

# MEKONG MIGRATION NETWORK

# ANNUAL REPORT

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Annual report prepared by Mekong Migration Network  
Cover design and layout by Angela Yang  
Photos Courtesy of MMN, John Hulme and MMN Members

Email for general enquiries: [info@mekongmigration.org](mailto:info@mekongmigration.org)

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

Hong Kong Office  
c/o Asian Migrant Centre  
4 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Tel: +85223120031, Fax: +85229920111

Website: [mekongmigration.org](http://mekongmigration.org)

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# Acronyms

<b>AAS</b>	Association for Asian Studies
<b>ACMW</b>	ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers
<b>ACRA</b>	Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies
<b>ADHOC</b>	Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association
<b>AFML</b>	ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour
<b>AGM</b>	Annual General Meeting
<b>AIT</b>	Asian Institute of Technology
<b>AMC</b>	Asian Migrant Centre
<b>AMS</b>	ASEAN Member States
<b>APF</b>	ASEAN People's Forum
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CARAM</b>	Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility
<b>Cambodia</b>	
<b>CCC</b>	Clean Clothes Campaign
<b>CCFD</b>	Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development
<b>CDI</b>	Centre for Development and Integration
<b>CLMTV</b>	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam
<b>CRCD</b>	Center of Research and Consultancy for Development
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>CTUM</b>	Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar
<b>CWCC</b>	Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre
<b>CWPD</b>	Cambodian Women for Peace and Development
<b>DGD</b>	Direction Générale Coopération au Développement et Aide Humanitaire, Belgium
<b>DOLAB</b>	Department of Overseas Labour, Vietnam
<b>EAC</b>	East Asian Coalition
<b>FAR</b>	Foundation for AIDS Rights
<b>FCCT</b>	Foreign Correspondents' Club Thailand
<b>FED</b>	Foundation for Education and Development
<b>FFW</b>	Foundation for Women
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>FLC</b>	Future Light Centre
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GFMD</b>	Global Forum on Migration and Development
<b>GMS</b>	Greater Mekong Subregion
<b>HRDF</b>	Human Rights and Development Foundation
<b>HRWG</b>	Human Rights Working Group
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre
<b>III</b>	Individual In-depth Interviews
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation



<b>IPSR</b>	Institute for Population and Social Research
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>IWD</b>	International Women's Day
<b>LIFT</b>	Livelihoods and Food Security Fund
<b>LMIP</b>	Labour Migration Information Portal
<b>LPN</b>	Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation
<b>LSCW</b>	Legal Support for Children & Women
<b>MAC</b>	Manpower Association of Cambodia
<b>MEPPCCA</b>	Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program-Christian Conference of Asia
<b>MMN</b>	Mekong Migration Network
<b>MMN SC</b>	Mekong Migration Network Steering Committee
<b>MOC</b>	Memorandum of Cooperation
<b>MOEAF</b>	Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation
<b>MOLISA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam
<b>MOLVT</b>	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Cambodia
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MSD Vietnam</b>	Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development
<b>MWEAC</b>	Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Centre
<b>NCCM</b>	National Catholic Commission on Migration
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NPA</b>	National Plan of Action, Myanmar
<b>NV</b>	Nationality Verification
<b>OSF</b>	Open Society Foundation
<b>PRA</b>	Private Recruitment Agencies
<b>RLS-SEA</b>	Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Southeast Asia
<b>SEZ</b>	Special Economic Zone
<b>SISD</b>	Southern Institute of Sustainable Development
<b>SISS</b>	Southern Institute of Social Sciences
<b>SSW</b>	Specified Skilled Worker
<b>SWAN</b>	Shan Women's Action Network
<b>TACDB</b>	Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma
<b>TIP</b>	Trafficking in Persons
<b>TITP</b>	Technical Internship Training Program
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollars
<b>USP2030</b>	Universal Social Protection 2030
<b>VAMAS</b>	Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply
<b>YCOWA</b>	Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association

# About MMN

The Mekong Migration Network (MMN) is a subregional network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) 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, collaborative research, capacity building, and networking.

MMN emerged from a collaborative research initiative pioneered by the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) together with more than 20 collaborating organisations between 2001 and 2003 to assess issues surrounding migration in the GMS. The collaborative research led to the publication in 2003 of “Migration Needs, Issues and Responses in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: A Resource Book,” which highlighted policy gaps and set out comprehensive recommendations for 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 information on migration in the region and conduct research, advocacy, capacity building, and networking. MMN was conceived as a way to fill gaps identified by organisations in the region, including the lack of cross-border collaboration among CSOs in the GMS concerned with promoting and protecting migrants’ rights. These participants became MMN’s founding members and worked to develop the MMN Terms of Partnership to set out the nature of the network and the way it would work. The founding members also nominated members to the MMN Steering Committee (MMN SC), which has become instrumental in decision-making and coordination among members. As a result, MMN has become a crucial organisation linking migration advocacy efforts 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 within the United Nations (UN) international human rights instruments, standards, and treaties apply equally to all migrant workers. Under this vision, members are committed to advocating without discrimination for the rights of all migrants in the GMS and work towards MMN’s central goal of promoting their welfare, well-being, dignity, and human rights, with a special emphasis on labour rights, women’s rights, and family rights. Member organisations also strive to strengthen the advocacy of migrants’ rights by building mutual support and solidarity among migrants and their advocates within the GMS.

<b>Myanmar</b>	<p>Future Light Centre (FLC)</p> <p>88 Generation Peace and Open Society</p> <p>WE Generation</p> <p>Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar (CTUM)*</p> <p>*CTUM is in the process of formalising their membership.</p>
<b>Cambodia</b>	<p>Legal Support for Children &amp; Women (LSCW)</p> <p>Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)</p> <p>Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)</p> <p>Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD)</p> <p>Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM Cambodia)</p> <p>Banteay Srei</p>
<b>China</b>	<p>Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Centre (MWEAC)</p> <p>Ruili Women and Children Development Centre</p> <p>Association for Women's Capacity Building and Community Development in Yunnan</p> <p>Women Migrant Education Research Professional Association</p> <p>Yunnan Health and Development Research Association</p>
<b>Lao PDR</b>	<p>Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Laos</p> <p>Lao Women's Union</p>
<b>Thailand</b>	<p>MAP Foundation</p> <p>Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)</p> <p>National Catholic Commission on Migration (NCCM)</p> <p>EMPOWER Foundation</p> <p>Foundation for AIDS Rights (FAR)</p> <p>Foundation for Women (FFW)</p> <p>Foundation for Education and Development (FED)</p> <p>The Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF)</p> <p>Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University</p> <p>Maryknoll Thailand - Office for Migrants at Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok</p> <p>The Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program-Christian Conference of Asia (MEPPCCA)</p> <p>Pattanakarn Foundation</p> <p>Raks Thai Foundation</p> <p>Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)</p> <p>Yaung Chii Oo Workers Association (YCOWA)</p>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<p>Centre for Development and Integration (CDI)</p> <p>Center of Research and Consultancy for Development (CRCDD)</p> <p>Southern Institute of Sustainable Development (SISD)</p> <p>Education &amp; Psychology Association - Ho Chi Minh City</p> <p>The Applied Social Work Center</p> <p>Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD Vietnam)</p>

# MMN Steering Committee

The MMN Steering Committee (MMN SC) comprises the following representatives from our member organisations:

**Mr Brahm Press, SC Chairperson**  
MAP Foundation, Thailand

**Ms Thet Thet Aung**  
FLC, Myanmar/Burma

**Ms Pok Panhavichetr**  
CWCC, Cambodia

**Ms Han Jialing**  
MWEAC, China

**Ms Kim Thi Thu Ha**  
CDI, Vietnam

**Ms Reiko Harima**  
ex-officio as the MMN Regional Coordinator

All of the MMN SC members listed above were elected at MMN's 7th General Conference held on 3 August 2018. The seat representing Laos remains vacant as MMN members from that country were unable to join the above-mentioned General Conference.

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

## **MMN Secretariat Team 2019**

Ms. Reiko Harima, MMN Regional Coordinator, 2003 to date  
Ms. Omsin Boonlert, MMN Project Coordinator, April 2011 to March 2019  
Ms. Carli Melo, MMN Project Coordinator, June 2016 to July 2019  
Ms. Suphit Chaihong, Administration Officer, April 2017 to date  
Ms. Trang Hoang, MMN Project Coordinator, March 2018 to October 2019  
Ms. Phasy Res, MMN Research and Advocacy Officer, April 2018 to July 2019  
Mr. Luk Kay Yui Stefan, MMN Information and Advocacy Officer, July 2018 to date  
Ms. Yanin Wongmai, MMN Project Coordinator, November 2019 to date.

## **Consultants**

Mr. Che Singh Kochhar-George  
Ms. Reena Arora  
Ms. Hayley Welgus

## **Interns and Volunteers**

Mr. Yuki Hayasaka, MMN intern, May to August 2019  
Ms. Elizabeth Dolan, MMN intern, June to August 2019  
Ms. Vidhi Mago, MMN intern, June to August 2019

## **MMN Supporters**

Solidar Suisse  
Oxfam  
Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD-Terre Solidaire)  
Open Society Foundation (OSF)  
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)  
Toyota Foundation  
Porticus Foundation

# Acknowledgements

On behalf of the MMN Secretariat, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all MMN member organisations for the commitment, contribution, and solidarity in working together to jointly promote and protect the rights of migrants. I would like to thank the MMN SC members who have kindly contributed their expertise to advance MMN's goals and strengthen the network. Equally, I would like to thank all our conscientious staff, interns, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly towards achieving MMN's vision. In 2019, we saw three multi-year collaborative research projects reach successful conclusions, while the MMN Secretariat bid farewell to several highly committed and talented members of staff, namely Ms Omsin Boonlert, Ms Carli Melo, Ms Trang Hoang, and Ms Phasy Rey. During their time at MMN, all four worked tirelessly to advocate for migrants' rights, exhibited exceptional capacity in carrying out MMN's collaborative research and advocacy projects, and helped strengthen the network. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours. I am sure that the next generation to serve on the MMN Secretariat will strive to build on the momentum created by our outgoing members of staff.

I would also like to acknowledge the continued support of the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood for managing MMN's operations in Thailand, and AMC for hosting the network's Secretariat in Hong Kong and contributing its expertise in carrying out regional work.

Last but not least, I would like to thank our generous supporters who have made it possible for MMN to go from strength to strength. MMN supporters in 2019 include: Oxfam; Solidar Suisse; CCFD-Terre Solidaire; OSF; IDRC; Porticus Foundation; and the Toyota Foundation, among others. MMN extends our heartfelt gratitude to all our supporters, named and unnamed, who have contributed their time, money, expertise, and efforts towards our work.

**Reiko Harima**

Regional Coordinator, Mekong Migration Network





# Message from the Steering Committee

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As the migration situation continues to change, the Mekong Migration Network (MMN) has been consistent in its call for migrant rights. The MMN has maintained its stance that not only should migrants be treated fairly, but migrants also need to have full access to portable social protections in both origin and destination countries, in all types of work which migrants are employed. In the year 2019, to provide opportunity for dialogue and promote positive policy changes, MMN brought together various stakeholders to present results on a number of different recently completed research. Stakeholder meetings covered topics such as: Special Economic Zones being more gender-sensitive to workers' needs; Roles of Origin Countries promoting social protections for migrant workers; the needs of agricultural workers in Thailand; and trends in labour recruitment between the GMS and Japan. With the continued dedication of the membership and support of the highly capable Secretariat, MMN will continue to be a valuable resource in identifying arising trends and helping guide migrant policies into the future.



**Brahm Press**

Chairperson of MMN Steering Committee

Among MMN's achievements in 2019, I feel it is important to highlight the network's groundbreaking initiatives in the area of labour migration from Mekong countries to Japan. The series of activities outlined in this report has provided MMN members from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam a rare opportunity for multi-stakeholder dialogue and to make new connections with organisations in Japan. Moreover, these activities have allowed MMN members from various countries of origin to collectively strategise and have strengthened determination to support Mekong migrant workers heading for Japan.

With the expertise and commitment of MMN members and the MMN Secretariat, I believe MMN will continue to play a critical role in strengthening capacity of civil society organisations in the Mekong, facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue, conducting research and advocacy, and forming partnerships within and beyond the Mekong region.



**Kim Thi Thu Ha**

CDI, Vietnam

# Overview of Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion in 2019

To give context to MMN's work in 2019, 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 both 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, 2019 saw ongoing developments related to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations States (ASEAN) Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers agreed by ASEAN Members States (AMS) back in 2017. This included activities pursuant to the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) for the period 2018-2025. MMN contributed constructive, direct engagement with ACMW activities including presenting our research findings at the Consultation Workshop on the Implementation of ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 18 December 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The year 2019 also saw the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML), take place on 25-26 September in Bangkok, Thailand. The event was hosted by the Government of Thailand, the then chair of ASEAN and the ACMW. The AFML is "an open platform for the review, discussion and exchange of good practices and ideas between governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and civil society on key issues facing migrant workers in Southeast Asia".<sup>2</sup> The overall theme for the 12<sup>th</sup> AFML was "Future of Work and Migration". During the AFML, participants discussed ways forward under the following sub-themes: i) Challenges on Sustainable, Fair and Equal Protection; and ii) Challenges on Migrant Worker Employability. As a result of discussion, participants agreed to recommend a set of concrete measures to protect and promote the rights and well-being of migrant workers in the future of work, as inputs to the ACMW in planning its regional actions to implement the ASEAN Consensus in 2021-2025. These recommendations included:

- Promote greater access of migrant workers to social security in line with relevant international agreements such as the principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 118, including through bilateral or multilateral agreements, as necessary, to facilitate portability of social security benefits;
- Take measures for safe and fair recruitment of migrant workers, first proposing that recruitment fees and related costs are reduced, with the view of eventually not charging to migrant workers;
- Protect the rights of workers in the supply chain through promotion of corporate social responsibility of private sector which would support sustainability of business, particularly as customers are increasingly

<sup>1</sup> US Mission to ASEAN, "Consultation Workshop on the Implementation of ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers", accessible at <https://asean.usmission.gov/consultation-workshop-on-the-implementation-of-asean-consensus-on-the-protection-and-promotion-of-the-rights-of-migrant-workers/>.

