



Migration Corridors Within and Beyond the Greater Mekong Subregion

Prepared by Mekong Migration Network

Roles of Countries of Origin: Phase II

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Cambodia to Thailand

Thailand is the most popular destination among Cambodian migrant workers. In 2015, the governments of Cambodia and Thailand signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) alongside a separate “Agreement on the Employment of Workers” to provide further guidance on migration to Thailand through recruitment agencies. Under the new agreement, migrant workers from Cambodia are entitled to change jobs if working conditions are “abusive, exploitative or become untenable.”¹ In addition, whereas workers previously had to wait three years between each two-year MoU deployment (of which they are entitled to a maximum of two), they now need to return to Cambodia for only 30 days.² As of May 2019, 243,465 Cambodian nationals had migrated to Thailand through processes established under the MoU. Meanwhile, 158,828 Cambodians are completing the nationality verification process as part of the registration process for undocumented migrants inside Thailand. A further 9,126 Cambodians have migrated temporarily to Thailand as seasonal workers through official channels.³ Including undocumented workers, there are an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 Cambodian nationals working in Thailand.⁴ The majority are employed in fisheries, agriculture, livestock, construction, manufacturing and service sectors, including domestic work.⁵

Cambodia to Malaysia

Cambodia officially began sending workers to Malaysia in 1998. Between 1998 and 2016, 46,541 documented migrant workers migrated to Malaysia, of whom 86% were women and 70% domestic workers.⁶ More recent figures from 2017 put the number of documented Cambodian workers in Malaysia at 5,995, the overwhelming majority of whom (4,643) are

¹ Agreement on the Employment of Workers between the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2015, Article 5(5).

² Ibid., Article 7.

³ International Labour Organization (ILO), TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, “Cambodia (April - June 2019)”, p.2, accessible at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_614380.pdf.

⁴ The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Cambodian Exodus from Thailand”, July 2014, accessible at <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=972098881&Country=Cambodia&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast>.

⁵ ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, “Cambodia (April - June 2019)”, p.1, above.

⁶ Serey Sok, “Cambodian Workers in Malaysia: Challenges and Constraints in Achieving Appropriate Working and Living Conditions”, *Malaysia Sustainable Cities Program, Working Paper Series*, p. 3, accessible at <https://malaysiacities.mit.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Sok.pdf>.



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women.⁷ In 2011, following widely reported cases of Malaysian employers abusing their Cambodian domestic workers, the Cambodian government issued a moratorium on the “first time” migration of domestic workers to Malaysia. Despite the ban, more than 8,000 Cambodian nationals were believed to have continued their employment in Malaysia.⁸ The ban was eventually lifted in 2015 when the Cambodian government signed an MoU with its Malaysian counterparts concerning the recruitment of domestic workers⁹ and a separate agreement concerning migrant workers in non-domestic work sectors.⁹ However, ILO reported that the Cambodian government has not issued Standard Operating Procedures to implement the MoU. Nonetheless, recruitment agencies in Cambodia have been sending domestic workers to Malaysia again since 2016.¹⁰ According to the Immigration Department of Malaysia, migrant workers from Cambodia are currently permitted to work in construction, on plantations, in agriculture, and in the service and manufacturing sectors.¹¹

Cambodia to Japan

Cambodia began sending workers to Japan in 2007 under the Technical Internship Training Program (TITP).¹² Under the programme, migrants must use the services of recruitment agencies to migrate. In 2017, replacing a prior Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), the governments of Cambodia and Japan signed a new MoC to outline the responsibilities of both governments in the sending and accepting of migrant workers from Cambodia based on reforms of the TITP in Japan. According to the new MoC, the purpose of the TITP is to “transfer technical skills, techniques and knowledge to Cambodia, to contribute to the human resource development by which the development of the economy of Cambodia would be led and thus to promote international cooperation.”¹³ As of December 2017, 6,180 Cambodian workers had been recruited under the programme¹⁴ and, in 2018, an additional 3,328 Cambodian workers migrated to Japan.¹⁵ Migrant Workers are permitted to engage in 133 categories of work within 77 sectors. For Cambodians, agriculture (34%), textile (26%),

⁷ ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, “Cambodia (April - June 2019)”, p.2, above.

⁸ Chhay Channyda and Alice Cuddy, “Malaysia maid pipeline resumes”, *Phnom Penh Post*, 11 December 2015, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/malaysia-maid-pipeline-resumes>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ILO, “Protected or put in harm’s way? Bans and restrictions on women’s labour migration in ASEAN countries”, 2017, p.29, accessible at

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_555974.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2wqzCp07Sas7luqv-wz1YljoMXUINtb4WIumNLLkj4K8a7FWO8oFverGo.

