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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACMW</td>
<td>ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers (Formal name is the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of Migrant Workers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACRA</td>
<td>Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies</td>
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<td>ACSC</td>
<td>ASEAN Civil Society Conference</td>
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<td>AEPF</td>
<td>Asia-Europe People’s Forum</td>
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<td>AFML</td>
<td>ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour</td>
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<td>AIT</td>
<td>Asian Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>AMC</td>
<td>Asian Migrant Centre</td>
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<td>AMS</td>
<td>ASEAN Member States</td>
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<td>APF</td>
<td>ASEAN People’s Forum</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ASEM</td>
<td>Asia-Europe Meeting</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>Clean Clothes Campaign</td>
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<td>CCFD</td>
<td>Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development</td>
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<td>CDI</td>
<td>Centre for Development and Integration</td>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>Certificate of Identity</td>
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<td>COC</td>
<td>Code of Conduct</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>CTUM</td>
<td>Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWCC</td>
<td>Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre</td>
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<td>DOLAB</td>
<td>Department of Overseas Labour, Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FED</td>
<td>Foundation for Education and Development</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focal Group Discussions</td>
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<td>FLC</td>
<td>Future Light Centre</td>
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<td>GC</td>
<td>General Conference</td>
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<td>GCM</td>
<td>Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration</td>
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<td>GFMD</td>
<td>Global Forum on Migration and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMS</td>
<td>Greater Mekong Subregion</td>
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<tr>
<td>HLD</td>
<td>High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development</td>
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<td>HK</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>IWD</td>
<td>International Women’s Day</td>
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<td>LPN</td>
<td>Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSCW</td>
<td>Legal Support for Children &amp; Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MAC</td>
<td>Manpower Association of Cambodia</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Myanmar Infrastructure, Craft and Service</td>
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<td>MMN</td>
<td>Mekong Migration Network</td>
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<td>MMN SC</td>
<td>Mekong Migration Network Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOC</td>
<td>Memorandum of Cooperation</td>
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<td>MOEAF</td>
<td>Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOHRSS</td>
<td>Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, China</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOL</td>
<td>Ministry of Labor, Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOLIP</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Myanmar</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOLISA</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Center</td>
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<td>MSD</td>
<td>Management and Sustainable Development, Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSDP</td>
<td>Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan</td>
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<td>MWEAC</td>
<td>Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Centre</td>
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<td>NFAT</td>
<td>National Fishing Association of Thailand</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NSEDP</td>
<td>National Socio-Economic Development Plan</td>
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<td>NV</td>
<td>Nationality Verification</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEA</td>
<td>Overseas Employment Agencies</td>
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<td>OSF</td>
<td>Open Society Foundation</td>
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<td>OSSC</td>
<td>One-Stop Service Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDR</td>
<td>People's Democratic Republic (of Lao)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEZ</td>
<td>Special Economic Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>SISS</td>
<td>Southern Institute of Social Sciences</td>
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<td>SMJ</td>
<td>Solidarity with Migrants in Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>TITP</td>
<td>Technical Internship Training Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMFG</td>
<td>Thai and Migrant Fishers Union Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Terms of Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWC2</td>
<td>Transient Workers Count Too</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAMAS</td>
<td>Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSFM</td>
<td>World Social Forum on Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCOWA</td>
<td>Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association</td>
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About **MMN**

The Mekong Migration Network (MMN) is a subregional network of civil society organisations (CSOs), research institutes, and grassroots movements 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 emerged from a collaborative action research project that the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) along with over 20 collaborating organisations carried out from 2001 to 2003 to assess the issues, needs, and responses regarding migration in the GMS. As a result, the first edition of a resource book on migration in the GMS, entitled “Migration Needs, Issues and Responses in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: A Resource Book,” was published in 2003, highlighting gaps in responses and laying out comprehensive recommendations for policy reforms.

In October 2003, over 30 CSOs 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 CSOs 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 (TOP), which explains the nature and mechanisms of MMN. The founding members also nominated members to the MMN Steering Committee (SC), 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 United Nations (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 working 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 advocacy on migrants' rights by building mutual support and solidarity among migrants and their advocates within the GMS.
MMN Members

Myanmar
Future Light Centre
88 Generation Peace and Open Society (Labour Department)
Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar (CTUM)*
WE Generation*
*CTUM and WE Generation are already active in MMN projects, and are in the process of formalising their membership.

Cambodia
Legal Support for Children & Women (LSCW)
Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)
Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD)
Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM)-Cambodia
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's Union

Thailand
MAP Foundation
Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)
National Catholic Commission on Migration (NCCM)
EMPOWER Foundation
Foundation for AIDS Rights (FAR)
Foundation for Women (FFW)
Foundation for Education and Development (FED)
The Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF)
Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University
Maryknoll Thailand - Office for Migrants at Immigration Detention Centre in Bangkok
The Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program-Christian Conference of Asia (MEPPCCA)
Pattanarak Foundation
Raks Thai Foundation
Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association (YCOWA)

Vietnam
Centre for Development and Integration (CDI), Centre of Research and Consultancy for Development (CRCRD)
Southern Institute of Sustainable Development (SISD)
Education & Psychology Association - Ho Chi Minh City
The Applied Social Work Center
Research Centre for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD)
The following members of the MMN SC were elected during the 6th General Conference held in March 2015 and held their seats until August 2018:

Ms. Thet Thet Aung  
Future Light Center (FLC) (formerly representing 88 Generation Peace and Open Society), Burma/Myanmar

Ms. Chhan Sokunthea  
Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodia

Ms. Han Jialing  
Migrant Workers’ Education and Action Research Centre (MWEAC), China

Ms. Kabmanivanh Phouxay  
National University of Laos, Lao PDR

Mr. Brahm Press  
MAP Foundation, Thailand

Ms. Trang Thu Hoang  
Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD), Vietnam  
In April 2018, Ms. Trang Thu Hoang left MSD and joined the MMN Secretariat. MSD has not appointed a new SC representative and this seat remained vacant prior to the 7th General Conference held in August 2018.

Ms. Reiko Harima  
Ex-Officio as the MMN Regional Coordinator, MMN Secretariat

On 3 August 2018, the 7th General Conference was held and the following SC members were elected:

Ms. Thet Thet Aung  
Future Light Centre (FLC), Burma/Myanmar

Ms. Pok Panhavichetr  
Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC), Cambodia

Ms. Han Jialing  
Migrant Workers’ Education and Action Research Centre (MWEAC), China

Vacant SC seat  
Lao PDR  
This became vacant as MMN members from Lao PDR were not able to join the General Conference

Mr. Brahm Press  
MAP Foundation, Thailand

Ms. Duong Thi Viet Anh  
Centre For Development and Integration (CDI), Vietnam

Ms. Reiko Harima  
Ex-Officio as the MMN Regional Coordinator, MMN Secretariat

Steering Committee members elected at the 7th General Conference. (Photo: MMN)
MMN Secretariat offices are located in Hong Kong (HK) 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 ever since. The Secretariat office in Chiang Mai was established in 2008 and was hosted by the MAP Foundation until 2011. In November 2011, following a 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 2018**
Ms. Reiko Harima, MMN Regional Coordinator, 2003 to date
Ms. Omsin Boonlert, MMN Project Coordinator, April 2011 to date
Ms. Carli Melo, MMN Project Coordinator, June 2016 to date
Ms. Suphit Chaihong, Administration Officer, April 2017 to date
Ms. Thaw Dar, MMN Project Assistant, August 2017 to April 2018
Ms. Trang Hoang, MMN Project Coordinator, March 2018 to date
Ms. Phasy Res, MMN Research and Advocacy Officer, April 2018 to date
Mr. Luk Kay Yui Stefan, MMN Information and Advocacy Officer, July 2018 to date

**Consultants**
Dr. Ché Singh Kochhar-George

**Interns and Volunteers**
Ms. Amber Gauthier, May-August 2018
Ms. Haila Hassan, May-August 2018
Mr. Alex Wang, May-August 2018

**MMN Supporters**
Solidar Suisse
Oxfam
Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD)-Terre Solidaire
Open Society Foundation
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
Porticus Foundation
On behalf of MMN Secretariat, I would like to thank all the MMN members who have tirelessly defended the rights of migrants. Without their contribution and solidarity, it would not have been possible for MMN to work together as a network. MMN celebrated its 15th anniversary in August 2018. With many long-time members having been active in MMN since the network was started and now with the next wave of migrants’ rights advocates joining the network, MMN sees the synergy between ideas emanating from the multiple generations of advocates. I would like to thank the MMN Steering Committee members who have greatly contributed their expertise in advancing MMN’s goals and strengthening the network. I also wish to thank all the staff members, interns, and volunteers of the Secretariat, who have persistently worked to achieve MMN’s vision. I would also like to acknowledge the continued warm support and contributions of the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood for managing MMN’s operations in Thailand since 2011, and the AMC, the initiator of the network in 2001, for hosting the MMN Secretariat in Hong Kong and contributing its expertise in carrying out regional work.

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 2018 included the following: Oxfam, Solidar Suisse, Open Society Foundation, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD), and the Porticus Foundation. And to all others not named here but who have contributed their time, expertise, and efforts, MMN would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude.

Reiko Harima
Regional Coordinator, Mekong Migration Network

MMN’s 15th anniversary workshop group photo. (Photo: MMN)
In 2018, MMN celebrated fifteen years of continually striving to keep abreast of changes in current migration policy and to report on the real conditions migrants face. It is an honor to be a part of this group of committed advocates. MMN’s research has aimed to inform policy makers and other key stakeholders of the impact policies have, and how they could be improved to support migrants’ rights and well-being. MMN’s foresight, and the direct contact it has with the migrant community through its members, has made the network a highly respected authority on migrant issues by governments. This past year, MMN’s most recent research has once again identified issues of emerging importance, such as the roles of origin countries, the conditions of migrant workers and their families in agriculture and seafood, and the growth of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). As the situation continues to change and migrants move farther afield in the hope of finding lucrative jobs in countries outside the sub-region, it is important to remain pertinent and follow-up with Mekong migrants’ situation.

Brahm Press
Chairperson of MMN Steering Committee

For MMN members in Myanmar, 2018 saw growing interaction between migrants’ rights advocates and labour movements. In January 2018, in collaboration with the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), MMN co-organised a series of workshops on the rights of garment factory workers. A number of trade unions and civil society organizations working to protect rights of garment factory workers in Myanmar attended the workshops, learnt about global strategies to promote the workers’ rights, and exchanged strategies with participants from all over the world.

