

TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme Quarterly Briefing Note

Cambodia (January – March 2022)

Key partners	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) Provincial Departments of Labour and Vocational Training (PDOLVT), Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Battambang, and Kampot Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC) National Employment Agency (NEA) Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW) Phnom Srey Organization for Development (PSOD) Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
Target sites	Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Battambang, Phnom Penh, and Kampot
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Background information

Cambodia is a major country of origin for migrants, with over 1,100,000 citizens abroad in 2020, 54 per cent of whom are women (UNDESA). Of migrants officially registering with the government to move abroad, in 2019 a lower percentage (41 per cent) were women (ILOSTAT). This data suggests that there are a number of Cambodian women abroad who are either not working, or who are migrating for work irregularly at a higher rate than men. Most Cambodian migrant workers seek work outside of the country due to a lack of employment opportunities and significant wage differentials of employment overseas. The primary destination country for Cambodian migrant workers is Thailand, with workers commonly working in the fishing, agriculture, livestock, construction, manufacturing, and service sectors, including domestic work.

Only a small proportion of these workers use regular channels to migrate due to the high cost, considerable time investment and administrative complexities involved. According to a survey conducted by the ILO and IOM, less than a third of Cambodian migrants use regular channels to migrate, with the majority relying on social networks and unlicensed brokers (53 per cent) to go abroad (ILO and IOM, 2017).

The Republic of Korea is the second most popular destination for regular Cambodian migrant workers. Cambodia also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Japan, but far fewer migrants travel there for work, likely due to the requirements of the Industrial Training Program and Technical Internship Program. MOUs with the governments of Kuwait and Qatar were signed in 2009 and 2011, but no Cambodian migrant workers have been sent through these channels.

Bilateral agreements on the deployment of domestic workers abroad have also been signed, including with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. However, these agreements have proven contentious, with reports of abuse of domestic workers recorded in all countries where Cambodian domestic workers are employed. In response, the Cambodian Government suspended 'first-time' migration to Malaysia for domestic work in 2011. After several years of bilateral negotiations between Cambodia and Malaysia, an MOU to resume the deployment of domestic workers was signed in 2015. However, the restriction remains officially in place pending agreement on standard operating procedures for sending domestic workers abroad (ILO, 2017).

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Cambodia at a glance

 Population:	16.72 million
 Labour Force:	9.19 million

Source: ILOSTAT, 2020

Migrant workers in Thailand

MOU migrant workers = 153,030
(Women= 69,344/ Men= 83,686)

Registered migrant workers completing nationality verification including those under the 2019 Thai Cabinet Resolution¹ = 137,685
(Women= 62,725/ Men= 74,960)

Migrant workers under the 4 August 2020 Cabinet Resolutions (includes border employment)² = 59,184
(Women= 26,528/ Men= 32,656)

105,577 migrant workers under the December 2020 Cabinet Resolution (amnesty program)²
(Women=47,275/ Men=58,302)

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Thailand (December 2021)

Migrant workers in other destination countries

Malaysia: 30,113 migrant workers
(Women= 25,872 / Men=4,241)

Republic of Korea: 49,099 migrant workers
(Women=10,403 / Men=38,696)

Japan: 9,195 migrant workers
(Women=3,867 / Men=5,328)

Singapore: 851 migrant workers
(Women=831 / Men=20)

Source: MoLVT's Policy on Labour Migration 2019-2023; Point in time measurement from Cambodian Government data (2018)

TRIANGLE in ASEAN delivers assistance directly to migrant workers and their communities through eight Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs). These MRCs are managed in partnership with government institutions, trade unions and civil society organizations and, in each location, linked with an additional MRC in the local Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training. These MRCs are based in **Battambang** (with the National Employment Agency), **Kampong Cham** (with Phnom Srey Organization for Development), **Kampot** (with the National Employment Agency), and in **Prey Veng** (with Cambodian Labour Confederation).

Since the start of the programme until the end of 2021, **TRIANGLE in ASEAN reached 43,199 migrant workers** (53% women) through Cambodian MRCs.

¹ The August 2019 Cabinet resolution allows migrant workers to renew a work permit without leaving Thailand. This includes those who have completed nationality verification and held temporary passports, travel documents, or certificate of identity.

