manage migration. The Thai government made regular changes to policy without clarity or long term vision. Most notably, deadlines for registration of undocumented migrants for NV procedures were repeatedly extended.

Migrants who completed the NV and fully legalised their status, as well as the workers who migrated to Thailand through a recruitment agency pursuant to the MOU process (“MOU migrants”), were entitled to join the national Social Security program, which offered more comprehensive benefits than Compulsory Migrant Health Insurance (CMHI), in which migrants to Thailand previously participated.

Following the military coup in May 2014, large numbers of Cambodian migrants left Thailand, both through deportation and voluntarily, fearing a crackdown on undocumented workers. Industries dependent on migrant workers suffered greatly, and the incident proved a stark reminder that Thailand's economy is reliant on migrant labour, and led to the introduction of policies that sought to increase legal migration. These measures included setting up One Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) to register migrant workers; and setting up Facilitation Centres for the Return of Cambodian Workers (FCRCWs).

Despite this demonstration of Thailand's longstanding dependence on migrant labour in many industries, and the introduction of measures such as OSSCs, FCRCWs, and the extension of deadlines for the NV process, Thailand's migration policies still failed to provide a long term and sustainable response to the millions of migrant workers working in the country.



One Stop Service Center in Ranong province, Thailand

During this period, Rohingya refugees from Burma/Myanmar also continued to flee into Thailand. However, they were treated as illegal immigrants by the Thai authorities and continued to suffer from human rights violations.

At the same time, there remain over 100,000 refugees living in nine refugee camps in Thailand while around 100,000 refugees have been resettled to third countries. In 2014, the Thai junta announced that it wants to repatriate all refugees by 2015. Despite the positive changes in the past years in Myanmar/Burma, the conditions are not yet conducive for refugees to return and many refugees do not feel safe returning to their homeland.



Vietnam

In order to alleviate unemployment, the Vietnamese government continued with its programme of sending workers abroad. Another continuing trend was that of increased marriage migration from the country, particularly to South Korea. With regards to inward migration, there was also a sharp increase in foreign workers migrating to Vietnam.



Group photo at the Bottom of ASEAN project consultation meeting, Burma/Myanmar

MMN continued its work promoting and protecting the rights of migrants in the region, through joint advocacy, information monitoring and research, capacity building and networking. MMN continued to strengthen its organisational capacity, and reach out to new members and expand its operational bases. In particular, MMN has forged partnerships with Burmese civil society organisations, something that was previously very difficult due to the sensitivity of migration issues under the military government. Two organisations, namely 88 Generation Peace and Open Society (Labour Department) and the Labour Rights Defender and Promoters, have formally joined the MMN as members, while many other organisations have also regularly collaborated with MMN on various projects.

The project MMN implemented in 2014 largely fall under the following themes.

Research and Advocacy

1. Arrest, Detention and Deportation/Exodus of Cambodian migrants
2. Embracing Diversity/Living Together
3. Bottom of ASEAN
4. Social Protection, and Labour Rights and Health
5. ASEAN

Capacity Building

6. Regional Exchange Program

Advocacy and Networking

7. ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum
8. Global Forum on Migration and Development
9. World Social Forum on Migration
10. Asia - Pacific Feminist Forum
11. Clean Clothes Campaign

Information Monitoring and Sharing

12. MMN Website
13. MMN Listserve

All of MMN's projects complement each other by focusing on the achievement of protection and promotion of rights of migrants, de-criminalisation of migrants and promotion of tolerance, advancement of mutual respect and harmony, and the creation of solidarity. While all our projects are coordinated through the MMN Secretariat with guidance from the Steering Committee, and in some cases external advisors, MMN emphasises teamwork and close collaboration between its members and Secretariat staff members. Most of the projects are multifaceted and serve several functions including advocacy, knowledge building, capacity strengthening, awareness raising, developing evidential based tools for advocacy, and strengthening mutual understanding and partnership among migrant advocates in the region.

Please see the following sections for more information about the achievement in 2014.

I. Arrest, Detention and Deportation/Exodus of Cambodian migrants



Cambodian migrant deportees arriving at Poi Pet reception center, Cambodia

ADD Research, Monitoring, and Handbook

Most migration continues to occur through informal channels in the GMS, thus arrest, detention and deportation (ADD) is an issue of great concern to migrants in the region. Migrants are not only vulnerable to human rights violations during the actual enforcement of the ADD, but the threat and/or fear of ADD also severely impacts the lives of migrants. It hinders migrants' capacity to negotiate fair terms with their employers, bring complaints to labour offices in case of labour exploitation/abuse, report to the police when becoming a victim of a crime, and even go to a hospital.

MMN has worked on issues of ADD for many years, primarily conducting research and collecting case studies of ADD experienced by migrants. MMN's most recent published research on the topic is the 2013 publication "No Choice in the Matter: Migrants' experiences of arrest, detention, and deportation", produced with support of the Open Society Foundation (OSF).