MMN also carried out a number of collaborative research projects in 2018, and I am happy to see that taking part in these research projects has provided our member organisations with an opportunity to deepen our understanding on the issues, and to develop stronger evidence for our advocacy work. Carrying out field study in Myanmar for the MMN’s collaborative research project on SEZs and migration in the GMS allowed us to better understand the situations in the SEZs as well as in other industrial zones. Participating in the MMN’s collaborative research project focusing on migrant agricultural workers in Thailand has given us a deeper understanding on the specific challenges facing these workers. The second phase of the Roles of Countries of Origin project also started in 2018. Being part of this project has given us opportunity not only to deepen our collective analysis on the roles of countries of origin in protecting migrants’ rights, but also to learn about some of the newly emerging destination countries, such as Japan.

In August 2018, MMN celebrated 15th Anniversary and held the General Conference (GC) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Future Light Centre (FLC) was re-elected as a Steering Committee member for the second term during the GC. We are truly honoured to be part of the network that continues to strive for the protection of migrants’ rights.

Thet Thet Aung
MMN Steering Committee Member
Overview of Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion in 2018

To give context to MMN’s work in 2018, this section provides some brief background on recent migration-related trends and policy developments in the GMS. As an important source, destination, and transit point for international migrants, the GMS implicates the way migration is managed at the local level, in the wider Asia-Pacific region, and beyond. As a network, MMN continues to place great importance on information monitoring and providing venues where migrant advocates can effectively exchange information.

Beginning with regional policy, 2018 saw ongoing developments related to the Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, which heads of Association of Southeast Asian Nations States (ASEAN) signed in 2017. In 2018, ASEAN Member States (AMS), through the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW), adopted a subsequent action plan for 2018-2025. Following the provisions in the Consensus, the Action Plan was also categorised under five broad areas, namely: (i) education/information; (ii) protection; (iii) enforcement; (iv) recourse; and (v) reintegration. According to the Action Plan, Thailand has agreed to coordinate or lead a number of actions including the following: the study on portability of social security for migrant workers across ASEAN member states; development of effective mechanisms and programmes to protect migrant children, focusing on development, education, and health services; and advocacy targeted to sending countries on ensuring health coverage of documented migrants. Myanmar and Lao PDR agreed to co-lead the Protection Programme for Marginalised and Vulnerable Women (e.g. victims of trafficking, migrant workers, victims of disasters).

At the national level, labour migration governance implemented by most of the governments in the GMS continued to centre around regularising migrants’ immigration statuses, promoting regular migration channels, and preventing undocumented migration. The global discussion that was taking place in anticipation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) was reflected in the migration discourse in the GMS to a certain extent, emphasising the benefits of regular and orderly migration. On 10 December 2018, the GCM was approved by 164 nations during the Intergovernmental Conference on GCM. On 19 December 2018, the UN General Assembly endorsed the document. 152 countries voted in favour of the resolution to endorse it, while the United States, Hungary, Israel, Czech Republic, and Poland voted against it.

Meanwhile, the movement of people in the GMS continued to be characterised by the mixed nature of migration; many became or remained displaced due to conflicts, large-scale development projects, or human rights violations, while many others were trafficked. Adequate social protection and decent work continued to be beyond reach for many of the ordinary workers in the region.

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Burma/Myanmar

Within the GMS, Myanmar has grown to become the country of origin with the greatest number of migrants. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that there were as many as 4.25 million Myanmar migrants living abroad, though accurate data concerning the number of migrants is hard to come by, as many migrated outside of formal mechanisms for cross-border and overseas labour migration. According to an official from the Ministry for Planning and Finance, remittance through state-owned and private banks by nearly 1.5 million Myanmar migrants reached around $1.5 billion USD between April 2016 and June 2018.2 Thailand was the most popular destination country, followed by Malaysia, China, and Singapore.3

The management of labour migration continued to be a priority for the Myanmar government. In 2018, the government launched the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) 2018-2030, the nation's overall development strategy aimed at providing coherence in different policy areas. The plan is structured around three “pillars”, namely: 1) Peace and Stability; 2) Prosperity and Partnership; and 3) People and Planet, with corresponding strategies and goals developed under each pillar. Under People and Planet, the MSDP sets out to “protect the rights and harness the productivity of all, including migrant workers”.4 To achieve this, the MSDP recommends action plans such as providing a legal identity to all, promoting legal, affordable, and secure migration services, protecting labour rights, and promoting safe and secure working environments.5

Aside from the new national plan, the Myanmar government also worked towards consolidating existing formal migration channels. In April 2018, the government renewed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Japanese government, which lays out the commitments and responsibilities of both governments in the participation of Myanmar migrant workers in Japan's Technical Internship Training Program (TITP).6 The Myanmar government was also expected to send the first group of 9,000 migrants to work in Thailand's fishing industry under processes established by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2016 between the two countries.7

In January 2018, the Myanmar government officially lifted a ban on Myanmar workers migrating to Malaysia, imposed in December 2016 following political tensions between the two governments.8 During the period of the ban, Myanmar workers reportedly continued to migrate to work in Malaysia through irregular channels, such as using a tourist visa, to find jobs.9 As of the end of 2018, a separate suspension on Myanmar workers migrating to any location as domestic workers continued to be in place. This latter ban was introduced in 2014 following widely reported incidents of abuse and violation of domestic workers in Asia. However, as a previous MMN report pointed out, the ban did not effectively prevent domestic workers from migrating and gave rise to a network of illegal and unregulated brokers who facilitated migration through irregular

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5 Ibid., p.49.
Responding to concerns about the suspension, an official from the Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) revealed in May 2018 that a policy to reopen formal migration channels for domestic workers was in the drafting process.11

In Thailand, the pink card (a non-Thai identification document that the Thai government issued at a previous round of registration to migrant workers from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR who arrived in the country undocumented) expired on 31 March 2018. Myanmar workers who held the pink card were required to register at One-Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) before the deadline, after which they were allowed to stay and work in Thailand until 30 June 2018.12 Between 31 March and 30 June 2018, if they had not already done so, registered migrants were expected to pass a health test, get their nationality verified, and obtain a Certificate of Identity (CI) from the Myanmar government. Having the CI is a requirement for visa and work permit applications in Thailand.13 Those who successfully obtained the work permit could extend their stay until 31 March 2020 with the exception of workers in the fishing and seafood processing industries, who were allowed to stay until 1 November 2019.14 To facilitate the Nationality Verification (NV) process, the Myanmar government set up nine CI centres and two mobile centres across Thailand to process documents and issue CIs.15 By the end of the registration process, 777,217 migrants from Myanmar successfully completed required procedures and were allowed to stay until 1 November 2019 or 31 March 2020.16

Several human rights groups raised concerns about Myanmar migrant workers of Muslim and South Asian heritage facing additional barriers to complete registration processes. In Myanmar, people of Muslim and South Asian background often face restrictions obtaining citizenship documents. To complete NV processes, migrants of Muslim and South Asian heritage were reportedly asked to produce documents to Myanmar authorities that were not demanded from other Myanmar workers, including Myanmar-issued ID cards, household registration forms, and letters from both the police and local officials in Myanmar. Many reported not being able to meet these extra requirements.17

12 See the section on Thailand for a more detailed description of policy changes in Thailand.
Cambodia

A government estimate in 2018 revealed that in excess of 1.8 million Cambodian nationals were working overseas at the time of the estimate. According to an earlier joint survey conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and IOM, less than one-third of Cambodian migrants moved abroad through formal channels. The majority continued to rely on a combination of unlicensed brokers and social networks to reach their destination countries. Neighbouring Thailand remained the most popular destination for Cambodian migrant workers, followed by other affluent East and Southeast Asian countries such as the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Japan, and Singapore.

In December 2018, the Cambodian government updated its policy concerning outbound migrant workers with the launch of the Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia 2019-2023. The new policy provides the main framework to protect and empower migrant workers through strengthening the mechanisms for Cambodian people to migrate safely and through regular channels. Included in the policy are provisions to promote skill recognition, reduce migration costs for migrants, strengthen support and reintegration services, increase access to social protection, and increase opportunities for migrant women. Alongside the new policy, the Cambodian government released the Dispute Resolution Guidelines for Resolving Migrant Worker Grievances, which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the settlement of labour disputes in reference to Prakas (Regulation) No. 249 on the Complaint Receiving Mechanism for Migrant Workers.

Aside from updating existing legal and policy frameworks on outbound migration, the Cambodian government also worked towards expanding international labour markets for Cambodian workers. Towards the end of 2017, the government authorised six recruitment agencies to send more than 1,000 domestic workers to Hong Kong, although only 40 Cambodian workers had pursued this option as of August 2018. Cambodia and Japan also signed an agreement in 2017 to allow Cambodian workers to participate in Japan’s TITP. To facilitate recruitment of workers under the programme, the first elderly care training centre was set up in Cambodia in 2018 to provide skills training to prospective elderly care workers travelling to Japan. Regarding destination

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20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
countries in the Middle East, the governments of Kuwait and Qatar were reportedly in talks with the Cambodian government to discuss the possibilities of deploying Cambodian workers.27

A number of industry initiatives among recruitment agencies to improve the protection of migrant workers’ rights took place in 2018. In November, two recruitment agency associations, namely the Manpower Association of Cambodia (MAC) and the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA), signed an MOU with the Thai-Cambodia Relations Association in Cambodia to cooperate with the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to protect and promote the rights and welfare of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand.28 A month later, MAC and ACRA signed a separate MOU with the Malaysian Association of Foreign Workers Agencies, the National Association of Human Resources Malaysia, and the Malaysia National Association of Employment Agencies to ensure the rights and safety of migrant workers in Malaysia.29

For Cambodian workers who migrated through irregular channels, the constant risk of arrest and deportation continued to constitute part of their experience abroad. In Thailand, following the expiration of the pink card on 31 March, the Thai government required Cambodian workers to go through NV processes and obtain a CI in order to apply for visas and work permits. The entire registration process ended on 30 June 2018.30 The following day, the Thai government launched an operation to clamp down on undocumented migrant workers who remained in the country. In the first month of the operation, 1,000 Cambodians were deported31 and a total of 19,379 were sent home over the course of the year.32

China remained a prominent country of origin and destination for the global migrant labour force in 2018. Available statistics place the global Chinese workforce at 10 million abroad, many of whom had followed the developments of the Belt and Road Initiative in its expansion across the globe.33 While the World Migration Report of 2018 still marks the Chinese-US migration corridor as China’s largest,34 there was a growing interest in the Chinese labour forces moving to countries like Algeria and Angola. In 2018, there were a documented 202,000 Chinese labourers across Africa on temporary contracts, with a particular concentration of workers employed in the construction sector.35 Chinese nationals also continued to travel