¹¹ See the webpage entitled “Foreign Worker” of the Immigration Department of Malaysia’s website, accessible at <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/foreign-worker.html>.

¹² Sry Bopharath, “Current Status and Policy Challenges of Labour Migration in Cambodia”, 2016, p.5, accessible at <https://www.jcer.or.jp/eng/pdf/Sry2016eng.pdf>.

¹³ Memorandum of Cooperation on the Technical Intern Training Program between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training of Cambodia, 2017, p.1, accessible at <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001229407.pdf>.

¹⁴ Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, PowerPoint presentation entitled “Technical Internship Training Program”, 2018, slide 2, accessible at <https://www.otit.go.jp/files/user/190408-1.pdf>.

¹⁵ Preliminary figures in 2018 cited during a meeting with the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO), conducted in July 2019, Tokyo, Japan.



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construction (18%) and food manufacturing (11%) are among the most popular.¹⁶ As of July 2019, 77 recruitment agencies in Cambodia have been approved to send workers to Japan under the TITP.¹⁷

To plug gaps in Japan's labour market, Japan created a new migration pathway for migrant workers, including those from Cambodia, who are considered "Specified Skilled Workers" (SSW), which became active in April 2019.¹⁸ To prepare for migration under the SSW, in March 2019, the governments of Cambodia and Japan signed an MoC on a Basic Framework for Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of "Specified Skilled Worker".¹⁹ Under the SSW, migrant workers from Cambodia must use the services of recruitment agencies to migrate and, once deployed, enjoy the freedom to change employers in the same field of work.

Cambodia to Hong Kong

In April 2017, the governments of Cambodia and Hong Kong launched a five-year pilot programme to facilitate migration of Cambodian domestic workers to Hong Kong.²⁰ The programme was launched at a time when several high-profile cases of violations of domestic workers were reported in the city.²¹ A later report published in August 2018 stated that the Cambodian government had approved more than ten recruitment agencies to send domestic workers to Hong Kong, although only four had successfully recruited workers. At the time of the report, fewer than 40 Cambodian domestic workers were in Hong Kong. A representative of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training was quoted saying that the pilot programme was "not a success".²²

Lao PDR to Thailand

Thailand's geographical proximity to Lao PDR, as well as wage differentials, are reasons why Thailand has been the most popular destination among Lao migrant workers. In 2016, the governments of Lao PDR and Thailand renewed a MOU to outline migration procedures through recruitment agencies. According to statistics released in December 2018, 162,039

¹⁶ Figures in Financial Year 2017 cited during a meeting with the JITCO, above.

¹⁷ Organization of Technical Internship Training (Japan), "Full list of approved sending organization of Cambodia", July 2019, <https://www.otit.go.jp/files/user/190717-3.pdf>.

¹⁸ See the brochure published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan entitled, "A New Status of Residence—'Specified Skilled Worker'—has been created", available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000459527.pdf>.

¹⁹ Memorandum of Cooperation between Japan and Myanmar on a Basic Framework for Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of "Specified Skilled Worker", March 2019, accessible at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000462638.pdf>.

²⁰ Yesenia Amaro and Sen David, "Hong Kong seeks Cambodian workers", *Phnom Penh Post*, 25 April 2017, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/hong-kong-seeks-cambodian-workers>.

²¹ Yon Sineat and Daphne Chen, "Maids depart for Hong Kong as part of new program", *Phnom Penh Post*, 28 December 2017, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/maids-depart-hong-kong-part-new-program>

²² Kong Meta, "Pitfalls for Hong Kong maid program", *Phnom Penh Post*, 6 August 2018, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/pitfalls-hong-kong-maid-program>.