² These resolutions (CR), in response to COVID-19, facilitate migrant workers to stay and work in Thailand legally. The 4 August 2020 CR granted extension to four groups of migrant workers, whose work permit expired, including MoU workers with four years completed, and migrant workers with border passes whilst the December 2020 CR provides amnesty for migrant workers from Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar with irregular status, along with their children under the age of 18 to register.

The Cambodian Labour Migration Policy and Action Plan (2019-2023) outlines the Government's commitment to leveraging the benefits of labour migration for the country's long-term development. The policy is unique within South-East Asia in applying a holistic and multi-ministerial approach to labour migration governance.

Key developments

During the **COVID-19 pandemic** more than 260,000 Cambodian migrant workers have returned from abroad, mainly from Thailand (until 21 December 2021) [according to the National Committee for Counter Trafficking \(NCCT\)](#). While some migrant workers continue to return home due to job losses, others have begun (re)migration, with reports of migrant workers crossing the border to Thailand despite entry restrictions.

The number of new COVID-19 cases reported has declined during the reporting period (Source: [WHO](#)). All ILO-supported Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs), and the PDoLVTs remained open during the period. MRC staff, working with Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW), and officials of PDoLVTs provided direct relief assistance and have used remote counselling.

A Thai Cabinet Resolution on 28 September 2021 allowed undocumented migrant workers to get regularised until the end of November 2021. Thailand reopened its borders on November 1 for fully vaccinated travellers by air from 63 countries, including Cambodia. The [Thai Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration \(CCSA\) approved the Ministry of Labour's guidelines on resuming the MOU process](#) to allow migrant workers to return. The requirements include vaccines, COVID tests and mandatory quarantine, which significantly increases migration costs. Fully vaccinated migrant workers entering through land borders must undergo a seven-day quarantine after entering Thailand.

From January to March 2022, ILO worked with the UN Network on Migration, the Government, the private sector and key stakeholders to review and finalize the Cambodian National Implementation Plan for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), with a view to more rights-based and gender-responsive planning.

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Main programme activities: January – March 2022

From January to March, the MRCs in Kampot and Battambang provided in-person migration counselling services to 110 potential migrant workers and their families (M:50; W:60), as well as community outreach activities. Two Gender Champions engaged in specific outreach activities for women and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) migrants, including sharing information on access to sexual and reproductive health care, equal pay, non-tolerance of gender-based discrimination in hiring, non-tolerance of harassment and violence. These activities reached 135 potential migrants (M:65; W:70). Moreover, the MRC in Prey Veng provided migration counselling services to an additional 64 potential migrant workers and their families (M: 27, W:37), and through community outreach, disseminated information to 280 potential migrant workers and their families (M:150; W:130).

During this quarter, TRIANGLE in ASEAN held meetings with Cambodia's two private recruitment agency associations – the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA) and the Manpower Association of Cambodia (MAC) – to finalize the review of the tool and checklist to assess members' compliance with the Code of Conduct (CoC) for Cambodian Private Recruitment Agencies. The tool was translated into Khmer and will be submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training for review and input before its formal adoption in April 2022, and the beginning of a pilot assessment process.

On 24 February, TRIANGLE in ASEAN conducted a virtual session to share outcomes of the ILO remittances comparison app SaverAsia in Cambodia, organized by Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW). 640 potential migrant workers have downloaded the SaverAsia App at dissemination events alone, in addition to downloads outside of the events. Twenty-five participants from civil society, the private sector and the Government discussed sustainability strategies of SaverAsia through integration into the National Employment Agency (NEA) annual operational plan. SaverAsia was also included in a mapping exercise on the Royal Government of Cambodia's support on Digital Transformation.

On 2 March, MRC Prey Veng partnered with the Prey Veng Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training (PDOLVT) to deliver a one-day training session on the complaint mechanism for migrant workers, as well as guidelines for its use. In total, 25 (M:21; W:4) labour officials and service providers from government and non-government agencies participated in the capacity building workshop.