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30 See the section on Thailand for a more detailed description of policy changes in Thailand.
within migration corridors in East Asia. China is currently listed as one of nine priority countries that Japan will recruit from to help supplement their ageing national workforce amidst an easing on Japanese migrant worker policy.\(^{36}\) Under Japan's TITP, 77,567 Chinese migrant workers worked in Japan as of December 2017.\(^{37}\)

In terms of migration flow into China from neighbouring countries in the GMS, the Chinese government officially inaugurated a land border crossing route connecting the Chinese cities of Guilin and Dongxing to the Vietnamese cities of Mong Cai and Ha Long on 1 June 2018 in response to a rising population of Vietnamese labourers seeking employment across the border.\(^{38}\) One report estimated that 8,000 Vietnamese workers cross over to the port of Pingxiang every day.\(^{39}\) In November 2018, China also began construction of an economic cooperation zone along the Myanmar-China border based on an MOU that had been signed in May 2018. Both sides hoped that the zone would foster greater investment, create more employment opportunities, and promote trade between the two countries.\(^{40}\)

In 2018, the Chinese government also made efforts to engage in international dialogues on cross-border labour issues. On 6-7 April, senior officials from member states of ASEAN, China, and the Republic of Korea organised a seminar focusing on migrant workers’ contribution to the East Asia Economic Community. The conference provided a space to encourage discussion on how to support vulnerable migrant workers employed in low-income sectors who often cannot access various forms of social protection, especially within the spheres of occupational safety and health, social protection systems, employment services, and overseas work opportunities. Recommendations to promote the rights and well-being of migrant workers were scheduled to be discussed at the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting.\(^{41}\)

On 25 May, China’s Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) signed an MOU with the ILO to improve working conditions more broadly across global supply chains, with an emphasis on promoting decent work.\(^{42}\) Under this MOU, China committed itself to the implementation of an European Union (EU)-funded programme on responsible supply chains\(^{43}\) and a project on promoting rights within the cotton supply chain, funded by Inditex, one of the world’s largest fashion retailers that owns fashion brands such as Zara.\(^{44}\) On 6 November, the MOHRSS signed an additional MOU with the ILO to “promote development cooperation with a focus on South-South initiatives,” to specifically look at the protection of workers in supply chains within Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar. This agreement promised improvements in employment services, the dissemination of labour market information, and skills development programmes.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{39}\) Ibid.


\(^{45}\) ILO, “China partners with the ILO to advance South-South cooperation”, 6 November 2018, accessible at https://www.ilo.org/beijing/
Outbound labour migration continued to be a way of life for many workers in Lao PDR. The ILO reported that an estimated 1.3 million Lao nationals were living abroad, of whom 54 percent were women. In 2018, Lao overseas workers sent home a total of $149 million USD in remittances. Key sectors employing Lao migrant workers in Thailand included domestic work, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and entertainment work. Migration of Lao domestic workers to Thailand largely took place outside of regular channels, as confusion over the legality of Lao women migrating for work that “[is] unskilled, offer few learning opportunities, or contrary to cultural traditions” as ambiguously referenced in the Labour Law, remained problematic.46

2018 marked the halfway point in Lao PDR’s 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). Among its objectives, the NSEDP aims to ensure political stability, peace and order in society, significantly reduce poverty in all areas, and push Lao PDR out of the Least Developed Country category.47 At this halfway point, the Lao government launched a midterm review to track progress made by various responsible actors, such as government agencies, to implement goals set out in the plan. A report on the midterm review noted that the rate of outbound migration remained high and acknowledged that Lao migrant workers continue to face challenges due to their limited access to information, training, resources, skill matching, mobility, and social protection support while abroad, as well as reintegration services and job opportunities in Lao PDR upon return.48

Despite existing gaps in policies and practices, there were some efforts to expand services to migrant workers abroad. In August, Lao PDR inaugurated its fourth Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in conjunction with the ILO’s TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme with the intention of assisting more migrants in accessing legal counsel, referral support, and information on migrant rights and support services in destination countries.49 In December, the National Assembly of Lao PDR approved the Law on Overseas Representative Offices of Lao PDR, although it was not clear whether the law contains provisions with implications for migrant workers.50 In Lao PDR, the monthly minimum wage was also raised from Kip 900,000 (108 USD) to Kip 1,100,000 (132 USD), an 11% blanket increase and the third of its kind in eight years.51 Officials hoped this would attract more migrant workers back across the border from their temporary work positions in Thailand where wages are higher.52

48. Ibid., p.63.
A New Round of Registration

In 2018, the Thai government opened up registration processes to migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar based on the resolution of a Cabinet meeting held on 16 January. Migrant workers targeted for the registration process included: 1) those who had obtained the Non-Thai Identification Card (Pink Card); 2) those who had been certified by the employer-employee relationship screening (in reference to the National Council for Peace and Order No. 33/22560); 3) those who worked in the fishing industry; and/or 4) those who worked in the seafood-processing sector. Registration procedures for the four categories of migrant workers varied. Furthermore, five different government offices were assigned to implement the registration, with each having its own implementation guideline. Migrant workers were required to register at an OSSC in Thailand before 31 March. However, on 27 March, the Cabinet approved to extend the period migrant workers could stay and work in Thailand until 30 June to complete NV processes, provided that they registered at an OSSC before 31 March.

During the registration window, OSSCs in Bangkok, Ranong, Ratchaburi, and Chiang Rai operated 24 hours per day near the 31 March deadline and an online registration system was also set up. However, OSSCs were overcrowded and employers and workers reported being confused by the complicated registration procedures. Migrant rights advocates also noted that the registration period was too short to register close to 2 million targeted migrant workers, which may have led to some workers not being registered in time.

At the end of registration, the Thai Ministry of Labour (MOL) reported that 1,187,803 migrant workers had successfully registered nationwide, of whom 350,840 were from Cambodia, 777,217 from Myanmar, and 59,746 from Lao PDR. Migrant workers who failed to register were required to leave Thailand and re-enter the country through processes established by MOUs signed between Thailand and Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR. Irregular migrants who remained in the country risked a fine of 5,000-50,000 baht (160–1600 USD) and being deported back to their countries of origin. Deported workers were prohibited from returning to Thailand for 2 years.

In total, as of December 2018, there were 3,085,801 registered migrant workers in Thailand. This number can be broken down into five groups:

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1. 1,853,603 regular migrant workers (holding a passport), consisting of the 941,372 who completed the NV, and another 912,231 who came to Thailand through the processes established by the MOU;

2. 1,187,803 migrant workers whose work permits were due to expire on 1 November 2019 or 31 March 2020, of which 350,840 were from Cambodia, 777,217 from Myanmar, and 59,746 from Lao PDR;

3. 6,080 migrant workers whose work permits were due to expire on 30 September 2019 (fisheries workers under section 83), of whom 4,565 were from Cambodia, 1,397 from Myanmar, and 120 from Laos;

4. 1,283 migrant workers who were allowed to work for 1 year under the Cabinet resolution on 6 November 2018, of whom 446 were from Cambodia, 809 from Myanmar, and 28 from Laos;

5. 37,030 cross-border or seasonal migrant workers, of whom 33,827 were from Cambodia, and 3,203 were from Myanmar.

Amendments to the Royal Decree on Management of Foreign Workers B.E. 2560 (2017)

In 2017, the Thai government issued the Royal Decree on Management of Foreign Workers B.E. 2560 (2017), which introduced hefty fines and prison terms on undocumented migrants and their employers. The Royal Decree was met with strong opposition from employers and industry associations. In response, the Thai government delayed implementation of sections regarding punishment for violation under the Royal Decree until 1 January 2018.58 A Cabinet meeting on 6 March 2018 further approved amendments to the Royal Decree and enacted them on 27 March 2018.59 These amendments reduced penalties for several offences, including the removal of imprisonment term of migrants who work without work permits and a decrease in the fine for employers who hire undocumented migrant workers.60

Government Policies on Migrant Workers in the Fishing Industry

To address the ongoing labour shortage in the fishing industry, the Committee on the Management of Foreign Labour and Human Trafficking Policies proposed three new strategies: 1) to allow a 2-year extension of work permits at OSSCs in 22 coastal provinces for 11,000 fisheries migrant workers who were recruited under section 83 of the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries B.E. 2558 (2015), and who had completed the NV process; 2) to recruit migrant workers through processes established by MOUs; and 3) to allow migrant workers who held a passport, a temporary passport, a CI, or other travel documents to work in the fishing industry for one year.61 In order to fulfill the demand for 42,649 workers submitted by the Thai Fishery Association, the Thai government also actively coordinated with the governments of Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam on the recruitment of migrant workers through processes established by existing MOUs.62

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On 23 September 2018, the MOL of Thailand coordinated with the MOLIP of Myanmar to set up a new Post-Arrival and Reintegration Centre for Migrant Workers in Ranong, Thailand, to facilitate the recruitment of Myanmar workers in the fishing industry. Establishing the centre was agreed to in an earlier MOU signed between the governments of Thailand and Myanmar. The Centre was designed to help Myanmar migrant workers have easy and one-stop access to the necessary documentation, and to provide training courses on work in the fishery industry as well as workers' rights and welfare.63

Vietnam

Official statistics recorded that 142,860 Vietnamese migrants travelled abroad for work in 2018,64 adding to the existing 500,000 Vietnamese migrant workforce employed in 40 countries and territories.65 Taiwan and Japan continued to be major countries of destination, accounting for nearly 88% of the total outbound flow of Vietnamese migrants. In particular, numbers migrating to Japan saw rapid increases under Japan’s TITP, which had hosted an estimated 140,000 Vietnamese workers as of the end of 2018.66 Migrants also travelled to other destination countries in Asia including the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, although Malaysia was no longer among the top five destination countries for Vietnamese workers.67

66 DOLAB, "The Department of Overseas Labours reports on the work in 2018 and sets targets in 2019 (in Vietnamese)", 9 January 2019, see n.64 above.
67 Vietnam Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), "In eight months of 2018: Vietnam sends 86,000 workers abroad", 2

Street vendors in Vietnam. (Photo: MMN)
migration corridors became more diversified, with more workers traveling to the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Europe. In total, $16 billion USD in remittances was sent back to Vietnam.

Regarding migration within the GMS, a majority of Vietnamese migrants continued to travel to work in Thailand through irregular channels. Although Thailand and Vietnam signed an MOU in 2015 to establish formal migration procedures, only six Vietnamese migrant workers had migrated through these channels as of August 2018. This low number may be due to the fact that the MOU only permits Vietnamese migrants to work in fishery and construction. Meanwhile, an estimated 50,000 Vietnamese migrants were estimated to be working in Thailand without proper documentation. In an attempt to attract more Vietnamese migrant workers to Thailand through the formal channel, the Thai Cabinet in November 2018 approved, in principle, amendments to the 2015 MOU. The amendments allowed Vietnamese migrant workers to work in the same manual and domestic sectors that are authorized areas of occupation for migrant workers from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR.