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Lao migrant workers arrived in Thailand through processes established the MOU. Meanwhile, 63,373 were completing the nationality verification processes and 59,746 were registered at One Stop Service Centres.²³ A report by the ILO revealed that numbers accessing formal migration channels established by a previous MOU was low due to high costs, long processing time and complicated procedures. Recruitment agencies charging fees beyond prescribed levels to prospective migrants are also common for migration to Thailand.²⁴

Currently, a majority of Lao migrant workers are employed in domestic work, construction, manufacturing, agriculture and entertainment work.²⁵ Migration of Lao domestic workers to Thailand largely takes place outside of regular channels due to confusion over the legality of Lao women migrating to any location for work that “[is] unskilled, offer few learning opportunities or are contrary to cultural traditions.”²⁶

Myanmar to Thailand

An estimated 70% of migrants from Myanmar are believed to be in Thailand.²⁷ In 2016, the governments of Myanmar and Thailand signed a new MoU alongside a separate “Agreement on the Employment of Workers”, similar to that with Cambodia, to provide further guidance on migration procedures through recruitment agencies. Under the new agreement, migrant workers may change employers if the latter could not “protect the worker according to the existing laws.”²⁸ Myanmar workers are also only required to return to Myanmar for 30 days, as opposed to three years under the previous agreement, between each two-year MoU deployment (of which they are entitled to a maximum of two).²⁹ While the Myanmar government has set the maximum recruitment fee for migration to Thailand at Myanmar Kyat (MMK)150,000 (USD 98-99), labour rights organisations have noted cases of migrant workers paying as much as MMK 800,000 (USD 527).³⁰

Accurate data concerning the number of Myanmar migrants is hard to come by as many migrants remain undocumented. As of December 2018, 437,471 migrants had migrated through processes established by the MoU signed in 2016, while 765,640 were completing

²³ ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, “Lao PDR (April-June), 2019”, 2019, p.2, accessible at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_614379.pdf.

²⁴ Ibid., p.1.

²⁵ Ibid., p.2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See the webpage of the International Organization for Migration website entitled, “Myanmar”, <https://www.iom.int/countries/myanmar>.

²⁸ Agreement on the Employment of Workers between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Article 6(2).

²⁹ Ibid., Article 6(1).

³⁰ Zaw Zaw Htwe, “Unscrupulous Employment Agencies Prey on Workers Despite Agreements”, *Myanmar Times*, 28 May 2019, accessible at

<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/unscrupulous-employment-agencies-prey-workers-despite-agreements.html>.

the national verification process that allows undocumented migrants in Thailand to register with the authorities and regularise their status.³¹ Estimates suggest there are at least as many undocumented workers in the country as there are those who migrated through regular channels.³² Construction and manufacturing are among the most popular industries for Myanmar migrant workers.³³

Myanmar to Malaysia

As of October 2018, 138,492 Myanmar migrants were officially working in Malaysia, including 22,605 women and 115,887 men.³⁴ However, the actual number of documented and undocumented migrant workers is believed to be much higher, with Myanmar's Labor Ministry claiming in 2017 that more than 420,000 Myanmar citizens were working in Malaysia.³⁵ According to the Immigration Department of Malaysia, migrant workers from Myanmar are permitted to work in construction, on plantations, in agriculture, and in the service and manufacturing sectors.³⁶ In 2016, the Myanmar government banned its nationals from migrating to Malaysia after the former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak accused the Myanmar government of perpetuating human rights violations against the Rohingya in Rakhine State.³⁷ The Myanmar government officially lifted the ban in January 2018.³⁸ At present, there are no MoU agreements in place between the governments of Myanmar and Malaysia to outline migration procedures, however Myanmar migrant workers have continued to migrate to Malaysia either through recruitment agencies or through irregular channels. For migration through the formal channel, visa applications must be processed at the only service company in Myanmar authorised by the Malaysian government. The Myanmar government has also prescribed a maximum recruitment fee of USD 850 for

³¹ ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, "Myanmar (April-June), 2019", p. 2, accessible at

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_614382.pdf.

³² See MMN, "Safe from the Start", above, p.37.

³³ International Organisation for Migration (IOM), "Flow Monitoring Surveys: Insights into the Profiles and Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Migrants to Thailand (Round Two)", December 2018, p. 2, accessible at https://migration.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/IOM%20-%20DTM%20report%20A4_2019-01-09.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=4968.

³⁴ ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, "Myanmar (April-June), 2019", above, p.2.

³⁵ Peter Zsomer, "Myanmar Workers Bound for Malaysia Stuck with Stifling Fees", *The Irrawaddy*, 5 April 2019, accessible at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/malaysiamyanmar-workers-bound-for-malaysia-stuck-with-stifling-fees.html>.

³⁶ See Immigration Department of Malaysia webpage entitled "Foreign Worker", accessible at <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/foreign-worker.html>.

³⁷ Ye Mon, "Govt cuts flow of migrant workers to Malaysia amid diplomatic spat", *Myanmar Times*, 7 December 2016, accessible at

<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/24084-govt-cuts-flow-of-migrant-workers-to-malaysia-amid-diplomatic-spat.html>.

