



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANTS IN THAILAND SITUATION REPORT OCTOBER 2022



Myanmar migrant worker supported by IOM's direct cash assistance program during COVID-19 (CREST) (© IOM 2022)

Background

South-East Asia is comprised of source, transit and destination countries and is characterized by migration inflows and outflows. Due to its unparalleled economic growth in the last decade, Thailand is a lucrative destination for labour migrants, mainly from South-East Asia. According to the Thailand Migration Report in 2019, the number of migrants in Thailand reached 4.9 million. The majority of the migrant population are from bordering countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and containment measures put in place across Thailand, migrant communities have faced an array of challenges. For many, it has resulted in loss of employment, as well as limited access to services and facilities.

Highlights

- From 1 October 2022, The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) in Thailand will manage COVID-19 as a "Disease under surveillance" instead of a "Dangerous infectious disease". The Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) ceased its operations and the Emergency Decree was not extended.
- COVID-19 testing by using ATK will be recommended only for individuals with respiratory symptoms or suspicion of infection. Regarding mask wearing, MOPH advises the public to wear a mask in closed and poor ventilated settings, such as public transportation, hospitals and care facilities.
- From 17-21 October, the World Health Organization's Joint Mission conducted a Review of Health System Capacity and Essential Public Health Functions to address the needs of refugees and migrants in Thailand.
- By 26 October, 143 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in Thailand, including 57.03 million (82% of population) first dose, 53.53 million (77%) second dose and 32.29 million (46%) third dose. Data from 17 October reported that 5,450,329 (+46,023) doses had been administered to foreign nationals residing in Thailand. First, second and third dose coverage are 57, 47 and 16 per cent respectively.

THAILAND

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

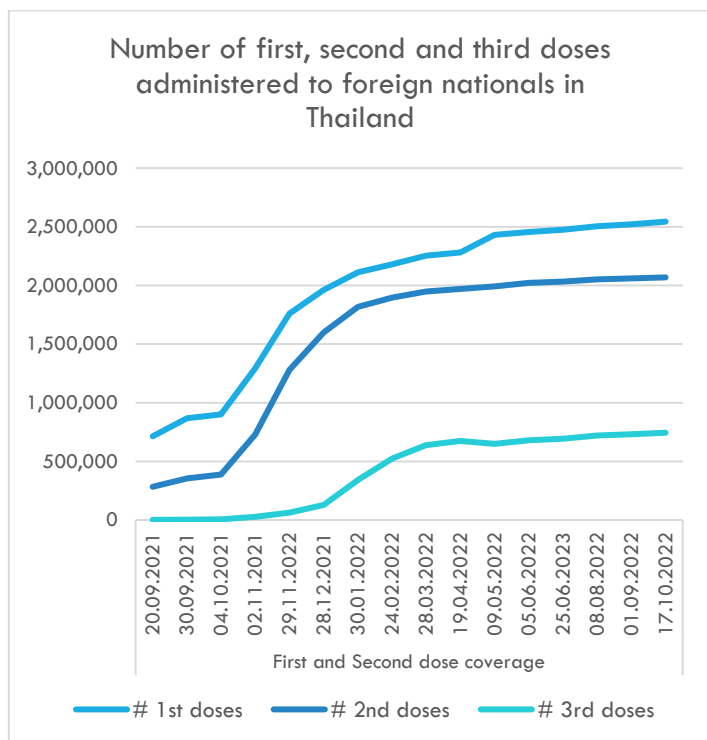
By the end of October 2022, the cumulative number of cases had reached 4,692,448 (+11,139 compared to 30,390 cases in September) and 32,955 deaths (+191 compared to 461 in September).

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

With the dissolution of the CCSA, COVID-19 data relating to cases and vaccination is now being reported weekly rather than daily. On 26 October, MOPH reported that 143 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in Thailand, including 57.03 million (82% of population) first dose, 53.53 million (77%) second dose and 32.29 million (46%) third dose.

COVID-19 VACCINATION AMONG MIGRANTS

Data released by the MOPH Department of Disease Control (DDC) on 17 October reported that a total of 5,450,329 (+46,023) doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to foreign nationals residing in Thailand.



