

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT WORKERS

IN CAMBODIA, LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC,
MYANMAR AND THAILAND



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MYANMAR AND THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

THAILAND NOVEMBER 2021

FOREWORD

Migrant workers are essential to economic and social development across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. They compensate for a growing shortage of labour and contribute substantially towards the economic well-being of many households through remittances. Migrant workers were among the hardest hit by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but they continue to contribute to the economy across the region as essential workers during the pandemic, especially in key sectors such as health care, domestic work and agriculture.

Although migrant workers are a particularly vulnerable population, they can act as key drivers for building back better if included within policies and plans for socioeconomic recovery from (COVID-19) crisis. However, the availability of comprehensive data that can be used to inform the development of a migrant-centred approach to socioeconomic recovery in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand remains scarce.

This study was conducted by the International Organization for Migration under the Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement (PROMISE) Programme to assess the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on men and women migrant workers and their families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. The findings from this study will provide evidence and recommendations to the governments of these four countries as well as social partners to assist in shaping policies and plans for economic and social resilience and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic is proving that no one is safe until everyone is safe. To overcome the pandemic's effects and build back better, a more migrant-inclusive and mobility-sensitive response is essential. Such approach is also necessary to fulfil commitments made towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – leaving no one behind. This research is an important step towards a more rigorous evidence base for assessing impacts and providing a wealth of relevant data. The International Organization for Migration is dedicated to working together with the Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand and social partners to fully leverage the results in support of economic resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.



Geraldine Ansart

Chief of Mission

International Organization for Migration | Thailand

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This report was drafted by consultants Carly Fuglei, Sanushka Mudaliar and Saagarika Dadu-Brown with analytical inputs from Abhimanyu Dadu and Amrita Dasvarma. The data collection and primary analysis was conducted by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix team under the overall supervision of Sonia Blue.

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ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BHT	Thai Baht
CSO	Community-based organization
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
MHIS	Migrant Health Insurance Scheme
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PROMISE	Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small and medium enterprises
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics
SSF	Social Security Fund
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VFI	Village Focus International
WCF	Workmen's Compensation Fund

RESEARCH TERMS AND CONCEPTS

TABLE 1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Migrant worker	A person who is engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990).
Regular migrant worker	A regular migrant worker or members of their family authorized to enter, to stay, and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990).
Irregular migrant worker	A migrant who is not authorized to enter, to stay and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.
Domestic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. domestic work means work performed in or for a household or households; b. any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship is a domestic worker; c. a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker (Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 – No.189).
Informal sector	All economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements (Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).
People with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristic (SOGIESC)	Umbrella term for all people whose sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and/or sex characteristics place them outside culturally mainstream categories.
Stayees	Migrant workers who were working in Thailand before the onset of COVID-19 and stayed in Thailand at least until the time of the survey.
Returnees	Migrants workers who were working in Thailand before the onset of COVID-19 and returned to their home countries after March 2020.

CURRENCY CONVERSIONS

Currencies were converted into Thai Baht (THB) using the United Nations operational rates of exchange as of 1 March 2020. These were 1 United States dollar (USD) = 30.15 THB; 1 Cambodian riel (KHR) = .00739 THB; 1 Lao Kip (LAK) = .003226 THB.

The below table provides an indicative overview the exchange rates between USD and THB used in the report:

TABLE 2. EXCHANGE RATES APPLIED

USD	THB
1	30.15
50	1,508
100	3,015
200	6,030
300	9,045
400	12,060
500	15,075
1,000	30,150



SNAPSHOT: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has dramatically impacted labour conditions and labour migration across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, likely for the long term. Prior to the pandemic, risks posed to migrant workers in Thailand included vulnerability to excessive recruitment fees and migration-related costs, exploitative employment conditions and exorbitant debts owed to recruiters and/or their employers, lack of access to legal protections and social protection, poor working conditions, irregular working days and hours and informal barriers to accessing grievance and remediation mechanisms. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns gave rise to concerns that the pandemic has further exacerbated these vulnerabilities.

This research assesses the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on men and women migrant workers and their families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic

Republic, Myanmar and Thailand to inform a migrant-centred approach to socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand with evidence-based recommendations. The research applied a mixed-methods approach including a literature review of 100 documents, a quantitative survey with a total of 2,187 migrants (47% men, 51% women and 2% people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics – SOGIESC).¹ Of these, 818 were returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic and 1,369 were migrants who remained in Thailand – referred to as stayees in this report. In addition, data collection included 63 qualitative community interviews with migrants, returned migrants, key informants working for trade unions, civil society and community-based organizations and employers in a variety of the target sectors, and a quantitative survey with 156 employers.

TABLE 3. RESEARCH SAMPLE

Gender	Stayees				Returnees			Grand total
	Cambodian	Laotian	Myanmar	Total	Cambodian	Laotian	Total	
Women	75	83	552	710	210	204	414	1,124
Men	116	15	486	617	191	213	404	1,021
People with diverse SOGIESC	10	27	1	38	0	0	0	38
Do not want to answer	2		2	4	0	0	0	4
Total	203	125	1,041	1,369	401	417	818	2,187

1. People with diverse SOGIESC are those whose sexual identity, orientation or practices place them outside culturally mainstream categories.

KEY FINDINGS

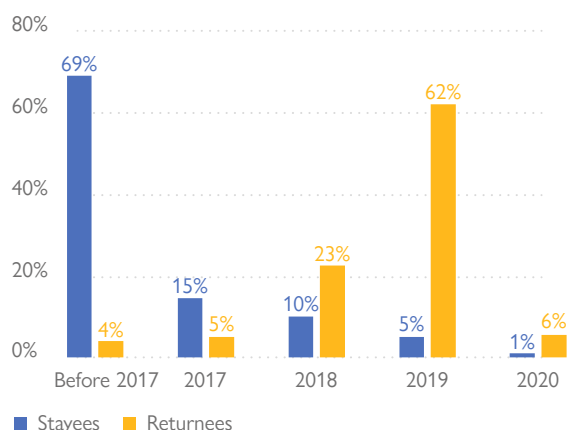
1. DECISION-MAKING ABOUT REMAINING IN THAILAND OR RETURNING TO COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

KEY FINDING 1.1:

Migrants who have lived in Thailand for longer were more likely to stay in the country than return home.

Migrants who remained in Thailand during the pandemic – and at least until data collection – as opposed to those who returned to their countries of origin, were most likely migrants who had been in Thailand for longer than three years. The majority (69%) of stayees had lived there for at least three years or more. On the other hand, almost all (90%) returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic had migrated to Thailand after 2017.

FIGURE 1. YEAR OF MOST RECENT ARRIVAL TO THAILAND FOR STAYEES AND FOR RETURNES



KEY FINDING 1.2:

Migrants were most likely to return to their countries of origin, or to stay in Thailand, out of choice.

Findings showed that at the time of the survey, which was undertaken one year into the pandemic, returning or staying had been an active choice for migrants rather than a result of being “forced” one way or another by job status.



KEY FINDING 1.3:

Migrants who stayed in Thailand stayed because it afforded them a better standard of living.

Among respondent stayees, 86 per cent reported that their main reason for staying was because it afforded them a better standard of living.

KEY FINDING 1.4:

Migrants who returned to Cambodia or Lao People's Democratic Republic most commonly returned to be closer to their families.

Nearly half (49%) of respondents reported that they returned because their families wanted them to come back, with slightly more women (52%) than men (45%) stating this the reason.

2. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STAYEES AND RETURNEES IN CAMBODIA AND LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

KEY FINDING 2.1:

Most stayees continued working, although one in every 10 said they had been let go.

The majority (68%) of respondents reported they had continued working in Thailand during the lockdown. However, one in every ten respondents said they had been let go from their main jobs, either immediately after the outbreak or after a period of leave. The remainder of job-related experiences during the lockdown included quitting and being asked to take time off but later returning to the same job. Migrant workers in hospitality and tourism sector (31%) and those who worked in entertainment and sex work (33%) were most likely to lose their jobs. Migrants working in restaurants and retail stores were also commonly asked to take time off. These are all occupations that employ many women migrant workers.

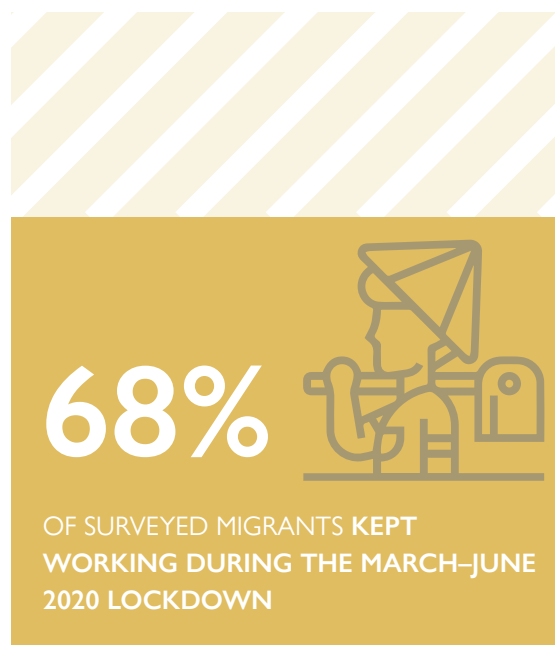
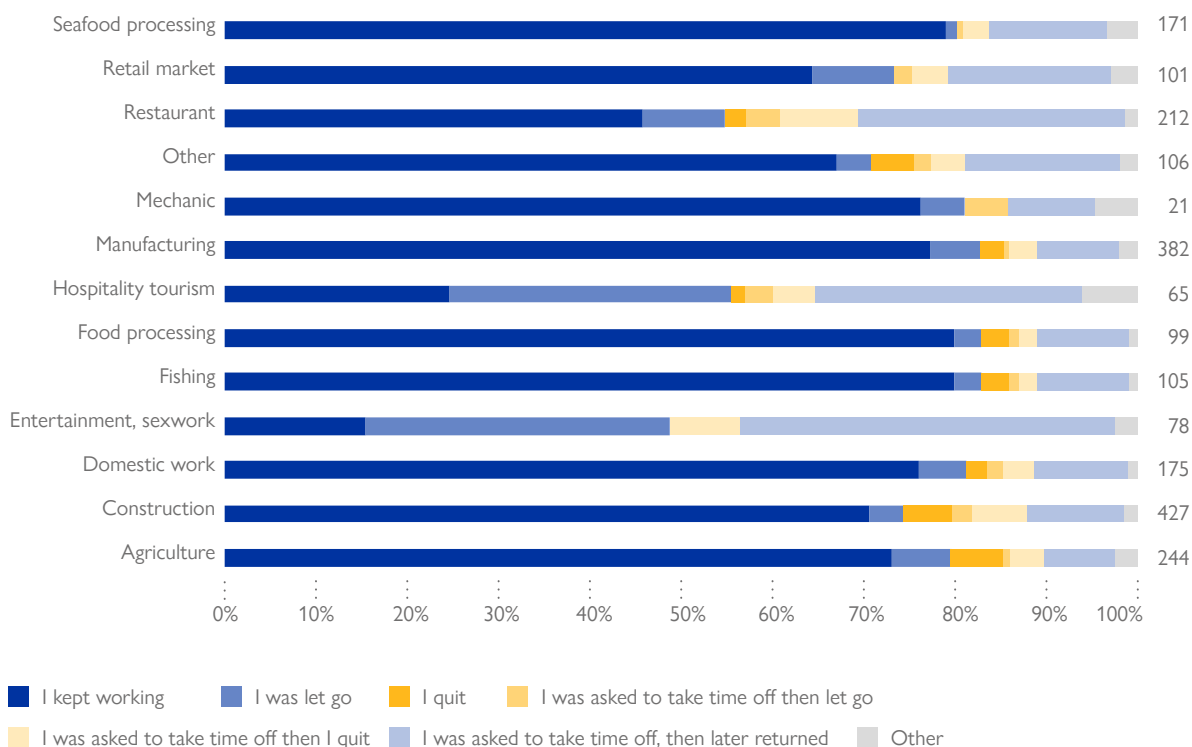


FIGURE 2. SURVEYED MIGRANTS' EMPLOYMENT SITUATION DURING THE MARCH-JUNE 2020 LOCKDOWN BY SECTOR (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



KEY FINDING 2.2:

After the onset of the pandemic, more migrants were paid below minimum wage.

Before COVID-19, one in three (31%) surveyed migrants were paid less than the minimum wage of 313 THB per day. As of March 2021, the number of migrants who were paid below the minimum wage rose to three out of five (42%).² Women were more likely to have been paid below the minimum wage prior to COVID-19, with more than half of surveyed women migrant workers paid below the minimum wage during the pandemic.

TABLE 4. MIGRANTS PAID BELOW THE MINIMUM WAGE PRE-AND DURING COVID-19 BY GENDER

	Women	Men	People with diverse SOGIESC	Total
Pre-COVID-19	41%	22%	0%	31%
At the time of survey	55%	30%	11%	42%

KEY FINDING 2.3:

Most migrant workers had reduced wages because of the pandemic.

Two in every three (58%) respondents said their wages were reduced following COVID-19, with women (63%) reporting more wage reductions than men (55%). The higher percentage of women is in line with the finding that the sectors where migrant workers were most likely to lose jobs were predominantly occupied by women.

KEY FINDING 2.4:

Returnees, especially women, lost more income than those who stayed.

Returnee migrant workers saw an average 40 per cent reduction in their income, with women's incomes reducing more than men's. While the average income for stayees reduced by 9 per cent, wages reduced by 40 per cent for migrants who returned to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. Women's income overall (across both returnees and migrant workers remaining in Thailand) decreased by 14 per cent while men's income decreased by 9 per cent. Cambodian women returnees saw the largest wage reduction of any group (39%).

KEY FINDING 2.5:

One in four migrants surveyed were unemployed during the March–June 2020 lockdown, especially women.

A quarter (25%) of migrants surveyed reported they were not employed during the lockdown in April, May and June of 2020, with women (27%) more likely to have been unemployed than men (19%).

KEY FINDING 2.6:

During the pandemic, migrants have been working the same hours for less pay.

Despite income reductions, both returnees and stayees reported working 6.2 days per week and 8.3 hours per day, similar to levels reported prior to the pandemic. This means that since the onset of the pandemic, migrants are working the same number of hours for lower pay and that women are working for a lower pay than men. Women migrant workers already had lower wages and income before the pandemic, and their wages decreased even further during the pandemic.

2. Regular migrant workers in Thailand are entitled to receive the minimum wage. The daily minimum wage in Thailand in 2021 is between 313 THB and 336 THB. Under the Labour Protection Act B.E 2540 (1997), the general rule is that a working day shall not exceed 8 hours per day and no more than 48 hours per week. Employees must also have a minimum of one day off per week as per Thailand's Department of Labour Protection and Welfare policy of 1998.