³⁸ Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Myanmar lifts worker ban to Malaysia", *Myanmar Times*, 11 January 2018, accessible at <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-lifts-worker-ban-malaysia.html>.



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migration to Malaysia,³⁹ but in recent reports, migrant workers expressed difficulties meeting migration costs, with some taking loans to migrate.⁴⁰ In 2018, some factories in Malaysia were reportedly hiring workers from Myanmar directly due to a labour shortage in the country. No recruitment fees were charged to workers in the process.⁴¹

Myanmar to Japan

Japan is an emerging labour market for migrant workers from Myanmar. In 2017, following reforms of the TITP in Japan, the governments of Myanmar and Japan signed an MoC to outline responsibilities of both governments in the sending and accepting of Myanmar migrant workers under the programme. Myanmar nationals must use the services of recruitment agencies to migrate under the TITP. As of December 2017, 6,144 Myanmar workers had worked in Japan under this programme⁴² and, in 2018, an additional 3,692 migrant workers moved to Japan under the TITP.⁴³ Most Myanmar workers under the TITP are engaged in food manufacturing (38%), textile (23%), construction (13%), machinery and metals (6%) and agriculture (5%).⁴⁴ In January 2019, Myanmar also sent the first group of care workers to Japan following revisions of the legislation on the TITP to enable workers to migrate as care workers.⁴⁵ To plug gaps in Japan's labour market, Japan created a new migration pathway for migrant workers, including those from Myanmar, who are considered "Specified Skilled Workers." In March 2019, to prepare for migration under the SSW scheme, the governments of Myanmar and Japan signed an MoC on a Basic Framework for Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of "Specified Skilled Worker" to implement the new migration channel.⁴⁶ The new agreement does not specify whether Myanmar migrant workers have to migrate using the services of recruitment agencies.

³⁹ Peter Zsomer, "Myanmar Workers Bound for Malaysia Stuck with Stifling Fees", above.

⁴⁰ See Ibid.; and Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Exodus of Workers Grows as Living Costs Rise in Myanmar", *Myanmar Times*, 16 July 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/exodus-workers-grows-living-costs-rise-myanmar.html>.

⁴¹ Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Malaysian companies hire Myanmar workers directly, without broker fees", *Myanmar Times*, 1 August 2018, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/malaysian-companies-hire-myanmar-workers-directly-without-broker-fees.html>.

⁴² Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, PowerPoint presentation entitled "Technical Internship Training Program", 2018, slide 2, accessible at <https://www.otit.go.jp/files/user/190408-1.pdf>.

⁴³ Preliminary figures in 2018 cited during a meeting with the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO), conducted in July 2019, Tokyo, Japan.

⁴⁴ Figures in Financial Year 2017 cited during a meeting with the JITCO, above.

⁴⁵ "Myanmar nursing care trainees arrive in Japan", *drawn from Kyodo by the Myanmar Times*, 8 January 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/myanmar-nursing-care-trainees-arrive-japan.html>.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Cooperation between Japan and Myanmar on a Basic Framework for Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of "Specified Skilled Worker", March 2019, accessible at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000462638.pdf>.

Myanmar to Singapore

Recruitment agencies in Myanmar were reportedly planning to send domestic workers to Singapore in 2014 after the Myanmar government lifted restrictions on domestic workers migrating to Singapore and Hong Kong.⁴⁷ However, following widespread reports on the abuse of migrant domestic workers in Asia, the Myanmar government issued a ban on women from Myanmar migrating for domestic work to any location, including Singapore. In April 2019, the ban was lifted by MOLIP on domestic workers migrating to Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and Macau.⁴⁸

Reports have pointed out that such bans have been largely ineffective in preventing Myanmar citizens migrating abroad for work. During the Myanmar government's ban on deploying domestic workers in 2016, between 30,000 and 40,000 moved to work in Singapore as domestic workers.⁴⁹ When the bans were in force, migration continued through underground and unregulated channels operated by unlicensed brokers or licensed agents acting illegally.⁵⁰ Before departure, domestic workers from Myanmar reportedly paid high and unregulated recruitment fees to "doctor" their documents and/or pay bribes, and were provided little to no pre-departure training.⁵¹ Once deployed, Myanmar domestic workers were found to be more prone to abuse and exploitation because of their irregular migration status. A study by UN Women reported that Myanmar domestic workers were among the lowest-paid workers of all foreign domestic workers in Singapore.⁵² They were also the least likely group to maintain contact with social structures outside of their place of employment, which created situations conducive to abuse.⁵³ When Myanmar domestic workers made arrangements to return home, the ban prevented them from accessing mechanisms to transfer social benefits they might have accrued during their tenure abroad.⁵⁴