The latest data also indicates that 2,233,504 (+20,967) doses were to Cambodian, Lao and Myanmar (CLM) nationals, who continue to represent the top three nationalities, as follows:

	Myanmar	Cambodian	Lao
Total	1,558,793	451,481	223,230
Since September	(+18,304)	(+1,671)	(+992)

Data from 17 October for CLM nationals shows that:

- First dose coverage is at 57 per cent (2,233,504)
- Second dose coverage is at 47 per cent (1,816,200)
- Third dose coverage is at 16 per cent (610,308)

Coverage is based on a CLM population denominator of 3.9 million, as estimated in the 2019 Thailand Migration Report.

NUMBER OF DOCUMENTED MIGRANT WORKERS (as of 31 July 2022)

No further data has been released by the Foreign Workers Administration Office of the Department of Employment since its update reported in July 2022. The number therefore remains as before: 2,099,097.

Myanmar	Cambodian	Lao
1,503,639 (+126,015)	382,626 (+27,912)	184,920 (+10,236)

POLICY UPDATE

Policy updates: COVID-19

In addition to the overarching policy changes relating to the CCSA and the Emergency Decree that came into place on 1 October, on 6 October, the Ministerial Regulation on the removal of COVID-19 from the list of prohibited diseases for migrant workers coming to work in Thailand was published in the Royal Thai Government Gazette. Migrant workers entering Thailand are no longer required to have a COVID-19 test or show a proof of negative result for a visa.

WHO JOINT MISSION TO REVIEW HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH FUNCTIONS TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEEDS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THAILAND (17-21 OCTOBER 2022)

Thailand is a ‘Champion Country’ of the UN Migration Network for its implementation of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and proactively supports the International Migration Review Forum for the GCM Implementation (IMRF). In this light, WHO Headquarters proposed that Thailand be a pilot country to conduct a joint mission to review health system capacity and essential public health functions to address the health needs of refugees and migrants in Thailand. The objectives of the assessment were:

1. To pilot the tool which will allow the WHO Health and Migration Programme (PHM) to gather inputs and comments from the ground in applying the tool in other countries.
2. To review the current migration situation and the health-system response including assessing the capacity of the health systems and essential public health functions to respond to the health needs of refugees and migrants, through desk review, meetings and interviews to stakeholders, and field visits.
3. To explore future health policy that would advance universal health coverage (UHC) on migrants’ agenda in Thailand, as well as to consolidate good practices and lesson learnt that would help generate informed decisions and propose key areas of future collaboration and technical support between the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, and other partners.

Findings and recommendations relating to the six areas reviewed, including Policy and Governance, Health Financing, Health Information Systems, Health Service Delivery, Public Health Response, and Communication strategies and community engagement will be documented in a report to be released in December 2022. Overall, the Review was considered a successful exercise, with experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic allowing for practical examples of existing challenges that continue for migrants to access health care services in Thailand.

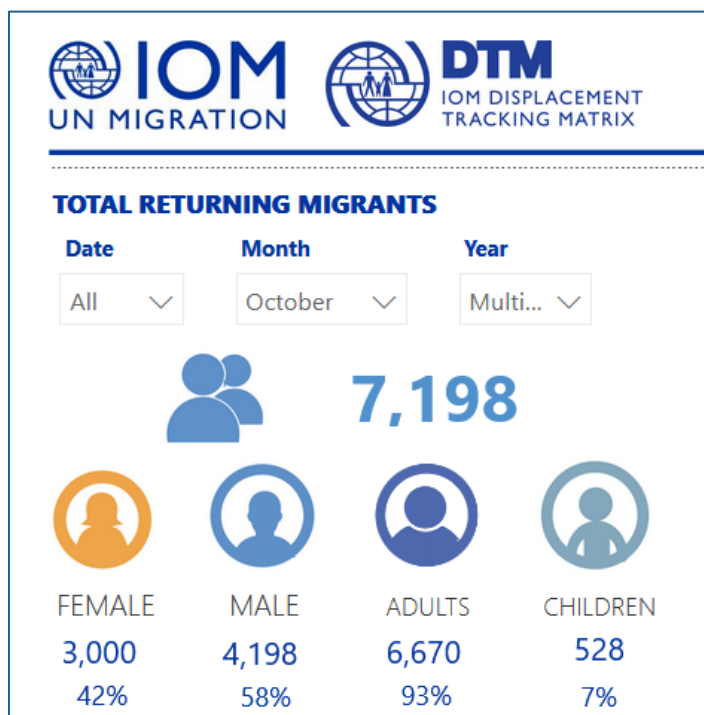
CAMBODIA

 **POLICY UPDATE**

On 3 October the Royal Government of Cambodia lifted all restrictions, and no more COVID-19 documents are required to enter the country, such as proof of vaccination or testing. No further COVID-19 related policies were reported in October.