Migration to China through irregular channels was also on the rise. A report documented that, in the first three months of 2018, more than 7,200 Vietnamese workers crossed into China from the northern provinces of Lai Châu, Phú Thọ, and Lào Cai without work permits or documentation. Poor financial conditions at home and better job opportunities in China were some of the key drivers for the increasing trend of migration to China. Many travelled to China using the services of brokers who were often locals in Vietnam. Once in China, Vietnamese workers experienced higher risks of abuse and exploitation due to their irregular working status.

In terms of migration to destination countries outside the GMS, the governments of Vietnam and the Republic of Korea extended an MOU in 2018 to continue sending Vietnamese workers to the Republic of Korea for an additional two years. However, this was suspended for certain Vietnamese provinces in May 2018 due to a high rate of migrant workers overstaying their contracts.

In 2018, various stakeholders in Vietnam stepped up efforts to monitor recruitment agencies to ensure they fulfill their roles and responsibilities to provide support to migrant workers. To ensure workers were adequately October 2018, accessible at http://english.molisa.gov.vn/Pages/News/Detail.aspx?tintucID=218112.

71 “Solving the Labour Shortage in the Fishery Sector by Extending Work Permits and MOUs (in Thai)”, Matchon Online, 2 September 2018, see n.61 above.
protected, the Vietnamese Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs increased inspections at Vietnam's 340 licensed recruitment agencies, especially those in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.\textsuperscript{76} The Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply (VAMAS), an industry group of recruitment agencies, also launched a new Code of Conduct (COC) including the incorporation of provisions on gender equality, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the application of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers, 2011 (Convention No. 189), and ILO's initiatives on fair recruitment.\textsuperscript{77} VAMAS developed a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system regarding the application of the COC and an annual system of scoring and ranking recruitment agencies. The ranking list of recruitment agencies is published and available to the public.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} MOLISA, “In eight months of 2018: Vietnam sends 86,000 workers abroad”, 2 October 2018, see n.67 above.
Achievements in 2018

In 2018, MMN continued its work in promoting and protecting the rights of migrants in the region through collaborative research, joint advocacy, capacity building, and networking. While all our projects were coordinated through the MMN Secretariat with guidance from MMN SC, MMN emphasised teamwork and all the projects were implemented collaboratively with MMN members. Collaborative research projects were developed and designed with an aim of not only creating new knowledge and evidence for advocacy, but also with an aim of strengthening the capacity of MMN members and the broader civil society movement in the region. Advocacy was carried out through joint efforts of MMN members, the MMN Secretariat, and partner organisations. MMN continued to strengthen the partnership among the MMN members while also networking with broader civil society actors.

MMN achievements in 2018 have been categorized as follows:
I. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants’ Rights
II. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Migrants in Agriculture and Fisheries
III. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Special Economic Zones (SEZs), the Garment Industry, and Migration
IV. Study on the Impact of Emerging Migration Policies and Consultations with Migrants
V. ASEAN Advocacy
VI. MMN Organisational Development, Information Monitoring and Dissemination
VII. Global Advocacy and Networking Initiatives
VIII. Other Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

Much of the research and advocacy work carried out in 2018 paid special attention to social protection, labour rights, social inclusion, and gender equality.

MMN’s work in 2018 was supported by Open Society Foundation, Solidar Suisse, Oxfam, CCFD, IDRC, and anonymous donors. Please see the following sections for more information about the achievements in 2018.

I. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on the Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants’ Rights

In 2018, MMN initiated a second phase of ‘The Role of Countries of Origin’ project, given the success of the first phase, and the continued need to strengthen the roles of countries of origin in protecting migrants’ rights.

The first phase of the project primarily targeted Cambodia and Myanmar as key countries of origin in the GMS, however the scope of the second phase expanded to include two new countries of origin, Lao PDR and Vietnam, with specific focus on the following migration corridors:
- Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR to Thailand;
- Myanmar to Singapore;
- Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam to Japan; and
- Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam to Malaysia.

To a lesser extent, MMN also monitored the development of migration policies and trends regarding new
migration corridors from Cambodia and Myanmar to Hong Kong.

MMN partners who implemented the project in the countries of origin included:

- Future Light Centre (FLC), Myanmar;
- WE Generation, Myanmar;
- Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre (CWCC), Cambodia;
- Legal Support for Children & Women (LSCW), Cambodia;
- Centre for Development and Integration (CDI), Vietnam; and
- Southern Institute of Social Sciences (SISS), Vietnam.

The following organisations and individuals also assisted the project in various roles:

- MAP Foundation, Thailand;
- Foundation for Education and Development (FED), Thailand;
- Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), Singapore;
- Prof Asato Wako, Kyoto University, Japan;
- Solidarity with Migrants in Japan (SMJ), Japan;
- Workers’ Rights Consortium, Southeast Asia Program; and
- AMC, Hong Kong.

ILO Myanmar provided valuable advice and co-organised events held in Myanmar.

The detail of activities organised in 2018 on this front is reported below.

1. Research on the Role of Countries of Origin

Under the second phase of the project, the MMN continued to focus on researching and outlining the roles that countries of origin should play in protecting their nationals abroad.

The study continued its prior focus on the following areas of policy and practice: (1) establishing migration mechanisms; (2) information dissemination; (3) regulation of recruitment agencies; (4) provision of overseas assistance; (5) international cooperation; (6) provision of overseas welfare funds and social security; and (7) facilitating reintegration. In addition, the study examined in greater detail the roles of countries of origin in protecting and promoting the rights of migrant workers to access social protection in destination countries.

The goals and framework of the study were constructed via collective consultation amongst MMN project partners. Key informant interviews with recruitment agencies, government representatives, ILO, IOM, and CSOs were conducted in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The study was carried out in tandem with desk research on migration frameworks of countries of origin and interviews with migrant returnees.

MMN plans to publish a report on the study along with recommendations (including translated versions) and present them at a multi-stakeholder meeting/policy dialogue at the end of the project period in 2019. Final recommendations will also be submitted to specific relevant stakeholders.
2. Consultation Workshops
From 4-5 June 2018, MMN organised a consultation workshop under the Roles of Countries of Origin Project in Chiang Mai, Thailand. 23 participants, including representatives of CSOs both in and outside of GMS, and various experts, attended the workshop to share their knowledge on current migration trends from GMS countries of origin to destination countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and Hong Kong. The workshop also provided an opportunity for project partners to collectively develop a work plan for the second phase of the project. Project partners agreed that the role of countries of origin in facilitating migrants’ access to social protection would be the focal theme of the study.

On 6 August 2018, another workshop was organised to further concretise the project’s strategy. The 17 participants discussed the theme of “social protection” within the framework of the study, and agreed on the research methodology. It was decided that the study would include an analysis of roles of countries of origin in facilitating migrants’ access to existing formal mechanisms of social protection, including social security schemes, health insurance policies, pension schemes, workers’ compensation fund, and migrant welfare funds.

3. Consultation Workshop on Labour Migration from Myanmar to Japan
On 15 October 2018, MMN and ILO jointly organised the Consultation on Labour Migration from Myanmar to Japan at the Sedona Hotel in Yangon, Myanmar. The consultation was held in light of the growing anticipation of Japan liberalising its migration policy to receive an increased number of workers. In early 2018, the Japanese government announced its intention to recruit upwards of 500,000 foreign workers by 2025 to fill gaps in the country’s labour market. Japan considered Myanmar to be a key source of workers, and under a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on the TITP signed between the governments of Myanmar and Japan in April 2018, increasing numbers of Myanmar workers began travelling to Japan as “Technical Intern Trainees”.

Given this background, MMN and ILO held a consultation meeting aiming to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the migration process from Myanmar to Japan, and to jointly explore interventions and strategies to improve the efficacy of migration procedures and the safety of migrants. 41 participants attended the event, including representatives from the MOLIP, the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF), Overseas Employment Agencies (OEAs), CSOs, a labour attaché from the Embassy of Japan in Myanmar, experts on migration policies in Japan, and migrant returnees.

The three plenaries of the consultation addressed a number of topics including trends, policies, and recruitment.
practices of workers migrating from Myanmar to Japan; issues concerning migrants who leave their jobs in Japan without properly terminating their contracts; mechanisms for skills transfer between the two countries; available support and assistance for migrants; and actual labour conditions at worksites in Japan. Participants then examined the opportunities and challenges involved in migration from Myanmar to Japan from the perspectives of migrant workers, the governments of both countries, and OEAs in Myanmar. Based on the results of the discussion, participants collectively developed a set of recommendations to improve existing protections for migrant workers.


4. Field Visit to Myanmar Migrant Community in Singapore

On 4 November 2018, MMN organised a country visit to Singapore, joined by MMN member organisations, FED (Thailand) and FLC (Myanmar), and MMN Secretariat representatives. The visit aimed to build partnerships among migrant support CSOs within and beyond GMS countries. During this visit, the MMN delegation met with a representative from TWC2, a non-profit organisation working with migrant workers in Singapore, to discuss issues related to migration and challenges faced by migrant workers in Singapore, to discuss issues related to migration and challenges faced by migrant workers. TWC2 also arranged a visit to a Myanmar migrant community in Singapore, during which MMN members had the opportunity to learn about migrants’ working and living conditions and gather opinions on what roles the Myanmar government should play to support migrant workers abroad. Some of the suggestions raised by migrant workers included:

i. The government should create better job and income opportunities for nationals;

ii. The government should establish a more comprehensive support system for migrant returnees, including by setting up shelters, information centres, and complaint services; and

iii. The government should focus on taking responsibility for migrant workers abroad when they face abuse and violations.

During this visit to Singapore, MMN, FLC, FED, and TWC2 also co-organised a concurrent thematic workshop during the ASEAN People’s Forum (APF), as reported under the ASEAN Advocacy section of this report.
II. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Migrants in Agriculture and Fisheries

Many migrant workers in Thailand are undocumented and employed in the informal sector, outside the protection of established labour laws, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

In 2017, with the support of Solidar Suisse, MMN started a new collaborative research and advocacy project paying special attention to migrants in informal sectors, particularly those in agriculture and fisheries.

MMN has long identified migrants in agriculture as being among the most marginalised and largely understudied populations in the GMS, despite the fact that agriculture is one of the major sectors employing migrant labour in the region. Given the significant gap in knowledge on the issues faced by migrant agricultural workers, MMN launched this project on migrant agricultural workers in Thailand, with a special focus on those producing corn, cassava, rubber, and palm oil.