<sup>2</sup> ILO, "12th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour", 25-26 September 2019, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS\\_713644/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%2012th%20AFML%20was%20held,of%20Migrant%20Workers%20\(ACMW\)](https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS_713644/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%2012th%20AFML%20was%20held,of%20Migrant%20Workers%20(ACMW).).

becoming more inclined to purchase from companies with ethical practices;

- Promote transition from informal employment, such as agriculture, fishery and domestic work, to formal employment to ensure labour rights protection of migrant workers in all sectors; and
- Promote migrant workers' voice and representation in collective bargaining and social dialogue by ensuring their freedom of association.<sup>3</sup>

In the GMS, discussion on portability of social protection for migrants garnered much attention. On 17 September 2019, Cambodia hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on Labor Cooperation among Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (CLMTV) countries in Siem Reap. The opening ceremony of the conference was presided over by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The conference approved, in principle, the plan to achieve portability of social security for migrants in the CLMTV region and to further strengthen labour cooperation among the five countries. In addition, the meeting also agreed to set up a working body to draft a ministerial declaration, which will be proposed for approval at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on Labor Cooperation among CLMTV countries in Laos.<sup>4</sup> The press release from the Cambodian government is accessible at <https://pressocm.gov.kh/en/archives/57021>.

In terms of global level discourse, the 12<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), originally scheduled for November 2019 in Quito, Ecuador, was postponed due to political unrest, but subsequently took place in January 2020. The 12<sup>th</sup> GFMD is expected to provide a forum for governments to present their national action plans in working towards the goals set out in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) adopted by the international community in December 2018.

3 For the full list of recommendations from the 12th AFML, please see [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_722162.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_722162.pdf).

4 Royal Thai Embassy, Washington DC, "3rd Ministerial Conference on Labor Cooperation approves plan for migration, social security rights for migrant workers in CLMTV", 19 September 2019, accessible at <https://thaiembdc.org/2019/09/19/3rd-ministerial-conference-on-labor-cooperation-approves-plan-for-migration-social-security-rights-for-migrant-workers-in-clmtv/>.



## Cambodia

In 2018, the Cambodian National Committee for Counter Trafficking reported that in excess of 1.8 million Cambodian nationals were currently working overseas.<sup>5</sup> According to a 2017 joint survey conducted by the ILO and International Organization for Migration (IOM), less than one-third of the 1.8 million Cambodian migrants had moved through formal channels. The majority of migrant workers continued to rely on a combination of “unlicensed brokers and social networks” to reach their destination countries.<sup>6</sup> Some of the major factors pushing people to work abroad include the lack of employment opportunities at home, relatively higher wage levels abroad,<sup>7</sup> and the need to pay off existing debts.<sup>8</sup> According to the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT), migrant workers sent home approximately 2.8 million USD in remittances in 2018,<sup>9</sup> and yet a 2019 report by the Future Forum on the relationship between remittances and household debt suggested that migration had sunk many Cambodian workers further into debt, rather than alleviating existing debt.<sup>10</sup>

Neighbouring Thailand remains the most popular destination for Cambodian migrant workers. Including undocumented workers, there are an estimated 650,000 Cambodian nationals working in Thailand.<sup>11</sup> As of September 2019, 308,295 workers had migrated through processes established under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Cambodia and Thailand in 2016, while 355,731 had completed Nationality Verification (NV) as part of the registration process for undocumented migrants inside Thailand.<sup>12</sup> Most of these workers were employed in the fishing, agriculture, livestock, construction, manufacturing and service sectors, including domestic work.<sup>13</sup>

Other popular destination countries for Cambodian migrants include the Republic of Korea (with 49,099 workers migrating through formal channels), Malaysia (30,113 workers), Japan (9,195 workers), and Singapore (851 workers).<sup>14</sup> In 2019, the Cambodian government coordinated with countries in East Asia to expand formal channels for its nationals to move and work abroad. In March 2019, for instance, the governments of Cambodia and Japan signed a “Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on a Basic Framework For Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of “Specified Skilled Worker”. This MOC enables Cambodian workers to migrate using the ‘Specified Skilled Worker’ pathway that was created in Japan to ease the country’s labour shortage by increasing the recruitment of migrants.<sup>15</sup> In July 2019, the government of the Republic of Korea also

5 Khuon Narim, “Thai authorities to help migrant workers renew expired permits”, *Khmer Times*, 28 May 2018, accessible at <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/608273/thai-authorities-to-help-migrant-workers-renew-expired-permits/>.

6 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Cambodia (April-June 2019)’”, 2019, p.1, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_735105.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_735105.pdf).

7 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Cambodia (October-December 2019)’”, 2019, p.1.

8 MMN, “Proceedings of the Workshop on Migration from Mekong Countries of Origin to Japan”, July 2019, p.18, accessible at <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7720>.

9 Chea Vannak, “\$2.8 Billion sent home by Cambodian migrant workers in 2019”, *Khmer Times*, 28 February 2020, accessible at <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50696319/2-8-billion-sent-home-by-cambodian-migrant-workers-in-2019/>.

10 Men Kimseng, “Remittances Pull Farmers Deeper Into Debt, Research Finds”, *VOA Cambodia*, 13 March 2019, accessible at <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/remittances-pull-farmers-deeper-into-debt-research-finds/4825821.html>.

11 IOM, “Cambodian Labour Migrants in Thailand: IOM Study”, 28 June 2019, accessible at <https://www.iom.int/news/cambodian-labour-migrants-thailand-iom-study>.

12 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Cambodia (October-December 2019)’”, 2019, p.2, see n.7 above.

13 Ibid, p.1.

14 Ibid.

15 Ministry of Justice, Japan, “Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the National Police Agency of Japan and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training of the Kingdom of Cambodia on a basic framework for information partnership for proper operation of the system pertaining to foreign human resources with the status of residence of ‘Specified Skilled Worker’”, March 2019, accessible at <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001291694.pdf>.



A pre-departure training held at the Department of Employment and Manpower of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training for prospective migrants bound for Japan. (Photo: MMN)

announced that it would increase its quota on the recruitment of Cambodia workers, following meetings with representatives of the MOLVT.<sup>16</sup>

In Cambodia, the high cost of migration continues to be of concern. On average, migrating to Thailand through formal channels costs around 650 USD, while total migration costs involved in migration to Japan can range between 6,000 and 10,000 USD.<sup>17</sup> The Cambodian government has yet to place any legal caps on recruitment fees and related costs that recruitment agencies can charge. High migration costs have led some migrants to take out loans, further adding to their financial insecurity.<sup>18</sup> According to an official from the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government was considering capping recruitment fees, although a timeframe for such measures remains unclear.<sup>19</sup>

Recent years have seen the Cambodian government and other stakeholders take steps to protect workers once abroad. In June 2019, the Cambodian Embassy in Thailand announced that it would undertake migrant work site visits to deliver talks and provide assistance to its nationals by “renewing passports and directly verifying their documents”.<sup>20</sup> The Bar Association of Cambodia also planned to establish an office in Thailand to provide legal aid to Cambodian migrant workers. The office is expected to be staffed by at least three lawyers.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Long Kimmarita, “SK ups migrant worker quotas”, *Phnom Penh Post*, 24 July 2019, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sk-ups-migrant-worker-quotas>.

<sup>17</sup> MMN, “Social Protection Across Borders: Roles of Mekong Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants’ Rights”, September 2019, accessible at <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7578>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Matt Blomberg, “Cambodia to curb recruitment fees in bid to protect migrants from slavery abroad”, *Reuters*, 19 September 2019, accessible at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-workers-migrants/cambodia-to-curb-recruitment-fees-in-bid-to-protect-migrants-from-slavery-abroad-idUSKBN1W400T>.

<sup>20</sup> Khorn Savi, “Cambodian embassy in Bangkok to help migrants”, *Phnom Penh Post*, 13 June 2019, accessible at <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodian-embassy-bangkok-help-migrants>.

<sup>21</sup> Khuon Narim, “Bar Association to set up legal aid office in Thailand”, *Khmer Times*, 18 October 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50652259/bar-association-to-set-up-legal-aid-office-in-thailand/>.



# China



Given its draw of higher pay and relatively easy border crossing, China has become an attractive destination country for migrant workers from Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. For the most part, such migration takes place through informal channels. For example, an increasing number of young people from Laos are migrating to China's Yunnan Province to work in restaurants, hotels, and shops. Many of these migrants are members of a Chinese speaking ethnic group who maintain cross-border kinship ties. Lao government officials reported that the Chinese authorities have latterly taken action against undocumented workers by arresting and deporting them back to Laos.<sup>22</sup>

Large numbers of individuals from Myanmar are also currently working in China. As of October 2019, the *Myanmar Times* reported that there were approximately 100,000 undocumented Myanmar workers in China, many of whom are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.<sup>23</sup> In one instance, *Radio Free Asia* reported that Myanmar migrant workers in a sugarcane plantation were "cheated of their wages", had their documents confiscated, and were "threatened" on account of their 'illegal' status in China.<sup>24</sup> Despite the increased numbers of migrant workers from Myanmar in China, the two countries have yet to establish any official procedures to facilitate a process of managed migration. In July 2019, the Myanmar government began a process to draw up a MOU with China, but negotiations are still ongoing and the *Myanmar Times* reported that it "may take a while before an agreement [can] be reached".<sup>25</sup>

In recent years, the issue of women being trafficked from GMS countries into China for the purpose of marriage, sometimes referred to as "bride trafficking", continues to be widely reported. The issue stems from China's "one-child policy" (1979-2015), which has skewed the ratio of males to females within the country.<sup>26</sup> *Myanmar Now* reported that "up to 37 percent of women from Kachin now living in China are trapped in forced marriages", but in 2017 the police had investigated just 18 cases.<sup>27</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, "the number of women and girls being trafficked is substantial and possibly growing" particularly given the porous border between China's Yunnan province and northern Kachin in Myanmar.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, with China's increased financial investment in infrastructure projects along the border, such as the high-speed railway connecting Mandalay to China, and the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Ruili, activists in Myanmar fear that the increased connectivity may create further "openings for traffickers".<sup>29</sup> Thus far, this issue has not been adequately addressed by governments in the region, nor has there been much support for survivors who manage to return home.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup> "Lao Migrant Youth Increasingly Looking for work in China", *Radio Free Asia*, 17 January 2019, accessible at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-migrant-china-01172019123757.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> "Myanmar Workers Return Home After Fleeing Miserable Conditions at Chinese Sugarcane Plantation", *Radio Free Asia*, 23 January 2019, accessible at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/workers-01232019165526.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Khin Myat Myat Wai, "Myanmar negotiated with China on sending workers", *Myanmar Times*, 23 October 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/myanmar-negotiates-china-sending-workers.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Heather Barr, "China bride trafficking problem", *Human Rights Watch*, 31 October 2019, accessible at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/31/chinas-bride-trafficking-problem>.

<sup>27</sup> Graeme Acres, "China's Belt and Road Construction Boom May Fuel Demand for Trafficked 'Brides', Say Advocates", *Myanmar Now*, 9 October 2019, accessible at <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/chinas-belt-and-road-construction-boom-may-fuel-demand-for-trafficked-brides-say-advocates>.

<sup>28</sup> Elaink Kurtenbach, "Report: Myanmar, China failing to stop 'bride' trafficking", *AP News*, 21 March 2019, accessible at <https://apnews.com/4970593b86c84e258fbc6f8b5f53a76>.

<sup>29</sup> Graeme Acres, "China's Belt and Road Construction Boom May Fuel Demand for Trafficked 'Brides', Say Advocates", *Myanmar Now*, 9 October 2019, see n.27 above.

<sup>30</sup> Elaink Kurtenbach, "Report: Myanmar, China failing to stop 'bride' trafficking", *AP News*, 21 March 2019, see n.28 above.





