



## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANTS IN THAILAND SITUATION REPORT OCTOBER 2021



An IOM enumerator conducts a survey with a migrant worker from Myanmar in Mae Sot (Anat Duangchang 2021)

### 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 Vietnam.

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

In October, Thailand continued to experience a downward trend in COVID-19 cases and related deaths, a positive development as it moves towards its planned reopening for tourism in November. The UN Network on Migration presents this monthly overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants in Thailand, and includes updates from neighbouring countries.

- 13,548 migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos tested positive for COVID-19 in October (Ministry of Public Health). These positive cases comprised 9.2 per cent of cases nationwide (7% alone were from Myanmar). The cumulative case burden amongst CLM migrants was twice as high as that for Thai nationals, and continues to highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic.
- On 2 November, MOPH Immunization Centre reported that to date 755,489 Myanmar nationals had received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (251,879 more since 4 October), 223,201 Cambodian nationals (+81,612), and 115,927 Lao (+35,154). The percentage of CLM migrants who have received a first dose represents 28 per cent of the CLM population in Thailand (3.9 million, Thailand Migration Report 2019).
- In October 10,200 CLM nationals (57% from Myanmar, 36% from Cambodia, and 7% from Laos) were intercepted along the Thai border (Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA)). Figures for those intercepted along the Thai-Myanmar border marked a significant increase since September (1,194).
- In the Lao People's Democratic Republic the Ministry of Health reported a total of 23,532 new cases in October, bringing the cumulative total to 47,842 since the start of the pandemic. This was equivalent to a 97 per cent increase in case load compared to figures from 30 September 2021.
- In Cambodia WHO reported on 1 November a cumulative total of 118,613 positive COVID-19 cases, of which 114,902 have recovered. 19,641 (16.6%) cases were acquired overseas.

## THAILAND

### NUMBER OF DOCUMENTED MIGRANT WORKERS (as of September 2021)

#### Myanmar



1,475,447

#### Cambodian



462,553

#### Lao



218,466

Source: Foreign workers Administration Office of the Department of Employment.

### COVID-19 CASES IN THAILAND

By 31 October Thailand reported a cumulative total of 1,912,024 positive cases since the start of the pandemic, with 19,205 deaths. Among the positive cases 1,792,128 persons have recovered (93.7%), while 100,691 continue to receive treatment (5.27%). Among these 2,225 are in a serious condition with 500 on ventilators.

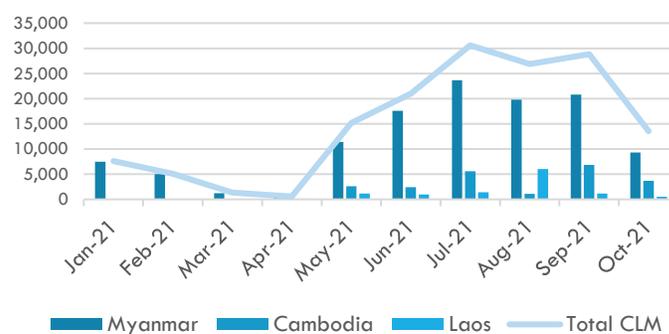
The average number of new community acquired cases reported per week in October continued to decrease, and the average number per day by the end of the month had dropped to below 7,000 for the first time since July. The number of deaths continues to decrease, as do the number of severe and ventilated cases. While cases in Bangkok were decreasing, those in southern provinces and Chiang Mai since mid-October are increasing.

### COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANTS

In October, 13,548 migrants from Myanmar (69%), Cambodia (27%) and Laos (4%) tested positive for COVID-19. Positive cases amongst Cambodian, Lao and Myanmar (CLM) migrants comprised 9.2 per cent of cases nationwide (7% alone were from Myanmar).

The case burden amongst CLM migrants was twice as high as the Thai figure (23 cases/1000 amongst Thais compared to 48 cases/1000 amongst CLM migrants). While this has decreased since the end of July (when CLM cases accounted for 14% of the total nationwide, and the infection rate was three times higher than Thai nationals), it continues to highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on migrant communities.

