



HOSPITALITY SCHOOL IN CAMBODIA © IOM 2016/MUSE MOHAMMED

MAKING MIGRATION WORK GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

Making migration work in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) means making it work for migrants and their families, making it work for their employers, and making it work for the societies they leave behind and the communities they join.

An estimated 80% of migration in the GMS is intraregional.¹ During the past two decades, migration has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth and development in both countries of origin and destination within the GMS. The GMS is currently undergoing a process of rapid economic and social integration with intraregional migration, particularly labour migration, a key feature of this transformation.

Governments in the subregion have made progress towards developing human mobility policies aimed at facilitating the movement of migrants across the subregion and beyond. However, currently an estimated 74% of movements in the GMS are irregular bringing unnecessary risk to migrants, creating an environment conducive to human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and diminishing the economic and social benefits of migration.² Improved consistency of national and subregional laws, policies, and practices combined with opportunities to jointly develop government, private sector, and civil society capacities will help facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration in the GMS.

IOM is an indispensable operational actor in the field of human mobility in the GMS, supporting migrants across the subregion, and developing effective responses to changing migration patterns; it is also a key source of advice on migration policy and practice. The Organization works with governments, private sector and civil society

MAKING MIGRATION WORK

The strategy focuses on three priority areas: **labour migration and sustainable development** and **safe, secure and healthy border management, research and data collection on migration**.

The strategy works in the six Greater Mekong Subregion countries - **Cambodia**, the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the **People's Republic of China**, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, **Myanmar**, **Thailand**, and **Viet Nam** - and engages at the subregional, regional, and global level.

CONTEXT - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

LABOUR MIGRATION that is safe, orderly and regular is proving to be essential to the sustainable development of the Greater Mekong Subregion both for countries of origin and destination. As the region emerges from the impact of COVID-19, one of the main factors affecting recovery in the GMS in the next few years will be the speed of recovery of demand for foreign labour.

International migration flows in the subregion are shaped by two main factors: (1) disparities between countries in terms of economic and social development; and (2) demographic differences among the populations in countries of origin and destination countries affecting the supply and demand of labour. Currently, these manifest as migration flows moving from less developed economies of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam into Thailand. However, as populations age in the more advanced economies across the wider Asia Region, it can be expected that there will be increased demand and competition from those nations for working aged men and women.

Despite the prevalence of labour and other forms of migration in the GMS, the governance structures framing migration are not well-developed. The reality that approximately 74 per cent of migrants to Thailand used irregular channels is a symptom that the current system requires reform. Contributing factors include the high cost and time involved for regular migration, the exclusion of feminized sectors such as domestic and entertainment work from MOUs, uneven border management, as well as demand from sections of the private sector for an unregulated labour force. The lack of legal migration pathways for feminized sectors is reflected in the statistic that 77 per cent of detected victims of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific are female.³

Recent analysis found that about 56 per cent of jobs in the subregion are at risk of automation by 2035; with jobs in migrant-heavy sectors such as hospitality, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing industries most at risk.⁴ While the majority of migrant workers are still likely to be absorbed into low skill jobs, with women in particular likely to find opportunities in the “caring industries”, more gaps in medium to high-skilled jobs, notably in IT are expected. Currently, the strong presence of migrant workers with low levels of education in migrant stock is at odds with the growth in medium-skill occupations, with an estimated 55 per cent of migrants underqualified for the positions they hold⁵. To ensure the benefits of labour migration into the future, migrants skills need to reflect the changing needs of the private sector.

The situation in the GMS is complicated by the proliferation of special economic zones; some of which are at risk of becoming foci of illicit activity, including smuggling of migrants. This situation not only raises protection concerns, but also has the potential to undermine GMS business competitiveness, as an increasing number of countries adopt Modern Slavery legislation.

The importance of safe, orderly and regular labour migration will only increase. The advanced economies of East Asia will need to find and additional 275 million workers by 2030 to keep their working age population steady.⁶ Conversely 40 per cent of nationals from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar are under the age of 25, including increasing numbers of university educated youth, that are unlikely to be able to be absorbed into the local economy.