## Laos

In recent years, working abroad has remained an attractive option for many Lao workers especially in the sectors of agriculture, construction, and domestic work.<sup>31</sup> According to the ILO, an estimated 1.3 million Lao nationals live abroad, 54% of whom are women.<sup>32</sup> The prospect of higher wages and better employment opportunities abroad are oft-cited reasons for Lao workers to migrate.<sup>33</sup> Financial remittances from migrant workers reached 254 million USD in 2019, constituting a significant part of Laos' national income.<sup>34</sup>

Over the years, Thailand has become the biggest destination country for Lao migrant workers. Data released by the Thai Ministry of Labour in September 2019 showed that 175,766 workers had migrated through processes established under an MOU signed between Laos and Thailand in 2016, and an additional 105,153 were completing the NV as part of the registration process for undocumented workers in Thailand.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, there are an estimated 30,000 undocumented Lao workers in Thailand. Many of whom perform unauthorised work having entered Thailand on tourist visa-exemptions or border passes. Those who have not been able to migrate through formal channels are at greater risk of mistreatment and abuse. Some workers are passed from one employer to another and in certain cases, are not been paid their full, promised wages, or in other cases, experience sexual exploitation.<sup>36</sup>

Aside from Thailand, countries in East Asia are becoming increasingly popular destinations for Lao workers. As of June 2019, 505 Lao workers had migrated to Japan under the Technical Internship Training Program (TITP).<sup>37</sup> The government of the Republic of Korea allows a maximum of 500 Lao nationals to work under its Employment Permit System, and in 2019, 234 workers did so.<sup>38</sup> China has also seen an increase in Lao migrant workers, given that the wage level in China is typically twice that of Laos.<sup>39</sup> As noted in the previous section, rising numbers of young adults from Laos are taking up service sector jobs in China's Yunnan Province.<sup>40</sup>

MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION  
ON  
THE TECHNICAL INTERN TRAINING PROGRAM  
BETWEEN  
THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE OF JAPAN  
AND  
THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF LAO PEOPLE'S  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan (hereinafter referred to collectively as "the Japanese side") and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as "the Lao PDR's side") shared the view that the purpose of the Technical Intern Training Program is to transfer technical skills, techniques and knowledge (hereinafter referred to as "technical skills, etc.") to Lao PDR, to contribute to the human resource development by which the development of the economy of Lao PDR would be led and thus to promote international cooperation. Based on this view, the Japanese side and the Lao PDR's side (hereinafter referred to collectively as "both sides") have decided as follows in order to adequately advance the Technical Intern Training Program:

(Purpose)

1 The purpose of this Memorandum is to transfer technical skills, etc. from Japan to Lao PDR appropriately and smoothly through the Technical Intern Training Program by setting out the commitments between both sides to send and accept technical intern

*The Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the governments of Japan and Lao PDR. (Photo: MMN)*

While Laos is a major country of origin in the region, it is also a destination country for a significant number

31 The UN in Lao PDR, "Country Analysis Report: Lao PDR", 13 November 2015, p.29, accessible at <https://laopdr.un.org/en/13290-lao-pdr-united-nations-partnership-framework-sustainable-development-2017-2021-2015-country>.

32 ILO, "TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, 'Lao PDR (July-September 2019)'" 2019, p.1, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_614379.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_614379.pdf).

33 The UN in Lao PDR, "Country Analysis Report: Lao PDR", 13 November 2015, p.29, see n.31 above.

34 ILO, "TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, 'Lao PDR (October-December 2019)'" 2019, p.1.

35 Ibid., p.2.

36 "Lao Migrants Fleeing Poverty Defy Dangers to Work in Thailand", *Radio Free Asia*, 27 August 2019, accessible at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/migrants-08272019160657.html>.

37 Ministry of Justice, Japan, "在留外国人統計（旧登録外国人統計）統計表 (in Japanese)", June 2019, accessible at [http://www.moj.go.jp/housei/toukei/toukei\\_ichiran\\_touroku.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/housei/toukei/toukei_ichiran_touroku.html).

38 "Labour authorities laud Lao workers' deal in South Korea", *The Star*, 30 January 2020, accessible at <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2020/01/30/labour-authorities-laud-lao-workers-deal-in-south-korea>.

39 "Lao Migrant Youth Increasingly Looking for Work in China", *Radio Free Asia*, 17 January 2019, see n.22 above.

40 Ibid.

of migrants. As of May 2019, an estimated 40,000 migrants from Myanmar have migrated to the country through informal channels, and the governments of Myanmar and Laos have been negotiating details of an updated MOU that would create formal migration processes.<sup>41</sup> Despite an absence of official data on the number of Vietnamese in Laos, reports indicate that there is a sizeable migrant community in the country.<sup>42</sup> In response to the increasing population of undocumented migrant workers, the Lao government announced in 2019 that officials would register migrant workers and issue them with a temporary work permit every year. According to the *Borneo Bulletin*, so far 42,000 migrant workers from Vietnam, China, and Thailand have been registered, and 23,000 have provided proof of nationality.<sup>43</sup>



## Myanmar/Burma



A migrant worker fishes in Mae Sot, Thailand. (Photo: John Hulme/MMN)

Over recent decades, migration has become a way of life for many families in Myanmar. According to the latest government census of 2014, the first in 30 years, 3.9% of Myanmar's population resides abroad, 69% of whom were men and 43% women.<sup>44</sup> However, ILO reported that the number may in fact be far higher, estimating that as many as 10% of the country's labour force may reside abroad.<sup>45</sup> In 2019 alone, 305,000 Myanmar citizens used formal channels to migrate.<sup>46</sup> Higher wages continue to be the main driving factor for

41 "Myanmar to officially dispatch workers to Laos", *Eleven Myanmar*, 12 May 2019, accessible at <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-to-officially-dispatch-workers-to-laos>.

42 "Vietnamese flock to Laos and Thailand for jobs", *Vietnam Net*, 18 February 2019, accessible at <https://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/society/217954/vietnamese-flock-to-laos-and-thailand-for-jobs.html>.

43 "Laos accelerates registration process of foreign workers", *Borneo Bulletin*, 10 January 2019, accessible at <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/laos-accelerates-registration-process-of-foreign-workers/>.

44 ILO, "Migration Data for Policy Development: An Appraisal of Data and Statistics on International Labour Migration in Myanmar", 2018, p.21, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/yangon/publications/WCMS\\_672535/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/yangon/publications/WCMS_672535/lang--en/index.htm).

45 ILO, "TRIANGLE in ASEAN – Myanmar", accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS\\_622433/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_622433/lang--en/index.htm).

46 Yu Wai, "Myanmar migrant workers in 2019 exceed 300,000", *Myanmar Times*, 14 January 2020, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes>.

emigration from Myanmar. Despite recent rises in the national minimum wage, salaries in nearby countries such as Thailand and Malaysia remain considerably higher.<sup>47</sup>

Popular destination countries for Myanmar's migrant workers include Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, and Japan.<sup>48</sup> As of December 2019, the Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population had granted licenses to 313 recruitment agencies to facilitate the migration of Myanmar nationals to 18 destination countries.<sup>49</sup> Of those countries, Thailand is by far the most popular. As of August 2019, 493,744 workers had migrated through processes established by an MOU signed between Myanmar and Thailand in 2016, while 652,507 were completing the NV process that allows undocumented migrants in Thailand to register with the authorities and regularise their status.<sup>50</sup> Estimates suggest there are at least as many undocumented workers in the country as those documented.<sup>51</sup> Informal migration remains a common phenomenon, given the expense, complexity, and time-consuming procedures involved in formal mechanisms.<sup>52</sup>

In an effort to establish more legal migration channels for Myanmar nationals, the government has signed or planned to establish bilateral agreements on labour cooperation with a number of countries in East and South-East Asia. In March 2019, the governments of Myanmar and Japan signed the “Memorandum of Cooperation on a Basic Framework for Information Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of ‘Specified Skilled Worker’” to enable Myanmar workers who are considered to be ‘Specified Skilled Workers’ to migrate to Japan. As of December 2019, 100 workers had been recruited through the new migration channel, adding to the 10,328 Myanmar workers already in Japan under a separate migration scheme known as the TITP.<sup>53</sup> The Myanmar government has also reportedly begun negotiations with Laos and China in May and October 2019 respectively, to establish bilateral agreements that would enable



*Prospective migrant workers bound for Japan attend Japanese language training at a recruitment agency in Yangon, Myanmar.  
(Photo: MMN)*

[com/news/myanmar-migrant-workers-2019-exceed-300000.html](http://com/news/myanmar-migrant-workers-2019-exceed-300000.html).

47 Zaw Zaw Htwe, “Exodus of workers grows as living costs rise in Myanmar”, *Myanmar Times*, 26 July 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/exodus-workers-grows-living-costs-rise-myanmar.html>.

48 Yu Wai, “Myanmar migrant workers in 2019 exceed 300,000”, *Myanmar Times*, 14 January 2020, see n.46 above.

49 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Myanmar (October-December), 2019’”, 2019, p.1.

50 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Myanmar (July-September), 2019’”, 2019, p.2, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_614382.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_614382.pdf).

51 MMN, “Safe from the Start: The Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants”, 2017, accessible at [http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Safe-from-the-Start\\_English.pdf](http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Safe-from-the-Start_English.pdf).

52 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Myanmar (July-September), 2019’”, 2019, p.1, see n.50 above.

53 For the number of migrant workers in Japan under the “Specified Skilled Workers” visa category, please see Immigration Services Agency of Japan, “特定技能 1 号在留外国人数 (in Japanese)”, December 2019, accessible at <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001313794.pdf>. For the number of migrant workers in Japan under the TITP, please see the Ministry of Justice of Japan, “在留外国人統計 (旧登録外国人統計) 統計表 (in Japanese)”, June 2019, see n.37 above.



Myanmar workers to migrate through formal procedures.<sup>54</sup>

2019 also saw other significant new developments in the Myanmar government's policies on migration. In April, the government lifted its ban on domestic workers migrating to Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Macau.<sup>55</sup> The ban on women migrating for domestic work in any location had been instituted in 2014, following widespread reports on the abuse of migrant domestic workers across Asia. However, the ban was largely ineffective, as the UN estimates that as many as 28,000 undocumented domestic workers from Myanmar were working in Thailand, and between 30,000 and 40,000 had moved to work in Singapore.<sup>56</sup> In May, the Myanmar government also officially released its second National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Management of International Labour Migration for 2018-2022.<sup>57</sup> This NPA includes a number of aspects to improve migration mechanisms and enhance protections for migrant workers throughout the migration cycle.<sup>58</sup>

The ILO reported that an estimated 2.754 billion USD was remitted by migrants in 2019, which made up approximately 3.9% of Myanmar's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This figure is likely to be an underestimate as it does not include remittances transferred by brokers or carried home in-person by workers.<sup>59</sup> To formalise the process, the Central Bank of Myanmar began issuing official remittance licenses in November 2019. License holders, which may include recruitment agencies, are required to deposit 100 million Kyat as part of the application procedure. Migrant workers are allowed to remit a maximum of 5,000 USD per month, with an upper limit of 1,000 USD per transfer. According to an article by the *Myanmar Times*, the hope is that these official licenses will provide a record of money being transferred, thus giving workers additional protection that their funds are safe.<sup>60</sup>



## Thailand

For many years now, Thailand has been a key destination for migrant workers from neighbouring countries in the GMS. As a relatively well developed country sharing porous land borders with poorer neighbouring countries, it has attracted estimated 3 to 4 million migrant workers primarily from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. Migrant workers from these countries have played an important role in the Thai labour market, especially in the construction, agriculture, fishing and manufacturing sectors.

There are three main processes through which labour migration is facilitated in Thailand. Firstly, migrants

<sup>54</sup> "Myanmar to officially dispatch workers to Laos", *Eleven Myanmar*, 12 May 2019, see n.40 above; and Khin Myat Myat Wai, "Myanmar negotiates with China on sending workers", *Myanmar Times*, 23 October 2019, see n.24 above.

<sup>55</sup> Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Govt to resume sending maids to Singapore, three other areas", *Myanmar Times*, 26 April 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/govt-resume-sending-maids-singapore-three-other-areas.html>.

<sup>56</sup> UN Women, "Myanmar Domestic Workers – Driving Development at Home and Abroad", June 2017, p.18, accessible at [http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2018/04/mig-dw-research\\_english-r02x.pdf?la=en&vs=1903](http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2018/04/mig-dw-research_english-r02x.pdf?la=en&vs=1903).

<sup>57</sup> Zaw Zaw Htwe, "Govt, UN agency launch plan to protect migrants", *Myanmar Times*, 14 May 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/govt-un-agency-launch-plan-protect-migrants.html>.

<sup>58</sup> The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, "Five-year National Plan of Action for the Management of International Labor Migration 2018-2022", 2019.

<sup>59</sup> ILO, TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, "Myanmar (July-September), 2019", 2019, p.1, see n.50 above.

<sup>60</sup> Zeyar Hein, "Official remittance licences now available for migrant workers", *Myanmar Times*, 20 November 2019, accessible at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/official-remittance-licences-now-available-migrant-workers.html>.



A migrant community in Rayong, Thailand. (Photo: MMN)

go through processes established under an MOU signed between Thailand and countries of origin such as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Such processes provide migrants a “fully legal channel to access job opportunities in Thailand” using the services provided by recruitment agencies.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, there has been periodic migrant registration exercises, “which allows undocumented migrants to regularize their status without having to return to their countries of origin”.<sup>62</sup> Since the 1990s, the Thai government, by way of a series of Cabinet Resolutions, has permitted undocumented migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and more recently Vietnam to semi-regularise their status during these windows.<sup>63</sup> The registration process includes NV and would be phased out by 2020, after which migrant workers wishing to enter Thailand must do so by way of MOU channels.<sup>64</sup> Thirdly, migrants may travel to Thailand for work using the so-called Section

64 Border Pass, named after the provision within the 2017 Royal Ordinance on the Management of Foreign Workers.<sup>65</sup> The border pass scheme permits nationals of countries that share a land border with Thailand to enter the Kingdom on a temporary basis or for seasonal work at a specified location. The various border passes available differ in duration (daily, weekly, or monthly) and by the issuing authority in question. For example, the agreement between Myanmar and Thailand relating to the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border crossing requires border pass holders to be residents of Myawaddy, and permits them to remain and work in specified areas within Tak province for a period of 30 days.<sup>66</sup>

According to the Thai Foreign Workers Administration Office, as of December 2019, 1,005,848 individuals migrated using the MOU process, 1,716,576 have either completed or were completing the registration process, and 65,991 seasonal workers were working with a Section 64 Border Pass.<sup>67</sup> Including migrants without any formal immigration status, the IOM estimates that the total number of migrant workers in Thailand is around 3.9 million.<sup>68</sup> Among migrant workers in the three migration categories, migrants from Myanmar account for the largest number at 1,820,928, followed by Cambodian workers at 686,429, and Laotian workers at 280,962.<sup>69</sup>

61 UN, Thailand Migration Report 2019, 2019, p.16, accessible at [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Thailand%20Report%202019\\_22012019\\_LowRes.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Thailand%20Report%202019_22012019_LowRes.pdf).