98%

OF SURVEYED RETURNEES WERE WORKING
FOR LOWER WAGES UPON RETURN THAN
THEY HAD AT THEIR JOBS IN THAILAND



KEY FINDING 2.7:

Unemployment was high among returnees.

However, stayees largely continued working at the same jobs they had prior to the lockdown but at reduced wages.³ This finding also speaks to a lack of job opportunities in the countries of origin for returnee migrant workers.

KEY FINDING 2.8:

Almost all returnees lost income.

A total of 98 per cent of returnees reported reductions in wages when comparing their jobs in Thailand to their current situation, likely because Thailand offers higher wages and more opportunities, and many returnees have struggled to find employment upon return.

KEY FINDING 2.9:

Migrant workers in Thailand find it difficult to maintain regular migration status.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the cost and complexity of maintaining regular migration status for stayees. Regularization opportunities periodically opened by the Royal Thai Government in 2020–2021 recognized the importance of regularization pathways in terms of protection of migrant workers; their importance to the Thai economy and businesses; and in terms of the overall health response (in that

regularization helps to curb the spread of COVID-19 by increasing the likelihood that migrant workers will access testing, treatment and vaccinations). Administrative hurdles including the requirement for migrant workers to identify an employer to maintain regular status are a barrier and may reduce uptake of these initiatives. The costs for regularization and extensions included payments for work permits, visas, COVID-19 testing and health check-ups. These costs amounted to approximately 8,000–9,000 THB, which is nearly one month's salary (at the minimum wage).



Bicycles of Myanmar migrant worker in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

3. Unemployment rates are at least partially informed by the sampling strategy which sought to interview migrants who were working in manufacturing, construction, domestic work and hospitality.

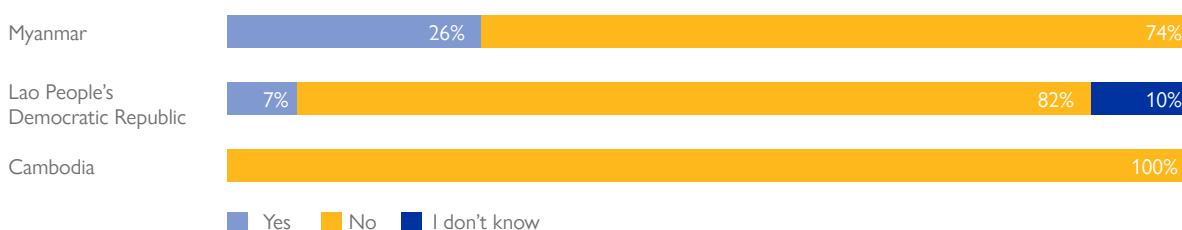
KEY FINDING 2.10:

Few migrants are aware of social protection entitlements and even fewer have attempted to access them.

This lack of awareness is primarily due to a lack of understanding of the enrolment process and migrants' rights. Few respondents were enrolled in the Social Security Fund (SSF) and even fewer had accessed its provisions for paid leave and Government benefits

during COVID-19, even when they were enrolled. Only one quarter (24%) of respondents said they were enrolled in any kind of Government or private sector insurance scheme. Almost all of those who were enrolled were from Myanmar. Of the 283 respondents who were aware of the compensation introduced due to force majeure events related to the COVID-19 pandemic through the SSF, 257 (90%) had not yet tried to access compensation or benefits.

FIGURE 3. RESPONDENT ENROLMENT RATE IN GOVERNMENT/PRIVATE SECTOR BENEFIT SCHEMES BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



3. COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES

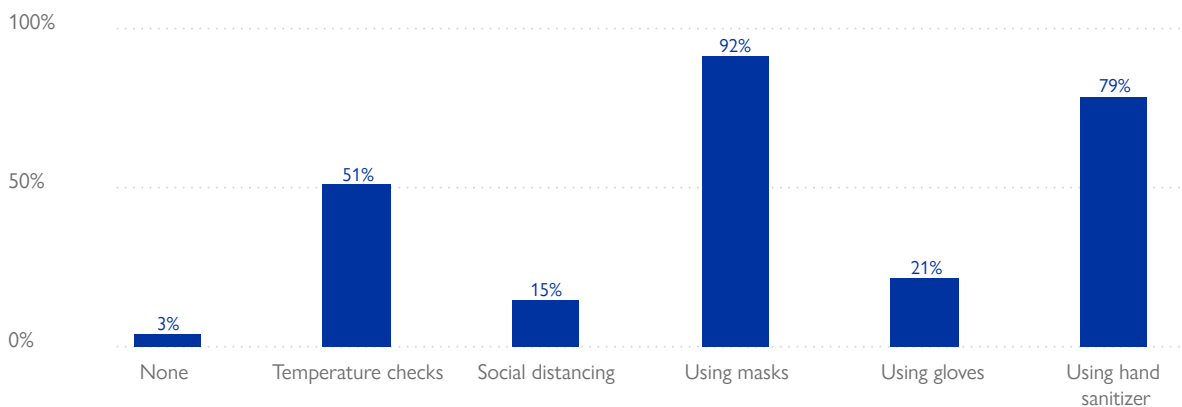
KEY FINDING 3.1:

COVID-19 measures in the workplace are ad hoc and inconsistent.

Wearing masks and using hand sanitizer is common in migrants' workplaces, but social distancing is not. Respondents commonly reported that their employers require them to wear masks (92%),

use hand sanitizer (79%) and conduct regular temperature checks (51%). Notably, only 15 per cent of migrants reported social distancing as a measure adopted at their workplace, an issue that is particularly pressing for those working in indoor settings, and considering the risk of transmission in migrant workers' accommodation.

FIGURE 4. COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES IN WORKPLACE AT THE TIME OF SURVEY IN THAILAND (n=1369) (STAYEES)



KEY FINDING 3.2:

Most migrants' workplaces lack policies that allow for workers to seek treatment and receive time off in case they contract or may have been exposed to COVID-19.

While 79 per cent of respondents said that their employer requires them to quarantine should they or another colleague get sick, 88 per cent of respondents said they would not be paid or were not aware of the existence of any compensation payment. Workers not being paid when quarantining is related to the fact that most migrant workers have informal jobs where they are paid daily and have no provisions for sick leave.

KEY FINDING 3.3:

Migrants will likely be forced to bear the cost of COVID-19-related employment procedures such as quarantines and testing.

Key informants raised concerns that if migrants wanted to return to Thailand, need to move between provinces, attempt to obtain regular migration status or change jobs, migrants would end up bearing the COVID-19-related costs on top of existing migration- and employment-related costs. For example, as of July 2021, testing was only free for those with symptoms, yet a negative PCR COVID-19

test was required for regularization and employment procedures. PCR COVID-19 tests for asymptomatic individuals in private clinics cost approximately THB 4,000. Migrant workers earning the current minimum wage in Bangkok (THB 331) would have to commit 12 working days' wages to cover these additional costs. Survey findings show that many migrant workers are spending a higher proportion of their income on food during the pandemic due to reduced wages, so these additional costs can have a significant impact on migrant workers' daily subsistence.

KEY FINDING 3.4:

Migrants reported having access to at least one type of health care, although the survey did not examine the extent to which this coverage was adequate or comprehensive.