### COVID-19 cases among CLM nationalities



### COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANT CHILDREN

By 26 October the total number of accumulated COVID-19 cases among children up to 18 years of age was reported at 177,442 (up from 93,391 reported between 1 April and 11 August 2021). This total figure includes 6,679 CLM migrant children (4%) (4,483 were reported between 1 April to 11 August 2021). During October, 1,792 cases were reported among CLM children in Thailand (source: Open Government Data).



### COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By 31 October 2021, a total of 75,390,996 doses of vaccine had been administered across 77 provinces in Thailand. 42,202,759 million people have received a first dose, representing 58.59% of the total population; 30,768,857 million people received a second dose (42.71%), and 2,419,380 (3.36%) had received a third dose. Second-dose vaccination amongst pregnant women was low at 10% on 17 October.

**The Royal Thai Government aims to administer a first dose for at least 80 per cent of the population and a second dose for at least 70 per cent of the population by the end of December 2021.**

As of 2 November 2021, MOPH reported that 2,196,774 COVID-19 vaccine doses had been administered to non-Thai populations, representing 26.5% of the total non-Thai population residing in Thailand. 755,489 Myanmar nationals had received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (251,879 more since 4 October), 223,201 Cambodian nationals (+81,612), and 115,927 Lao (+35,154). The percentage of CLM migrants who have received a first dose represents 28 per cent of the CLM population in Thailand (3.9 million based on the Thailand Migration Report 2019).

In terms of vaccination coverage at provincial level, data indicates a wide variation ranging from 20 per cent to 77 per cent. Phuket, Bangkok, Chonburi, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon, Pathum Thani, Phangna, Ranong, and Nonthaburi, for example, range from 45-77 per cent coverage, whereas Mae Hong Son, Kalasin, Sisaket,

Bueng Kan, Ubon Ratchathani, and Pattani are between 20-23%. Vaccine coverage of second doses along border provinces is also low, ranging from 38% or below along Cambodia border, 30% or below along the Lao border, 50% or below along Myanmar border, and 35% or below along the southern border.

The United Network on Migration continues to advocate for greater vaccination coverage amongst migrant communities in Thailand. It further emphasizes the importance of promoting the inclusion of migrants in the COVID-19 response and recovery effort in Thailand; and increasing access to health care, essential services (including testing, treatment and vaccination) and social protection schemes regardless of status.



## POLICY UPDATE

### Policy updates: National control measures

Thailand continues with its plans to reopen the country on 1 November to international, fully vaccinated travelers arriving by air from low-risk countries without quarantine. The Certificate of Entry will be replaced by the 'Thailand Pass' to shorten the documentation process. To accompany the reopening, more than 35,000 schools plan to restart onsite learning from 1 November, and the curfew has been lifted.

The number of provinces in maximum and strict control/dark red zones reduced from 23 to 7 only by the end of October (Chantaburi, Tak, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Naranthiwas, Pattani, Yala and Songkhla) leaving 38 maximum controlled areas, 23 controlled areas, 5 high surveillance areas and 4 pilot tourism areas under the Sandbox programme (Bangkok, Krabi, Phang Nga, Phuket).

No lockdowns in construction camps or factories were reported in October.

### Policy updates: Migrant workers

The PM Cabinet Resolution on 28 October 2021 announced that the extension of stay for migrant workers from Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia would comprise of two groups: 1) irregular migrant workers and 2) migrant workers who are in the process of registering for permission to extend their stay following the Cabinet Resolution on 29 December 2020:

- **1st group** – For irregular migrant workers, employers must register migrant workers within 30 days after the announcement. The migrant workers must also undergo health check-ups, buy health insurance, and pass identification process by 31 March 2022. Migrant workers

must process the temporary permission of stay by 1 August 2022 and the temporary permission will be valid until 13 February 2023

- **2nd group** – The government extended the time for registering for permission of stays until 13 September 2021, and which allows working until 31 March 2022. If this group wishes to work until 28 February 2023, they must process health check-ups by 18 October 2021 and update their information by 31 March 2022.