62 Ibid.

63 For a historic overview see generally AMC & MMN, “Migration Needs, Issues and Responses in the Greater Mekong Subregion: A Resource Book”, 2002, accessible at [http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page\\_id=1705](http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=1705).

64 Thai Ministry of Labour, “Operation on Tackling Labour Trafficking Issues (in Thai)”, p.8-9, accessible at [http://ccpl3.mol.go.th/ewt\\_dl\\_link.php?nid=248&filename=&fbclid=IwAR1sgilf5hOpOcll\\_3cTlDs9S2pP29cm-5dY5Nzn9BvK6l-8LBfsmUujnqg](http://ccpl3.mol.go.th/ewt_dl_link.php?nid=248&filename=&fbclid=IwAR1sgilf5hOpOcll_3cTlDs9S2pP29cm-5dY5Nzn9BvK6l-8LBfsmUujnqg).

65 See s.64 of the Royal Ordinance on the Management of Foreign Workers’ Employment, B.E. 2560 (2017). The Royal Ordinance derives from an Emergency Decree that was approved without amendment by the military-appointed legislature. English translation accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=107728&p\\_count=4&p\\_classification=17](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=107728&p_count=4&p_classification=17).

66 MMN, “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand”, January 2020, p.17, accessible at [http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/book\\_Migrant-in-Agriculture-Eng-1.pdf](http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/book_Migrant-in-Agriculture-Eng-1.pdf).

67 Foreign Workers Administration Office of the Thai Ministry of Labour, “Monthly Statistic of Migrant Workers in Thailand of December 2019 (in Thai)”, accessible at [https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien\\_th/871ee42c2af93e63c9b4f1bbfb83360b.pdf](https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien_th/871ee42c2af93e63c9b4f1bbfb83360b.pdf).

68 IOM, “Thailand Migration Report 2019”, 2019, p.XI, see n.61 above.

69 Department of Employment, Thai Ministry of Labour, “Statistic of Migrant Workers in Thailand of December 2019 (in Thai)”, accessible at [https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien\\_th/c33cea75dc3c81eb7497c3eb809327e9.pdf](https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien_th/c33cea75dc3c81eb7497c3eb809327e9.pdf).

Irrespective of their immigration status and occupation, migrant workers in Thailand have contributed significantly to the Thai economy by filling gaps in Thailand’s aging labour market. Constituting over 10% of the Thai labour force, migrants contribute between 4.3 to 6.6 per cent of Thailand’s GDP.<sup>70</sup> Despite their economic contribution, many migrant workers continue to face challenges, from sub-minimum wage labour,<sup>71</sup> to poor working conditions, to restricted freedom of movement, to lack of access to formal justice systems and other social protections.

The Thai government and other responsible stakeholders have recently increased their efforts to protect migrant workers and workers in the informal sector. In April 2019, the Thai Government, alongside workers’ and employers’ organisations, launched the country’s first Decent Work Country Programme, 2019-2021.<sup>72</sup> Its main goals include the strengthening of labour protection, particularly for vulnerable workers, as well as the strengthening of labour market governance to bring the Thai market closer to international standards.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, the European Union formally announced the lifting of a yellow card for Thailand in January 2019 to recognise the “substantive progress Thailand has made in tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing since 2015”.<sup>74</sup> The government has been proactive in committing itself to international conventions, becoming in January 2019 “the first country in Asia to ratify the [ILO] Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No.188), which protects the living and working conditions of fishers on board vessels”.<sup>75</sup> Despite this positive step, it is likely to be some time before changes are seen in practice. The ITF Fishers Rights Network highlighted continued instances of “forced labor, debt bondage, boats that lack clean water and adequate food supplies, and unsafe working conditions”.<sup>76</sup> With regards to the issue of human trafficking, the government has also maintained efforts to meet international compliance standards. Thailand ranked in Tier 2 for the second year in a row in the United States’ (US) 2019 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. However, anti-trafficking activists have raised concerns about the extent of the government’s efforts and willingness to solve the problem.<sup>77</sup>

Even though Thailand is a major destination country for migrants in the region, many of Thai nationals continue to migrate overseas for work. Popular destination countries for Thai workers are Taiwan, South



*A representative of the Thai Social Security Board explains migrants’ access to social protection at the MMN Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Migrants in Agriculture in Thailand, December 2019, Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: MMN)*

70 UN, “Thailand Migration Report 2019”, 2019, p.14, see n.61 above.  
71 In 2019, the daily minimum wage ranged by province from 308 to 325 Baht. In past research, MMN found that “the stipulated minimum wage often seems to be a negotiating point rather than a non-negotiable minimum for migrant workers” in Thailand. See MMN, “Permanently Temporary: Examining the Impact of Social Exclusion on Mekong Migrants”, October 2016, p.13, accessible at <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Permanently-Temporary-Eng-mmnn-printed-version.pdf>.  
72 ILO, “Government, employers and trade unions launch Thailand’s first Decent Work Country Programme (2019-2021)”, 11 April 2019, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_684786/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_684786/lang-en/index.htm).  
73 Ibid.  
74 Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “EU Announced the Lifting of a Yellow Card for Thailand”, 8 January 2019, accessible at <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6885/98154-EU-Announced-the-Lifting-of-a-Yellow-Card-for-Thai.html>.  
75 ILO, “Thailand Ratifies Work in Fishing Convention”, 30 January 2019, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_666581/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_666581/lang-en/index.htm).  
76 “ITF Fishers’ Rights Network Petitions For C188 Enforcement in Thailand”, *The Maritime Executive*, 25 November 2019, accessible at <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/itf-fishers-rights-network-petitions-for-c188-enforcement-in-thailand>.  
77 Penchan Charoensuthipan, “Nation retains ‘Tier 2’ status on trafficking”, *Bangkok Post*, 22 June 2019, accessible at <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1699760/nation-retains-tier-2-status-on-trafficking>.



Korea, Japan, and Israel.<sup>78</sup> From January to October 2019, Thailand sent 97,597 workers abroad, 27,226 of whom migrated to Taiwan.<sup>79</sup> The Thai Labour Ministry has been encouraging Thai nationals to migrate to these destinations, not only because of their higher pay and living conditions, but also because their developed labour markets and training systems may help Thai workers “improve their efficiency”.<sup>80</sup> Labour Minister Mr Chatu Mongkol Sonakul commented that working in those countries may help to turn many Thai workers “from unskilled labourers into professional, skilled migrants”.<sup>81</sup> In 2020, the Thai Ministry of Labour plans to send 34,100 people to Taiwan, 12,200 to South Korea, 7,300 to Japan, and 5,000 to Israel,<sup>82</sup> moves which are expected to help generate 140 billion baht in revenue for the country.<sup>83</sup> Even though Thailand has signed bilateral agreements with several destination countries to institute formal migration channels, large numbers of Thai workers continue to work overseas without proper authorisation. For example, according to official data from July 2019, Thai nationals made up 40% of undocumented foreign residents living in South Korea.<sup>84</sup>



## Vietnam

Outbound labour migration has been part of official government policy in Vietnam since the 1980s,<sup>85</sup> and the Vietnamese government has considered outbound labour migration and the expansion of overseas labour markets key to boosting employment, income, and skills for Vietnamese workers.<sup>86</sup> Recently, Vietnam has



Prospective migrants attend Japanese language training at a pre-departure training at a recruitment agency in Hanoi, Vietnam.  
(Photo: MMN)

become a major source of low-skilled labour to higher-income economies. The main sectors of employment for migrant Vietnamese workers include domestic work, manufacturing, fishing and seafood processing, nursing and caregiving, agriculture, and construction. Most of the Vietnamese migrant workers have tended to be young and hail from less developed parts of the country.<sup>87</sup> The ILO estimated that there are approximately 560,000 Vietnamese workers abroad.<sup>88</sup> In 2019 alone, 152,530 Vietnamese nationals migrated for the purpose of overseas employment.<sup>89</sup>

78 “Labour Ministry sets 100,000 overseas worker target for 2020”, *National News Bureau of Thailand*, 14 November 2019, accessible at [http://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news/print\\_news/TCATG191114131916972](http://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news/print_news/TCATG191114131916972).

79 Ibid.

80 “Thais sought for jobs abroad”, *Bangkok Post*, 3 January 2020, accessible at <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1827649/thais-sought-for-jobs-abroad>.

81 Ibid.

82 “Labour Ministry to Send 100,000 Thai Workers Overseas”, *Thai News Agency*, 2 January 2020, accessible at <https://www.mcot.net/view/5e0da142e3f8e40af540e946>.

83 “Labour Ministry sets 100,000 overseas worker target for 2020”, *National News Bureau of Thailand*, 14 November 2019, see n.78 above.

84 Lee Suh Yoon, “Korea, Thailand sign MOU to curb flow of illegal migrant workers”, *The Korea Times*, 27 November 2019, accessible at [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2019/11/251\\_279376.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2019/11/251_279376.html).

85 Dang Nguyen Anh at the ILO, “Labour migration from Vietnam: issues of policy and practice”, 2008, p.1, accessible at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_099172.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_099172.pdf).

86 The National Assembly of Vietnam, “The Five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020”, 2016, p.12, accessible at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/839361477533488479/Vietnam-SEDP-2016-2020.pdf>.

87 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Vietnam (July-December 2019)’”, 2019, p.1.

88 Ibid.

89 “Việt Nam sends more than 650,000 workers overseas”, *Vietnam News*, 17 January 2020, accessible at <https://vietnamnews.vn/>

Countries in East Asia including Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, are the most popular destination countries for Vietnamese nationals, accounting for 96.9% of the total number of documented Vietnamese migrants working overseas in 2019.<sup>90</sup> While figures from the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) continue to show that more Vietnamese nationals currently work in Taiwan than in Japan,<sup>91</sup> there is a shift to Japan as more Vietnamese workers were hired there than in Taiwan in 2019.<sup>92</sup> Due to the growing demands of Japan's labour market, the Japanese government has added a new migration pathway to facilitate the recruitment of so-called "Specified Skilled Workers" from countries such as Vietnam. In July 2019, the governments of Japan and Vietnam signed the "Memorandum of Cooperation on Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Foreign Human Resources with the Status of Residence of 'Specified Skilled Worker'" to formalise the new migration channel. By the end of 2019, 901 Vietnamese workers had been recruited by way of the newly created scheme,<sup>93</sup> adding to the nearly 190,000 Vietnamese nationals already working in Japan under a separate migration pathway known as the TITP.<sup>94</sup> The fast-growing Vietnamese population in Japan has made it the third-largest migrant community in the country.<sup>95</sup>

South Korea has been a major recruiter of Vietnamese nationals for work.<sup>96</sup> However, due to the high rate of migrant workers overstaying their employment period, the MOU on labour migration to South Korea was suspended for four years between 2012 and 2016. In May 2018, South Korea issued an additional suspension on the recruitment of people from specific provinces of Vietnam, such as Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Thanh Hoa, Hai Duong, and Quang Binh, identifying workers from those regions as workers who displayed high rates of 'non-return'.<sup>97</sup> In 2019, the government of South Korea maintained its ban on workers from 40 districts in 10 provinces across Vietnam.<sup>98</sup>

Due to the informal nature of migration, it is difficult to obtain accurate data pertaining to the number of Vietnamese workers who have migrated within the GMS. However, it is estimated that some 50,000 Vietnamese have travelled to Thailand through Laos or Cambodia in search of work.<sup>99</sup> In Cambodia where generations of Vietnamese immigrants and more recent migrants reside, the estimated number of Vietnamese in the country varies greatly. The Cambodian government estimates that there are more than 180,000 people from Vietnam, but human rights groups estimate that the figure is about four times higher. The majority of Vietnamese immigrants and migrants lack official documentation, hence tend to lack access to public

[society/571238/viet-nam-sends-more-than-650000-workers-overseas.html](https://vietnamnews.vn/society/571238/viet-nam-sends-more-than-650000-workers-overseas.html).

90 "More than 132,000 Vietnamese go overseas for work in 2019", *Vietnam News*, 9 December 2019, accessible at <https://vietnamnews.vn/society/569540/more-than-132000-vietnamese-go-overseas-for-work-in-2019.html>.

91 ILO, "TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, 'Vietnam (July-December 2019)'" , 2019, p.2, see n.87 above.

92 "More than 132,000 Vietnamese go overseas for work in 2019", *Vietnam News*, 9 December 2019, see n.90 above.

93 Immigration Services Agency of Japan, "特定技能 1 号在留外国人数 (in Japanese)", December 2019, accessible at <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001313794.pdf>.

94 Ministry of Justice, Japan, "在留外国人統計 (旧登録外国人統計) 統計表 (in Japanese)", see n.37 above.

95 "Vietnamese community becomes 3rd largest foreign group in Japan", *Vietnam Plus*, 26 October 2019, accessible at <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnamese-community-becomes-3rd-largest-foreign-group-in-japan/162684.vnp>.