All the while, migrants employed in the fishing industry received relatively high media attention throughout 2018. However, as the government and media outlets often interchangeably used frameworks such as trafficking, forced labour, slavery, and labour migration to discuss this extremely exploitative work sector, nuanced understanding of the issues generally continued to be lacking. MMN therefore organised a workshop on frameworks surrounding migrant labour in the fishing industry in order to improve understanding as well as strengthen the capacity of CSOs and trade unions to protect and promote rights of migrants in the fishing industry.

More detail on the activities of 2018 on this front is reported below.

1. Collaborative Research on Migrants in Agriculture

Between 21 and 23 March 2018, MMN held a second project consultation meeting with project partners to discuss details of further research to look into issues that were not covered by the pilot study conducted in 2017. Project partners collectively decided that the full-fledged research would be carried out in 10 study sites in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand.

The overall study objectives included:

i. To learn about the perspectives and experiences of migrant workers and migrant returnees in the agriculture sector in Thailand;
ii. To highlight migrants’ needs and their contribution to migrant communities and Thailand; and
iii. To further examine existing policies and protection mechanisms available to migrant workers in the agriculture sector and to identify gaps between policies and their implementation.

MMN project partners discuss the research design at the third consultation meeting. (Photo: MMN)
Based on these objectives, MMN and project partners jointly developed a research design, survey questionnaires, and questions for key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and individual in-depth interviews. To ensure that the survey questionnaire was clear, comprehensive, and understandable to migrant respondents, project partners conducted a trial run of the sample questionnaire. On 6 August 2018, MMN held a third project consultation meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to gather feedback and comments from project partners based on their trial run. The questionnaire was revised accordingly and the final version of the survey form, and accompanying research tools, including a brief background of the research and consent forms, were translated into Burmese, Khmer, and Thai.

Where deemed necessary, training of field research team members in respective project areas was conducted. In November 2018, MMN project partners started conducting the survey with migrants and returnees. By the end of 2018, 220 more migrants and returnees were interviewed using updated survey forms.

MMN partners involved in this project included:
- MAP Foundation, Thailand;
- FED, Thailand;
- Raks Thai, Thailand;
- FLC, Myanmar;
- Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar (CTUM), Myanmar;
- CWCC, Cambodia; and
- LSCW, Cambodia.

Interviews with migrant agricultural workers took place in the following areas -
Thailand: Phang Nga, Surat Thani, Rayong, and Tak (Mae Sot).

Interviews with migrant returnees who had previously worked in Thailand’s agriculture sector took place in the following areas -
Cambodia: Kampong Thom and Banteay Meanchey; and
Myanmar: Bago Region, Southern Shan State, Kayin/Karen State, and Mon State.

While the field research was being carried out, the MMN Secretariat continued to conduct relevant desk research. This included collecting and analysing relevant migration and labour policies surrounding migrants in agriculture and literature reviews on previous studies focusing on this topic.

Combining the findings from the desk research, survey interviews, key informant interviews, in-depth individual interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), a final research report along with a list of recommendations will be released in 2019.

2. Workshop on Frameworks on Migrant Labour in the Fishing Industry in the Mekong, Chiang Mai, Thailand
On 5 August 2018, MMN organised a workshop entitled, “Frameworks on Migrant Labour in the Fishing Industry in the Mekong”, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The workshop aimed to: 1) clarify the concepts of various
frameworks surrounding labour migration, such as trafficking, slavery, and forced labour; 2) examine the implications of these frameworks on labour migration, particularly on migrant labour in fisheries; and 3) exchange views on what can be done to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families in the fishing industry. Approximately 30 representatives from CSOs, intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations, as well as former migrant workers in the fishing industry, attended the event.

The workshop started with a presentation by Ms. Jackie Pollock, a representative from ILO Myanmar, who clarified the concepts of various frameworks. Ms. Pollock provided definitions of the key terms often applied to the conditions of migrant labour in the fishing industry, including human trafficking, smuggling, forced labour, slavery, and decent work. The plenary session was followed by the screening of a recent Human Rights Watch documentary entitled, “Thailand: Forced Labour, Trafficking Persist in Fishing Fleets,” which explores the changes (and the lack thereof) in the fishing industry after the Thai government stepped up its efforts to stop human trafficking and forced labour in the sector.

In the second plenary, “Understanding the Day-to-Day Reality of Working at Sea”, Mr. Sompong Srakaew from the Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation (LPN) presented on the situation of migrant workers in the fishing industry in Thailand and LPN’s initiatives to provide assistance to workers in the industry. Mr. Tun Lin from the Thai and Migrant Fishers Union Group (TMFG) then presented on his 11 years of experience as a fishery worker.

In the final plenary, “How are different frameworks used to understand the situation of migrant labour in the fishing industry and what are the implications for policy and programme formulation?”, Mr. Sokchar Mom from LSCW discussed the frameworks adopted in Cambodia to protect fishery workers. Mr. Mom noted that laws and policies related to migrants in the fishing industry in Cambodia remain unclear, as the government neither regulates nor bans certain practices, which causes migrants to become more vulnerable.

Mr. Phil Robertson from Human Rights Watch (HRW) then shared the findings of a recent HRW report that discusses cases of forced labour in the fishing industry.

In the ensuing discussion, participants raised concerns related to harsh working conditions and inadequate protection mechanisms. Participants also shared their own advocacy experiences and made suggestions on strategies to more effectively promote migrant workers’ rights in the fishing industry.

To learn more about the workshop, please visit: http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=6543.

3. Joint Civil Society Statement concerning Ratification of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)

Following the above workshop, MMN members became more active in online and in-person discussions about migrant labour in the fishing industry. Helped by increased understanding and awareness on the issues, MMN was able to quickly mobilise with other CSOs to take action when the Thai government was showing signs of backing away from ratifying ILO C. 188 (Work in Fishing). This followed protests by the National Fishing Association of Thailand (NFAT) against C. 188. On 20 August 2018, MMN, Human Rights Watch, and a dozen CSOs issued a joint public statement urging the Thai government to ratify the convention. 80

To read the joint statement, please visit: http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=6301.

III. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on SEZs, the Garment Industry and Migration

SEZs have emerged as a prominent strategy in the pursuit of regional economic integration in the GMS. They tend to be located in border regions or in other strategic positions, such as in close proximity to ports and capital cities, and are generally in areas where certain national laws related to labour, taxation, and trade either do not apply or are relaxed, thereby facilitating greater investment in a given zone. 81

SEZs are often home to labour-intensive factory-based industries, including the garment industry, and rely on internal and cross-border migrant workers for production. While SEZs have been upheld as a model for market-based growth, they are often associated with labour rights violations and poor working standards. Such violations include: workers facing limitations on their freedom of association; trade unions being restricted from accessing zones; employees working under the threat of arbitrary dismissal; wages being below a country's minimum wage; working hours exceeding those stated in national labour laws; and degraded occupational health and safety standards. 82 Women, who make up the majority of the workforce in many industrial zones, are more likely to experience violations of workers’ and human rights. 83

In order to attract and maintain investment, it is common for states to suppress labour rights while deregulating trade practices in a ‘race to the bottom’. 84 This approach is supported by the very structure of SEZs, which often includes lax regulations and the existence of exploitable migrant labour.

1. MMN/AIT Collaborative Research Project on SEZs and the Garment Industry

Financially supported by the IDRC, Canada, this three-year joint project between MMN and the Asian Institute

80 Finally, Thailand decided to commit itself to the Convention, and in January 2019, it became the first country in Asia to ratify the ILO C.188.
84 Ibid.
of Technology (AIT) explored the policies and practices of the garment industry operating in industrial zones and SEZs in Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia, as well as their impact on women migrant workers’ working and living conditions and life choices. The project investigated how particular environments – industrial zones and SEZs located in border regions and in the vicinity of major cities in central regions – and internal and cross-border migration influence women’s living and working experiences.

MMN partners involved in this project included:

- FLC, Myanmar;
- LSCW, Cambodia;
- FED, Thailand;
- Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association (YCOWA), Thailand;
- MAP Foundation, Thailand; and
- LPN, Thailand.

The five study sites included in this project were: Yangon, Myanmar; Mae Sot, Tak, Thailand; Bangkok/Samut Sakhon, Thailand; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and Svay Rieng, Cambodia.

The project commenced in 2016 and throughout 2018 involved the conducting of detailed questionnaires by project partners across the project’s five study sites, as well as the encoding and analysis of questionnaire results by the MMN Secretariat and AIT. A second project consultation meeting was held in 2018, along with additional data collection activities and consultation meetings, which are elaborated on below.

2. Second Project Consultation Meeting

On 13 and 14 January 2018, MMN project partners and Secretariat members, AIT project personnel, and resource persons congregated in Yangon, Myanmar, for the Second Project Consultation Meeting. The objectives of the meeting were: (1) for project partners to share information on the progress of the research and reflect on key issues and challenges; (2) to jointly review and analyse preliminary findings from data collection activities; (3) to jointly discuss future data collection activities, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews; (4) to jointly discuss advocacy targets and strategies; and (5) to jointly draft a work plan for the remainder of the project.

3. Clean Clothes Campaign and Mekong Migration Network Solidarity Meeting

In recognition of the rapid expansion of Myanmar’s export-oriented garment industry and the subsequent need to better understand the challenges facing workers in this sector, the MMN and Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) co-organised a workshop and network exchange on 15 and 16 January in Yangon, Myanmar. On 15 January, 21 representatives from Yangon-based trade unions and CSOs, as well as nine people representing trade unions and organisations from Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Thailand, and the Netherlands, gathered to participate in the MMN/CCC Garment Worker Labour Rights Workshop. By means of interactive presentations, group discussions, and activities, participants exchanged information on the key challenges facing garment factory workers and labour rights activists in their countries as well as strategies used to promote and protect the rights of these workers.

On 16 January, additional six trade union and CSO representatives from South Korea, the Philippines,
Cambodia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Norway joined the previous day’s participants for the MMN/CCC Network Exchange. This meeting carved a space for Myanmar unions and organisations to share information on the garment industry in Myanmar, the challenges being faced by Yangon garment factory workers, and the interests and priorities of unions and labour organisations. The meeting provided an opportunity for Myanmar organisations to better understand the workings of MMN and the CCC respectively, as well as develop partnerships with like-minded groups in other countries.

Following a fruitful exchange, CCC and MMN relocated to Bangkok to further co-organise a three-day CCC Urgent Appeals Global Meeting. From 17-19 January, around 60 people from over 20 countries across Asia, Europe, and North America met to discuss campaign strategies. During the meeting, the MMN Secretariat made a presentation on the implications of SEZs for workers in the GMS as part of a series of presentations on global trends affecting the garment industry. MMN also had an opportunity to present an overview of the joint MMN-AIT research project and seek feedback on advocacy strategies from members of CCC.