Source:

<https://www.prd.go.th/th/content/category/detail/id/37/iid/44756>

The entry process for MOU workers due to the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to change. The changes include 1) post-arrival orientation (PAO) training to be conducted through video conference, 2) workers to be placed in quarantine based on their vaccination status based on the three categories below:

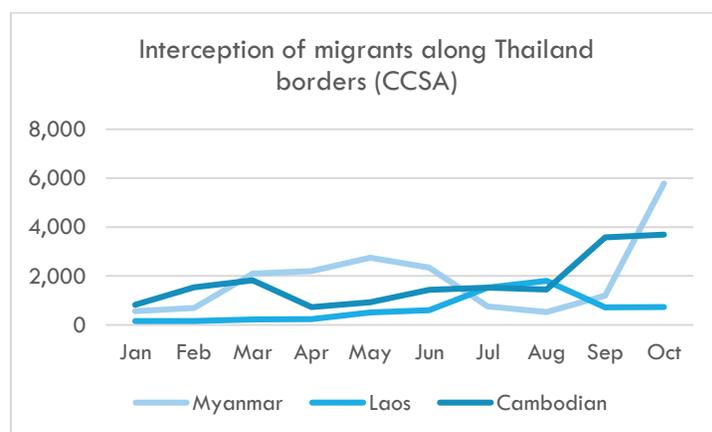
- **Green:** Fully vaccinated workers who received vaccines at least one month ago
- **Yellow:** Fully vaccinated workers who received vaccines less than one month ago
- **Red:** Partially or unvaccinated workers

Workers in the green category will be the first group allowed to enter Thailand. All workers must present a negative PCR test (72-hour COVID-19 testing certificate) before entering. Those in the green and yellow categories will remain in quarantine facility for seven days, while those in the red category will remain in quarantine facility for 14 days.

**Employers are responsible for the cost of quarantine, COVID-19 test fees and private COVID-19 insurance for workers. In case workers are not fully vaccinated, the employer must provide vaccines.**

### Updates on border control measures

In October, 10,200 CLM nationals (57% from Myanmar, 36% from Cambodia, and 7% from Laos) were intercepted along the Thai border according to Thailand's CCSA. Figures for those intercepted along the Thai-Myanmar border marked a significant increase compared to the number reported in September (1,194).



The Ministry of Defence announced on 20 October an increase in surveillance along the entirety of its border ahead of Thailand's national reopening for tourism on 1 November. Concerns were raised on irregular entry, legal action against government officials and agents involved in human trafficking and COVID-19 cases. The Prime Minister further added importance to strict surveillance and increased maritime and land patrol along the Thailand-Myanmar border.

On 21 October 2021, the Deputy Commissioner of the Thai Immigration Bureau reported a rise in irregular migrant interceptions, especially in the northwestern, southern and eastern parts of Thailand in the past month due to the improvement in the COVID-19 situation and a rising need for labour. This statement is consistent with higher figures of interceptions reported by the CCSA in October. He stressed that legal action and deportation would be taken against those who enter the country irregularly.

## MYANMAR

In October Myanmar (CLM) migrants comprised 9.2 per cent of cases nationwide (7% alone were from Myanmar).

- This month, the cumulative case burden of COVID-19 amongst CLM migrants was twice as high as that for Thai nationals, and continues to highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on migrant communities in the country.
- There remains considerable scope to scale up vaccine coverage amongst the migrant population in Thailand, as well as along



### COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

According to figures from WHO in Myanmar (14 September) 5.5 million first doses had been administered nationwide, and 3.4 million second doses, with a total vaccinated population of 9 million.

To date, the country has received 12 million doses of vaccine across all products. In the coming months Myanmar is set to receive up to 37 million doses of other vaccines based on pending allocations via COVAX, donations, and bilateral deals arranged by the Ministry of Health (MOH).

## CAMBODIA



### CAMBODIA-THAILAND BORDER

#### Returning migrants

By 31 October 2021, 261,430 (F: 114,482) migrant workers had returned from abroad since March 2020, 35,002 (42% Female, 8.8% Children) of whom crossed the border with Thailand since the reopening of borders on August 13. Of this group, 3,134 (F:1,404) tested positive with COVID-19 (according to WHO can be assumed infected with the Delta variant).