96 ILO, "TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, 'Vietnam (July-December 2019)'" , 2019, p.2, see n.87 above.

97 Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), "Document No. 1665/LDTBXH-QLLDNN on the Suspension of Recruitment Under EPS Programme 2018 in Certain Provinces" (in Vietnamese), 5 April 2019, accessible at <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/cong-van/Lao-dong-Tien-luong/Cong-van-1665-LDTBXHQLLDNN-2018-tam-dung-tuyen-chon-lao-dong-theo-Chuong-trinh-EPS-381209.aspx>.

98 Phan Ahn, "South Korea says no to Vietnamese workers from 10 provinces", *VN Express*, 7 May 2019, <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/south-korea-says-no-to-vietnamese-workers-from-10-provinces-3919737.html>.

99 Nancy Huyen Nguyen and John Walsh, "Vietnamese Migrant Workers in Thailand–Implications for Leveraging Migration for Development", *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, 2014, accessible at [http://e-migration.ro/jims/Vol8\\_No1\\_2014/Articles/JIMS\\_Vol8\\_No1\\_2014\\_pp\\_68\\_94\\_HUYEN\\_WALSH.pdf](http://e-migration.ro/jims/Vol8_No1_2014/Articles/JIMS_Vol8_No1_2014_pp_68_94_HUYEN_WALSH.pdf).

services, are vulnerable to rights violation, and are at risks of repatriation.<sup>100</sup> A small number of Vietnamese nationals also work in Laos.<sup>101</sup> In 2019, the Lao government granted citizenship to 2,000 Vietnamese who had resided in the country for more than 10 years. The move drew criticisms from some Lao nationals, who took the view that their government had unfairly prioritised Vietnamese over themselves.<sup>102</sup>

In recent years, increasing numbers of Vietnamese nationals have been migrating outside Asia, including to destinations in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Europe.<sup>103</sup> The governments of Vietnam and Germany were in talks in September 2019 to sign a new bilateral agreement that would further facilitate migration to Germany, where 1,000 Vietnamese care workers already reside.<sup>104</sup> In October 2019, 39 Vietnamese nationals were found dead in the back of a refrigerated lorry while being smuggled into the United Kingdom.<sup>105</sup> The incident highlighted the fraught journeys many Vietnamese migrant workers, and migrant workers more broadly, take to find work, bringing to light the dangers many have to navigate to reach their destinations.



Motorcyclists in Hanoi, Vietnam. (Photo: MMN)

100 Rina Chandran, “No room on water, no home on land for Cambodia’s ethnic Vietnamese”, *Reuters*, 27 June 2019, accessible at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-landrights-refugees/no-room-on-water-no-home-on-land-for-cambodias-ethnic-vietnamese-idUSKCN1TS03L>.

101 “Vietnamese flock to Laos and Thailand for jobs”, *Vietnam Net*, 18 February 2019, see n.41 above.

102 “Native Lao Citizens Disagree With Naturalization Grants to Vietnamese Immigrants”, *Radio Free Asia*, 22 November 2019, accessible at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-vietnamese-immigrants-naturalization-11222019163857.html>.

103 ILO, “TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, Quarterly Briefing Note, ‘Vietnam (July-December 2019)’”, 2019, p.1, see n.87 above.

104 “Việt Nam seeks to send more workers to Germany: minister”, *Vietnam News*, 26 September 2019, accessible at <https://vietnamnews.vn/society/535996/viet-nam-seeks-to-send-more-workers-to-germany-minister.html#0mcqDDCKJrePyskp.97>.

105 “Essex lorry deaths: Police name 39 Vietnamese victims”, *BBC*, 8 November 2019, accessible at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-essex-50350481>.

# Achievements in 2019

During 2019, many of MMN's multi-year collaborative research projects reached or neared successful completion with MMN and its partners organising numerous events to discuss and share our findings.

In July, MMN and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) organised a multi-stakeholder workshop in Bangkok entitled "Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region". At the workshop, MMN and AIT presented the findings of their collaborative research, and various stakeholders also shared their initiatives in promoting gender-sensitive policies in SEZs. In September, MMN published a research report entitled "Social Protection Across Borders: Roles of Mekong Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants", which was the culmination of our collaborative study on the theme since 2018. The report was launched at MMN's 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Dialogue on Roles of Countries of Origin organised in Phnom Penh. In December, MMN organised a multi-stakeholder workshop in Bangkok on Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand, where we presented the findings from our collaborative research on the theme.

The above events were organised with the objective of widely sharing our research findings, whilst providing a forum for stakeholders, including government, migrants, the private sector, recruitment agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and trade union to share their perspectives and discuss ways to improve migrants' rights protection.

In 2019, MMN also organised multi-stakeholder consultation meetings in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Japan to discuss the emerging trend of GMS labour migration to Japan. Given the limited prior opportunities for stakeholders to exchange information and views on this issue, participants representing government ministries, embassies, migrants, returnees, recruitment agencies, NGOs, and trade unions expressed a desire to continue such dialogue in the future. At many of the meetings, strategies to utilise such migration processes for human resource development and skill transfer, as well as possibility of Zero Recruitment fee model whereby employers bear the cost of migration, were discussed at length from various perspectives. Moreover, given CSOs' relative lack of experience in assisting GMS migrants going to Japan, in November 2019, MMN launched a new project focusing on capacity building for CSOs in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam in providing assistance to migrants destined for Japan.

In terms of advocacy at the regional level, MMN continued to engage in various formal channels associated with ASEAN. At the global level, MMN engaged in the preparatory process for the GFMD. MMN also participated in the ILO Social Protection Week in Geneva in December 2019, and advocated for social protection for migrants at every opportunity.

MMN's achievements in 2019 together with some brief background to each respective area of our work are set out below under the following headings:

- 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 SEZs, the Garment Industry and Migration
- IV. Study on the Impact of Emerging Migration Policies and Consultations with Migrants
- V. Capacity Building and Advocacy on Migration from Mekong countries to Japan
- VI. ASEAN Advocacy

- VII. MMN Organisational Development, Information Monitoring and Dissemination
- VIII. Global Advocacy and Networking Initiatives
- IX. Other Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

It should be noted that much of our migration research and advocacy carried out in 2019 devoted special attention to the issues of social protection, labour rights, social inclusion, and gender equality.

MMN's work in 2019 was made possible by the generous support of Solidar Suisse, Oxfam, CCFD, IDRC, Toyota Foundation, Porticus Foundation, and anonymous donors.

## I. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants' Rights

MMN's Roles of Countries of Origin Project seeks to protect the rights of migrants throughout the migration process from a country of origin perspective. In 2016 and 2017, MMN carried out the first phase of the project in which we conducted collaborative comparative research to investigate the migration policies and mechanisms pursued by Myanmar and Cambodia, and to review them against the migration governance models pursued by the Philippines and Indonesia, two longstanding migrant-sending countries in Southeast Asia. The project culminated in the publication of "Safe from the Start: Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants," as well as a Policy Dialogue held in Yangon, Myanmar on 20-21 July 2017. During the Policy Dialogue, the governments of Cambodia and Myanmar pledged to pursue a multi-country dialogue on the roles of countries of origin, and to jointly negotiate with Thailand for better social protection of their workers abroad.

To learn more about the proceedings, please see: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RoCoOPolicyDialogueProceedings.pdf>.

To read the full report, please visit: [http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Safe-from-the-Start\\_English.pdf](http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Safe-from-the-Start_English.pdf).

Building on the successful completion of the first phase, MMN launched the second phase of the project from 2018 to 2019. The second phase focused on the roles played by countries of origin in ensuring their citizens benefit from social protection schemes while abroad and upon return. Through its ongoing work with migrant communities, MMN has been increasingly aware of the obstacles migrants encounter when enrolling in overseas social security schemes, and the issues they face trying to receive benefits upon their return. MMN believes that greater attention needs to be devoted to this aspect of the labour migration system. While much of the discourse on migration governance in the GMS centres on the formalisation of the migration process, there should also be a specific focus on migrants' access to social protection as part of the benefits of regularised migration.

Furthermore, in light of the growing trend in migration from Mekong countries to destination countries beyond the GMS, and in recognition of the gap in knowledge of policies and of support systems for migrants in these countries, the scope of the second phase of the project was expanded to include the following



migration corridors:

- Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos to Thailand;
- Myanmar to Singapore;
- Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam to Japan; and
- Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam to Malaysia.

Though to a lesser extent, MMN also monitored the development of migration policies and trends from Cambodia and Myanmar to Hong Kong, two further emerging labour migration corridors.

MMNs project partners for this phase of the project included:

- CWCC, Cambodia;
- Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW), Cambodia;
- MAP Foundation, Thailand;
- FED, Thailand;
- FLC, Myanmar;
- WE Generation, Myanmar; and
- Southern Institute of Social Science (SISS), Vietnam.

### 1. Research Consultation Meetings

As part of the research process on the role of countries of origin in supporting accessing to social protection at home and abroad, MMN conducted multiple consultation meetings with civil society organisations from Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Japan from 2018 to 2019. At these meetings we discussed research strategies, shared findings, and developed recommendations. On 26-27 April 2019, MMN held the third research consultation meeting in Yangon, where project partners and our secretariat research

team shared the findings of our desk research on migration governance of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, as well as interviews with key informants such as government officials and representatives of recruitment agencies. Project partners then decided to collect case studies of migrants’ experiences accessing social protection programmes both at home and abroad and agreed on the scope and criteria of case study interviews. The meeting also provided the opportunity for CSOs from countries of origin to learn about social protection programmes available in destination countries such as Thailand and Japan from experts of the field.



*Third consultation meeting with project partners, April 2019, Yangon, Myanmar.  
(Photo: MMN)*

MMN organised its fourth and final consultation meeting on 22-23 June 2019 in Bangkok. At this meeting, project partners and the secretariat research team discussed findings from their desk research on social protection programmes in the countries



of origin, namely Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, and from the case study interviews conducted with migrants. Participants further identified additional key informants to interview in order to better understand the issue. The meeting concluded with project members developing recommendations for various stakeholders in the countries of origin to facilitate migrants' access to social protection programmes throughout the migration cycle. These recommendations were reflected in the publication "Social Protection Across Borders" mentioned in the section below.

## 2. Consultation Workshops on Labour Migration from Mekong Countries of Origin to Japan

Given the growing number of migrants from GMS countries travelling to Japan for work, MMN organised a series of multi-stakeholder workshops to build knowledge on Japan's evolving migrant worker policies and discuss strategies to better support migrant workers throughout the migration cycle. The first of these meetings took place in October 2018 in Yangon, followed by meetings in Phnom Penh (February 2019), Tokyo (July 2019), and Hanoi (July 2019).

### 2.1 Consultation on Labour Migration from Cambodia to Japan

On 18 February 2019, MMN, CWCC, and LSCW jointly organised the Consultation on Labour Migration from Cambodia to Japan in Phnom Penh. The event was attended by more than 50 participants, including representatives from the Cambodian government, CSOs, ILO, Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA), Manpower Association of Cambodia (MAC), Private Recruitment Agencies (PRAs), and academic experts on migration to Japan.

The two plenaries of the consultation addressed various topics, including: issues relating to migrants who

leave their jobs without properly terminating their contracts; mechanisms for skills transfer between the two countries; availability of support and assistance for migrants; and the labour conditions at migrants' work sites in Japan. These sessions were followed by a keynote speech by Her Excellency, Ms Chou Bun Eng, Secretary of State, Permanent Vice President of the National Committee for Counter-Trafficking, Royal Government of Cambodia, who discussed existing concerns and possible challenges arising from the migration of Cambodian workers to Japan under the current TITP and the new migration pathway, namely the Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) scheme. Participants then



*A group discussion at the Consultation on Labour Migration from Cambodia to Japan, February 2019, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.  
(Photo: MMN)*

explored opportunities and challenges involved in migration from Cambodia to Japan from the perspectives of migrant workers, CSOs, the Cambodian and Japanese governments, and PRAs. Based on the results of the discussion, they collectively formulated recommendations to improve the protection of migrant workers.

To learn more about the consultation meeting, the proceedings are accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7224>.

## 2.2 Workshop on Labour Migration from Mekong Countries of Origin to Japan

On July 8, 2019, MMN held a multi-stakeholder workshop in Tokyo on labour migration from Mekong Countries to Japan. The workshop gathered more than 35 stakeholders to address potential challenges and opportunities. Participants included representatives from the Embassy of Vietnam in Japan, the Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply (VAMAS), ACRA, the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF), inter-governmental organisations, recruitment agencies, and CSOs in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Japan, as well as academic experts on labour migration.

The workshop's two plenary sessions addressed a number of topics, including: issues arising from the different legal frameworks and recruitment practices in the various countries of origin; labour rights violations in Japan; migrants' experiences in pre-departure and post-arrival training; restrictive conditions attached to the TITP visa; migrants' reproductive rights; the work of CSOs and associations of recruitment agencies in countries of origin in supporting migrant workers throughout the migration cycle; the feasibility of adopting the "Zero Recruitment Fee" model for migration to Japan; and the continued presence of illegal intermediaries involved in the migration process.

To learn more about the workshop, the proceedings are accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7720>.