NUMBER OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

In October a total of 7,198 migrants have returned to Cambodia (42% female), who were accompanied by 528 children (7%).

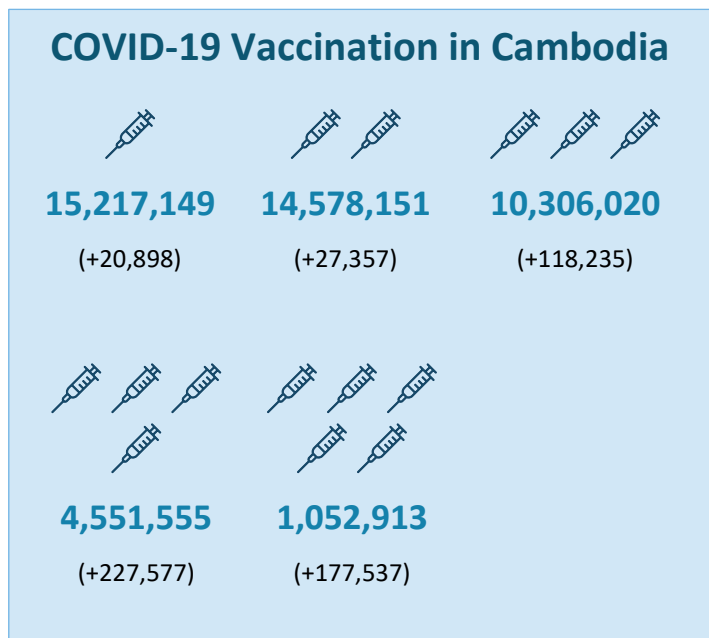


COVID-19 CASES IN CAMBODIA

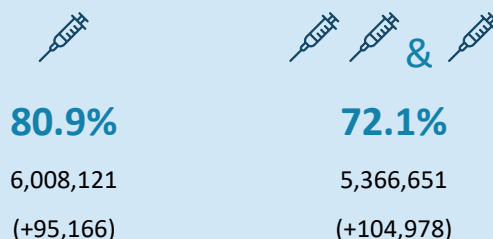
In October, 114 (including 1 imported) confirmed cases were reported, with no fatalities. These figures bring the cumulative totals to 137,991 cases (21,235 imported) and 3,056 deaths.

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By the end of October, the Cambodian Ministry of Health had reported vaccination coverage as follows:



COVID-19 Vaccination in Lao People’s Democratic Republic



MYANMAR

POLICY UPDATE

The Myanmar Ministry of Health announced new guidelines in October for travelers entering the country via PoEs, commercial flights and relief flights. Details of these guidelines, which continue to require isolation, proof of vaccination, and negative COVID-19 RDT/RT-PCR tests to be presented upon arrival, can be found using the following links:

1. [Guidelines for Testing and Quarantine Requirements for Travelers to Myanmar by Relief Flight \(8 Oct 2022\)](#)
2. [Guideline for Public Health Requirements for Travelers Entering Myanmar Through International Commercial Flights \(8 October\)](#)
3. [Guideline for Public Health Requirements for ravelers Entering Myanmar Through Cross-Border Point of Entry \(8 October\)](#)

Overall, travelers entering Myanmar through cross-border PoEs should have a COVID-19 vaccination certificate showing that they were fully vaccinated at least 14 days before arrival to Myanmar, with MOH approved vaccines. Travelers shall submit a Health Declaration Form to the respective airport health authorities upon arrival to Myanmar (legal action will be taken against those who not provide the correct information in the Heath Declaration Form). Upon arrival in Myanmar, travelers shall be subject to a thermal screening to be conducted by the respective airport health authorities.