#### Policy updates: Quarantine requirements

New quarantine requirements for international travelers arriving in Cambodia via airports also came into effect in October. Fully vaccinated travelers have to quarantine for 7 days, with the time reduced to 3 days for diplomats, civil servants, investors etc. In addition, electronic visas for tourist became available again on 18 October, a system which hadn't been available since 2020.

Quarantine requirements at the land border with Thailand also changed in October. They are now summarized as follows:

#### Battambang province:

1. For migrants who have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination from Thailand (based on vaccination card), they need to quarantine for only seven days at a Quarantine Centre (QC). For those with only one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, or not at all, they need to quarantine for 14 days.
2. No need to quarantine at home anymore.
3. Starting from November, all migrants are responsible for their own transportation from QC along the border to their province or home. Military trucks are not used anymore.

#### Banteay Meanchey province:

1. Health screening is conducted Point of Entry with an Antigen Rapid Diagnosis test (Ag-RDT) (if the result is positive they will be referred to a Transition Centre, and if negative, to a QC).
2. Fully vaccinated migrants are required to stay in a QC for seven days only and will do PCR test on day six. Unvaccinated migrants are required to stay in a QC for 14 days and do a PCR test on day 7 and 13.
3. Migrants who test negative will be vaccinated with single dose vaccine before being discharged from quarantine.

#### Oddor Meanchey province:

1. All migrants required to quarantine for 14 days.
2. They will undergo an Ag-RDT on day seven and PCR on day 13.
3. Home quarantine is no longer required after being discharged from QC.

On 1 November, more than 2,705 (F:898) people were reported in 13 QCs in four provinces: Oddor Meanchey, Beanteay Meanchey, Battambang and Siem Reap. Over 1,055 (F:499) people are in seven different Treatment Centres according to the severity of COVID-19 cases.

## COVID-19 CASES IN CAMBODIA

As of 01 November 2021, 118,613 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2,794 deaths were reported in Cambodia, of which 114,902 (97%) have recovered. A total of 19,641 (16.6%) cases were acquired overseas.



Figure 1: Health care worker provides a COVID-19 vaccine job to migrants at quarantine centers.

## OTHER UPDATES FROM CAMBODIA

On 26 October, the UN Network on Migration in Cambodia organized an inter-agency meeting on the management of the outflow Cambodian migrant workers who are expected to migrate to Thailand once the border provinces in Thailand re-open on 1 January 2022. Over 60 participants including representatives of from the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), UN Resident Coordinator and UN agencies participated in the virtual meeting. The discussion focused on challenges of irregular migration especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Recommendations and practical solutions on how to promote safe, orderly and dignified migration in post-pandemic world were put forward, such as simplifying procedures and reducing migration fees. Her Excellency Chou Bun Eng, the Permanent Vice Chairperson of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) and the Secretary of State, urged participants to take the opportunity presented by the pandemic to transform migration procedures and innovate to tackle irregular migration. First and foremost, she emphasized the inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration required to address the complex challenges of irregular migration. Many participants further stressed the importance of removing barriers to access COVID-19 vaccines for returning and prospective migrant workers.

As a next step, government stakeholders committed to continue the discussion about simplifying migration procedures. Potential solutions proposed included reducing recruitment fees, improving efficiency in the documents' processing time, and offering a free or subsidized COVID-19 PCR test for prospective migrant workers.

## LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



### LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC -THAILAND BORDER

Since May 2021, the Immigration Bureau of Thailand reported that the number of Lao returning from Thailand was 284,180.

## COVID-19 CASES IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to experience a significant wave of COVID-19 cases. The Ministry of Health (MOH) reported a total of 23,532 new cases during October, bringing the cumulative total to 47,842 since the start of the pandemic. This was equivalent to a 97 per cent increase in case load compared to figures from 30 September 2021. The total number of deaths has reached 86, of which 66 were reported in October alone.