The partners on that project also formed a working group on ADD, which has continued to monitor the ADD situation, which is often impacted by changing political, social, economic factors in Thailand. One recommendation of the working group was to produce a handbook for CSOs providing support to migrants who are subjected to ADD to enhance their understanding of policies governing ADD.

Following the development of a draft handbook by the MMN secretariat, a consultation meeting took place in April 2014 in Chiang Mai for the working group to contribute its suggestions, such as including more practical information for migrant advocates on how to respond to ADD. The handbook has now been finalised and includes information on relevant ADD policies, explanations of key terms, and practical advice to migrant advocates on what can be done when they are contacted by migrants in different ADD scenarios.

In addition, the ADD working group raised concerns on the way that ADD is portrayed in the media, which often negatively affect public perception towards migrants. The working group agreed on the importance of media advocacy and has developed a work plan in this regard.

Exodus of Cambodian Migrants

Beginning in June 2014, Thailand witnessed the departure of over 220,000 Cambodian migrant workers who were deported or left voluntarily in fear of government crackdowns following the military coup. The reliance on migrant labour in Thailand, combined with a lack of economic opportunities in Cambodia, meant that the return of migrant workers to Thailand was inevitable. In anticipation of an eventual return of these migrants to Thailand, and hoping that they would do so through a formal channel, both Thailand and Cambodia swiftly introduced a number of policy reforms to make legal migration channels more accessible. MMN and its partner organisations believed it was critical to ensure that these rapidly developing responses reflected the voices of migrants and their families, and decided to conduct a series of interviews for this purpose. Interviews were carried out by the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC), Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW), Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD), and Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), in Banteay Meachey, Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, and Kandal provinces.

While the study was being carried out in these areas, large numbers of migrant returnees started going back to Thailand. Therefore MMN extended the scope of its work and carried out interviews with those who had returned to Thailand, their employers and local government officials in Thailand. The interviews on the Thai side were carried out in Trat, Rayong and Sa Kaeo.

On 9 December 2014, the MMN launched the report *The Precarious Status of Migrants in Thailand: Reflections on the Exodus of Cambodian Migrants and Lessons Learnt*. The launch was attended by 45 people, including her Honourable Excellency Ms. Chou Bun Eng, Secretary of State, Ministry of Interior, Royal Government of Cambodia and Mr. Choub Narath, Deputy Director General, Department of Employment and Manpower, Ministry of Labour, Royal Government of Cambodia, the representatives of the Civil Society Organisations, International NGOs and members of the media.



The launch of the Precarious Status of Migrants in Thailand: Reflections on the Exodus of Cambodian Migrants and Lessons Learnt report, Cambodia.

The research revealed that Cambodian migrants' top two concerns while migrating are the cost and the legality of their actions. Migrants' willingness to migrate through legal channels appears to have grown stronger since the exodus. However, many face significant financial obstacles in doing so, and the issue is exacerbated by the fact that many migrants are receiving below the minimum wage in Thailand. This research highlights the need for both the Cambodian and Thai governments, along with ASEAN, to work collaboratively to improve both the living standards of migrants, and the migration process overall.

The full report in English is available on the MMN Webpage at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FINAL-REPORT-The-precious-status-of-migrants-in-Thailand.pdf>

The Khmer version is also available at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FINAL-REPORT-The-precious-status-of-migrants-in-Thailand-Khmer-Version.pdf>

Ongoing commitment to ADD Issues

Throughout 2014 MMN continued to monitor the ADD situation, and presented on the ADD issues in a number of national and regional meetings to highlight the lack of transparent process and the human rights violation occurring in the ADD procedures.

MMN continues to update the ADD website (http://mekongmigration.org/add/?page_id=13) that monitors and alerts MMN members and advocates of serious rights violations. The website has been running since 2012 and remains an important form for information sharing among migrants' advocates.

As ADD continues to be used to control migrant populations and pose a major threat to migrants, MMN will continue to advocate for policy reforms so that migrants will be able to work and live without fear of ADD, and urge the authorities to seek alternatives to ADD in controlling undocumented migrant populations.

2. Embracing Diversity/Living Together

MMN has been working on issues of the integration and social cohesion of migrants in the region since 2012, when it held a symposium on these themes titled “Living Together”. A subsequent project, based on recommendations from that symposium, was carried out with the support of the Toyota Foundation. In this project, entitled “Embracing Diversity”, MMN produced educational materials for children of different ages, and held a symposium to launch the materials.

Children’s Book *Dragon Lake*

One part of the project was the creation of an illustrated book for children aged 6-7 years old, entitled *Dragon Lake*. In developing the book, MMN first carried out activities at schools in Chiang Mai to see how children thought about these issues, and their understanding of migration. The MMN consultant then developed a story line and details of the characters for the book in a way that would be accessible to young children. It follows a community of dragons who have a variety of characteristics and explores the importance of living together with neighbours who have different ways of life. In this way, the book introduces to children themes of inclusion and exclusion. The book seeks to open dialogue on these important issues not only between children and adults, but among adults as well. The book is published in Thai, Burmese, Shan, Khmer, Lao, and English.