Participants watch a video of migrant interviews at the Workshop on Labour Migration from Mekong Countries of Origin to Japan, July 2019, Tokyo, Japan. (Photo: MMN)



Small group presentation at the Consultation on Labour Migration from Vietnam to Japan, July 2019, Hanoi, Vietnam. (Photo: MMN)

## 2.3 Consultation on Labour Migration from Vietnam to Japan

On 24 July 2019, MMN organised the Consultation Meeting on Labour Migration from Vietnam to Japan in Hanoi. A diverse group of over 50 participants attended the workshop to exchange views, including representatives of the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam, the Department of Overseas Labour (DOLAB) under the MOLISA in Vietnam,



Participants at the workshop included representatives of recruitment agencies and CSOs from Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam and a broad range of stakeholders from Japan. (Photo: MMN)





Participants at the workshop included representatives of the DOLISA, Japanese labour attaché, VAMAS and its member agencies, CSOs, trade unions, and UNs. (Photo: MMN)

VAMAS, intergovernmental organisations, CSOs, and recruitment agencies.

The day's plenaries addressed a number of topics, including: challenges faced by migrant workers throughout the migration cycle; issues related to high recruitment fees paid by migrants from Vietnam to Japan; international standards regarding the collection of recruitment fees and other related costs; the roles of the governments of Vietnam and Japan and

recruitment agencies in supporting migrant workers; and concerns surrounding migration to Japan under the newly created SSW scheme. Following the plenaries, participants discussed the opportunities and challenges involved in the migration of workers from Vietnam to Japan, specifically the themes of developing human resources, achieving decent work, and facilitating ethical recruitment practices. The consultation meeting ended with participants developing recommendations to improve channels of information dissemination, enhance international cooperation, and expand support for migrant returnees.

To learn more about the consultation meeting, the proceedings are accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7725>.

### 3. Country Visit to Japan

Between the 6 and 9 July 2019, MMN conducted a series of field visits in Tokyo to better understand Japanese policy on migrant workers, the efforts of CSOs and labour unions in providing support to migrants from the GMS, and the working and living conditions of migrant workers' in Japan. Nine participants joined the field visits, including representatives of the LSCW, Cambodia; the FLC, Myanmar; the Center for Development and Integration, Vietnam; and the MMN Secretariat, as well as academic experts on labour migration.

During these visits, MMN held separate meetings with the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization, Vietnam Mutual Aid Association in Japan, and the Federation of Workers' Union of Burmese Citizens in Japan, and paid home visits to Cambodian migrant workers. This series of meetings was organised for the purpose of deepening our understanding of the TITP and migrants' conditions under the programme. These meetings provided valuable opportunities for the MMN research team to meet key stakeholders involved in labour migration from GMS countries to Japan.



MMN delegation, joined by a representative of the MOEAF, had a meeting with JITCO representatives. (Photo: MMN)

To learn more about our country visit, please see our website report accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7367>.

#### 4. Collaborative Research on Roles of Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants Rights

In collaboration with MMN project partners and resource persons, MMN launched its research project on the role of Mekong countries of origin in improving access to social protection programmes both at home and overseas. Focusing specifically on Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, the project investigated the ways in which governments and other stakeholders from these countries of origin safeguard the social protection rights of their nationals, both when abroad and upon return. For this study, a rigorous research methodology was adopted based on collective consultation. Project partners collected case studies by interviewing migrant workers and migrant returnees from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam who had worked in Thailand and Japan. MMN's research team also conducted key informant interviews with various stakeholders, including representatives of relevant government ministries, recruitment agencies and agency associations, and local CSOs, in addition to desk research on migration governance in the aforementioned countries. The findings from our collaborative research was published in 2019 and entitled "Social Protection Across Borders: Roles of Mekong Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants' Rights."



*MMN paid home visits to Cambodian migrant workers. (Photo: MMN)*

Below are the key findings from our study:

- Prospective migrants receive incomplete information on the social protection schemes available in destination countries during their compulsory pre-departure training/orientation.
- Once abroad, migrant workers are often left unaware of their social protection entitlements and assistance available to them. Migrants have to rely on partial and fragmentary information from a variety of unofficial sources.
- Upon return, migrant returnees receive little support in accessing benefits owed to them from social protection schemes abroad.
- Across the three countries of origin surveyed, few mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate the transfer of entitlements from overseas social protection schemes to migrant returnees.
- The lack of portability mechanisms results in some migrant workers simultaneously liable for contributions to social protection schemes in two separate jurisdictions.
- Some migrants are at risk of losing entitlements to accumulated social security contributions when forced to change immigration status.
- A range of additional barriers exist that impede migrants' access to social protection programmes.

Based on these findings, MMN also made recommendations to the governments of countries of origin and recruitment agencies to improve the protection of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle. To read "Social Protection Across Borders", please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7578>.

#### 5. The Second Policy Dialogue on the Role of Countries of Origin

On 16-17 September, MMN organised the second Policy Dialogue on the Roles of Countries of Origin in





More than 40 people representing governments, recruitment agencies, CSOs, trade unions and UNs attended Second Policy Dialogue on the Role of Countries of Origin.  
(Photo: MMN)

Phnom Penh. More than 40 representatives from CSOs, recruitment agency associations from Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, the Embassies of the Republic of the Philippines and Japan in Phnom Penh, intergovernmental organisations, and international NGOs gathered to hear our research findings from the above-mentioned MMN's publication, "Social Protection Across Borders: Roles of Mekong Countries of Origin in Protecting Migrants". The Policy Dialogue provided a rare opportunity to discuss with a range of key stakeholders how countries of origins

can expand their role in enhancing migrants' access to social protection across borders. The Policy Dialogue took place on the fringes of a Labour Ministerial Conference held on 17 September in Siem Reap between governments of CLMTV aimed at creating a joint framework on the portability of social security for migrant workers in CLMTV.

During each of the seven panels at the Policy Dialogue covering different thematic areas, MMN presented its findings and recommendations from our "Social Protection Across Borders" research report. The panels of relevant stakeholders then provided feedback, as well as expounded on their initiatives to protect migrants and their own challenges. All participants collaborated during small group sessions to examine gaps in policy and implementation, and brainstormed recommendations on how to improve the rights of migrants going forward and facilitate access to social protection. At the conclusion of the meeting, participating stakeholders from the three countries of origin actively discussed the results from the small group discussion and adopted a set of recommendations. Key recommendations for governments of countries of origin include:



A small group discussion at the Second Policy Dialogue, September 2019, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.  
(Photo: MMN)

- Ensuring information relevant to migrant workers' benefits and rights is available, understandable, and accessible;
- Enhancing cooperation between Labour Attachés/Counsellors and different stakeholders, such as CSOs, in order to strengthen migrant workers' access to social protection;



- Effectively monitoring recruitment agencies to make sure they comply with legal standards; and
- Encouraging recruitment agencies to adopt and uphold industry Codes of Conduct.

In the long term, countries of origin should ensure uninterrupted and transferrable social protection regardless of migrants' location of work; encourage the formation of a subcommittee under the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers to establish a framework for the portability of social protection; develop inclusive social protection schemes that migrants can voluntarily participate in and access when abroad; and establish flexible money transfer systems enabling migrants to contribute to social protection schemes through digital systems. Countries of origin should also take steps towards establishing a welfare fund for migrants in their respective countries at the appropriate time.

To learn more about the Second Policy Dialogue, please see the proceedings of the event accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Proceedings-of-the-Second-Policy-Dialogue-3.pdf>.

The press release following the second Policy Dialogue is also accessible at: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7550>.



*Migrant workers at a rubber plantation in Surat Thani, Thailand.  
(Photo: Raks Thai Foundation)*

## II. Collaborative Research and Advocacy on Migrants in Agriculture and Fisheries

Thailand's agriculture sector has long relied on the labour of migrant workers from neighbouring countries in the GMS. This reliance has increased in recent years as Thailand's rural population has moved to work in urban areas. Surprisingly, despite growing numbers of migrants travelling to work in Thailand's agricultural sector, existing research on these migrants remains limited. Further understanding of the conditions and needs of this oft-overlooked group is needed, as they risk being insufficiently protected from mistreatment, abuse, and other rights violations.

With the support of Solidar Suisse, from 2017 to 2019, MMN conducted a collaborative research project focusing on the living and working conditions of migrant workers from Cambodia and Myanmar employed in Thailand's agricultural sector.

MMN partners involved in this project included:

- MAP Foundation, Thailand;
- Raks Thai Foundation, Thailand;
- FED, Thailand;
- FLC, Myanmar;
- Confederation of Trade Unions of Myanmar;
- CWCC.

Key MMN activities related to this project in 2019 included a project partner research consultation meeting held in May, the publication of the report entitled “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand”, and a multi-stakeholder meeting organised in December 2019 to discuss findings of the report.

### 1. Research Consultation Workshop

On 28-30 May 2020, MMN convened its Third Research Consultation Workshop in Bangkok, attended by partners involved in the research process. During the meeting, the MMN Secretariat presented a statistical summary of the results from survey interviews. The data was collected between September 2017 and January 2019 in two separate phases. Project partners also shared their observations from the field, as well as the results of interviews conducted with key informants, such as government officials and representatives of employers' association and recruitment agencies. Based on initial findings from the survey and key informant interviews, project partners developed a work plan to follow up on the field study, including conducting Focus



*MMN project partners at the Third Research Consultation Workshop, May 2019, Bangkok, Thailand.  
(Photo: MMN)*

Group Discussions (FGD) and Individual In-depth Interviews (III) with migrants and migrant returnees to better understand their experiences, as well as planning additional key informant interviews.

Project partners also had the opportunity to hear from an MMN legal consultant, who delivered a presentation on the existing legal framework protecting migrant agricultural workers in Thailand and the gaps in these protection mechanisms. At the final session of the consultation meeting, project partners developed advocacy strategies to bring attention to the conditions of migrants in the agriculture sector, including setting up a photo exhibition to document the experiences of migrants in the field. MMN also began planning for a multi-stakeholder workshop that would take place towards the end of 2019 to discuss findings from this research.

## **2. Publication of the report “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand”**

MMN completed the drafting of the report “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand” in 2019. The publication examines the experiences and working conditions of migrants in Thailand’s agricultural sector based on the above-mentioned research. Focusing on the experiences of workers on corn, cassava, palm oil, and rubber plantations, it highlights their experiences and analyses gaps in existing protection mechanisms. For this study, an extensive desk study was added to the primary research methods alluded to above. The primary research methods included: surveys of migrant agricultural workers currently employed in Thailand, as well as migrant returnees in Cambodia and Myanmar who have previously worked in Thailand’s agricultural sector; interviews with family members of migrants, employers, recruitment agencies, government officials, plantation owners, and CSOs; and FGDs and IIIs with migrant agricultural workers.

Across the cassava, corn, rubber, and palm oil plantations surveyed, migrant workers recounted their experiences of sub-minimum wage labour; long working hours; discrimination; inadequate accommodation; restricted freedom of movement; limited access to schools, hospitals, and other forms of social protection; insufficient and inadequate personal protective equipment; lack of access to formal justice systems; and harassment from elements within rural communities. While many of these issues also affect migrants in other employment sectors, the study found that agricultural workers are particularly vulnerable given that they live and work in isolated rural areas where access to assistance from government authorities and NGOs is limited. Furthermore, our results suggest that a significant proportion of migrants in agriculture remain undocumented in part due to a variety of obstacles which are distinctive to migrant workers in this sector. These include prohibitively high registration costs relative to average incomes, and difficulties reaching government agencies where documents are issued. Without proper immigration status in Thailand, migrants are deprived of essential rights and services.

The research has also sought to challenge the notion that all employees in the agriculture sector are “informal workers” and thus not entitled to legal and social protection under Thai labour law. MMN’s legal analysis suggests that migrants in agriculture who have worked continuously for one year should be considered as workers who enjoy the same legal and social protections afforded those in other sectors.

Based on these research findings, MMN compiled a list of recommendations for the Thai government, employers, governments of countries of origin, and NGOs in Thailand to improve conditions of migrant agricultural workers in Thailand.



To read “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand”, please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7951>.

### 3. Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Migrants in Agriculture



*A panel discussion at the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Migrants in Agriculture, December 2019, Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: MMN)*

In Bangkok on 19 December 2019, MMN convened a multi-stakeholder workshop on Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand. Over 40 participants, including migrant workers representatives, government officials from the Thai Ministry of Labour, Cambodian government officials, CSOs from Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia, the ILO, and experts attended the Workshop to hear findings from MMN’s publication on migrant agricultural workers in Thailand and discuss how stakeholders can work towards improving protection mechanisms afforded to this group of workers.

The three panels of the workshop focused on three key issues related to agricultural migrant workers: labour protection, access to social services and social protection, and occupational health and safety. At each panel, migrant representatives and CSOs shared common issues and violations in the workplace, as well as challenges workers face in accessing their entitlements by way of official justice mechanisms. Officials from the Thai government also discussed the government’s latest initiatives to enhance existing protection mechanisms, including plans to expand the role of labour inspectors, ensure that all migrant workers are able to participate in Thailand’s Social Security System and Workmen’s Compensation Fund, conduct training



*A panel discussion at the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Migrants in Agriculture, December 2019, Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: MMN)*



*MMN Workshop poster. (Photo: MMN)*

on occupational health and safety, and work with neighbouring countries of origin, namely Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, on issues related to the migration status of agricultural workers.

MMN will officially launch the “Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand” on 30 January 2020 at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club Thailand (FCCT) in Bangkok, Thailand.

To read the MMN press release on the workshop, please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7859>.

To read the proceedings of the workshop, please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Proceedings-of-Migrant-Agricultural-Workers-in-Thailand-1.pdf>.