Of the migrants surveyed, 83 per cent indicated they had access to at least one type of health-care service, with no difference across genders. Most of the 246 respondents who said they did not have access were Myanmar workers in Tak Province. Of this group, almost three quarters (73%) said lack of access was because they could not afford health care. Key informants raised concerns about migrants receiving unequal treatment or being forced to pay for health-care services.

4. DEBT AND REMITTANCES

KEY FINDING 4.1:

While most surveyed migrants reported their debt levels had remained the same, a high number reported their debt had increased.

Around one third of surveyed migrants overall owed debt before the pandemic, 17 per cent of whom reported owing higher levels of debt compared with their pre-COVID-19 debt. Notable differences in

terms of debt levels emerged among nationalities. By nationality, Cambodians owed the most debt (45%) followed by Myanmar (32%) and Laotian (20%) migrant workers. Across all nationalities, slightly more women owed debt than men.

KEY FINDING 4.2:

Migrants are taking on debt to pay for their daily expenses.

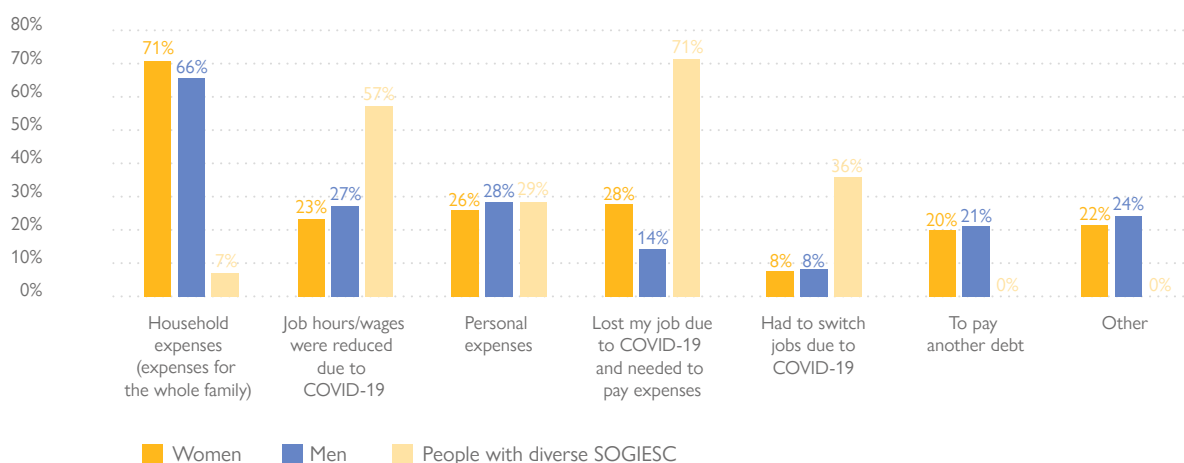
By far, the most common reason for migrants in Thailand (65%) to have taken on higher debt was to pay for household expenses. While past research has found that debt is strongly linked to migration-related expenses, findings suggested that migrants are now taking on loans to support themselves in Thailand, potentially as an alternative to returning.

KEY FINDING 4.3:

Remittances dropped significantly for both the families of migrant workers in Thailand and returnees.

Survey findings indicated that COVID-19 had a profound impact on remittances to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, and even more so for the families of migrants who returned. Average remittance amounts for households of returnee migrants dropped by 92 per cent, while average remittance amounts for households of stayees dropped by 50 per cent.

FIGURE 5. RESPONDENT REASONS FOR INCREASED DEBT SINCE THE ONSET OF COVID-19 BY GENDER (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



KEY FINDING 4.4:

Most migrants had been sending remittances prior to COVID-19 and had either stopped or significantly reduced the amounts.

More than two thirds (68%) of migrants were sending money to their families prior to March 2020. Over 90 per cent of returnees were sending money home prior to March 2020 compared with 56 per cent of those remaining in Thailand.

TABLE 5. REMITTANCE SENDING PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY

		Were you sending remittances pre-COVID-19?	Are you sending remittances now?
Stayees	No	44%	63%
	Yes	56%	37%
		Were you sending remittances pre-COVID-19?	Is your family receiving remittances now?
Returnees	No	9%	90%
	Yes	91%	8%



Along Pattaya beach. Chonburi, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

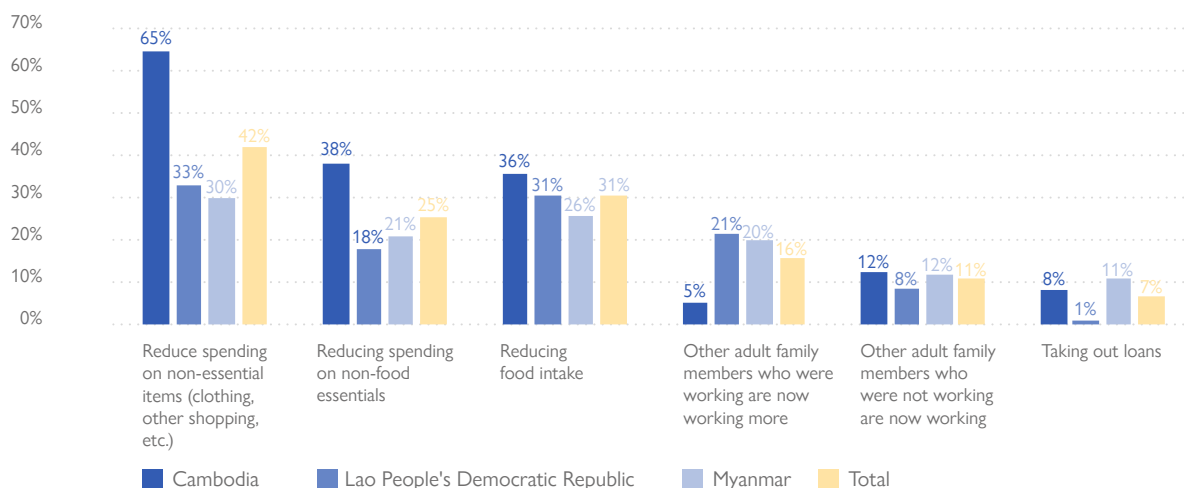
KEY FINDING 4.5:

The average household income of returnees reduced by 69 per cent, from THB 15,820 to THB 4,893.⁴

The families of at least one third of Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar respondents had been adversely impacted by the reduced or stopped remittances. Cambodians lost the most income:

household income of Cambodian returnees dropped from THB 16,554 before March 2020 to THB 4,760 (-71%), while for Laotian returnees, average household incomes reduced from THB 9,464 to THB 6,672 (-29%). Income loss is likely explained by the reduced wages and limited jobs available to returnees.⁵

FIGURE 6. COPING MECHANISMS AMONG RESPONDENT FAMILIES EXPERIENCING REDUCED REMITTANCES BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEEES)



- Household income data were not collected for stayees as they were less likely to provide an accurate reading of their household situations in their home countries.
- Laotian returnee respondents were less likely to know their household incomes compared to Cambodian returnees. As a result, there were fewer data points for Laotian household income compared to Cambodian household income. Twelve per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes pre-COVID, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women. Eight per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes at the time of the interview, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women.

5. REMIGRATION AND RE-EMPLOYMENT

KEY FINDING 5.1:

Most returnees expressed a degree of uncertainty about remigrating to Thailand or said they did not want to remigrate.