The *Dragon Lake* book, inside story

The book will be primarily used in schools in Thailand. It has been widely circulated, including at migrant learning centres, local schools, libraries, and churches.

Dragon Lake is available at: http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=2740.

Lesson Plans on the History of Migration

The other component of educational materials was the development of lesson plans on the history of migration for children aged 10-11. MMN drafted the initial version of the lesson plans with the input of two collaborating schools in Chiang Mai. In June 2014, the MMN team carried out pilot lessons in the two collaborating schools, Wat Chang Kian and Wat Suan Dok.

Although students at first seemed to believe that migration had no relevance to them, they gradually saw more of a connection between issues of migration and their personal experiences. Positive changes in students' attitudes were evident, such as a broader sense of identity transcending that of national identification, increased understanding about people from other places, and increasing interest in the region.



Lesson Plans on The History of Migration book cover

The structure of these lessons enables students to gradually develop their own understanding of how migration is a natural part of human progress, and that it contributes to the present day's way of life.

The lesson plans are available in Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese and Japanese, and have received excellent feedback from representatives of Thailand's Office of the Basic Education Commission.

The lesson plans are available at: http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=2732

Symposium on Embracing Diversity

In October 2014, in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University, and the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood, MMN held a Mekong Symposium on Migration titled “Embracing Diversity: Seeking Multicultural Values and Mutual Understanding”, at which the above educational materials were launched. The symposium was attended by over 50 people including representatives from the Thai Ministry of Education, community based organisations, international NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, educational institutions and universities.



Group photo at the Symposium on Embracing Diversity, Bangkok

The Symposium focused on the need for understanding multicultural values in order to achieve social cohesion, peace and human security in the region. The specific challenges faced by migrants in the Mekong region were also discussed, such as limited educational and work opportunities, exploitation and abuse, and social problems such as discrimination, stigma, and social exclusion. One common theme of discussion throughout the symposium was the importance of promoting multiculturalism especially through teaching this value in schools, which can help cultivate tolerance and celebrate diversity throughout society.

3. Bottom of ASEAN

MMN’s project theme on “The Bottom of ASEAN” focuses on the way in which the changing situation in Burma/Myanmar affects labour and migration, but also more broadly on the way in which workers in other Mekong countries face renewed challenges as a result of an exacerbated race to the bottom. Indeed, it has become increasingly common for investors to refer to Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR, as the “last frontiers” of Asia where “young and cheap labour is abundant”.

MMN has conducted a variety of activities around this theme. Through these activities, including situation monitoring, research, information exchange and capacity building of advocates, MMN aims to build pressure for improved labour protection and fairer wages for all the workers left at the bottom of economic structures – including both migrant and local workers.

Consultation Meeting in Yangon



Group discussion, Burma/Myanmar

On 19 March 2014, MMN held a project consultation meeting in Yangon, Burma/Myanmar on the Bottom of ASEAN project with around 30 MMN project partners and collaborators. The participants included representatives from Cambodian labour unions, Burmese Civil Society Organisations, migrants' advocates from other GMS countries, ILO, Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), Asia Pacific Women Law and Development (APWLD) and development partners such as the OSF and Oxfam. This meeting provided a unique opportunity for workers, union leaders and civil society representatives especially from Burma/Myanmar and Cambodia, to discuss their similar issues and struggles.

Throughout the day, participants discussed the difficulties workers face and strategies to counteract these; the positive and negative impacts of investment in the region, and what could be done to encourage positive developments and prevent negative ones. The meeting also served as capacity building for the participants, as a resource person from the WRC presented on the global supply chain to strengthen the advocates' understanding of what is happening on a larger scale. Towards the end of the consultation meeting, participants collectively developed recommendations which included: i) to incorporate labour standards into investment laws; ii) to raise workers' knowledge of their rights; iii) to develop strategies for consumer awareness; iv) to strengthen networking among the advocates in supplier and consumer countries; v) to foster respect between investors and workers; and vi) most importantly, to build solidarity between workers in the region.

The proceedings of the project consultation meeting are available at:
<http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=2486>

The Workshop during the 11th ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF)

On 22 March 2014, MMN held a workshop entitled “the Bottom of ASEAN”, during the 11th ACSC/APF held in Yangon, Burma/Myanmar. The workshop was co-hosted by Legal Support for Children and Women, Cambodia; Foundation for Education and Development, Thailand; Generation 88, Burma/Myanmar; APWLD; and Workers Hub for Change, Malaysia. Over 100 participants from 15 countries, including 50 workers from industrial zones in Burma/Myanmar, and labour activists from Cambodia who had been active in the recent garment worker strikes in Phnom Penh attended the workshop. This workshop offered an excellent opportunity for Burmese workers and Cambodian workers to exchange their experiences and strategies to address common challenges.