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



*Garment factory workers at an SEZ in Yangon, Myanmar. (Photo: IDRC/Panos)*

SEZs have emerged as a prominent strategy in GMS countries’ pursuit of regional economic integration. SEZs are often located in border regions or in other strategic locations, such as in close proximity to ports and capital cities. Such areas are generally areas where national laws either do not apply or are relaxed, with the aim of facilitating inward investment.<sup>106</sup>

SEZs often contain labour-intensive factory-based industries, such as the garment industry, and rely on internal and cross-border migrant workers for labour. While SEZs have been upheld as a model for market-based growth, they are also often associated with labour rights violations and poor working conditions. Such violations include: workers facing limitations on their freedom of association; trade unions being restricted from accessing zones; employees constantly working under the threat of arbitrary dismissal; wages held below the country’s minimum wage; working hours exceeding those provided for in national labour laws;

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Farole, “Special Economic Zones in Africa: Comparing Performance and Learning from Global Experiences”, World Bank, 2011, accessible at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2268>.



and degraded occupational health and safety.<sup>107</sup> Women, who make up the majority of the workforce in many SEZs, are more likely to experience rights violations.<sup>108</sup> In order to attract and maintain investment, it is not uncommon for states to suppress labour rights while deregulating trade practices in a ‘race to the bottom’.<sup>109</sup> This approach is supported by the very structure of SEZs, which is maintained through lax regulations and exploitable migrant labour.

### **1. MMN/AIT Collaborative Research Project on SEZ and the Garment Industry**

Supported by the IDRC, this three-year joint project between MMN and the 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 the lives of women migrant workers. The project investigated how particular environments – industrial zones and SEZs located in border regions and in the vicinity of major cities – alongside 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 Chi Oo Workers’ Association, Thailand;
- MAP Foundation, Thailand; and
- Labour Rights Promotion Network (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 ran from 2016 to 2019, and involved primary research including the collection of detailed questionnaires by project partners from across the project’s study sites, the encoding and analysis of questionnaire results by the MMN Secretariat and AIT, and the drafting and publication of the study.

Based on the results of an analysis of the study’s primary data as well as a thorough literature review, four key themes emerged as requiring special attention in order to realise decent work for women migrant garment factory workers in Mekong SEZs. These areas were: working conditions, labour organising, skills development and recognition, and care work. The impact of SEZ development on workers’ mobility was also highlighted in an analysis of these themes. The research findings were presented in the publication entitled, “Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region”, along with recommendations directed at national governments of Mekong countries, regional organisations, and employers’ associations.

To read the publication, please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7595>.

<sup>107</sup> International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, “Export Processing Zones-Symbols of Exploitation and a Development Dead-End”, 2003; Samanthi Gunawardana, “Struggle, Perseverance, and Organizations in Sri Lanka’s Export Processing Zones”, in Kate Bronfen-Brenner ed., *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns*, Cornell University Press, 2007; and Shankar Gopalakrishnan, “Negative Aspects of Special Economic Zones in China,” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 April 2007.

<sup>108</sup> MMN, “In-depth Study: Border Economic Zones and Migration”, 2013, accessible at [http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page\\_id=1815](http://www.mekongmigration.org/?page_id=1815).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



*Participants of the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region, July 2019, Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: MMN)*

## **2. Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region**

On 20-21 June 2019 in Bangkok, MMN and AIT collectively organised its “Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region”. Representatives of the Myanmar, Cambodian, and Thai

governments, Thilawa SEZ and Phnom Penh SEZ management committees, employer associations, UN agencies, Asian Development Bank, and CSOs gathered to hear our research findings and recommendations contained within the then-forthcoming report, referred to above, entitled: “Jobs in SEZ: Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region”. Stakeholders at the workshop also discussed what SEZs can and should do to promote opportunities for decent work for women migrant workers.

The Multi-Stakeholder Workshop framed the dialogue around the themes of labour migration, working conditions, labour organising, skills training and recognition, career development, and care responsibilities, with an overarching focus on labour within SEZs and the garment industry in the GMS. The workshop took place in the form of panels, where findings from the study were first presented, followed by comments from various stakeholders and open discussion. At the workshop, participants actively discussed issues relating to establishing childcare facilities in SEZs, paying workers a living wage, allowing workers access trade unions and labour rights organisations inside the zones, and the restrictions that come with temporary and seasonal migration programmes.

To learn more about the workshop, please see: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7297>.

## **3. Project Partner Strategy Meeting**

Following the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop, on 22 June 2019, MMN in collaboration with AIT organised a strategy meeting where MMN project partners reflected on the discussion of the previous two days, as well as collectively identified key points to be highlighted in a press release circulated to the media and the public.

To read the press release entitled “Mekong special economic zones commit to promoting ‘decent work’ for women migrant workers”, please visit: <http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=7297>.

## **4. Roundtable Discussion at the AAS-in-Asia Conference, 2019**

The Association for Asian Studies (AAS)-in-Asia Conference is a platform for members of the association and others interested in Asian studies to connect and exchange knowledge. The annual conference featured panel sessions, keynote speeches, and book exhibits. On 1-3 July 2019, MMN project partners and representatives of AIT organised a roundtable discussion at the conference entitled, “Migrant Workers in Special Economic Zones in the Mekong: Are SEZs an opportunity or threat to workers’ rights?”. The discussion aimed to 1)



*Panellists of the Panel Discussion and Launch of the Report “Jobs in SEZs: Migrant Garment Factory Workers in the Mekong Region.”  
(Photo: MMN)*

critically examine whether SEZs are contributing to the improvement of working conditions for migrant workers; 2) foster discussion on the opportunities and dangers of expanding SEZ development from a labour and migrant rights perspective; and 3) explore avenues of advocacy for the improvement of migrant workers’ rights as well as their life options.

Panel discussants included representatives of MMN project partners from LSCW, FLC, and FED, as well as delegates of the MMN Secretariat and AIT.

### **5. Panel Discussion and Launch of the Report “Jobs in SEZs: Migrant Garment Factory Workers in the Mekong Region”**

MMN and AIT officially launched the report “Jobs in SEZs: Migrant Garment Factory Workers in the Mekong Region” on 3 July 2019 at SEA Junction in Bangkok. At the launch, MMN project partners and AIT participated in a panel discussion to introduce the context and methodology of the research, and to share key findings and recommendations from the report. The panel discussants included: Ms Carli Melo, MMN; Ms Kyoko Kusakabe, AIT; Ms Tep Mealea, LSCW; Mr Thit Lwin Aung, FLC; and Mr Sai Aung Tun, FED. The launch was attended by members of academia and interested members of the public.

## **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 carried out the following thematic studies, as reported in MMN’s Annual Report 2018. The main areas of study included: 1) the impact of new migration policies in Thailand from migrants’ perspectives; and 2) the review of policy change concerning registration of Vietnamese migrants in Thailand.

In 2019, MMN carried out additional desk research to include latest policies and continued drafting the reports. The final reports is due to be released in 2020.

## **V. Capacity Building and Advocacy on Migration from Mekong Countries to Japan**

With the support of the Toyota Foundation, MMN launched a new project focusing on migration from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam to Japan. The project is timely, given the growing trends of migration from these countries of origin to Japan and the limited experience and capacity of these countries of origin in facilitating migration. The project period will run from November 2019 until October 2021. Country visits are planned to Myanmar, Cambodia, and Japan to facilitate mutual learning on responses to migration, collectively identify good practice and lessons learnt, and develop recommendations. The project aims to produce a short film on migration from these countries of origin to Japan to raise awareness, publish an advocacy paper presenting good practice and recommendations, and develop a handbook for CSOs and trade unions in Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam who will provide support to migrants heading to Japan. The project’s concept is based on the needs collectively identified by CSOs and trade unions in the region,

particularly during the multi-stakeholder consultation meetings on labour migration from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam to Japan as reported above, as well as during MMN's internal meeting. The outputs are expected to produce ripple effects, enhancing the capacity of the relevant countries of origin to adequately facilitate migration to Japan.

On 25 and 26 October, MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima, and MMN Project Coordinator, Mr Stefan Luk, attended the Grant Award Ceremony and the Presentation Workshop organised by the Toyota Foundation, in Tokyo. During the Workshop, Ms Harima gave a presentation introducing the project to other grantees and delegates invited by the Toyota Foundation.

## VI. ASEAN Advocacy

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 of MMN's research papers include recommendations to ASEAN and MMN promotes these recommendations during relevant press conferences, workshops, and other opportunities. MMN's formal engagement has taken place primarily through participation in the 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. Moreover, MMN has been active in the ASEAN People's Forum (APF), an annual gathering of CSOs who meet to discuss various social issues in ASEAN. However, in 2019, MMN was not able to participate at either the AFML or APF due to conflicts of schedule. MMN was, however, involved in the preparatory processes for both events. As additional channels to engage with ASEAN, MMN also participated in the (1) Consultative Meeting Enhancing Information Management and Sharing of Labour Market and Migration Information in ASEAN, organised by IOM and ASEAN; (2) Secretariat and the Regional Good Practice Seminar on Inclusive Future for Southeast Asia: Labour Mobility, Skills and Growth, also organised by IOM and ASEAN Secretariat; and the (3) Consultation Workshop on the Implementation of ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Please find below further details regarding these activities and MMN's participation.

### **1. Consultative Meeting Enhancing Information Management and Sharing of Labour Market and Migration Information in ASEAN – Furthering Discussions of an ASEAN Labour Migration Information Portal (LMIP)**

The meeting was organised by IOM and ASEAN Secretariat in Bangkok on 21-22 February 2019. This regional meeting was aimed at providing a discussion forum on the importance of harnessing ASEAN's growing access to information via technology. The ultimate goal would be to achieve an AMS-led consolidated online regional migration information Portal, to help enhance freer intra-ASEAN skilled mobility in the region. The Portal project has been proposed by IOM. Participants at the meeting included: (i) representatives of private sector recruitment firms; (ii) trade unions and migrant diaspora/migrant worker organizations; (iii) AMS government ministries; (iv) CSOs/NGOs; and (v) UN agencies. Much of the discussion at the meeting focused on the migration of "skilled" workers and those who migrate through formal channels using recruitment agencies. MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima, attended the meeting and provided input as a CSO representative. In particular, Ms Harima pointed out the importance of making available information that benefits a larger proportion of migrants. Ms Harima explained that the majority of migrants in ASEAN will



not benefit from the programmes as they are aimed at facilitating migration of “skilled” workers. Moreover, Ms Harima remarked that there continues to be large numbers of undocumented migrants who work with little or no rights protection despite their important contribution to the success of the ASEAN economy. To make the Portal useful for these migrants, Ms Harima recommended that it be an online platform where ASEAN member states provide clear information concerning labour rights, social protection, and justice mechanisms for all migrants. Such information will benefit not only “skilled” and documented migrant workers, but also other categories of migrant workers.

## **2. Regional Good Practice Seminar Inclusive Future for Southeast Asia: Labour Mobility, Skills and Growth**

On 9-10 April 2019 in Bangkok, the IOM, in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat, organised the Regional Good Practice Seminar “Inclusive Future for Southeast Asia: Labour Mobility, Skills and Growth”. The seminar provided a space for exchange on key challenges and opportunities in linking labour mobility to a more inclusive future for Southeast Asian societies. The seminar also discussed emerging solutions in the ASEAN and in other global regions. Participants of the event included policymakers of ASEAN member states, employers, labour recruiters, civil society, trade partners, and international organisations.

Ms Carli Melo, MMN Project Coordinator, took part in the seminar on behalf of MMN and delivered a presentation in a panel discussion on the theme of “skilled” and “unskilled” workers. She noted that there is a lack of critical discussion on the judgements of value shaping “high-skilled” and “low-skilled” labour categories within current migration policy dialogues. The rights afforded to these two groups are different and create a hierarchy of rights. “Skilled” migrants often experience freer movement, greater access to long-term or permanent migration, and an ability to migrate with their families, while “low-skilled” migrants often experience controlled mobility, restricted access to temporary and circular migration programmes, and an inability to migrate with their families. In particular, restricting labour mobility can limit processes of skills recognition and development.

Based on the restrictions that come with policy responses to different labour categories, Ms Melo concluded by making recommendations to policymakers in the region to: develop a migration governance regime that is built upon principles of fairness and respect for all migrant workers; ensure that options for migration beyond temporary migration schemes are available for migrant workers; and ensure that all migrant workers have paid days off in accordance with international labour standards, in order to have the opportunity to participate in vocational training and non-formal education.

## **3. Consultation Workshop on the Implementation of ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers**

On 18 December 2019, MMN joined more than 35 CSOs including the CDI, an MMN member, in Hanoi, Vietnam for a Consultation Workshop on the Implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. The workshop, organised by the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) was attended by representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) and Vietnam’s MOLISA. Participants engaged in policy dialogue on how to strengthen implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers in Vietnam. The main objective of the workshop was to provide a platform for dialogue



among key stakeholders on strengthening national and regional implementation of the ASEAN Consensus. To generate discussion, MMN's Ms Trang Hoang presented findings from our recent research on the roles of countries of origin in protecting migrants' rights.<sup>110</sup>

## VII. MMN Organisational Development, Information Monitoring and Dissemination

Throughout 2019, MMN monitored news, emerging policies, and statistics concerning labour migration in the GMS. The relevant information was widely circulated via the MMN list serves, as well as uploaded onto the MMN website ([www.mekongmigration.org](http://www.mekongmigration.org)). Such regular information monitoring and sharing lays a basis for MMN operation, as it enables the network members to stay alert and take 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. Throughout 2019, MMN worked on renewing the design and content of a new webpage, to make information on the homepage more accessible. The new webpage will have a clearer structure both introducing various areas of MMN's work and linking to news and references on labour migration in the GMS.