4. Key informant interviews
Beginning in July 2018, in-depth interviews with select women garment factory workers, along with key informant interviews with representatives of governments, SEZ management committees, employer associations, factory owners, trade unions, and CSOs, were conducted in each location. In Yangon, in-depth interviews were carried out with four women garment factory workers employed in Thilawa SEZ-based factories, as well as with one worker from a garment factory in Hlaing Thar Yar industrial zone. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, Thilawa Special Economic Zone Management Committee, Atsumi Myanmar Co. Ltd. (a garment factory located in Thilawa SEZ), Myanmar Infrastructure, Craft and Service (MICS) Federation of Trade Unions, WE Generation, and ILO-Yangon.

5. In-depth interviews
From 16 to 20 November 2018, six in-depth interviews were carried out with cross-border migrant garment factory workers in Mae Sot District, Thailand, along with six key informant interviews with representatives of the Tak Department of Employment, Tak Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Tak Special Economic Zone Office, Tak Chapter of the Federation of Thai Industries, Myanmar Labour Attaché, and local Thai villagers who were working on land issues related to the development of the Tak SEZ.

6. Civil Society Consultation and Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Meeting
Between 12 and 14 December, the MMN Secretariat, the FLC, and AIT facilitated a civil society consultation
and multi-stakeholder dialogue meeting in Yangon, Myanmar. The objectives of the civil society consultation meeting were: (1) to share preliminary findings and proposed recommendations from research conducted in Thilawa SEZ; (2) for CSOs and trade unions to share their feedback on these findings and proposed recommendations; and (3) for meeting participants to exchange ideas on effective advocacy strategies aiming to protect and promote the rights of Thilawa SEZ garment factory workers.

During the following day’s multi-stakeholder dialogue meeting, FLC presented on the preliminary findings and proposed recommendations, and government departments, Thilawa SEZ Management Committee, CSOs, and trade unions then shared their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of ensuring decent work for Thilawa SEZ garment factory workers. The meeting provided a forum for stakeholders to discuss a way forward for the development of Myanmar’s SEZs that protects and promotes the rights of workers.

IV. Study on the Impact of Emerging Migration Policies and Consultations with Migrants

In 2018, with the support of the Open Society Foundation (OSF), MMN was able to closely monitor the development of migration policies, trends, and issues in the GMS, and carried out some thematic studies. The main areas of study included: 1) the impact of new migration policies in Thailand from migrants’ perspectives; and 2) a review of policy change concerning registration of Vietnamese migrants in Thailand.

As reported above, in 2018, the Thai government opened up registration processes to migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar. Historically, Thai authorities have implemented periodic registration schemes to semi-regularise the status of undocumented migrant workers.85

The most recent round of registration closed on 30 June 2018, following an extension of the original deadline of 31 March 2018.86 Official statistics show that as of November 2018 a total of 2,214,298 work permits had been issued to GMS migrants who had completed the registration process. This included migrants registered in the latest round ending on 30 June 2018 (1,187,803), fisheries workers granted permission to remain until 30 June 2019 (6,082), and those who had previously completed the NV process (1,020,413).87

While ostensibly straightforward, the registration process is often problematic in practice. Undocumented migrants frequently reported access difficulties given that relatively few OSSC actually provided NV services.88 Migrants also reported discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion,89 and being unable to obtain the documents deemed necessary to complete NV.90 The Thai authorities have been criticised for a lack of foresight and for failing to devote sufficient resources to the mammoth task of registering millions of

86 The Secretariat of the Cabinet, “Thai Cabinet Resolution of 27 March 2018 (in Thai)”, accessible at http://www.cabinet.soc.go.th/soc/Program2-3.jsp?top_serl=99328106&key_word=&owner_dep=&meet_date_dd=27&meet_date_mm=03&meet_date_yyyy=2561&doc_id1=&doc_id2=&meet_date_dd2=&meet_date_mm2=&meet_date_yyyy2=-
88 Of the 80 OSSCs established across Thailand, just a few provide NV on site. See “Four one-stop service centres set up to process migrant workers who registered”, The Nation, 19 April 2018, accessible at https://www.nationthailand.com/national/30343513.
migrant workers at short notice. Under the threat of fines and deportation for failing to register, migrants reportedly waited outside some OSSCs for up to six hours.

To increase organisational understanding of migrants’ perspectives on migration policies and registration processes in Thailand, MMN organised a series of consultation meetings with migrants in Chiang Mai, Pang Nga, and Mae Sot in Thailand, and with migrant returnees in Poi Pet, Cambodia. In Mae Sot, the meeting also explored the implication, from migrants’ perspectives, of Mae Sot becoming an SEZ. MMN also carried out key informant interviews with local government officials to understand the perspectives of the policy implementers.

Finally, MMN examined the process of registration of Vietnamese migrants in Thailand, who were recently included within the policy on the regularisation of migrants in Thailand.

The details of the respective activities are reported below.

1. Study on the Impact of Emerging Migration Policies
   Migrant consultation meetings
   In 2018, researchers from MMN’s secretariat partnered network members to run a series of consultation meetings with groups of migrant workers and migrant returnees. Participants were recruited by MMN member organisations who, through their work, had longstanding relationships of trust with migrant communities.

   Migrant consultation meetings began with a short introduction to the project by MMN, including details from the initial desk research to update participants on current law and policy. The participants then broke off into small groups based on factors such as sector of employment, family status, and the type of immigration status held. In these discussion groups, migrants articulated their views and experiences before reporting back to the floor for further debate and to draw together some conclusions. The meetings were designed to be as interactive as possible and provide a forum in which migrants’ voices could be brought to the fore.

   In all, MMN and its member organisations conducted five days of consultation meetings in different locations across Thailand and Cambodia. The meetings were attended by a total of 109 migrant workers and returnees, of whom 65 were women and 44 were men. Reflecting the wider migrant worker population in Thailand, 78 participants were from Myanmar and 31 were from Cambodia. Participants had varied immigration statuses.

   The first consultation meeting took place in Mae Sot on 20 May 2018 and was attended by 26 migrant workers from Myanmar (7 women, 19 men), aged between 20 and 48 years. Mae Sot was selected as a study site given its importance as a migration hub along the Thai-Myanmar border, as well as being part of the Tak SEZ. The migrant workers who joined the Mae Sot meeting were mainly employed in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

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92 Penchan Charoensuthipan, “Cops crackdown on illegal migrants”, Bangkok Post, 2 July 2018, see n.55 above.
The second migrant consultation meeting took place over two days on 23 and 25 May 2018 in Phang Nga, southern Thailand. These meetings were attended by 28 migrant workers from Myanmar (15 women, 13 men). Participants were aged between 19 and 43 years, employed mostly on rubber plantations and in construction, and contained a cohort who had migrated to Thailand under the MOU process. The location was selected to ensure that the views of migrants in agriculture were reflected in the study, since these geographically hard-to-reach workers tend to encounter difficulties engaging with government and civil society.

The third migrant consultation took place in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai on 17 June 2018. Due to its geographic and cultural proximity to Shan State in Myanmar, Chiang Mai is a longstanding destination for cross-border Shan migrants. In total, 24 migrant workers of Myanmar nationality (20 women, 4 men) participated in the consultation meeting. They were employed in a range of sectors including manufacturing, construction, domestic work, retail, and agriculture. The Chiang Mai meeting provided an opportunity for discussion with members of a well-established migrant community in Thailand who were well-placed to reflect on changes to the treatment of migrants over time.

The sole consultation meeting held outside of Thailand took place on 29 May 2018 in the Cambodian border town of Poi Pet. This consultation differed from those outlined above in that it focused on examining the insights and experiences of Cambodian migrant returnees from Thailand. Of the 31 returnees (23 women, 8 men) who participated, 12 were seasonal migrant workers and 19 were individuals who had returned more permanently to Cambodia from Thailand. Poi Pet was chosen as a site of study due to its reputation as a migration hotspot, including a sizeable population who partake in cross-border seasonal work in Thailand.

Key informant interviews
To complement the migrant consultation meetings discussed above, researchers from MMN Secretariat and partner organisations conducted key informant interviews with selected local government officials charged with administering the labour migration systems that exist between Thailand and its GMS neighbours. The purpose of these semi-structured qualitative interviews was to develop a better understanding of the attitudes and behaviours of frontline officials towards the migrants they encounter and the policies and systems that they implement.

In total, MMN researchers interviewed 19 local officials and frontline staff responsible for administering various aspects of the labour migration systems between Thailand and neighbouring countries within the GMS. These included individuals from the following government bodies in Thailand: Provincial Employment Offices; Provincial Offices of Labour Protection and Welfare; Provincial Social Security Offices; and Provincial Immigration Offices. To understand the situation on the ground from a countries of origin perspective, interviews were also conducted with representatives from the Myanmar Labour Attaché in Thailand and local authorities in Cambodia.
On 5 August 2018, MMN presented the preliminary findings of the study to the MMN project partners and representatives of other migrant support CSOs who attended the MMN 15th Anniversary Workshop in Chiang Mai. Based on the discussion, MMN is preparing a research paper.

2. Study on the New Laws and Policies Concerning Vietnamese Migrant Workers in Thailand
In 2015, the Thai government launched the first ever registration programme aimed exclusively at registering all Vietnamese migrants in the country. Although Vietnamese communities have been present in Thailand for many decades, the sudden attention given to the Vietnamese population was unusual as all previous registration efforts and governmental regulations for migration have mainly focused on migrants from its direct neighbours, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

After Vietnamese migrants began gaining public attention, MMN organised a consultation meeting in 2018 to discuss the impacts of current migration policies in Thailand. During the meeting, representatives of Vietnamese CSOs highlighted concerns about the lack of existing information on Vietnamese migrants’ experiences and the inadequacy of policy measures to respond to their needs. As a result, MMN agreed to undertake a study to explore the impact of policy changes on Vietnamese migrants in Thailand, through a desk study and key informant interviews. MMN plans to release a report highlighting key findings in 2019.

V. Advocacy on ASEAN

Since the network was launched, MMN has consistently engaged in advocacy with ASEAN, given the potential impact of ASEAN policies on millions of migrant workers in the Southeast Asian region, including the GMS. Many MMN research papers include recommendations to ASEAN, which MMN promotes during relevant press conferences, workshops, and other opportunities. MMN’s formal engagement has taken place primarily through participation in the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML), which is an annually-held forum where representatives of governments, trade unions, CSOs, and UN agencies jointly discuss a wide range of labour migration issues. MMN was also active in the APF, an annual gathering of CSOs discussing various social issues in ASEAN. MMN’s engagement in AFML and APF in 2018 is detailed below.