Solidarity activity between Cambodian and Burmese workers, Burma/Myanmar

The workshop began with a participatory activity through which participants compared the wages workers received in the region to the cost of living. A panel discussion was also held, in which participants spoke about the opportunities and risks arising from increased foreign direct investment in Burma/Myanmar, the current challenges faced by garment workers and their unions in Cambodia, the impact of investment projects on migration, the campaign for a living wage and a case study of a factory that pays workers a living wage. The workshop participants expressed special solidarity with the garment workers in Cambodia, who had recently experienced violent crackdowns for exercising their right to collective bargaining, and produced recommendations urging all governments and investors in ASEAN to protect the rights of all workers, including migrant workers in the region. For the recommendations, please see below. Key recommendations from the MMN workshop were incorporated into the final civil society statement of the ACSC/APF available for download at <http://aseanpeople.org/>.

After the workshop, MMN organised a special informal session for Cambodian and Burmese workers, where the workers continued to share their ideas and concerns, as well as some solidarity songs.

Please find the proceedings of the workshop here: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=2488>

MMN Recommendations from the 'Bottom of ASEAN' workshop during the 11th ACSC/APF

Workshop participants recommend **governments** to:

1. Immediately stop all forms of oppression against workers who exercise their right for freedom of expression and assembly, and their right to strike.
2. Ensure minimum wages are living wages and improve all working conditions for ASEAN countries (i.e. OHS regulations, 8 working hours a day, 40 hours a week, paid maternity leave, regular long term contracts).
3. Create space for independent trade unions and migrant workers associations to participate in decision making in ASEAN.
4. Expand coverage of social security to include all workers, including informal sector and migrant workers, and work towards portable social security systems and guarantee social protection to all workers, including informal sectors and migrant workers, and work towards portable social security systems.

Workshop participants recommend **investors** to:

1. Abide by international labour standards even when the national standards fall below.
2. Adhere to international standards on corporate respect for human rights (UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) in addition to self-regulating codes of conducts and/or business ethical principles.
3. Ensure that investments do not lead to loss of livelihood, displacement, violation of human rights, and environmental destruction affecting the communities and future generations.
4. Ensure that workers throughout the supply chain are paid a living wage, which may necessitate reforms of sourcing policies.

Research Paper

Over the course of December 2013 and January and February 2014, MMN carried out desk research into the impact foreign direct investment has on labour standards in Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

Researchers led by the MMN Secretariat team gathered information from international and local media reports, investment think tanks, government policy announcements and investment advice, CSO reports, analysis carried out by private consultancy agencies as well as international bodies such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The research primarily focused on what investor countries and private investors are saying and doing in terms of protecting labour in Burma/Myanmar and promoting responsible investment, as well as what mechanisms are being used to pursue their policies, and what role is being played by civil society. The resulting paper, entitled "Bottom of ASEAN: Impact of Rushed Investment in "Last Frontier" countries–Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR

on Labour and Migration”, covers investment trends in Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR, legislative reforms, corporate social responsibility initiatives, opportunities and risks arising from the responsible investment approach, and the impact of supply chains on labour standards in Mekong countries.

The key findings of this paper were presented at the Bottom of ASEAN project consultation meeting in Yangon in March 2014, and have also been useful in maintaining in the Bottom of ASEAN pages on the website (http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=1134).

The MMN paper on the Bottom of ASEAN is available at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/Bottom%20of%20ASEAN%20-%20Discussion%20paper-final.pdf>

Bottom of ASEAN Solidarity List Serve

To ensure that communications and solidarity exchange among advocates can be sustained beyond meetings, MMN uses email lists. After the project consultation meeting, MMN created a Bottom of ASEAN solidarity email list serve for participants and other interested persons, through which members continue to share information, news updates and resources on issues relevant to investment, worker rights and development in ASEAN.

4. Social Protection, Labour Rights and Health

All of MMN’s projects are aimed at strengthening the protection and promotion of migrants’ rights, including their labour and health rights. In 2014, MMN carried out a consultation meeting with migrant returnees in Myanmar to understand the issues they face. We also conducted research on migrant women and health across the region.

Consultation Meeting with Migrant Returnees

Given the newly arisen political space in which to advocate for countries of origin to play pro-active roles in protecting their nationals working abroad, MMN initiated a consultation meeting with migrant returnees in Burma/Myanmar, so that their experiences and insights on migration could be reflected in advocacy work. The meeting was held on 21 December 2014 in Yangon. During the meeting, migrant returnees shared their positive experiences of migration which included higher salaries, learning new languages and about new cultures, higher living standards, safer traffic, exposure to new ideas and greater self-confidence. At the same time, difficulties in the migration experience were also shared, and these included being exposed to dangerous working conditions, having to pay fees to the police whether documented or undocumented, receiving less than the minimum wage, and not being able to easily access health care, social security or insurance.

Based on their experiences of migrating from Burma/Myanmar to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, participants developed a set of recommendations for the Myanmar government.

The meeting was unique in its focus on discussing migration issues with migrant returnees, who have lived the experience. The content of the discussion was rich and the recommendations developed during the meeting will be incorporated to the MMN advocacy agenda.