**275 million migrants
needed by 2030**

to stabilize working age populations
in East Asia

USD2.8 billion+
remitted annually

to the Greater Mekong Subregion
from Thailand alone in 2019⁷

**74% use irregular
channels to Thailand**

increasing protection risks to
migrants across the subregion

“At first, there are not so many things that I could do, I don't even know how to use some equipment. But the longer I stay, the more I know.”

**Myanmar female migrant
working in Thailand**

CONTEXT - HEALTH & BORDER MANAGEMENT

HEALTH AND BORDER MANAGEMENT has come to the fore in the Greater Mekong Subregion as the COVID-19 pandemic places the spotlight on the negative impacts of poorly managed migration. The high percentage of irregular migrants in the GMS migration stock has made it both difficult to respond to the crisis and to plan the recovery phase. Limited cross-border health, border and mobility management systems hampered efforts to manage the crisis, and national governments in the region are facing a continued need to coordinate health and border assessments, testing, screening, immunization, certification and more.

The process of economic and social integration in the Greater Mekong Subregion means processes regulating the movement of goods and people will increasingly need to be timely and efficient while ensuring their legality and safety. Within the subregion, the six countries share approximately 12,000 kilometres of land borders. Currently, uncoordinated and uneven border management enforcement measures are resulting in illegal cross-border flows of goods and irregular movement of people that has already taken on a distinctly subregional character. While national policies and procedures are gradually put in place, missing in the mix of current health and border management capacity-building endeavours is a focus on international operational coordination and collaboration.

Analysis of country-level data on detected trafficking victims, smuggling of migrants, and regular migrants reveals that all flows follow broadly the same routes. While the scale is hard to determine, there is evidence of trafficking and migrant smuggling for a diverse range of purposes including forced or bonded labour, child labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage. Within the GMS national laws related to trafficking and migrant smuggling are not always complete and consistent, nor are they always consistent with international requirements and this hampers regional efforts to prevent and combat these crimes.

The GMS is a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases—in particular, zoonotic, and vector-borne diseases—as a result of many factors including population growth, mobility, urbanization, and environmental changes such as agriculture and livestock intensification, deforestation, and climate change. As a result, there has been global interest in understanding and predicting the emergence of disease in the region that predates the current COVID-19 pandemic. The role that cross-border movements can play in the transmission of infectious disease means that migrants will often be heavily impacted in the event of transnational outbreaks, and the current pandemic has served as a stark reminder of work that remains to be done on the intersection of migrant health and border management.

Aspirations for economic integration cannot be realized without effective, efficient, and sustainable Health, Border and Mobility Management. This is needed to bridge the gap between national policies and capacities, and the need for cross border coordination. One of the most dramatic responses to COVID-19 has been the global suspension of international travel in the hopes of slowing down the spread of the virus. This has revealed a critical need for the entire spectrum of migration management to adapt to a new reality. As the Greater Mekong Subregions contemplates removing internal restrictions and reopening borders, they are all confronted with the same challenge: there is no clear blueprint on how to safely enable cross-border human mobility in a post-pandemic world.



DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has proved to be highly adaptable in response to the pandemic and capable of filling critical data gaps. Surveys focused on demographic and socio-economic profile of returnees, their migration and return experiences and practices, and their economic, and social needs and vulnerabilities.

The GMS will continue to streamline the DTM for emergency use, including improving the capacity and willingness of missions, government, and non-government partners to use DTM tools.

FACILITATING HUMAN MOBILITY

HUMAN MOBILITY MANAGEMENT BY NATURE REQUIRES MULTI-SECTORAL CROSS BORDER COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS. The International Organization for Migration's expertise in migration health, protection, border management, human development, emergency response and environmental change, combined with its operational presence and strong existing partnerships in the subregion makes it ideally positioned to bridge the divide between the national and subregional.

As the subregion recovers from COVID-19 there is now an opportunity to support the migration stakeholders to put in place coordinated systems, procedures, and policies so that the high rates of irregular migration and the associated protection risks aren't perpetuated. This will allow States and other stakeholders to plan for and manage human mobility in way that maximizes benefits for migrants and societies alike, preparing them for emerging impacts from economic and political developments, demographic shifts, technological advances, and environmental change.