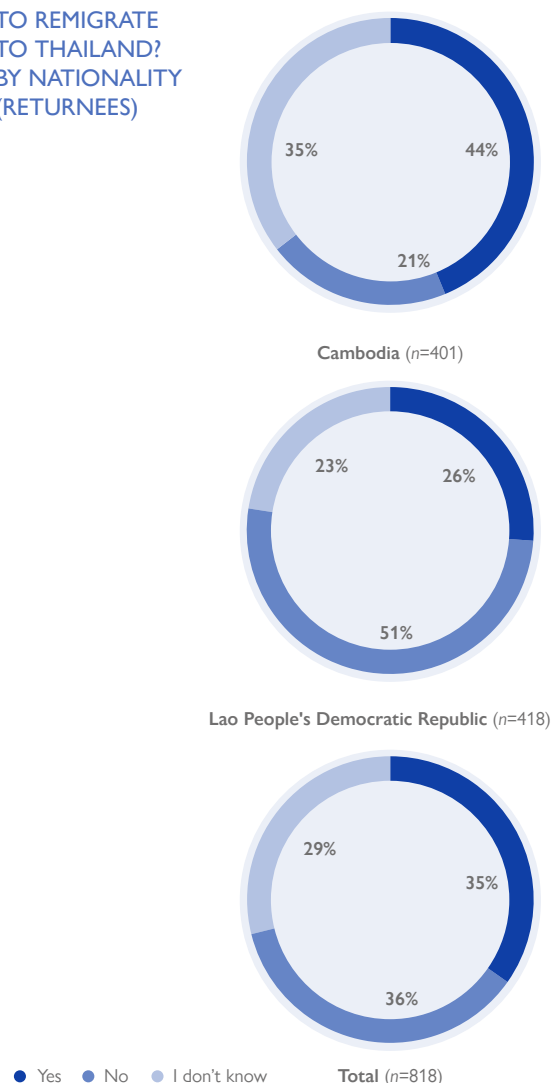
At the time of the survey in March 2021, only about one third (35%) of returned migrants surveyed intended to remigrate to Thailand. However, borders remained closed at the time of the survey, which could have influenced responses.

KEY FINDING 5.2:

Migrants who intended to remigrate said they would do so with the help of their former networks once the border opens and the Government says it is safe.

Existing networks in Thailand, including former employers, will play an important role in facilitating remigration. More than half (57%) of respondents who intended to remigrate said they would rely on their employer or friends and family in Thailand (51%) to help them. Furthermore, the majority (61%) said they were going to try and go back to their previous job. Results from the employers' survey generally indicate demand for migrant workers is expected to continue, with more than half (52%) expecting to maintain their business at the same level, and more employers expecting their business to expand (30%) rather than contract (16%).

FIGURE 7. RESPONSES TO: DO YOU INTEND TO REMIGRATE TO THAILAND? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



6. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RETRAINING

KEY FINDING 6.1:

Skills development training attendance among migrant workers remain low, with the majority trained in technical skills by employers and recruiters in Thailand.

Almost all trained migrant workers (90%) reported that skills development led to better work opportunities. Only 18 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men respondents said they had attended a skills training in the past, of whom 73 per cent were trained in Thailand and 31 per cent in countries of origin. Most migrant workers were trained in technical and vocational skills (67%) followed by labour rights (20%) and Thai language (17%). Approximately half (50%) of respondents received trainings from their employer or recruiter.

KEY FINDING 6.2:

Most migrant workers did not receive any skills development trainings due to lack of time outside work and lack of awareness of existing training programmes.

This finding was corroborated by one third of Thai businesses surveyed, who did not allow paid leave for employers to complete skills development training relevant to their work. Women migrant workers have lower attendance due to additional caretaking responsibilities in the household. Migrant community interviewees highlighted that their main concern regarding attending skills training was losing income during the process. They were interested in undertaking skills development if their employer allowed them time off, paid them to do the course or if they received assistance from the Government.

KEY FINDING 6.3:

Migrant workers are more interested in technical and vocational skills trainings, while employers are more interested in soft skills training.

The most popular choices for skills development training among women migrant workers were cooking (26%) and beauty salon/hairdresser (25%) while for men, they were mechanics (34%) and agriculture (19%). Four out of five (80%) of businesses surveyed reported they value soft skills for the migrant worker, especially the ability to communicate in Thai.



CONCLUSIONS

The below summarizes the main takeaways on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 based on the findings of this study.

Decision-making on returning to countries of origin or staying in Thailand

This study found that migrants who had spent a longer time in Thailand remained in the country during the pandemic, whereas those who had a shorter work history in Thailand had tended to return to their countries of origin. Returned workers were perhaps more likely to be younger, to have been in less stable employment situations and/or working in sectors that witnessed significant losses of revenue. Findings also suggested that the main factors for return were related to family concerns, fear of the virus and quality of living.

Impact of COVID-19 on jobs and working conditions in Thailand

Except for those working in the hospitality sector, migrants in most sectors continued working during the lockdown. However, those who continued to work do so in more insecure environments and for longer hours and lower wages. Around three in five migrants reported receiving wages below the minimum wage following the outbreak of the pandemic and wage reductions were widespread. Migrants working in the hospitality sector were the most likely to have been let go, followed by the entertainment sector. Notably, a large proportion of these workers were women.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected the wages, working conditions and employment of women migrant workers, who reported greater reductions. Wage reductions have had further knock-on effects, including the ability of migrants to pay for maintaining regular migration status and its associated costs and repay debts. Wage reductions also have led to reductions in remittances. This study shows such reductions have forced many migrants

to cut their spending on necessary items – in many cases food. The fact that wages have dropped yet working hours remain largely the same suggests that while demand for migrant workers is similar to pre-pandemic levels, conditions of work seem to be deteriorating, raising protection concerns. This finding also confirms concerns raised early in the pandemic about the impact of COVID-19 and economic shutdowns on employment conditions, particularly for low-wage workers. One concern that deserves further attention is the fact that COVID-19 has created an entirely new set of worker-borne expenses associated with recruitment, and migrants – particularly those in low-wage employment positions – will likely struggle to cover them.

Impact of COVID-19 on remittances and debt

COVID-19 had a profound impact on remittances to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, and even more so for the families of migrants who returned. Most migrants had been sending remittances prior to COVID-19 and had either stopped entirely or significantly reduced the amounts. Average remittances dropped by half for stayees, but for most families of returnees, remittances stopped entirely upon the return of the migrant family member. Reduced wages of migrant workers are likely to have contributed to remittance reductions and are likely to continue to do so until wages increase and stabilize.

Reduced remittances have affected the families of at least one third of Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar respondents, with Cambodians and Laotians reporting greater impact than Myanmar. Greater social protection and financial assistance is needed in these countries, as many families are not resilient against economic shocks.

While past research has found that debt is strongly linked to migration-related expenses during recruitment, findings suggested that migrants are now taking loans to support themselves in Thailand, potentially as an alternative to returning. Migrants who owed more debt following COVID-19 were most likely have taken loans.

Access to social protection

Access to social protection schemes among migrants was low. Few respondents were enrolled in any kind of social protection scheme and even fewer had accessed its provisions for paid leave and government benefits during COVID-19, even when such benefits were an entitlement. Almost all who accessed social protection schemes were Myanmar respondents who had arrived prior to 2017, suggesting longer-term migrants were more likely to be enrolled in this programme. In contrast to many other countries of destination, Thailand has established social protection schemes that migrant workers are permitted to join. However, these schemes exclude many migrant workers and are often too complex, meaning migrant workers experience significant difficulties in accessing them.