Migrant Women and Health Research Project

Inflexible health care systems in the GMS often exclude people who are not living in their hometown, who do not have documentation, or who have not contributed to a healthcare scheme. Due to these exclusions and other factors, migrant women often lack access to health care. The conditions created by migration in the GMS increase a woman's vulnerability to ill-health, while simultaneously limiting her access to care and treatment. While all undocumented workers face similar hardships, it is particularly challenging for women who bear increased burdens and discrimination because of their gender.

In order to provide evidence to reduce migrant women's vulnerability to health problems and to jointly develop recommendations for policy reforms and change in practice, MMN along with research partners in six Mekong countries agreed to jointly research this topic, with support from the UNDP.

On 26-27 November 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand, MMN held the first research consultation meeting. Participants discussed the engagement of their organisations with women's health and reflected on what gaps in current research it would be beneficial to address. Participants agreed upon a research design aimed to answer the questions on how migrant women take care of themselves; what underlying factors affect migrant women's health rights; and which policies enhance and hinder migrant women's ability to look after their own health.

During the first research consultation meeting, the research advisory team, MMN regional research coordinator, MMN Secretariat and country research teams jointly developed a standard research design and agreed on Terms of References (ToRs). They also collectively developed an interview guide/questionnaires for interviews.

Following the timeline agreed at the meeting, MMN's research partners will conduct research and interviews in their respective countries in the beginning of 2015. Once country research is completed, the second research consultation meeting will be held, during which time findings from the country research will be collectively analysed by all the partners. The final research paper will also be finalised to reflect the discussion during the second consultation meeting.

5. ASEAN

At a regional level, MMN has continued to explore ASEAN mechanisms as strategic venues in which MMN may intervene to influence the discourse and regional framework concerning migration. MMN takes multi-level approaches to lobby ASEAN, including by meeting country representatives, such as the focal points under the Ministry of Labour for the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers ("ASEAN Declaration on Migrant Workers"), and country representatives to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

Since the ASEAN Declaration on Migrant Workers was signed in January 2007, MMN has continuously worked towards influencing the two follow up processes: first, the process in which ASEAN member states (namely Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia) were to develop a framework for implementation of the Declaration on Migrant Workers; and second, the annual ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML), which is an open platform for review, discussion and exchange of best practices and ideas between governments, workers' and employers' organisations, and civil society stakeholders on key issues facing migrant workers in South-East Asia, and develop recommendations to advance the implementation of the principles of the ASEAN Declaration on Migrant Workers.



Participant of MMN workshop at APF/ACSC 2014 share their solidarity message for Cambodian workers, Burma/Myanmar

6. Regional Exchange Program

On 5-7 August 2014 a Regional Exchange Program on Migration Issues was organised in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Program was designed with acknowledgement that there is already rich expertise on migration in the region, and such capacity could be amplified by further exchanging knowledge and strategies. It was also designed to benefit organisations who have been working on other development and human rights issues but have not yet worked on migration as a focal issue. The exchange program was funded by the international non-profit organisation Diakonia. Hence, special attention was paid to help the Diakonia partner organisations to learn about migration issues and enable them to network with MMN member organisations who have been working on migration issues for a number of years. A total of 24 participants from Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia took part in the exchange program.

At the exchange, MMN and its member organisations presented on the history of recent migration in Thailand, principles and international frameworks to promote the rights of migrants, the work the network collectively carries out, and the work its individual member organisations carry out in order to empower migrant communities and

advocate for policy reform to achieve fair treatment and labour conditions for migrants. As Diakonia's partner organisations specialise in issues as diverse as women's rights, community development, human trafficking, poverty alleviation, and safe migration, the exchange program was designed to facilitate mutual learning among MMN members and Diakonia's partners. The program included discussions about the intersection of the issues of migration with those of labour rights, women's rights, and development.

To deepen understanding about working and living conditions of migrants, participants visited two separate migrant worker communities, one employed in agriculture and the other in construction. Participants also visited the MAP Foundation, EMPOWER and MMN and learnt issues and strategies from the respective organisations.

The exchange culminated in a final day of networking as the different organisations identified what issues they could collaborate with others on to address the needs of migrants.

The Exchange Program concluded with a range of recommendations for MMN and Diakonia regarding further action, which included organising similar Exchange Programs in other Mekong countries on a regular basis.



The Regional Exchange Program on Migration Issues was a successful example of the advantages of networking and information sharing. The issues facing organisations working throughout the Mekong Delta are closely linked and reveal the importance of cooperation and collaboration. MMN and its member organisations hope to continue this relationship with Diakonia and its partner organisations in its struggle to promote the wellbeing and rights of migrants throughout the region.

Speed dating interviews to brainstorm on organisational partnership potential, Chiang Mai

The Regional Exchange Program on Migration Issues was a successful example of the advantages of networking and information sharing. The issues facing organisations working throughout the Mekong Delta are closely linked and reveal the importance of cooperation and collaboration. MMN and its member organisations hope to continue this relationship with Diakonia and its partner organisations in its struggle to promote the wellbeing and rights of migrants throughout the region.