These new guidelines have resulted in migrants delaying their entry to the country. Undocumented migrants have bypassed official gates due to the document requirements at PoEs, instead passing through unofficial channels. They are also reportedly unaware of quarantine requirements, or do not follow them, and travel directly to their place of residence.

COVID-19 CASES IN MYANMAR

In October the MOH reported 8,550 (+605) confirmed COVID-19 cases and 22 (-9) deaths, bringing the cumulative totals to 631,716 and 19,482 respectively. The number of confirmed cases

LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

COVID-19 CASES IN LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Lao Ministry of Health reported in October that the number of COVID-19 cases remained stable. The use of ATK is widespread, for which any positive results are not recorded in the national data.

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

The Lao Ministry of Health reported the following figures at the end of October:

and deaths continues to increase steadily, and it is suggested that these figures show only the tip of the iceberg, since most people do not test nor report positive results to the local authorities.

According to analysis from MOH for the period between 28 January-15 October 2022, 90.4 percent of COVID-19 positive cases and 80.9 percent of deaths due to COVID-19 did not receive the COVID-19 vaccination, while some were partially vaccinated.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

By 29 October a total of 30,707,837 (+121,903) individuals above the age of 18 have received a COVID-19 vaccination. A cumulative total of 6,688,624 (+55,258) under 18-year-olds have been vaccinated in Myanmar since the start of the pandemic.

MOBILITY MONITORING

In October 2022, approximately 14,000 Myanmar nationals entered Thailand in Tak, Ranong, Kanchanaburi, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son provinces, according to IOM's mobility monitoring report. This marks an increase in the trend compared to the three previous months, when approximately 10,900, 11,000 and 11,900 (for July, August and September respectively) Myanmar nationals were reported entering via the same locations.

Most of the Myanmar nationals entered Thailand in Tak and Ranong provinces, accounting for approximately 9,400 and 4,500 entries each. In both provinces, reported entries were similar during the first and the second part of the month.

ACTIVITY UPDATES FROM UN NETWORK ON MIGRATION MEMBERS



RESPONSE

IOM

IOM Thailand

Activities under IOM's project to support the Royal Thai Government's COVID-19 vaccination roll out will continue until the end of 2022. In October, activities with partner World Vision Foundation of Thailand (WVFT) came to a close in four provinces around Bangkok. Key achievements include:

- 262 Migrant Health Volunteers (MHVs) were trained and were key in reaching out to migrant communities to increase their knowledge and awareness about vaccination and preventive measures.
- MHVs were able to reach 19,246 migrants and provide them with key messages on vaccine safety and COVID-19.
- Activities supported 5,559 Myanmar migrants get vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Results from WVFT's baseline and endline surveys indicated a sizeable increase in the willingness to get vaccinated (23%), as well as the vaccination coverage in the communities targeted (67%). These findings cement the significant contribution that MHVs brought to the pandemic response.

The volunteerism of the MHVs and their solidarity with migrants in their community to support vaccination and the COVID-19 response is highly commended.

As part of the same project, with funds from WHO and the Australian Government, IOM has been conducting data analysis of the second round of its COVID-19 Vaccine Perception Survey among Cambodian and Myanmar migrants. Some of the key findings include:

- Whereas in Round 1, 67% of respondents reported being vaccinated with one or more doses, and 18% with one dose (85% overall), Round 2 showed the number of fully vaccinated individuals (at least 2 doses) increased to 95%, with 2% reporting having received one dose. Of those who remain unvaccinated, about half (54%) are willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

- Those who did not want to disclose their documentation status and those who lack documentation had the lowest full vaccination rates (75% and 80% respectively).
- Nearly half (46%) of respondents indicated that they had received three doses or more of the COVID-19 vaccine. This rate was higher among Cambodian nationals (54%) than Myanmar nationals (36%). The rate of migrants with booster doses ranged from 63% in Chonburi to 27% in Tak.
- Employers played a bigger role as word-of-mouth sources for booster vaccines in Chanthaburi and Trat provinces (mentioned by 76% and 75%, respectively), but much less so in Tak (16%).
- Among unvaccinated respondents, the three most frequently voiced concerns regarding possible side effects (mentioned by 49%), having a chronic disease (38%) and fear of being arrested/deported while getting the vaccine (24%). There were also worries about interactions with other medications (20%) and the perception that as a healthy individual, one did not need the vaccine (17%).
- Among those who had not yet received a booster dose, a little over half (55%) indicated being willing to get a booster dose, with 19 per cent undecided and the remaining quarter unwilling.

