Nearly two-thirds – 65 per cent – of the world’s migrants have moved for employment purposes. In total, migrant workers number 150 million of which 44 per cent are women.

Labour migration has the potential to deliver a triple win. For countries of destination, it contributes to economic growth through the provision of labour, skills and ideas. For countries of origin, the movement of women and men across borders reduces unemployment pressures and increases remittances. Migrant workers have the opportunity to earn higher incomes and develop new skills, and thus greater independence and agency. However, the envisioned triple win is currently not equitably distributed. Maximizing the benefits of labour migration and minimizing the risks and social costs requires sound, gender responsive and effective labour migration governance. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration demonstrate the global significance of this issue, and offer an important opportunity for the ILO to promote its Decent Work Agenda, including the fundamental principles and rights at work.

The Bali Declaration was adopted at the 16th Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting of the ILO on 9 December 2016. The Declaration serves as a call to action for governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations in the region to do more to promote inclusive growth, social justice and decent work. This series of Policy Briefs aims to focus attention on the priorities for policies and actions at national level and by the ILO as defined in the Declaration.
Above all the future of work must include the advancement of decent work for migrant workers at all skill levels and sectors, leaving no one behind. The Global Compact on Migration gives us an opportunity to make this goal a reality together.

– Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General

DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

The Asia-Pacific region was host to 15.2 per cent of the world’s economically active migrants in 2017. This is the equivalent of 25 million migrants in total, 16 million males and 9 million females (ILO, 2018). Migration to higher-income economies within the region provides millions of jobs and generates billions of dollars in remittances for migrant workers and their families. Seven of the top ten remittance-receiving countries in 2016 were in the region (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam) with inflows totaling approximately US$210 billion (World Bank, 2017).

The key migration corridors in the region include flows to and within the ASEAN member States, from South Asia, to East Asian economies, and to New Zealand and Australia, with the latter countries primarily receiving seasonal migrants from Pacific Island countries. Labour migration in the region is primarily temporary in nature involving low- and semi-skilled work. In 2015, a third of new immigrants to OECD countries came from Asia (OECD, 2017). Between 2000 and 2017, the total number of international migrants originating in Asia increased by 40.7 million, the largest increase among all regions (UNDESA, 2017).

Both men and women migrate, although they tend to work in different sectors. Male migrants dominate sectors such as construction and female migrants are predominant in domestic work. ILO estimates that around 8.5 million (73.4 per cent) of all migrant domestic workers are women with South-East Asia and the Pacific hosting the largest number of women migrant domestic workers (24 per cent) (Tayah, 2016).

OUTFLOW OF WORKERS FROM SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES, 2010-2016 (‘000s)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1 124</td>
<td>1 319</td>
<td>1 435</td>
<td>1 469</td>
<td>1 431</td>
<td>1 438</td>
<td>1 328</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>235</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

was instrumental in developing the methodology to measure recruitment costs borne by an employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination (SDG indicator 10.7.1; methodology adopted in November 2018).

**Protection to all migrant workers:**

Many countries now take a sectoral approach on labour migration governance, with many working with the ILO to develop context-specific approaches to improving conditions in domestic work, construction, manufacturing, agriculture and fishing. A key element of the sectoral approach will be engagement with supply chain actors and the leveraging of their influence on the protection of workers. To protect migrants from abuses in employment practices, the ILO promotes the establishment and effective functioning of Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) run by government job centres, trade unions and civil society organizations (CSOs). Specific attention is needed to promote and enforce safe and fair migration for women.

**Supporting ASEAN employers to adopt and implement fair recruitment practices:**

The ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) has developed and adopted a policy position and framework for sustainable labour migration in the area of recruitment, skills matching, OSH, forced labour and human trafficking and non-discrimination.

**Portability of skills and social security:**

There is much potential for skills training and recognition systems to positively impact on the matching of labour migrant supply and demand. The ILO supports joint minimum standards and mutual recognition approaches to skills by building systems and linking the various actors involved. Bilateral agreements on portable social security benefits are also currently being explored for various ASEAN member States.

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**Regional cooperation on migration governance and statistics:**

Bilateral Labour Arrangements (BLAs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) among governments and countries of origin and destination should engage the social partners, making text available to the public (as in the Philippines), and adopting a system of periodic assessment. The ILO continues to support strengthening bilateral and regional frameworks and processes in the South-East Asia and South Asia, while also facilitating the collection and sharing of labour migration data.

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

**Some current ILO projects and areas of action:**

TRIANGLE in ASEAN (2016–2025). The project is a partnership between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the ILO. It delivers technical assistance and support with the overall goal of maximizing the contribution of labour migration to equitable, inclusive and stable growth in ASEAN. TRIANGLE in ASEAN engages with ASEAN bodies working on labour migration, primarily the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW). It supports comprehensive programmes in six priority countries (Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam). Most recently, the TRIANGLE programme helped to launch SaverAsia, a new free digital tool that helps migrant workers compare money transfer costs to find the best rates.

Safe & Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region (2018–2022). This project is aimed at reducing violence and trafficking by improving frameworks which govern labour migration, improving access to information and services, providing opportunities for

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**RATIFICATION OF MIGRATION-SPECIFIC AND RELATED CONVENTIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ICRMW</th>
<th>C.97</th>
<th>C.143</th>
<th>C.181</th>
<th>C.189</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>24 Aug 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 Jan 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong, SAR</td>
<td>22 Jan 1951 (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>31 May 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>28 Jul 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>17 Apr 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>10 Nov 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabah State of Malaysia</td>
<td>3 Mar 1964</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>11 Mar 1996</td>
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<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>30 Jan 2004</td>
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</table>

Note: ICRMW = International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; C.97 = Migration for Employment Convention; C.143 = Migrant Workers Convention; C.181 = Private Employment Agencies Convention; C.189 = Domestic Workers Convention.

these workers to network, record data and experiences of
these migrant workers and campaigning to promote a better
understanding of the contribution of women migrant workers.
The project is part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate
violence against women and girls, a global, multi-year
initiative between the European Union and United Nations.
Safe & Fair is implemented through a partnership between
the ILO and UN Women with the overriding objective of
ensuring that labour migration is safe and fair for all women
in the ASEAN region.

Application of Migration Policy for Decent Work for Migrant
Workers (2016–2018). The project, funded by the Swiss Agency
for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is supporting the
Government of Bangladesh to move into full implementation
of its migration policies. It provides research and technical
advisory support, facilitates social dialogue and stakeholder
engagement, and support the implementation of pilots to test
a range of strategies for migrant worker’s education, support
and re-entry into the Bangladesh labour market. It focuses on
strengthening the overall policy and governance framework
for migration, improving the institutions responsible for
managing migration, and supporting the development of
expanded services to migrant workers.

EU-India Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and
Mobility (CDMM) (2017–2020). The objective of the
project is to support the EU-India High Level Dialogue on
Migration and Mobility (HLDMM) and the implementation
of the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM)
which was endorsed by the Government of India and the
European Union in 2016. In collaboration with implementing
partner ICMPD, the project aims to contribute to the better
governance of mobility and migration between the EU and
India, as well as to prevent and combat irregular migratory
flow.

On 10 December 2018, leaders from 164 countries adopted
the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
(GCM), pledging to better manage migration at local, national,
regional and global levels, including reducing the risks and
vulnerabilities the migrants or refugees face at different
stages of their journey. The ILO Director-General attended the
event and pledged to continue the work of the ILO to assist in
practices of fair labour migration.

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