7. ASEAN Civil Society Conference /ASEAN People's Forum

In addition to intervention with the governmental processes, MMN has also worked towards forging solidarity with civil society organisations working on various human rights issues in South East Asia. The network has also worked on raising awareness on current issues on migration in the region through actively participating in the civil society process, namely the ACSC/APF.

The ACSC/APF in 2014 had a special significance for MMN, as it was the first time that the ACSC/APF was organised in Burma/Myanmar, a country which for so many years had little to no political space for civil society organisations to properly function.

Seeing the ACSC/APF as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with civil society in Burma, and to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations there, MMN, represented by Ms. Hkun Sa Mun Htoi and Ms. Pranom Somwong, joined the Program Committee and the Steering Committee for the ACSC/APF and attended the monthly meeting from 2013 leading up to March 2014.

In March, MMN representatives attended the 11th ACSC/APF along with around 2,000 other civil society representatives. Seventeen MMN delegates participated in the APF plenary and thematic workshops. As part of the APF program, MMN organised a thematic workshop entitled “The Bottom of ASEAN” on 22 March 2014. Please see the above section on Bottom of ASEAN for more information about the workshop.



Participants shared opinions at the MMN workshop, APF/ACSC 2014, Burma/Myanmar

8. Global Forum on Migration and Development

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), an intergovernmental platform established to deepen international dialogue and cooperation between countries on migration and development, held its 2014 meeting in Stockholm, Sweden on 14-16 May with the theme “Unlocking the potential of migration for inclusive development”. The meeting was attended by some 800 participants from 140 countries, 30 international organisations and including some 250 representatives from civil society organisations. Roundtables were held on the themes of “Integrating migration in global, regional and national development agendas”; “Migration as an enabler for inclusive economic development”; and “Migration as an enabler for inclusive social development”. Prior to the actual global forum were Civil Society Days at which civil society groups had the opportunity to discuss issues surrounding migration. MMN was represented by its Regional Coordinator, Reiko Harima at the GFMD, who actively shared the perspectives of migration in the GMS where migration is characterised by its mixed nature.

9. World Social Forum on Migration

On 5-8 December 2014, MMN attended the 6th World Social Forum on Migration (WSFM) in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the 6th WSFM was “Migration in the Heart of our Humanity: Rethinking Mobility, Development and Globalisation”.

The MMN delegation included network members from Cambodia and Burma/Myanmar, as well as the Secretariat team. At the forum, MMN organised a workshop under the pillar “Migration, Globalisation and Crises: Trends and Alternatives”.

The MMN workshop was entitled “Migrant Workers at Sea”. The aim of this workshop was to discuss the vulnerabilities of migrant workers aboard fishing vessels and to explore the trans-global responses needed to tackle the abuse, exploitation and trafficking that plagues the industry.

Ms. Omsin Boonlert, MMN Secretariat, provided an overview of migrant workers in the Mekong sub-region context. Ms. Vichuta Ly, from network member Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW), discussed the issues faced by migrant fishermen from Cambodia, and Mr. Htoo Chit, from network member Foundation for Education and Development (FED), highlighted the experiences of Burmese migrant fishermen in Thailand.

During the Q&A section, the participants shared experiences of migrant fishermen from both the Asian and African region and then discussed the country of origin response when migrant fishermen face exploitation. In addition, participants expressed their concerns about human trafficking issues, noting the similarity in the experiences of migrant fishermen in the Mekong region and in African countries.

The participants suggested that improving mutual cooperation between both countries of origin and destination countries to protect migrant workers from exploitation in this industry was needed. The contribution of migrant workers to the economies of both their country of origin and destination country should also be highlighted, which will raise awareness of migrant rights at the community level.

During the WSFM 2014, the MMN delegates also attended several workshops including workshops on gender based violence amongst migrants, human trafficking, children on the move, strategies on building alliances between civil society and local authorities, and the impacts of migration policy on country of origin and transit. Throughout the meeting, the MMN delegates were not only sharing experiences of migrants from the Mekong sub-region, but also connecting MMN with migrant/refugee rights advocates from around the world.

10. Asia-Pacific Feminist Forum

At the Asia-Pacific Feminist Forum held in Chiang Mai on 30 May-1 June 2014, MMN and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development organised a workshop entitled “Bottom of ASEAN: living wages as a feminist issue”. The objectives of the workshop were:

1. To provide a platform for feminist organisations in the Asia Pacific region to discuss challenges women workers face in demanding living wages and decent work;
2. To deepen analysis and knowledge of the principles and strategies concerning living wages and decent work;
3. To share advocacy strategies in promoting living wages and decent work in the region as well as from other regions;
4. To deepen solidarity and foster civil society action in calling for living wages in the region.

The interactive activity highlighted the disparity between purchasing power of workers in developing and developed economies, and just how long it takes for workers on minimum wage to earn enough to purchase basic commodities. The workshop also highlighted that women and migrant workers carry the burden of economic development, but face particular challenges in promoting better wages and conditions due to insecure jobs, risks of retaliation against union activities, lack of knowledge of their rights, as well as global supply chain logistics and race to the bottom economics.