Remigration

Interest in remigrating to Thailand was relatively high, with around one third of respondents reporting they would like to go back once Thailand had lower infection rates. Migrants will largely depend on their

existing networks to find jobs in Thailand again, meaning information dissemination and advocacy should be done within these networks. More than half of respondents said they would rely on their employer or friends and family in Thailand to help them make arrangements to remigrate to Thailand, and the majority were going to try and go back to their previous job.

Skills development

Few migrants had undergone training courses, and those who had largely undertook vocational training at their former positions in Thailand. Migrants were mostly interested in taking courses to enhance the vocational skills necessary for their previous positions in Thailand for those who wanted to remigrate, as well as for potential job prospects in their countries of origin but felt that training was insufficient unless it came with a pathway to income generating opportunities. Their main concern about skills training was not losing income during the process, and migrants were interested in undertaking skills development if their employer allowed them time off, paid them to do the course or if they received assistance from the Government.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Recognize and enhance the role of migrant workers in socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, through simplified access to regular migration status for migrant workers.

The findings indicate that accessible, reliable and predictable systems to facilitate regular migration benefit migrant workers and their employers during crises. The Royal Thai Government was flexible in recognizing the importance of regularization, by introducing a range of registration windows during 2020–2021. These welcome efforts recognized the multiplier effect of regularization, particularly in the context of a health crisis, namely that: regular status made it more likely migrant workers would access COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccinations; regular status makes it easier for employers to fill labour force gaps and maintain productivity; and regular status protects migrant workers from exploitation and abuse.

The findings in this research demonstrate that regularization schemes are mutually beneficial (to workers and employers, and to Thailand and countries of origin), effective, and most importantly, feasible. The introduction of the amended Royal Ordinance in 2018 and revision of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in 2016–2017 were proactive steps towards regularizing all migrant workers in Thailand, but the findings in this report show that more efforts are needed to ensure migrant workers and their employers have procedural certainty.

The research findings show that a considerable number of migrant workers had been in Thailand for longer than two years and have switched between regular and irregular status during this period. Since the 1990s, Thailand has periodically initiated short-term regularization drives, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, which shows that the need for such initiatives is ongoing. The continued presence of longer-term, irregular migrant workers may be

in part the result of a mismatch between available regular migration channels and labour market realities that demand migrant workers in a wide range of industries, occupations, sectors and business sizes. The pandemic presents an opportunity to take stock and address these mismatches to develop a labour market-responsive labour migration system which will facilitate a faster return to economic efficiency and productivity as part of Thailand's socioeconomic recovery.

These findings show that making it easy for migrant workers to come to and remain in Thailand with a regular status is positive for Thailand's economy. The following actions would enhance the benefits of labour migration to Thailand and countries of origin, in terms of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Create cheaper, more efficient, safer and less complex regular labour migration pathways:** The Royal Thai Government, in partnership with the Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, should review the content of labour migration MoUs to streamline recruitment and migration procedures to incentivize regular migration by making it cheaper, more efficient, safer and less complex than irregular pathways.
- **Conduct a review of the experience of workers, employers and regulators during their participation in the worker-registration process during the COVID-19 pandemic,** to collect lessons learned and inform future actions to transition irregular migrant workers already in Thailand to regular migration status. The review could be led by the Ministry of Labour with support from international organizations.
- **Streamline the implementation of MoUs to promote and monitor regular migration and ethical recruitment** through bilateral

and subregional policy dialogue, inclusive of employers and recruitment agencies. This action should be undertaken in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the International Organization of Labour (ILO) General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) Principles and Montreal Recommendations. Doing so will streamline the costs and administrative requirements related to compliance with national laws and MoUs, which are currently borne by both migrant workers and their employers, thus ensuring migrant workers, their families and Thai businesses are more likely to be resilient to future economic shocks.

- **Establish rules and procedures for regular labour migration when borders reopen, and ensure these measures are clearly understood by migrant workers, employers and private recruitment agencies in advance of reopening.** Measures to facilitate regular remigration can be established in preparation for an easing of COVID-19 related restrictions in the future. Dissemination of clear information on these rules and procedures in advance of reopening will make for a quicker and more efficient recovery. This could be done through bilateral and subregional dialogue between the Government of Thailand and Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.
- **Establish a clear schedule of costs related to recruitment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic,** and clarify who is responsible for bearing those costs, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, IRIS Principles and Montreal Recommendations; and with reference to [IOM's Global Guidance on International Recruitment and Protection of Migrant Workers](#).
- **Establish mechanisms for pre-departure**

orientation with the Governments of countries of origin and recruitment agencies to provide migrant-centric trainings, especially on labour rights and responsibilities and Thai language, in line with [IOM's Good Practices Guidelines on Skills Development for Migrant Workers](#) and [Regional Guidance and Management System for Pre-Departure Orientation in Abu Dhabi Dialogue Countries](#).

The main objective is to support aspiring migrant workers in preparing for their journey, adjustment period, life and work in the country of destination, along with providing guidance on ways to get access to social services, support channels and grievance mechanisms.

- **Recognize the role of employers in facilitating the remigration of migrant workers to Thailand during economic recovery.** The findings show that significant numbers of migrant workers plan to leverage their networks with employers in Thailand to facilitate their remigration and re-employment in Thailand. Likewise, the employer survey shows an anticipated ongoing demand for migrant workers during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand can work bilaterally and regionally to explore pragmatic solutions to facilitate and simplify the role of employers in direct recruitment of migrant workers, taking into account international standards and principles related to ethical recruitment.
- **Support Thai businesses to build back better through labour migration governance that responds more pragmatically to the demands of the labour market.** The findings show that the current legal framework does not fully reflect the realities of labour migration or the labour market in Thailand, including that the fact that migrant workers who have stayed in Thailand longer-term were most likely to remain in Thailand, thus allowing businesses in the country to continue operating. To ensure

readiness in the labour market to respond to the needs of Thai businesses, Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand should exchange labour market information to expand the categories of workers eligible for regular migration pathways, and longer-term stay in Thailand, including in businesses that employ migrant workers but have high levels of informality and irregularity, such as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), domestic work, agriculture, and hospitality and services. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments could also consider exploring the implications of allowing free movement for limited categories of workers in response to labour migration demand and realities, to provide more flexibility for employers particularly when unexpected changes (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) take place.

- **Ensure preparedness to build back better and consolidate competitive advantage through development of skills recognition systems across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand** that are responsive to the needs of lower- and semi-skilled workers and their employers. Almost all (97%) Thai businesses surveyed were either likely or very likely to hire a migrant worker if the worker had a skills certificate from a recognized body, especially the Government. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments can partner with the private sector to develop and implement mechanisms for skills assessment and certification for migrant workers, especially on recognition of prior learning and mutual recognition of skills. Doing so would enable migrant workers to find better employment opportunities both in Thailand and countries of origin through their newly acquired and officially recognized skills – required and valued by the employers.

Recommendation 2:

Leverage lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance protections and economic resilience of migrant workers in Thailand.

The findings confirm that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the economic vulnerability of migrant workers. Migrant workers reported reduced incomes and significantly reduced remittances and household incomes, and they were borrowing to cover living costs. Importantly, the findings show that when social protection was available, migrant workers lacked awareness of their eligibility and knowledge of how to access these schemes. Findings also show that workers who are among the most likely to need financial support due to job losses and reduced income have in some cases been excluded from specific, COVID-19 related compensation schemes.