In contrast to previous months, the number of imported cases remained low, and community transmission had significantly increased compared to August and September 2021. The most affected age group were adults aged 20-29 years old, with more females testing positive than males. The rapid increase originated in a factory in Chanthabouly District in Vientiane. In response, the Vientiane Mayor ordered a lockdown alongside a number of preventive, control and response measures in seven Districts in Vientiane Capital from 19-30 September. These were since been extended until 15 October.

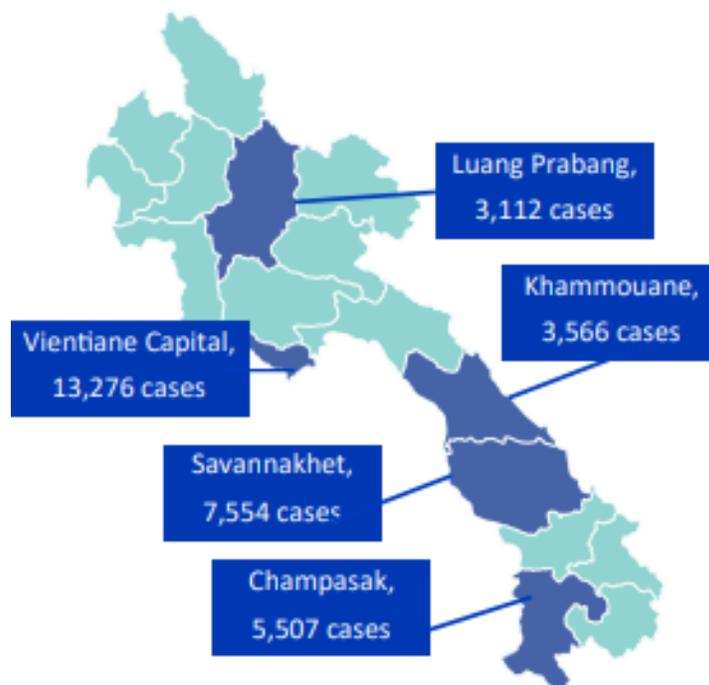


Figure 2: Distribution of COVID-19 cases in October in Lao People's Democratic Republic (source: Centre of Information and Education for Health)



## COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By 5 November a total of 3,385,146 people in Lao People's Democratic Republic had received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, accounting for 46 per cent of the population, and 2,884,907 had received and completed the two-dose cycle (39%). Lao People's Democratic Republic has recently received supplies of the Astra Zeneca vaccine from the U.S Government, and the COVAX Facility has committed to further supply. It is estimated that the country has enough vaccines to immunize the population as per the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan, which commits to vaccinating 50 per cent of the population by the end of 2021. This contributes to the wider goal of re-opening the country early in 2022.

The government of Lao People's Democratic Republic maintains a number of COVID-19 measures as follows:

- International, local and traditional borders remain closed
- Visas for foreign visitors remain suspended. Exceptions can be granted by the COVID-19 National Task Force Committee for diplomats, experts of international organizations and investors for diplomatic, investment, or project implementation purposes.
- Only Ambassadors and heads of international organizations are allowed to conduct home quarantine. Others are required to either quarantine at an assigned centre or hotel.

Temporary Quarantine Centers (QCs) at sports centres, factories, and schools have been staffed by frontline workers such as healthcare workers, police officers, military personnel, medical students, and volunteers. Returning workers who test positive and have mild symptoms or are asymptomatic are housed in isolation facilities, while those who test negative go to QCs. They may return home after 14 days when they test negative, however they are then required to complete another seven days of self-isolation. As of Oct 30, 2021, there were a total of 4,810 persons in 86 Quarantine and Isolation Facilities.

The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to adjust provincial level quarantine as required and is trying to move QCs away from school infrastructure as it prepares for school re-opening where possible. In Champasak Province a new building has been built to be the main QC (with a capacity for 228 people) to support increased numbers.

## ACTIVITY UPDATES FROM UN NETWORK ON MIGRATION MEMBERS



### RESPONSE

#### IOM

With the situation improving in Thailand and the reduction in restrictive measures, COVID-19 interventions in Tak and Ranong Provinces were able to gain momentum, and were supported with good collaboration with Provincial Health Officers (PHOs) and local health authorities.