11. Clean Clothes Campaign

A number of migrant workers in the GMS are employed in garment industries and many face substandard working conditions. MMN has hence been working on the issues faced by migrants in garment industries for a number of years. See Restricted Rights: Migrant Workers in Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia (<http://www.mekongmigration.org/WOW%20Migration%20Report.pdf>)

In November 2014, MMN also became a member of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC). MMN representatives joined the CCC General Forum organised on 18-21 November 2014 in Hong Kong. MMN representatives also joined a workshop on employment and presented on the issues faced by migrants in the GSM. MMN’s membership in CCC is expected to strengthen the MMN’s response to the exploitation of migrant labour in garment industries.

12. MMN Website

Throughout 2014, MMN regularly updated its homepage, www.mekongmigration.org. The homepage contains MMN updates, migration news in GMS, advocacy calls on various thematic issues that MMN work on, and resources. Reference sections include the following that are constantly updated to assist migrant rights advocates and researchers in the region to have a better understanding on migration.

1. MMN publications: All MMN publications from 2003 onwards are downloadable.
2. MMN press releases
3. Legally Binding: Summary of Labour Laws in the GMS: The online version of the Legally Binding: A Summary of Labour Laws in the Greater Mekong Subregion booklet published in October 2011 contains 14 key elements on labour protection in the Mekong countries, and is regularly updated, with new labour laws added as they come out. Available at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/labourlaw/>
4. Speaking of Migration: Mekong Vocabulary on Migration: This page includes approximately 117 terms on migration issues translated into Burmese, Chinese, Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese. The section on “Terms to Avoid”, new migration terms in Mekong countries and new examples of usage of Terms is regularly updated on the online version. Available at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/vocab/>
5. Annotated Bibliography: A Guide to Publications on Migration in the GMS. MMN has published a bibliography since 2002 as a companion publication of the resource book on migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion. In 2009, it launched an online Annotated Bibliography so that information can be updated more regularly. The Annotated Bibliography serves as a guide to the information currently available on the issue and also highlights some of the research gaps that currently exist. Available at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/bibliography/>
6. International obligations to respect human rights and labour standards in GMS countries: Under this section, MMN updates GMS governments’ ratification of the UN and ILO convention relevant to migrants. It also provides links to the observations and comments on implementation of these conventions addressed to the respective GMS countries, made by the relevant UN and ILO bodies. Specific sections of UN and ILO reports relevant to migrant populations in Mekong countries are highlighted. MMN hopes that such information can be used by migrant advocates to press their respective governments for reforms of national laws and policies and/or ratification of relevant conventions. Available at: http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=2008 (observation and comments) http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=2138 (ratification table)

Furthermore, the reference section of the MMN homepage has “Recommended Books” through which MMN introduces reports and books that it finds useful and thought provoking. The reference section also has “Critical reflections by MMN partners” through which MMN partners’ critical views on recently published books or reports are introduced. The reference section has a new page “Educational Materials” through which MMN introduces the lesson plans on history of migration in English, Thai, Burmese, Lao, Khmer, Vietnamese and Japanese, a publication launched in October 2014.



MMN continues to update all the sections of the MMN homepage, to make it continually more useful.

13. MMN Listserve

Information sharing has been one of the main objectives of the MMN since it was launched in 2003. Currently, MMN hosts the following main list serves:

1. MMN member's list serve:

This is a formal list serve, which only MMN members can subscribe to. The internal discussion including strategy discussion, work plan, formulating positions on key issues is done through this list serve. MMN Secretariat manages the list serve.

2. Mekong news:

This is an open list serve that everyone, including non-MMN members interested in migration news in the GMS can subscribe to. News as well as MMN statements, press releases, and reports are circulated through this list serve.

Conclusion

Throughout 2014, MMN continued to strengthen its work on promoting and protecting migrants' rights in the region. It has developed a number of advocacy and reference tools to increase the capacity of migrant advocates in the region to carry out advocacy; carried out research to build knowledge on migration; carried out special studies on a number of urgent topics including on the exodus of Cambodian migrants, on migrant women and health, and on the impact of rushed investment on labour and migration (under the Bottom of ASEAN theme); developed valuable educational materials for children to learn about multicultural values and the history of migration; held consultation meetings to ensure MMN action reflects the needs and views of its members and the process is owned by the members; carried out media advocacy; participated in a number of regional and international forums; networked with a number of organisations and allies; and constantly worked towards strengthening the network's capacity. To enable the network to act promptly and strategically on relevant issues, MMN also continuously monitored policies, practices and emerging issues. At the time of writing this report, MMN has also started some new initiatives picking up from the recommendations from various meetings organised in 2014. MMN is committed to stepping up such efforts in 2015 and beyond.