1. The ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, Singapore
On 29-30 October 2018, the 11th AFML was held in Singapore between representatives of the governments of ASEAN member states, employers and workers associations, CSOs, and intergovernmental organisations. The AFML is organised with the aim of advancing the principles of the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, an agreement concluded in 2007 amongst heads of ASEAN states. During the AFML, participants discussed “complex and regional migration issues” and collectively developed and adopted recommendations. Since the AFML’s creation in 2008, MMN has regularly taken part in the forum to bring issues faced by migrant workers to the platform. For the 11th AFML in 2018, MMN and the Migrant Forum in Asia were nominated to represent regional CSO networks. Mr Brahm Press, the Chairperson of the MMN SC, attended the forum on behalf of MMN.

The theme of the 11th AFML was, “Digitalization to Promote Decent Work for Migrant Workers in ASEAN”.

During the forum, Mr Press delivered a presentation entitled, “CSOs’ Efforts in Leveraging Technology in Promoting Migrant Workers’ Safety and Health”. His presentation addressed a number of topics, including the barriers migrant workers face in accessing the internet and other forms of social media to gather information or seek assistance, the need to develop migrant workers’ “digital literacy”, and the privacy of migrants’ personal data. Mr Press concluded by giving recommendations for governments and application developers to tailor different forms of digital tools to accommodate to the needs of migrants, in order to maximise the benefits of digital services and applications designed for migrant workers.

The 11th AFML ended with participants drafting and adopting recommendations to improve the digitisation of labour migration management and digital services for migrant workers.

To read the list of recommendations, please visit: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_648531.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_648531.pdf).

2. ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples’ Forum (ACSC/APF), Singapore

Between 2 and 4 November 2018, MMN attended the ACSC/APF in Singapore alongside more than 200 representatives from all the Southeast Asian nations, as well as representatives from various regional civil society groups. The overarching theme of the year was, “Empowering Peoples’ Solidarity Against All Forms of Discrimination”.

On the second day of the ACSC/APF, MMN organised a workshop entitled, “Examining the Impact of Social Exclusion on ASEAN Migrants”, in collaboration with FLC, FED, and TWC2. More than 20 participants attended the workshop. The main objectives of the workshop were: i) to generate critical discussion on the underlying factors leading to the social exclusion of migrants across the region, including discriminatory policies and practices of both countries of origin and destination; and ii) to provide a space for participants to jointly strategise and develop recommendations to tackle different forms of discrimination, promote the social inclusion and empowerment of all migrants, and build solidarity amongst migrants’ rights advocates across countries in ASEAN.

During the workshop, participants discussed the impacts of the Myanmar government’s ban on nationals migrating to work as domestic workers in any location, the challenges Myanmar domestic workers face when they migrated to Singapore through irregular channels, and migrants’ experiences at work in Thailand. At the end of the workshop, participants jointly developed six recommendations, all of which were adopted in the final ACSC/APF 2018 Statement under the section of “Ensuring the Safe Movement of Migrants” (Recommendations 2 to 7).

To read the statement and recommendations, please visit:
VI. MMN Organisational Development, Information Monitoring and Dissemination

2018 marked an historic occasion for MMN, with the 7th General Conference (GC) as well as the 15th Anniversary Workshop. These meetings provided MMN with an opportunity to consolidate the network, reflect on its work and achievement so far, and develop a renewed strategy in promoting and protecting migrants’ rights in the GMS.

1. MMN 7th General Conference, Chiang Mai, Thailand

In accordance with the MMN Terms of Partnership (TOP), the MMN organises periodic GCs, the network’s highest decision-making forum to which all member organisations are invited. On 3 August 2018, the MMN held its 7th GC in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Over 40 representatives from MMN member organisations, associates, and MMN supporters attended the GC. Facilitated by the MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms. Reiko Harima, members reviewed and amended the TOP. The MMN Secretariat additionally shared updates on the network’s recent and ongoing projects. Members from each country in the GMS exchanged information on policy changes and trends in terms of labour migration and highlighted critical challenges faced by migrant workers.

At the GC, MMN members voted to formally approve the membership application of FLC after Ms Thet Thet Aung, Director of FLC, gave an overview of her organisation’s work in supporting migrant workers. The GC concluded with the election of a new Steering Committee, which comprised:

- Burma/Myanmar: Ms Thet Thet Aung, FLC
- Cambodia: Ms Pok Panhavichetr, CWCC
- China: Ms Han Jialing, Migrant Workers’ Education and Action Research Centre (MWEAC)
- Thailand: Mr Brahm Press, MAP Foundation
- Vietnam: Ms Duong Thi Viet Anh, CDI
- Ms Reiko Harima, ex-officio as the MMN Regional Coordinator

SC seat for Lao PDR was kept vacant.
2. MMN 15th Anniversary Workshop, Chiang Mai, Thailand

On 4 August 2018, MMN organised the 15th Anniversary Workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The workshop aimed to review MMN’s achievements and challenges over the past 15 years, as well as to look at present and future issues, opportunities, and obstacles. 42 participants attended the event, including MMN members, partners, and supporters. The event was opened by Ms Jackie Pollock, a founding member of the MMN and the former Chairperson of the MMN SC, and Dr Rosalia Sciotino, a long-term supporter of MMN. In their speeches, they applauded MMN for its achievements and described some of the challenges that MMN will likely face under current trends of migration. Ms Reiko Harima, MMN Regional Coordinator, presented highlights of the network’s achievement over the past 15 years.

There were two panels during the workshop entitled, “Reflection on MMN’s Work for the Past 15 Years: What are the Key Successes and Challenges?” and “Reflections: Key Issues, Social and Political Changes Surrounding Migration and MMN’s Future Roles and Strategies”. In both panels, former and current MMN members noted examples of MMN’s successes, recounted obstacles faced by the network, and pointed to recent trends relating to migration that could provide opportunities for further advocacy. The workshop concluded with participants collectively discussing how best to promote and protect the rights of undocumented migrants, achieve social inclusion/diversity, and strengthen solidarity of the labour movement and empower workers.


3. Information Monitoring, Homepage and Facebook

Throughout 2018, MMN monitored news, emerging policies, and statistics concerning labour migration in the GMS. The relevant information was widely circulated through MMN listserves, as well as uploaded onto MMN’s homepage ([www.mekongmigration.org](http://www.mekongmigration.org)). Regular information monitoring and sharing of this nature is key to MMN’s operations, as it enables the network members to be alerted and take a timely action where necessary. MMN also manages a Facebook account, to make it easier for the Secretariat and member organisations to share news and promote its activities. In 2018, MMN started to develop a new webpage, to make information on the homepage more accessible. The new webpage will have a clearer structure, introducing various areas of MMN’s work and linking to news and references on labour migration in the GMS.

VII. Global Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

1. Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Marrakesh, Morocco

The idea of creating a global consultative forum on migration and development was proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the UN, at the first High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) held on 14-15 September 2006 during the UN General Assembly. During the HLD, over 140 member states discussed the interaction between migration and development, a complex relationship of growing importance in view of the increasing migration flows. At the time, there was still no single, all-encompassing global forum to bring together policy makers on the two critical issues of migration and
development. Given the limits of a strictly national approach to migration questions at a global level, there was widespread recognition and support in the UN at the HLD 2006 for an open and transparent dialogue on migration and development, in an informal, non-binding, and state-led framework that would promote practical, evidence-based outcomes, and cooperation between governments as well as non-government stakeholders. From this idea, the GFMD was born, hosting its first Summit meeting in 2007 under the direction of the first GFMD Chair, Belgium. The GFMD has since remained the largest informal, non-binding, voluntary, and government-led process, bringing together expertise from all regions and countries at all stages of economic, social, and political development. MMN has been constantly involved in the HLD as well as the GFMD processes from their inception.

From 4 to 7 December 2018, the 11th GFMD was organised in Marrakesh, Morocco. The overarching theme was, “Honouring International Commitments to Unlock the Potential of All Migrants for Development”, as the global community anticipated the adoption of the GCM. The GCM signalled the international community’s call for an enhanced global migration policy framework to be adopted by states in December 2018. GFMD week was organised as the following: 4 & 6 December: Civil Society Days; 5 December: Common Space; and 7 December: Platform for Partnerships and Official Closing Ceremony. Around 280 representatives of civil society from over 75 countries attended the Civil Society Days, and joined the Common Space and the Official Closing Ceremony. Over 1000 government officials representing roughly 130 countries attended the GFMD.

Mr Brahm Press, Chairperson of the MMN SC and Ms. Reiko Harima, MMN Regional Coordinator, attended the 11th GFMD on behalf of MMN. During the forum, MMN shared its perspective of the reality of labour migration in the GMS. During the Civil Society Days, the MMN representatives joined the parallel working session focusing on social, economic, and political inclusion of migrants, and assisted in the documenting and reporting of the discussion. MMN also hosted an information booth showcasing MMN publications and posters, and gave interviews to Moroccan media and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The GCM was formally adopted during the intergovernmental conference on 10-11 December 2019, where MMN attended as observers.

Following the adoption of the GCM, respective national governments were expected to develop their action plan for the implementation of the GCM. MMN has been closely monitoring the national action plans produced by the respective governments in the GMS and has developed an appropriate advocacy strategy.

2. The Asia Europe People’s Forum 12, Ghent, Belgium

From 29 September to 1 October 2018, the 12\textsuperscript{th} Asia-Europe People’s Forum (AEPF12) on “Building New Solidarities: Working for Inclusive, Just & Equal Alternatives in Asia & Europe” was held on the sidelines of the 12\textsuperscript{th} Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit, where heads of state and governments from across Asia and Europe met to discuss their future priorities and plans. A total of 425 participants representing people’s organisations from over 48 countries participated in the forum.

The AEPF is a strategic civil society gathering of Asian and European social movements, non-governmental organisations, and campaign networks that are confronting poverty and inequality and working for social, economic, and climate justice.

With the support of CCFD, MMN’s Regional Coordinator joined the AEPF12, and shared on key issues confronting migrants in the GMS during the Social Justice cluster and the Democratization, Human Rights & Migration cluster. At the end of the forum, participants adopted a declaration which was later submitted to the ASEM parliamentarians.

3. The World Social Forum on Migration, Mexico City, Mexico

Between 2 and 4 November 2018, MMN attended the 8\textsuperscript{th} World Social Forum on Migration (WSFM) in Mexico City, Mexico. The theme of this year’s WSFM was, “Migrate, Resist, Build and Transform” — a response to the growing trend of protectionism, authoritarianism, and segregation around the world. More than 200 representatives from CSOs based in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America came together to discuss various issues related to migration and develop strategies to counter the encroachment of migrants’ rights.