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⁴⁷ Bill O'Toole, "After HK halt, maid agencies look to Singapore", *Myanmar Times*, 8 September 2014, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/national-news/11576-after-hk-halt-maid-agencies-anticipate-singapore-business.html>; and UN Women, "Study on the impact of protective policies for Myanmar migrant domestic workers in Thailand and Singapore", June 2017, p. 16, accessible at http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2018/04/mig-dw-research_english-r02x.pdf?la=en&vs=1903.

⁴⁸ Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Govt to resume sending maids to Singapore, three other areas", *Myanmar Times*, 26 April 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/govt-resume-sending-maids-singapore-three-other-areas.html>.

⁴⁹ UN Women, "Study on the impact of protective policies for Myanmar migrant domestic workers in Thailand and Singapore", p. 18, above.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.



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Hong Kong was once considered an emerging market for domestic workers from Myanmar. In February 2014, the first group of Myanmar domestic workers arrived in the city after the Myanmar government lifted restrictions on sending women domestic workers to Singapore and Hong Kong.⁵⁵ However, owing to widespread reports on the abuse of migrant domestic workers in Asia, the Myanmar government suspended its nationals from migrating to work as domestic workers in Hong Kong in September 2014.⁵⁶ This was followed by a ban on women from Myanmar migrating for domestic work in any location. The MOLIP lifted the ban in April 2019 on domestic workers migrating to Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and Macau.⁵⁷

Vietnam to Malaysia

Vietnam officially began sending workers to Malaysia in 2002. In 2003, the governments of Vietnam and Malaysia signed an MoU to outline migration procedures under formal procedures. 220,000 Vietnamese nationals migrated through processes established by the agreement,⁵⁸ and the MoU was later renewed in 2015. However, numbers deployed to Malaysia have since decreased, with only 9,533 migrant workers migrating to the country between 2015 and 2016.⁵⁹ In 2018, Malaysia fell out of the top five destination countries for Vietnamese workers, with only 1,102 travelling there.⁶⁰ A number of factors appear to be responsible for this decline, including the emergence of new destination countries, which offers more options for prospective migrants, lower wage levels in Malaysia compared to other economies and weak labour monitoring mechanisms in Malaysia that could make it difficult for migrants to resolve labour disputes.⁶¹

In 2015, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and Malaysia Trade Union Congress (MTUC) signed an MoU setting out official bilateral cooperation on labour

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 16; and “Pictures: First domestic workers from Myanmar arrive in Hong Kong amid concerns of abuse”, *South China Morning Post*, 24 February 2014, accessible at <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1433980/pictures-first-domestic-workers-myanmar-arrive-hong-kong-amid>.

⁵⁶ Myanmar bans women from working as maids in Hong Kong, 14 September 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1592019/fearing-abuse-myanmar-bars-its-women-maid-jobs-hong-kong-singapore>

⁵⁷ Zaw Zaw Htwe, “Govt to resume sending maids to Singapore, three other areas”, *Myanmar Times*, 26 April 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/govt-resume-sending-maids-singapore-three-other-areas.html>.

⁵⁸ DOLAB, “Việt Nam – Malaixia ký kết Bản ghi nhớ về tuyển dụng và sử dụng lao động” (Vietnam and Malaysia signed the MOU on recruitment and employment”, accessible at <http://dolab.gov.vn/New/View2.aspx?Key=2047>.

⁵⁹ IOM, “Vietnam Migration Profile 2016”, 2017, accessible at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp_vietnam.pdf.

⁶⁰ MOLISA, “Cục Quản lý Lao động ngoài nước tổng kết công tác năm 2018, triển khai nhiệm vụ năm 2019” (Department of Overseas Labours reports on the work in 2018 and sets targets in 2019, January 2019, <http://www.dolab.gov.vn/New/View2.aspx?Key=4202>.