The experience of migrant workers and their employers during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of ensuring a conducive environment for the protection of the rights of migrant workers to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations below consider the importance of migrant workers to key growth industries in Thailand that are geared towards foreign investment and trade, and in which reputational issues related to protection gaps are of increasing concern.

- **The Ministry of Labour is encouraged to engage with employers of migrant workers to reiterate that national minimum wage laws apply to all migrant workers** and explain, in simple language, the responsibilities of employers in each sector to migrant workers. This should take place alongside longer-term efforts to create stronger enforcement methods and sanctions for employers that do not pay the minimum wage to migrant workers.

- **Reduce barriers to accessing social protection among migrant workers in Thailand**, including by removing sectoral exclusions for domestic work and seasonal agriculture, promoting and enforcing requirements for employers to enroll workers regardless of migration status, and facilitating application processes for receipt of benefits and compensation in migrant languages. Effective coordination as well as a real-time integrated database among the relevant Royal Thai Government agencies including the Ministry of Labour, Immigration Bureau and Ministry of Interior would shorten the procedure for migrant workers to receive protection, benefits and compensations they are entitled to. A detailed assessment and set of recommendations on expanding access to social protection for migrant workers, including in the context of COVID-19, is provided in Thailand's Social Protection Diagnostic Review Background study on social protection for migrant workers and their families in Thailand conducted by IOM, ILO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UN-Women (forthcoming).
 - In the interim and during the COVID-19 pandemic, **the Royal Thai Government should continue its efforts to guarantee access to essential services and expand access to compensation schemes to migrant workers regardless of their occupation or migration status**. Findings are overall positive in demonstrating widespread access to at least one kind of health care in Thailand, regardless of nationality, occupation and migration status. Findings do however indicate that migrant workers experiencing job losses and reduced income were facing more challenges in meeting their subsistence costs, and in some cases were taking on new debts to cover the cost of essentials such as food. Eligibility gaps in compensation schemes related to force majeure closures excluded many of the migrant workers who, findings show, were most likely to lose their job, especially those in employment that is likely to be informal (for example, entertainment and sex work).
 - **Ensure equality for women migrant workers and migrant workers with diverse SOGIESC, and address gender-based discrimination**. This study verified existing evidence that women migrant workers generally experience additional socioeconomic barriers compared to men, including lower wages, higher debts and greater difficulties in obtaining work upon return; and demonstrates that this gap widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of these recommendations should take into account the need to ensure equality in wages, job opportunities and access to regular migration pathways for women and SOGIESC people, including through tailored initiatives to ensure that women migrant workers are able to build resilience against crisis situations such as sudden loss of income in the event of a pandemic, natural disaster or conflict.
 - **Support initiatives led or supported by migrant workers** to address worker exploitation in general and arising from the COVID-19 pandemic such as the Migrant Forum in Asia's campaign 'Justice Mechanism for Repatriated Migrant Workers Now' to provide migrant workers with redress for wages stolen and illegally withheld due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant workers' access to justice should also be facilitated, and workers' voice in the development of measures to monitor employers and employment conditions should be prioritized.
- Recommendation 3:**
- Continue with and improve measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the health of migrant workers and productivity of Thai businesses.**
- The findings show overall that migrant workers and their employers had endeavoured to adapt to

the unexpected challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but highlight gaps and lessons learned to ensure preparedness to respond to future disasters and crises. Since data collection, the emergence of the Delta variant and acceleration of the spread of COVID-19 in Thailand and neighbouring countries demonstrates the ongoing importance of integrating health-based measures into overall migration and labour management. Effective measures to contain COVID-19, such as quarantine, physical distancing and self-isolation come with associated opportunity costs for workers and employers, including lost productivity and income. Implementing clearer regulations to enhance measures to contain infectious diseases such as COVID-19 will enhance the resilience of the Thai economy to future shocks.

One in four business surveyed in Thailand said they were likely to very likely at risk of closing and never reopening. More than one third (36%) reported a decrease in revenue during the first lockdown, which started in March 2020, highlighting the importance of strengthening measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in the first place, including COVID-19, in workplaces. Using the findings and lessons learned, the following actions can mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and infectious diseases on the Thai economy, allowing businesses to reopen more quickly and to stay open:

- **Establish and implement arrangements for safe working conditions.** Employers should follow the Royal Thai Government's guidelines on COVID-19 safety for their employees and the Government should enhance monitoring and enforcement, and reduce barriers to compliance. For example, workers reported not having access to compensation for lost income associated with self-isolation or quarantine arrangements, which could be addressed by expanding access to and enrolment in social protection and compensation schemes.
- **Establish clear regulatory frameworks to ensure safe workplaces and accommodation for migrant workers.** Findings show a lack of

consistency in workplace-based measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Given the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Royal Thai Government could consider incorporating COVID-19 and other infectious disease measures into Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Act B.E.2554 (2011) and Regulations. The Royal Thai Government could also consider introducing stronger legal requirements and standards for migrant workers' accommodation, to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, and to guarantee safe and dignified living conditions for all workers including migrants. Such standards could build upon guidelines already provided in the Labour Welfare Committee Announcement on Provision of Accommodations by Employers for Construction Workers. Once established in law, labour inspectors could be trained to monitor and enforce these measures.

- **Provide all employers with clear and simple-to-follow guidance on COVID-19 safety requirements in the workplace and in public spaces related to employment.** The rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for migrant workers and their employers to understand their legal obligations and access reliable information on recommended/best practice measures to stop the spread of the virus. Providing timely and accurate information on laws and policies regarding COVID-19 safety requirements would be an effective way to promote voluntary compliance.
- **Establish firewalls to ensure that migrant workers, regardless of their nationality or migration status, have access to COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccinations,** including through assurances that public health authorities will not require documentation or pass information to immigration authorities.

Recommendation 4:**Leverage lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance protections and economic resilience of migrant workers, including returnees to countries of origin.**

Results related to the economic situation of returnee migrant workers and their families are cause for significant concern. Migrants were very likely to report reduced wages and remittances, leading to an overall 69 per cent reduction in household income and increased debt levels. Returnees face limited job prospects upon return to country of origin – and with lower wages than positions in Thailand. Three out of five returnees are unemployed, with many resorting to cutting expenses on food, hygiene and utilities as a coping strategy.

More positively, migrant workers returned with skills and are well situated to contribute to the recovery of businesses in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, with many hesitant to remigrate to Thailand amid the pandemic. One in five were trained in Thailand. Returnees are eager to find regular employment and demonstrated high interest in additional vocational skills training.

The following measures are designed to enhance the economic resilience of returnee migrant workers and the economies of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, in the context of mass returns during the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced household income due to lost remittances and reduced gross domestic product (GDP) in countries of origin:

- **Develop reintegration plans and/or include returnee migrant workers in socioeconomic recovery plans,** to generate income and employment opportunities for returnee migrant workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. These plans can be achieved through cooperation among skills development providers, private sector, and civil society organizations to promote market-driven skills development and employment

opportunities, in turn ensuring that migrant workers have access to decent employment upon return. This process should be led by the Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, and may benefit from sharing lessons learned across countries of origin within Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). International corporations with supply chains in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar could play an important role in generating and sustaining economic opportunities for returnees and could be engaged in reintegration planning.