With the support of CCFD, MMN attended the WSFM and, over the course of three days, took part in seven workshops with the following themes: borders and bridges; migration and feminism; domestic workers in Asia; undocumented, criminalised and disappeared persons; the GCM; migration and capitalism; and myths about migration. Throughout the meeting, MMN raised issues related to migration in the GMS, many of which were shared concerns in other regions, and built valuable connections with representatives from other organisations from around the world. At the end of the forum, participants came together to share results of their discussion. Participants additionally adopted a declaration of solidarity.

To read the full declaration, please visit: https://wsf2018.org/en/fsmm-declaracao-de-participantes-do-8o-forum-social-mundial-das-migracoes/
VIII. Other Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

1. Technical Regional Meeting on Changing Attitudes and Behaviour towards Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN, Bangkok, Thailand

On 26-27 November 2018, MMN joined the Technical Regional Meeting on Changing Attitudes and Behaviour towards Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN. The meeting was organised as a part of strategising and planning process for the programme “Safe & Fair: Realizing Women Migrant Workers’ Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region” (2018-2022), which was part of the multi-year EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls. Safe & Fair is implemented by the ILO and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The programme aims to address women migrant workers’ vulnerabilities to violence and trafficking, strengthen rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to violence against women and labour migration governance, and support access to essential services. The programme is implemented in ASEAN countries. The meeting brought together experts, CSO representatives, women migrant workers, and ILO and UN Women staff to brainstorm on existing campaigns and programming interventions which have addressed attitudes towards women migrant workers and towards violence against women migrants. MMN representative, Ms. Reiko Harima, presented MMN’s initiatives in promoting social inclusion of migrant workers.

2. International Women’s Day, Chiang Mai, Thailand

On International Women’s Day (IWD) on 8 March 2018, MMN collaborated with women’s rights advocates and CSOs in Chiang Mai to organise an event under the theme of “Women 4.0: Equality, Power & Inclusion”. The theme “Women 4.0” echoes the Thai government’s policy of “Thailand 4.0”, which outlines the country’s economic development model. Over 200 migrant women and women rights advocates marched to Tha Pae Gate, a landmark in Chiang Mai, in a display of solidarity for women across the world. The march was
followed by speeches delivered by women’s rights advocates and a government representative from the Chiang Mai Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office. The event also showcased performances from several women’s groups, held film screenings, and set up information booths of CSOs. The IWD 2018 statement was read in Burmese, Thai, and English for the public audience.

3. International Labour Day (May Day), Chiang Mai, Thailand
On 1 May 2018, MMN organised an International Labour Day event in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in collaboration with the Northern Labour Network. Over 150 participants attended the event, including migrant workers employed in various industries, representatives of CSOs, academics, Thai government officials, and members of the Northern Labour Network. The event began with a workshop to discuss the current trends of employment in the informal sector and protection mechanisms available to workers, including migrant workers. Participants then submitted recommendations to a government representative from the Chiang Mai Labour Office at Suan Buak Hard Park. The submission was followed by music performances and poetry reading by labour groups to demonstrate support for the labour movement of May Day.

4. The 5th Mahidol Migration Centre Regional Conference, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand
On 9 November, representatives of the MMN Secretariat and MMN project partners, including MAP Foundation, LSCW, and AIT, attended the 5th Mahidol Migration Centre Regional Conference entitled, “Foreign Workers, Marriage Migrants and Displaced Persons: Understanding the Many Facets of Migration in an Interconnected World” in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. At the conference, MMN representatives held a panel discussion on the theme of “Border Zone Migration”. Panellists discussed the development of SEZs in Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and across the region, and the job trajectory and childcare arrangements for garment workers in SEZs in the GMS. They also highlighted some common and recurring issues faced by workers, including migrant workers, in these zones, such as receiving wages below the minimum wage level, working overtime without proper pay, and experiencing restrictions on forming or joining unions, or engaging in collective bargaining.

5. International Migrant’s Day, Yangon, Myanmar
On 16 December 2018, MMN participated in an International Migrant’s Day celebration in Yangon, Myanmar, organised by ILO. The theme of the year was, “From Safe Migration to Decent Work”. Together with FLC, MMN set up an information booth to distribute pamphlets, publications and stickers in Burmese to workers. The event also showcased music performances and speeches to celebrate the achievements and contribution of migrant workers.
6. International Migrant’s Day, Chiang Mai, Thailand

On 18 December 2018, MMN organised an International Migrant’s Day event with the Northern Labour Network in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Approximately 80 participants attended, including migrant workers from various sectors in Chiang Mai, representatives of CSOs, and members from the Northern Labour Network. The theme of the event was occupational health and safety. The event featured a film screening, as well as a session with migrant workers from the sectors of construction, domestic work, sex work, and agriculture sharing their experiences and working conditions. There was also a plenary involving government representatives from various departments, including the Chiang Mai Provincial Social Security and Employment Office. On the following day, 19 December 2018, migrant workers’ representatives and members from the Northern Labour Network gathered at the Chiang Mai City Hall to submit recommendations to the Governor of Chiang Mai.
January
13-14 MMN organised the 2nd Project Consultation Meeting for the SEZ Project, Yangon
15 MMN & CCC co-organised workshops on the global garment industry, Yangon
16 MMN & CCC conducted a network exchange between garment workers’ trade unions in Myanmar and advocates from other countries, Yangon
17-19 MMN & CCC co-organised the CCC’s Urgent Appeals Global Meeting, Bangkok
18 MMN attended the National Consultation Meeting on GCM, organised by the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok

March
8 MMN participated in the IWD event, Chiang Mai
13-17 MMN organised its annual review and planning meeting, Chiang Mai
20-21 MMN organised a project consultation meeting for the OSF-supported project, Bangkok
21-23 MMN organised the 2nd Project Consultation Meeting for the Solidar Suisse-supported project, Bangkok

April
23-26 MMN organised a secretariat coordination meeting, Chiang Mai

May
1 MMN participated in the International May Day event, Chiang Mai
3-4 MMN attended the Regional CSO Consultation Meeting on ASEAN Consensus, organised by the ASEAN Taskforce on Migrant Workers, Bangkok
20 MMN organised a consultation meeting with migrants, Mae Sot
27 MMN organised a consultation meeting with migrants, Pang Nga
29 MMN organised a consultation meeting with migrant returnees, Poi Pet

June
1 MMN conducted an interview with the Vietnamese Embassy, Bangkok
1-7 MMN organised a secretariat coordination meeting, Chiang Mai
4-5 MMN organised the 1st Project Consultation Meeting for the 2nd Phase of the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Chiang Mai
17 MMN and MAP Foundation organised a consultation with migrants, Chiang Mai

As part of the Northern Labour Network, MMN joined a meeting with the representatives of the Chiang Mai Ministry of Labour (Department of Employment and Labour Protection) Office, Ministry of Public Health & Provincial Administration Office
July
11-16 MMN and FLC conducted in-depth individual interviews with garment factory workers and key informant interviews with government and other stakeholders for the SEZ Project, Yangon
19 MMN had a strategy meeting with CDI for the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Hanoi

August
2 MMN organised the 3rd Project Consultation Meeting for the SEZ Project, Chiang Mai
3 MMN organised the 7th General Conference, Chiang Mai
4 MMN organised the 15th Anniversary Workshop, Chiang Mai
5 MMN organised the Workshop on Frameworks on Migrant Labour in the Fishing Industry in the Mekong, Chiang Mai
6 MMN organised the 2nd Project Consultation Meeting for the 2nd Phase of the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Chiang Mai
24-25 MMN organised a meeting to discuss the findings from the series of consultation meetings with migrants and returnees, Chiang Mai

September
24-27 MMN organised a country visit to Cambodia for the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Phnom Penh
28 MMN attended a meeting regarding work permits and visas for foreign volunteers, organised by the Thai Ministry of Human Security and Social Development and the Chiang Mai Foundations’ Association, Chiang Mai

October
6 Ms Thet Thet Aung, FLC Executive Director and MMN SC member, attended a local event in Yangon to launch the MMN report on SEZs, Yangon
4 & 12 Representatives of the US Embassy visited the MMN office, Chiang Mai
13-19 MMN organised research briefing and planning meetings with project partners for the Migrants in Agriculture Collaborative Research Project, Surathani and Phang Nga
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>MMN organised a multi-stakeholder Consultation Meeting on Labour Migration from Myanmar to Japan as part of the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Yangon</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>MMN conducted key informant interviews with MOEAF and a meeting with project partners for the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Yangon</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>MMN conducted a key informant interview with Cambodia Ministry of Labour for the Roles of Countries of Origin Project, Phnom Penh</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>MMN conducted a country visit to Vietnam for the Roles of Countries of Origin Project MMN representatives had meetings with project partners and conducted key informant interviews with ILO, IOM, CSOs and retired government officers, Hanoi</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>Mr Brahm Press, Chairperson of the MMN SC, attended the AFML on behalf of MMN, Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-31</td>
<td>MMN attended the Oxfam Project Partners’ Meeting, Siem Reap</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<td>2-4</td>
<td>MMN delegation participated in the ACSC/APF. On 3 November, MMN organised a workshop on, “Examining the impact of social exclusion on ASEAN migrants” under the convergence space on Safe Movement of Migrants, Singapore</td>
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<td>2-4</td>
<td>MMN joined the WSFM, Mexico City</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>MMN organised a field visit to migrant communities in Singapore (arranged by TWC2, joined by FED and FLC representatives), Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>MMN joined the 5th Mahidol Migration Center Regional Conference, Bangkok</td>
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<td>12-14</td>
<td>MMN organised an internal coordination meeting, Chiang Mai</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>MMN organised a MMN Foundation Board meeting, Chiang Mai</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>MMN conducted in-depth individual interviews, key informant interviews and meetings with various stakeholders for the SEZ project, Mae Sot</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>MMN joined the Technical Regional Meeting on Changing Attitudes and Behaviour towards Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN, organised by ILO and UN Women, Bangkok</td>
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December

4-11 MMN participated in the GFMD, Marrakesh

The program included the following:
- 4-5 & 7 December: GFMD CSO Days
- 6 December: GFMD Open Days (government and CSOs)
- 8-9 December: People's Global Action
- 10-11 December: Inter-Governmental Conference on GCM

13-14 MMN organised a Civil Society Consultation and Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Meeting for the SEZ project, Yangon

16 MMN joined an International Migrants Day Event, Yangon

18 MMN joined an International Migrants Day Event, Chiang Mai

19 MMN joined a preparatory meeting for the 2019 APF/ACSC as Thailand CSOs were preparing for hosting the meeting, Bangkok