IOM also pressed ahead with activities under its Regional Border Health project supported by CDC. Following the first training at the end of September in Nong Khai, two subsequent trainings in Ubon Ratchathani and Sakaeo were completed in collaboration with the Department of International Ports and Quarantine under the Department of Disease Control, to support the rollout of the MOPH’s Standard Operating Procedures for Sanitation Management at Immigration Detention Centres. Border officials from these PoEs with non-health designations were also included to build capacity in COVID-19 response. Despite the downgrading of the virus, it will continue to be important for such border authorities to maintain awareness and prevent any future outbreaks.



Figure 1: SOP Training for IDC and POE Officials in Songkhla (IOM @2022)

IOM Cambodia

Activities under the UN joint project, together with UNFPA, WHO and UNICEF, target returning migrants and local government at points of entry, quarantine and treatment centres and areas of return. IOM Cambodia continues with food distribution, WASH facility improvement, PPE and waste management item delivery. In October, 1,652 (F:698) returnees received dry food packages including noodles and drinking water.

In addition, IOM continues its work with the Provincial Department of Health (PHD) implementing community awareness campaigns. The sessions included information on COVID-19 prevention and access to vaccination. In cooperation with PHD, health staff also provided booster doses during the campaigns.

On 7 October and under the same UN joint project, UNFPA Cambodia collaborated with the Ministry of Women to deliver 400 dignity kits to the most vulnerable women and girls where they are needed most.



Figure 2: Community awareness sessions on COVID-19 and Tuberculosis in Balang, Banteay Meanchey Province (IOM Cambodia @2022)

UNICEF

In Thailand, 2,886 adults and 2,713 children received information about COVID-19 vaccine and prevention in the period of May-October 2022, through a mobile cinema screening project organised by UNICEF in collaboration with Serpanya Foundation and the Tak Provincial Public Health Office. The project comprised of 50 screenings in migrant learning centres in migrant communities, reaching the target audience through a collection of videos alongside question-and-answer sessions with the health workers. The screenings targeted migrant communities along the Thai-Myanmar border, in support of Government efforts to improve vaccination coverage, providing information about

COVID-19 vaccination and prevention to isolated and vulnerable communities.

37,600 soaps, 38,500 alcohol gels/sprays and 41,800 cloth masks will be distributed to 30,000 adults and children in Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Tak provinces by Q4 2022, following work to identify vulnerable communities which continue to be affected by COVID-19.

UN WOMEN

In Thailand, UN Women continued to support Maw Tao Clinic (MTC) in Mae Sot to carry out weekly COVID-19 screening tests for health workers and persons with suspected COVID-19 symptoms who want to have an ATK test. In October, 951 people were tested and 55 had positive results. The COVID -19 positive cases were advised to isolate at home, and were provided advice and criteria from MTC on symptom observation and accessible services, for further treatment for patients with severe or serious symptoms. The positive cases were also provided some medication. IPD patients who tested positive with concerned symptoms were admitted at the MTC's isolation ward for close observation.

In addition, with the support of UN Women, the Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Rights (CPPCR) conducted community awareness sessions on COVID-19 in three migrant communities (Moo 6, Moo.7 and Moo.10) in Maha Wan, Mae Sot.

A total of 120 migrants (60 children and 60 adults) participated in the awareness sessions.

Based on their experience in the area, the majority of people living in these communities are vaccinated against COVID-19. Some migrants who have recently travelled to Thailand (within the past 5 to 6 months) have also already received a second dose while in Myanmar. CPPCR has coordinated with the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit (SMRU) to provide COVID-19 vaccination to migrants who have recently arrived in these communities. Overall, 358 migrants in Mae Sot were vaccinated (171 men and 187 women) in October.



Figure 3: COVID-19 vaccination support activities in Mae Sot (UN Women @2022)