On 6 March, MRC Prey Veng collaborated with the Prey Veng PDOLVT to deliver food supplies, PPE and COVID-19 risk communication information to 100 migrant returnees from Thailand and Malaysia (M:50; W:50) in four communes in Mea Sang district: Kunthong, Kampous, Me Bon and Sangkat Kok Roka.

On 15 and 16 March, Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) conducted two consultation sessions with 59 local women migrant workers returnees in Bar Phnom district, Prey Veng province. The consultations informed network members of migration and were an opportunity to discuss their priorities, share their migration pathway experience, and recognize their value, contribution and agency for change.

On 23 March, TRIANGLE in ASEAN participated in the annual social dialogue between ILO and the National Trade Union Council. The dialogue resulted in the development of the annual work plan and identified support and collaboration of the ILO toward the implementation of the plan. Among the areas and sectoral interventions identified, labour migration issues, gender disaggregation in monitoring, and capacity building for all key leaders of trade unions will be prioritized in 2022.

On 29 March, LSCW collaborated with the Provincial Committee for Counter Trafficking in Prey Veng to conduct a one-day refresher training course on case management, referrals and 'do no harm' principles for migrant workers. Twenty-one participants (M:10; W:11) from government and non-government institutions attended where

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information on practices and understanding of right-based approaches, including in respect to non-discrimination, confidentiality, and privacy of migrant workers, was delivered.

Upcoming activities and key dates (April – June 2022)

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Purpose
April (ongoing)	Facilitator Training using the "By Women, For Women" training approach to strengthen women's networking activities	Phnom Penh/ Prey Veng	GADC (and TBC one more CSO), selected facilitators, TRIANGLE in ASEAN	To build the capacity of facilitators to create women's networks using a feminist and participatory training model
April (ongoing)	SaverAsia local outreach events	Phnom Penh and in 11 Job Centres in provinces	Prospective migrant workers, migrant returnees, and their families; local authorities	To organize SaverAsia awareness-raising events focussing on how to use the mobile app
April/ (ongoing)	Pilot the assessment system for the Code of Conduct (CoC) for Cambodian Private Recruitment Agencies with PRAs	Phnom Penh	ACRA, MAC, recruitment agencies, ILO, MoLVT, government institutions, NGOs, employers, UN agencies	To discuss piloting the COC assessment tool among selected agencies and develop steps forward for progressing COC implementation
April (ongoing)	Support consultations on the development of the yearly action plan to implement Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia 2019-2023	Phnom Penh	ILO, MoLVT, government institutions, tripartite constituents, NGOs, UN agencies	To support the development of the yearly action plan and get inputs from stakeholders
May (ongoing)	Support consultations on labour migration law development	Phnom Penh	ILO, MoLVT, government institutions, tripartite constituents, NGOs, UN agencies	To present the proposed new framework of the law and generate inputs from stakeholders
June	Capacity development for MRCs and implementation programme partners on Financial Literacy	Phnom Penh	ILO, MoLVT, direct implementing partners, tripartite constituents, NGOs,	To improve the capacity and the action on their financial literacy, budget smart, save smart, and link with SaverAsia Mobile app

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Media Coverage

Date	Title	Media source
19 January	Over 360,000 Cambodian migrant workers inoculated by Thai gov't	Khmer Times
3 February	First group of Cambodian workers under labor MoU enter Thailand	Khmer Times
28 February	Labour optimism as remittances rise	Khmer Times
1 March	Migrants crossing borders illegally an issue in Banteay Meanchey	Khmer Times
9 March	Thai Federation of Thai Industries urges swifter state action on Cambodian labour amid shortage	Khmer Times
16 March	26,840 Cambodian workers in Thailand have their work permit extended by another two years	Phnom Penh Post

TRIANGLE in ASEAN extends the cooperation between the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, the **Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** and **Global Affairs Canada** on protecting migrant workers and enhancing development opportunities. **TRIANGLE in ASEAN** aims to ensure that the benefits of labour migration are equally realised by men and women migrant workers; employers and governments. In shifting emphasis towards leveraging the development potential of migration, **TRIANGLE in ASEAN** aims to shape labour migration opportunities to support inclusive and sustainable growth in the ASEAN Economic Community. **TRIANGLE in ASEAN** engages institutionally with **ASEAN** and focuses on delivering in six countries (**Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam**).