Secretariat Calendar 2014

January

14 MMN representative attended a Consultation Meeting on 4 Year Work Permit Term organised by MAP foundation, Chiang Mai, Thailand

27 to 28

MMN representatives attended a research consultation meeting organised by the Asian Monitor Resource Centre and provided inputs, Bangkok, Thailand

March

8 MMN representatives attended the International Women Day 2014, Chiang Mai, Thailand

8 to 18

MMN representative joined the Lenten Campaign organised by CCFD, France

9 to 13

MMN representative attended the workshop on 5 C model, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

19

MMN organised Bottom of ASEAN Project Consultation Meeting, Yangon, Myanmar

20

MMN organised Mekong Migration Network Steering Committee meeting, Yangon, Myanmar

21 to 23

MMN delegation participated in the ASEAN People Forum (APF), Yangon, Myanmar

22

MMN organised the Bottom of ASEAN Workshop at the ASEAN People Forum (APF), Yangon, Myanmar

April

3 to 4

MMN representative attended a Paralegal Workshop on Human Rights organised by Cross Cultural Foundation, Chiang Mai, Thailand

20 to 24

MMN organised the Arrest, Detention & Deportation Advocacy Project Consultation Meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand

24

MMN representative attended the Launch of Thailand CAT Shadow Report organised by Amnesty International, Bangkok, Thailand

May

6

MMN representative attended a Consultation Meeting on Migrant Issues, organised by Prachatham News Agency, Chiang Mai, Thailand

- 9** MMN representative attended the ACSC/APF 2014 Regional Steering Committee Meeting on Interface, Yangon, Burma/ Myanmar
- 12 to 14** MMN representative attended the Global Forum on Migration & Development Civil Society Days, Stockholm, Sweden
- 16** MMN meeting with the OSF Migration Program
- 29** MMN Foundation board meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 30** MMN representatives participated in the Asia-Pacific Feminist Forum and organised a thematic workshop on “Bottom of ASEAN: living wages as a feminist issue”, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- June**
- 1** MMN representatives participated in the Asia-Pacific Feminist Forum and organised a thematic workshop on “Bottom of ASEAN: living wages as a feminist issue”, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 24 to 25** MMN representative attended Asian Roundtable on Social Protection: Organising the Marginalised for Social Protection organised by Asia Monitor Resource Centre and Oxfam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- 25** MMN organised an emergency meeting with Cambodian partners to discuss the issues of the exodus of Cambodian migrants in Thailand, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- 26 to 27** MMN representatives attended the Launch of the Oxfam Belgium Program 2014-16 organised by Oxfam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- July** MMN annual report for 2011-2013 was finalised
- August**
- 3 to 8** MMN organised the Regional Exchange Program supported by Diakonia, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- September**
- 10 to 12** MMN organised a research consultation meeting on the exodus of Cambodian migrants, Bangkok, Thailand
- 21** MMN representative attended a Public Consultation Meeting and Introducing the National Language Strategy and Policy organised by the Royal Institute, Bangkok, Thailand

October

15

MMN regional coordinator was interviewed on by Dana MacLean, Humanitarian reporter, Southeast Asia/ Latin America, The United Nations IRIN News as they were writing an article on migration and post MDG. The article was published on 11 November 2014. Please see the link below:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/100820/the-case-for-including-migration-in-the-post-2015-agenda>

27 to 28

MMN organised the Symposium on Embracing Diversity, Bangkok, Thailand

30

MMN regional coordinator attended the meeting organised by the Swiss Development Cooperation in Vientiane, Laos.

November

18 to 21

MMN regional coordinator attended a Clean Clothes Campaign annual meeting, Hong Kong. She also presented on the issues of precarious status of migrants in the region at the workshop on employment relations, organised on 19 November.

26 to 27

MMN organised the “Migrant Women and Health” 1st Research Consultation Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand

December

5 to 8

MMN representatives attended the World Social Forum on Migration 2014 and organised a workshop on ‘Migrants at Sea’ on 7 December, Johannesburg, South Africa

9

MMN representative attended a Preparatory Meeting for Organising the International Migrants Day, ILO Myanmar office, Yangon, Burma/Myanmar

14

MMN representative joined the International Migrants Day 2014 organised by the Myanmar CSOs Network for Migrants, Yangon, Burma/Myanmar

18

MMN representatives joined the International Migrants Day 2014 organised by MAP Foundation, Chiang Mai, Thailand

21

MMN organised a Consultation Meeting with Migrant Returnees which was attended by around 30 migrant returnees from Thailand, Singapore & Malaysia, and the meeting discussed roles of various stakeholders in protecting migrants, Yangon, Myanmar

Acronyms

ACSC	ASEAN Civil Society Conference
ADD	Arrest, Detention and Deportation
AFML	ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
AMC	Asian Migrant Centre
APF	ASEAN People's Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCFD	Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development
CCT	Church of Christ Thailand
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migrants
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MMN	Mekong Migration Network
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NV	National Verification
OSF	Open Society Foundation
SC	Steering Committee of the Mekong Migration Network
UN	United Nations
WSFM	World Social Forum on Migration