The International Organization for Migration seeks to work with

National Authorities including health, border enforcement, labour and protection agencies

Intergovernmental Subregional & Regional Forums impacting migration

Private Sector Actors who employ migrants in their supply chains and recruitment agencies

Civil Society representing migrants such as HomeNet and Mekong Migrant Network



POLICIES

National migrant health, labour migration, border management and protection policies will have a level of consistency across the subregion and be in line with international standards. Subregional policies will be responsive

PROCEDURES

Procedures for managing movement across borders will be efficient and safe. The costs and timeframes associated with regular migration will be reduced, including for new health requirements. Procedures for cross border protection

PRACTICE

Authorities will have the physical and organizational infrastructure in place to facilitate regular subregional operational coordination and collaboration. They will have a strong and consistent presence in subregional and

STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE

Governments in the GMS have compatible, innovative, flexible and inclusive cross-border mobility solutions in place to address current and future skills needs

Outcome 1.1 Migrants of all genders, ages, abilities and other diversities in the GMS have access to safe, orderly and regular protection sensitive migration pathways, as well as non-discriminatory, responsive resettlement and repatriation solution and complementary protection pathways

IOM will provide technical support to governments and intergovernmental entities in collaboration with relevant non-governmental entities in the subregion to ensure that their national human mobility systems, procedures, and policies are compatible and meeting international standards. Through its engagement with the GMS Labour Migration Taskforce and other relevant forums, IOM will advocate for policy frameworks that increase protections for migrants. The Organization will provide advisory services to private sector entities aiming to eliminate trafficking, migrant smuggling and other forms of exploitation from their operations and supply chains through activities such as supply chain audits and remediation toolkits.

Outcome 1.2 Migrants of all genders, ages, abilities and other diversities in the GMS have access to legal identity solutions, and receive relevant support to comply with visa procedures and admission, long-term stay and regularization requirements

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Outcome 1.3 Governments in the GMS have compatible, innovative, flexible and inclusive cross-border mobility solutions in place to address current and future skills needs