## VIII. Regional and Global Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

### 1. MMN at the Clean Clothes Campaign East Asian Coalition Annual General Meeting

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) is a global network of trade unions and NGOs dedicated to improving working conditions and empowering workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. On 12-15 June 2019, the CCC's East Asian Coalition (EAC) convened its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Taipei. The AGM was attended by labour unions and CSOs from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. While the primary focus of MMN is on migration in the GMS, MMN, represented by Mr Stefan Luk, Information and Advocacy Officer, joined the AGM as an international partner and provided input in discussions on migration to countries in East Asia from a countries of origin perspective.

During the meeting, Mr Luk participated in a panel entitled "Prevention of Student Worker/ Trainee (Migrant Workers) Exploitation", and delivered a presentation on migration and labour issues surrounding migration from the GMS to Japan under the TITP. Issues covered included: high recruitment fees, labour rights violations in the work place, and gaps in overseas assistance provided by responsible actors in countries of origin. In addition to the panel discussions, the AGM also provided the opportunity for participants to share updates of CCC's activities the previous year, discuss the impacts of recent trends on labour conditions of workers in the garment and sportswear industries, and strategize on forthcoming campaigns initiated by the CCC EAC.

### 2. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung South East Asia's "10-Year-Anniversary of RLS SEA: Achievements and Future Prospects"

The Hanoi office of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Southeast Asia (RLS-SEA) was established in 2009 with the mission of supporting "the transformation of countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar into participatory, socially just, and ecologically sustainable societies".<sup>111</sup> RLS-SEA held its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary workshop on 13 March 2019, in Hanoi, Vietnam. The workshop was divided into several plenaries following

<sup>110</sup> For further details see link at n.1 above.

<sup>111</sup> RSL-SEA, "Fighting for Fair Society", accessible at <https://rosaluxhanoi.org/en/>.



Ms Reiko Harima at the RLS-SEA Conference in Hanoi, 2019. (Photo: MMN)

the themes of “Social justice”, “Social-Ecological Transformation”, and “Future Perspectives on ASEAN”.

MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima, was invited to attend as a speaker on the theme of “Future Perspectives of ASEAN”. Ms Harima made a presentation entitled “Labour Mobility in Integrated ASEAN” and highlighted the inconsistency of labour migration policies in ASEAN that facilitates mobility of “skilled” workers, while restricting the mobility of others. Ms Harima also highlighted the varying degrees of rights afforded to migrant workers, depending on whether they are considered “skilled” or “manual workers”. Ms Harima concluded in stating the following points:

- ASEAN needs to develop a migration governance regime that is built upon principles of fairness and respect for *all* migrant workers, with the protection of workers’ rights being the utmost priority. This includes reducing barriers to mobility for *all* migrant workers.
- ASEAN needs to embrace the economic and social contribution made by millions of migrant workers. In light of its vision for an “integrated ASEAN” it needs to systematically examine the possibility of migration beyond temporary migration schemes for migrant workers. By ensuring that migrant workers have the option to remain in destination countries for extended periods of time, greater resources can be invested in their skills development and long-term job planning that can benefit both countries of destination and origin.

### 3. LIFT Forum, Nay Pyi Taw

The Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) is a multi-donor fund with the purpose of strengthening the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor households in Myanmar. On 11-13 June 2019, LIFT organised a forum to mark ten years since the inception of LIFT, when discussions began on how to support the growth and modernisation of Myanmar’s rural economy. The main objective of the forum was to explore the ways LIFT has been adaptive, relevant, and influential in Myanmar, and to present its 2019-2024 strategy. Participants representing funding agencies, governments, UN CSOs, and academic experts were invited to reflect, share, and celebrate key achievements.

MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima was invited to attend as a speaker for the session entitled “Looking Forwards”. On 13 June, Ms Harima gave a presentation entitled “People on the Move: Urbanisation and Migration”. In her presentation, Ms Harima highlighted the significance of urbanization and migration, including new migration trends such as that from Myanmar to Japan, and went on to analyse challenges and opportunities in such people’s movement. Ms Harima also noted that Myanmar’s efforts to regularise migration may work more effectively if migrants can see clear benefits of using formal migration channels. For this, migrants need to be provided with accurate information, need to be assured that their rights will be protected, and they need to have access to legal recourse in case of rights violation. Ms Harima also noted that



Day 2 of the LIFT Forum. (Photo: LIFT)

the opening of new labour markets for migrants such as to Japan, highlights the need to up-skill migrants by preparing comprehensive skill programmes, so as not to deplete the pool of skilled labour within Myanmar. This should include recognising the skills of returning migrants and providing incentives for migrants to return and utilise their skills in Myanmar.

#### 4. ILO's Global Social Protection Week



ILO's Global Social Protection Week in Geneva. (Photo: MMN)

The ILO's "[Global Social Protection Week](#)" was the high point of recent ILO's efforts in promoting social protection. The Global Social Protection Week was organised with an aim to chart the way towards achieving universal social protection for all. It was aimed at providing a roadmap for the future of social protection within the framework of the recently adopted ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

The Global Social Protection Week began with a two-day High-Level Conference on "Achieving SDG 1.3 and Universal Social Protection (USP2030) in the Context of the Future of Work", followed by a two-day Technical Segment. The event brought together over 300 participants including: governments; workers' and employers' organizations; development partners; international financing institutions; regional bodies; UN agencies; and members of the private sector, academia, and civil society.

MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima participated in the meeting as a member of Oxfam's delegation. Ms Harima hosted a poster session on "Social Protection for Migrant Workers in the GMS". During the



session, Ms Harima took the opportunity to promote MMN's work including distributing copies of our recent publications. In her poster session presentation, Ms Harima spoke about the key challenges facing migrant workers, including the barriers impeding access to social protection and the current lack of portability of social security in the GMS. Ms Harima's presentation placed particular emphasis on the roles of countries of origin in facilitating their nationals working abroad to access social security.



*Ms Reiko Harima at the Solidar Suisse's Partner Meeting in November, 2019. (Photo: MMN)*

### 5. Solidar Suisse's Partner Meeting

Solidar Suisse is a Swiss NGO that supports a number of programmes that are committed to improving working conditions, living conditions, and democratic participation in the poorest countries in the world. MMN has been a partner of Solidar Suisse since 2017. On 12-13 November, Solidar Suisse organised a partner meeting in Samut Prakan, Thailand. MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima attended the meeting on behalf of MMN and shared MMN's strategy in protecting the rights of migrant workers in the GMS.

### 6. Oxfam's Partner Meeting

Oxfam's Social Protection-focused programme, funded by the Belgium government's Direction Générale Coopération au Développement et Aide Humanitaire (DGD), is aimed at empowering workers in the informal economies of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. MMN has been a regional partner of the Oxfam's Social Protection program since 2017, and strives to promote the importance of social protection for migrant workers. As far as is possible, issues related to social protection are incorporated into all MMN's projects, and on occasions such as in the above-mentioned Roles of Countries of Origin project, MMN has taken social protection as a primary theme.



*Ms Reiko Harima at Oxfam's Partner Meeting in December 2019. (Photo: MMN)*

On 12-14 December, Oxfam organised a partner meeting in Luang Prabang, Laos. MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima attended on behalf of MMN and contributed towards Oxfam's planning for its "Maternal Protection for All" campaign.

## **7. The Asian Development Bank's Third Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion Working Group on Health Cooperation**

On 12-13 December 2019, MMN participated in the Asian Development Bank's Third Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Health Cooperation. The meeting featured discussion on key issues including: the need to integrate migrant health into Universal Health Coverage; how to prepare the GMS for potential pandemics; the integration of health in other GMS sectoral interventions (particularly in infrastructure investments); use of digital health solutions; and exploring existing models of innovative health financing.

At the meeting, MMN gathered information on Thailand's experience in providing health insurance to all migrants, including those who are undocumented, as well as upcoming changes in Thailand's migrant health insurance systems. The meeting also provided the opportunity for MMN to share its recent publication, "Social Protection Across Borders", with civil society and government officials of Thailand, in the hopes that its recommendations can contribute towards building a more inclusive social protection regime in the GMS.

## **IX. Other Advocacy and Networking Initiatives**

### **1. Seminar on Migration at Meiji Gakuin University, Japan**

On 21 September 2019, MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima, participated in a seminar on migration in Asia, organised by the Meiji Gakuin University, in Tokyo. Ms Harima presented on issues surrounding labour migration in the GMS and introduced the work of MMN.

### **2. Lecture on Labour Migration in the GMS, Kyoto University, Japan**

On 5 December 2019, MMN Regional Coordinator, Ms Reiko Harima, gave a lecture at Kyoto University on issues surrounding labour migration in the GMS and ASEAN. In her lecture, Ms Harima discussed the role of CSOs, and talked about how a network such as MMN works to promote and protect migrants' rights.

### **3. MMN at the International Women's Day**

On 8 March 2019, MMN took part in a celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. More than 200 migrant women from across Thailand and representatives of CSOs took to the streets of Chiang Mai to honour the achievements of women – past and present – and demand an end to the injustices and various forms of aggression women continue to face. The march ended with performances by migrants and the reading of a joint statement.

To view pictures of the march and read the joint statement, please visit: [http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=6972&fbclid=IwAR3vuneRcv9ior\\_YHB2gY4MqsJBORDIO--qsNUS2erMtCINboWIWN9uvVfk](http://www.mekongmigration.org/?p=6972&fbclid=IwAR3vuneRcv9ior_YHB2gY4MqsJBORDIO--qsNUS2erMtCINboWIWN9uvVfk).





*The International Women's Day march, March 2019, Chiang Mai, Thailand.  
(Photo: MMN)*

# Secretariat Calendar 2019

## January

**15-19** Held a week-long annual review and secretariat coordination meeting in Chiang Mai

## February

**18** Held the Consultation on Labour Migration from Cambodia to Japan in Phnom Penh

**18-24** Conducted In-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with migrants in Special Economic Zones in the vicinity of Phnom Penh

**19** Visited the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia accompanied by recruitment agency representatives to observe a pre-departure orientation session held for prospective migrants about to depart for Japan

**25-1 March** Held a week-long coordination and annual planning meeting for the MMN secretariat in Chiang Mai

## March

**8** Attended march for the International Women's Day 2019 in Chiang Mai

**27** MMN Secretariat office in Chiang Mai, Thailand visited by MMN supporter CCFD-Terre Solidaire

## April

**9-10** Attended the Regional Good Practice Seminar Inclusive Future for Southeast Asia: Labour Mobility, Skills and Growth in Bangkok

**24** Visited a recruitment agency in Yangon, Myanmar and conducted informant interviews with representatives of the agency, as well as interviews with prospective migrants about to depart for Japan

**26-27** Held the third project partner consultation meeting for the roles of countries of origin project in Yangon

**28** Visited a recruitment agency in Yangon, Myanmar and conducted informant interviews with representatives of the agency, as well as interviews with prospective migrants about to depart for Japan

## May

**28-30** Held the third project partner consultation meeting for the migrants in agriculture project in Bangkok

**30-31** Held the MMN Steering Committee in Bangkok

## June

**1** Visited a recruitment agency in Phnom Penh, Cambodia to observe a language training session and conducted informant interviews with representatives of the agency, as well as interviews with prospective migrants about to depart for Japan

**12-15** Attended the Clean Clothes Campaign East Asian Coalition Annual General Meeting in Taipei

<b>20-21</b>	Held the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Jobs in SEZs: Promoting Gender Sensitive Policies in the Mekong Region in Bangkok, Thailand
<b>22</b>	Held the Project Partner Strategy Meeting for the SEZ project in Bangkok, Thailand
<b>22-23</b>	Held the fourth project consultation meeting for the roles of countries of origin project in Bangkok, Thailand
<b>July</b>	
<b>1-3</b>	Attended the Roundtable Discussion at the AAS-in-Asia Conference in Bangkok
<b>3</b>	Launched the report “Jobs in SEZs: Migrant Garment Factory Workers in the Mekong Region” in Bangkok
<b>6-9</b>	Country Visit to Tokyo Japan for the roles of countries of origin project
<b>8</b>	Held the Workshop on Labour Migration from Mekong Countries of Origin to Japan in Tokyo
<b>24</b>	Held the Consultation on Labour Migration from Vietnam to Japan in Hanoi, Japan
<b>25</b>	Visited two recruitment agencies in Hanoi, Vietnam to observe language training sessions and conducted informant interviews with representatives of the agencies, as well as interviews with prospective migrants about to depart for Japan
<b>September</b>	
<b>16-17</b>	Held the Second Policy Dialogue on Roles of Countries of Origin in Phnom Penh
<b>18</b>	Held reflection meeting with project partners regarding the Second Policy Dialogue in Phnom Penh
<b>October</b>	
<b>25</b>	Attended the Grant Award Ceremony hosted by the Toyota Foundation in Tokyo
<b>26</b>	Attended the presentation workshop organised by the Toyota Foundation in Tokyo
<b>December</b>	
<b>12-13</b>	Attended the The Asian Development Bank’s Third Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion Working Group on Health Cooperation in Bangkok
<b>19</b>	Held the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand in Bangkok
<b>20</b>	Held the civil society organisation reflection meeting regarding the multi-stakeholder workshop in Bangkok