⁶¹ DOLAB, “Việt Nam – Malaixia ký kết Bản ghi nhớ về tuyển dụng và sử dụng lao động” (Vietnam and Malaysia signed the MOU on recruitment and employment”, accessible at <http://dolab.gov.vn/New/View2.aspx?Key=2047>. And MMN Key Informant Interview with retired government official, conducted October 2018, Hanoi.

migration.⁶² It also facilitates the engagement of these two actors in promoting the ratification of ILO conventions, conveying concerns of migrant workers to authorities and policy makers, and addressing occupational health and safety issues especially in hazardous sectors.⁶³

Vietnam to Japan

In 2018, Japan became the largest market for overseas labour migration from Vietnam. Migrant workers can formally go to work in Japan under two separate programmes, namely the Vietnam-Japan Economic partnership agreement (VJEAP) on nursing and care work, and the Technical Internship Training Programme. Under the terms of the VJEAP, Japan has agreed to the entry and temporary residence of Vietnamese nationals who are qualified nurses under relevant Japanese laws and regulations (commonly referred to as *Kangoshi*).⁶⁴ Suitably qualified individuals may practice nursing in Japan for a period of one or three years, which may be extended within a period of seven years from the date of obtaining the *Kangoshi* qualifications.⁶⁵ Vietnam has become the third country after Indonesia and the Philippines to send workers to Japan in the nursing and care giving sector. Vietnam's Department of Overseas Labour under the Ministry of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) was appointed as the implementing body for this programme. The first group of Vietnamese nurses and caregivers went to Japan under the VJEAP in 2014. By 2017, there were 673 Vietnamese nationals working in Japan as nurses and caregivers.⁶⁶

In 1992, the MOLISA and the Japan International Training Cooperation Organisation signed an MoC that would enable Vietnamese workers to migrate to Japan under the Japanese Industrial Training Program and the Technical Internship Program (later the TITP).⁶⁷ In 2017, Vietnam and Japan signed a new MoC to comply with the Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees (Japan).⁶⁸ Under the TITP, the

⁶² ILO, "Viet Nam, Malaysia's trade unions ink agreement to strengthen protection of migrant workers", accessible at

https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Informationresources/Publicinformation/newsitems/WCMS_353252/lang--en/index.htm. And MMN Key Informant Interview with retired government official, conducted October 2018, Hanoi.

⁶³ ILO, "Progress of the implementation of recommendations adopted at the 3rd – 8th ASEAN Forums on Migrant Labour: Background paper to the 9th AFML", 2017, p.16, accessible at

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_548377.pdf.

⁶⁴ See the Vietnam Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (VJEPA), Annex 7, Section 5. The agreement was signed on 25 December 2008 and came into effect on 1 October 2009. It is accessible at

<http://www.wtcenter.vn/chuyen-de/12772-full-text-of-vietnam-japan-economic-partnership-agreement-vjepa>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Tuyển 240 điều dưỡng viên, hộ lý sang làm việc tại Nhật Bản" (Recruiting 240 nurses, care givers working in Japan), Dân Trí, 7 October 2017, accessible at

<https://dantri.com.vn/print-2017100322252869.htm>

⁶⁷ Ishizuka Futaba, "International Labour Migration in Vietnam and the Impact of Receiving Countries' Policies", 2013, p.8, accessible at

https://ir.ide.go.jp/?action=repository_action_common_download&item_id=37761&item_no=1&attribute_id=22&file_no=1.

⁶⁸ The MOC on Technical Training Intern Programme between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan and The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Of Vietnam was signed on 6 June 2017 and came into effect on 1 November 2017. It is accessible at



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electronic, mechanical, manufacturing (garment), seafood processing, agriculture, construction, shipping, and building industries are among the most popular among Vietnamese workers. By the end of 2018, there were more than 140,000 Vietnamese trainees in Japan under the TITP.⁶⁹

Through this programme, trainees can go to work in Japan through approved recruitment agencies or through the IM Japan programme. The programme is based on an agreement between International Manpower Development Organization of Japan⁷⁰ and the MOLISA. Participants must undergo a stringent selection process, but if successful receive four months of pre-departure training and four weeks of “off the job training” in Japan.⁷¹ This cooperation initiative is mentioned as one of the implementation outcomes of the Prime Minister’s Decision no. 71/2009/QD-TTg on supporting people in poor and remote provinces to enable them to work overseas. On the Vietnamese side, the Centre of Overseas Labour is the agency responsible for implementing the programme.

<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/04-Houdouhappyou-11808000-Shokugyounouryokukaihatsukyoku-Gaikokujinken-shusuishinshitsu/0000167017.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See IM Japan website accessible at <http://www.imm.or.jp/en/towa.html>.

⁷¹ See IM Japan webpage entitled “Training Program for Foreign Interns in Japan”, accessible at <http://www.imm.or.jp/en/kensyu2.html>.