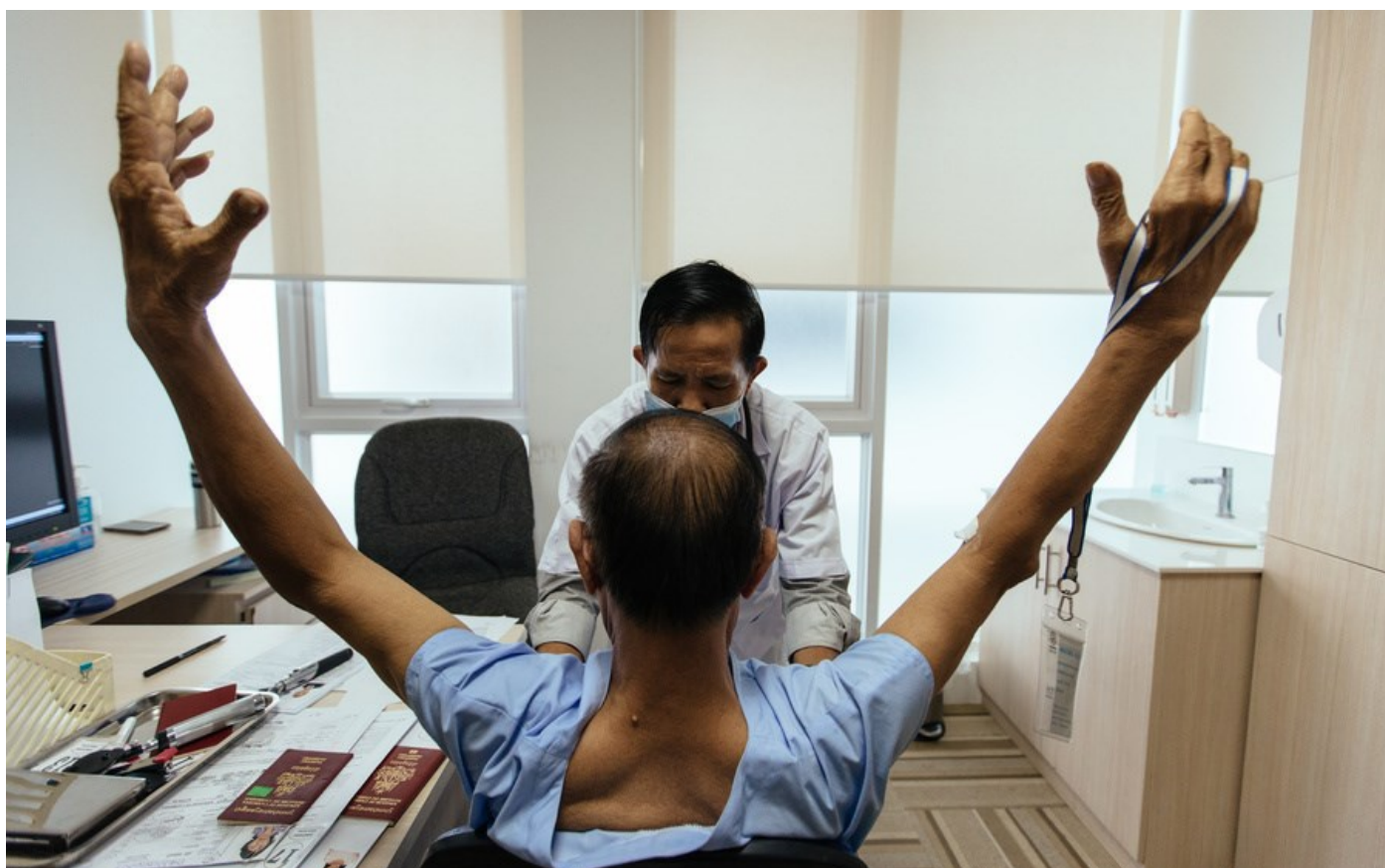
IOM will support the GMS Labour Migration Taskforce to ensure migrants' skills match the needs of industry through improved labour market information, simplifying administrative requirements, regulating recruitment agencies, expanding Mutual Recognition Agreements, and coordinating predeparture and post-arrival orientation systems. IOM will expand its investments in skills development, working with governments, education institutes, and the private sector to develop market-driven models that respond to industry needs and can be scaled and sustained by partners. Research will be conducted to keep abreast of socio-economic trends in the GMS that impact supply and demand for specific skills. IOM will give technical support to GMS governments so that their labour migration policies are fit for technological and demographic changes, using migration as a tool for climate adaptation, as well as responding to increased demand for medium and high-skilled migrant workers, especially those with technological skills.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO

Migration flows and cross-border mobility are well managed, with measures to ensure well-being, including health, security and safety throughout the mobility continuum

Outcome 2.1: Stakeholders in the GMS are able to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and related transnational organized crime, including increasing access to rights-based and victim-centered protection and assistance services

IOM will support GMS governments, primarily through seeking to reinvigorate COMMIT, to develop, strengthen and operationalize cross-border policies, legal frameworks, mechanisms, and procedures to facilitate the identification, referral, and protection and assistance of migrants exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse across the mobility continuum in the GMS region. In situations where the government is unable or unwilling to provide access to rights-based and victims-centered services, IOM work directly with non-government service providers and community groups to strengthen referrals and service provision. In coordination with other actors, IOM will collect and disseminate data on human trafficking and associated forms of exploitation and abuse in situations of humanitarian crisis, displacement, and large-scale migration. IOM will work in partnership with civil society actors and communities to ensure that emerging issues are quickly brought to the attention of duty bearers and will equip vulnerable populations with the information they need to migrate safely and access assistance. Regional social and behavioral change and communication strategies will be developed and operationalized in coordination with relevant stakeholders to sensitize migrants on the risks of irregular migration, and opportunities of safe migration channels.