- Relief packages were provided to 60 quarantined migrants and 75 COVID-19 impacted migrant families in high-risk areas.
- Local health authorities and public hospitals were supported in administering COVID-19 vaccines to more than 3,250 migrant workers, while simultaneously conducting hygiene and health education at the vaccination centers.

IOM Cambodia supported the Banteay Meanchey and Battambang Provincial Health Departments in delivering COVID-19 vaccine to returning migrants from Thailand who complete their quarantine. IOM supports strengthening vaccine cold chain storage, vaccine transportation, on-job training on vaccination, community engagement and awareness raising, field supervision and monitoring and strengthening data collection and reporting. As of 28 October 2021, 1,891 migrants had been vaccinated with at least one dose.

IOM Laos provided 886 assistant packages were distributed to support those in Champasak Province QC. 5 November a total of 3,385,146 people in Lao People's Democratic Republic



**Figure 3:** IOM Cambodia and Australian Embassy visit to quarantine facilities and POEs in Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey

## UN WOMEN

- 30 women migrants received health supports through Migrant Home Isolation Centre at Mae Sot hospital under the collaboration of Mae Sot Hospital, Rights Beyond Border (RBB), and NGO network.
- Under UN Women's Safe and Fair programme, 100 migrants received information on available psychosocial services and protection through community outreach and 41 women migrants received psychosocial support in Mae Sot.
- The integrated service system of Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) and COVID-19 response at the Migrant Home Isolation Centre at Mae Sot hospital was established in collaboration of Mae Sot Hospital, Rights Beyond Border (RBB), and NGO network to ensure women migrants' access to quality and timely VAW services. The centre provides telemedicine service, basic needs delivery, and referral services to women migrant workers.
- A focus group meeting on gender-responsive COVID-19 response for women migrants in Samut Sakhon was conducted with 16 stakeholders including migrants to discuss on available gender-responsive services provided to women migrant workers, impacts of COVID-19 on migration, laws and policy following up, best practices of service providing in Samut Sakhon. OM Laos provided 886 assistant packages were distributed to support those in Champasak Province QC.5 November a total of 3,385,146 people in Lao People's Democratic Republic

## UNICEF

- UNICEF continues its work with World Vision Thailand conducting Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities (RCCE), Health Case Management (screening, tracking, first aid consultation, referral, and follow up until cases are closed). It supports Community Mass Rapid Testing in migrant communities, and also worked with partners to distribute essential non-food items and hygiene supplies to migrant communities affected by lockdown, in home or community isolation.
- Through its IPs Help Without Frontiers (Mae Sot) and One Sky (Sangklaburi) UNICEF distributed more than 3,000 soaps, 4,500 bottles of alcohol gel and 200 gallons of disinfectant to migrant communities.
- Elsewhere, UNICEF and partners distributed hygiene supplies to curb the increase in COVID 19 cases in high-risk provinces including Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Narathiwat, Pattani and Tak.

- Hygiene supplies also targeted disadvantaged groups of children in migrant learning centres and migrant communities in these high-risk provinces that face ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.
- Following a government decision, many schools nationwide were granted permission to reopen for onsite learning on 1 November. The "Thai Stop Covid Plus" assessment, designed to help schools and businesses evaluate their Covid-19 control measures, including physical distancing, ventilation in buildings and waste disposal methods, among others, approved over 35,000 schools for re-opening after they passed the screening.
- Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs), which are mostly located in Education Service Area Office Tak 2, have not yet reopened for on-site learning, with distance learning arrangements still in place. In addition, it is reported that only private and secondary schools have reopened to in person classes in Tak, with OBEC run schools also remaining closed to on-site learning.

## ILO

- 947 food packages were distributed to migrant workers in camp sites in Bangkok, and to migrant workers in longan plantations in Chanthaburi.
- A total 2,700 medical face masks and 19 alcohol gels were distributed to MVHI (Migrant Volunteer for Health and Interpretation) and affected communities (migrant populations in quarantine and patients in a cohort ward). 30 MVHI were also trained using the curriculum of Ministry of Public Health in October.