FIT TO TRAVEL MEDICAL EXAMINATION © IOM 2016/MUSE MOHAMMED

Outcome 2.2: Migrants of all genders, ages, abilities and other diversities have access to essential healthcare along migration routes with the GMS and the risks that population mobility may pose to individual and public health are mitigated

IOM's Health, Border & Mobility Management framework will be employed to improve prevention, detection and response to the spread of diseases along the mobility continuum. IOM will facilitate the development of dedicated forums in the GMS to ensure coordination around migrant health and a harmonization of approaches to the major diseases of subregional import. This will include technical support for the integration of health of migrants into national health surveillance systems and mechanisms for sharing this information subregionally. In addition to a general need to harmonize approaches to predeparture screening, IOM will seek to understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on the health requirements for migrants. Finally, IOM will work with stakeholders to develop effective interventions in SEZ and other large-scale investment projects, seeking to understand (1) current government policy and practice in the GMS (2) actual health impacts on labour migrants and surrounding communities (3) and the potential impact of planned projects on future migration patterns and thus likely health impacts.

Outcome 2.3: Integrated, non-discriminatory border management policies, strategies and systems ensure the human rights, dignity and safety and security of all those on the move in the GMS

IOM will promote an integrated border management approach by conducting trainings and skills building at the national and subregional level to support Governments to enhance their respective systems to manage borders and immigration in line with international best practices and with a human rights based approach. This will consist of an integrated approach of investing in appropriate infrastructure combined with capacity-building exercises and technical support to develop a regional policy; coordinated national legal frameworks; national capacity-building; referral mechanisms; and joint simulations and regular operations. The focus will be on imbedding cross border collaboration in line with international human rights standards and subject to risk assessments. The Organization will work with donors to address the lack of a dedicated training facility for immigration and border management in the subregion whether through a virtual or physical training centre.



AN IOM ENUMERATOR CONDUCTS A SURVEY © IOM 2018/VISARUT SANKHAM

STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE

Accurate, disaggregated evidence on human mobility is collected, shared and utilized for evidence-based policy making across the GMS

Outcome 3.1: Governments and relevant stakeholders responsibly collect, analyse, share and disseminate quality, timely, disaggregated and comparable migration data

IOM will work with data plans or data governance frameworks relevant to migration to ensure they reflect subregional priorities as well as relevant global commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and other relevant global and regional frameworks. IOM will commission and conduct multi-country research and data collection in collaboration with stakeholders, including research institutes, international organizations, civil society on emerging issues. The Organization will provide and participate in events and forums to disseminate data, as well as good practices and standards related to its collection.



CONSTRUCTION TRAINING FOR MIGRANT WORKERS
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PROMISE

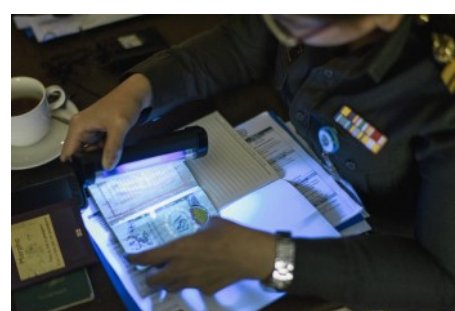
Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement project funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation improves employment opportunities and conditions for migrants through enhanced skills and



MIGRANT HEALTH SERVICES IN MAE SOT THAILAND
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TEAM

The Tuberculosis Elimination Among Migrants project resourced by the Global Fund Fight to AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria reduces the burden of tuberculosis among migrant populations in the GMS thereby reducing transmission, incidence, and mortality



TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION TRAINING IN BANGKOK
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The Document Examination Support Centre (DESC) supported by the Government of Canada, established the Asian Network for Document Examination is as a regional platform for immigration and law enforcement officials to share information and best

¹ United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand, *Thailand Migration Report 2019*, Bangkok, 2019, p2

² International Labour Organization & International Organization for Migration, *Risks and rewards: Outcomes of labour migration in S.East Asia*, Bangkok, 2017, p26

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2016, Vienna, p103

⁴ International Labour Office, *ASEAN in Transformation: The Future of Jobs at Risk of Automation*, Geneva, p12

⁵ OECD/ILO, *How Immigrants Contribute to Thailand's Economy*, Paris, 2017, p83

⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit & IOM, *The Future of Labour Migration in Asia*, forthcoming

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