- **Introduce portability of social protection among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand and/or explore ways to include migrant returnees in social protection in countries of origin:** The significant reduction in income experienced by returnees also indicates a need for compensation schemes or inclusion of returnees in unemployment schemes in countries of origin, particularly considering that their substantial contribution to GDP and household income helps to subsidize social protection in countries of origin. The Royal Thai Government, with the support of United Nations (UN) agencies, could consider mobilizing the private sector to provide seed capital, and international donor governments could provide support to develop required policies, capacity and infrastructure to implement the initiative. Alternatively, portable social protection across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand could guarantee access to social protection regardless of mobility and citizenship.
- **Invest in income generating opportunities in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar,** especially for women, including access to entrepreneurship support, financial management trainings, community revolving funds and other startup capital. Findings show that 63 per cent of surveyed returnees are unemployed. Of those unemployed and seeking

work at the time of survey, 69 per cent reported that no jobs were available. Being self-employed could be an alternative if given adequate support. SMEs are key drivers of long-term economic growth in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, and will have a vital role to play in socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic. Enhancing access to these opportunities for returning migrants, especially women, by having information about such opportunities standardized as part of reintegration processes and systems through collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSO)s and Community-Based Organizations, is also recommended.

- **Further support skills development trainings for migrant workers to encourage sustainable investment from employers.** A business case must be clearly established for employers to recognize the value of investing in both soft and technical and vocational training for migrant workers. Employers should be actively engaged in curriculum design and delivery of trainings. Investment in skills development trainings for migrant workers should be tax-exempt. Support mechanism must be in place to incentivize migrant workers to participate in skills development programmes, including paid time off, stipend, access to free childcare services and clear career development pathways based on improved skills.

- **In partnership with local financial institutions, explore mechanisms to provide migrant workers with access to regulated, reliable and affordable loan services.** Migrant workers overwhelmingly obtain informal loans that are not subject to monitoring or regulation (Harkins et al., 2017). Workers routinely borrow to cover costs related to migration, often at high interest. Better mechanisms to finance the costs of migration are urgently needed, in addition to advancing the employer pays principle. Improving and diversifying sources of finance requires multistakeholder dialogue building on the existing knowledge base on recruitment and migration costs and debt sources among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar migrants in Thailand. CSOs, skills development providers and recruitment agencies can also be engaged to incorporate financial literacy and management trainings in pre-departure orientation and reintegration support for migrant workers, including access to credit.



Myanmar migrant worker inside her home (Respondent).
Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021



I

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has dramatically impacted the working conditions and labour migration dynamics across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, likely for the long term. Globally, workers in low-wage jobs and those in the informal sector were particularly hard-hit by the effect of lockdowns and disruption in the global supply chains, and in Thailand many such workers were migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Labour migration from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to Thailand has become an increasing trend since the 1980s. As of 2019, about 3 million migrants were registered workers in Thailand, approximately half of whom were from Myanmar, 34 per cent from Cambodia and 18 per cent from Lao People's Democratic Republic.⁶ In addition, the United Nations (UN) estimated that at least 2 million more workers from these countries were working informally across the country. While there is no official record of migrant job losses in Thailand, the Migrant Working Group estimated that as many as 700,000 migrant workers – mostly in tourism, services and construction industries – lost their jobs between March and July 2020.

Prior to the pandemic, risks posed to migrant workers in Thailand varied depending on their migration status, with irregular workers at higher risk of labour exploitation and abuse. Main risks included vulnerability to recruitment fees and migration related costs charged to migrant workers, risks that can lead to exploitative employment conditions and exorbitant debts owed to recruiters and/or their employers, lack of access to legal protections and social protection, poor working conditions, irregular working days and hours, legal restrictions on forming and leading trade unions and informal barriers to accessing grievance and remediation mechanisms (Harkins et al., 2017). Migrants also lack information on their rights and entitlements, thus decreasing their ability to access these protection schemes (IOM, 2019).

Although social protection programmes exist and include migrants on paper, few migrants can access them, and specific exclusions apply to sectors which employ many migrants, for example agriculture and domestic work (IOM, 2019). In addition, women workers are more likely to work in informal and low-wage jobs and were therefore more vulnerable to layoffs, unethical recruitment practices and exploitative working conditions.

The pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers. Lockdown measures and border closures sparked mass returns of migrant workers to countries of origin, which has in turn impacted their families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Official statistics published by the Immigration Bureau of Thailand indicate that 183,375 Myanmar nationals, 71,292 Cambodian nationals and 284,180 Laotian nationals departed Thailand between March 2020 and April 2021. However, given the prevalence of irregular migration channels, it is likely these figures are higher. Returning migrants face difficult situations in their countries of origin. According to the World Bank, economic growth in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar declined to the lowest rates in three decades and unemployment rates increased, meaning migrants returned to few employment prospects. Lack of jobs is compounded by insufficient social protection coverage in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, pushing citizens into increasingly desperate situations. In addition, as previous research has shown that most migrants send money back home to their families and that families are highly dependent on remittances for household income, there is concern that reduced or stopped remittances are pushing the families of returned migrant workers deeper into poverty (Harkins et al., 2017).

Migrant workers make a significant contribution to the economy in Thailand, where they fill labour market gaps, particularly in lower-skilled occupations. Migrant workers are responsible for up to 6.6 per cent of Thailand's (GDP) and make up over 10 per

6. According to the Department of Employment, as of 2019.

cent of the labour force.⁷ Primary occupations for migrant workers in Thailand include construction, manufacturing, domestic work, hospitality and services, agriculture, and fishing. Migrant workers also play an essential role in generating household income and investments and building the economies of their countries of origin. In 2019, Cambodian migrant workers sent home 1.6 billion United States dollars (USD) in remittances, and according to the World Bank, Myanmar migrant workers sent home 3 billion USD, although the real figures are likely higher as unofficial remittance channels are common.

Recognizing that migrant workers will be key to the resilience and recovery in the context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, findings from the study will provide evidence and recommendations to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments and other relevant stakeholders to assist in shaping policies and programmes for both rapid recovery and longer-term resilience of economies, which consider the specific contributions of and challenges for migrant workers and key sectors that employ migrants.

7. Ibid



Members of Sisters Foundation, a Chonburi-based non-profit organization providing health, education, and support services to the transgender community. Chonburi, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

1.1 BACKGROUND ON IOM PROMISE AND THE DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX

This study was implemented under IOM's Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement (PROMISE) Programme with the support of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). PROMISE is a four-year programme (September 2017–August 2021) implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with UN-Women and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The overall objective of the programme is that migrants, especially women, from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar have improved employment opportunities and conditions, particularly in Thailand, through enhanced skills and protection, leading to poverty reduction in communities of origin. This overarching objective is achieved under four main programme components: 1) private sector engagement such as facilitating sectoral working groups and developing shared responsibility frameworks for ethical recruitment, skills development and protection of migrant workers; 2) skills development for migrant workers through in-service trainings and capacity-building for recruiters and skills providers; 3) return and reintegration support through enhanced certification and referral mechanisms, technical assistance to policy makers, and capacity-building for civil society organizations; and 4) protection of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar migrant workers through strengthened policy frameworks, enhanced assistance services and safe migration information at all stages of the migration cycle.

PROMISE adapted its programming to meet the evolving needs of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic since its onset:

1. Provision and distribution of Information, Education and Communication materials for migrant workers on COVID-19 prevention, border closures, relevant government policies regarding work permit extensions, labour rights and responsibilities, as well as access to social services to migrant worker and their employers, especially through the establishment of the online information hub, mitrthai.com.
2. Support the direct provision of food, water and hygiene supplies for vulnerable migrant workers, including to the migrant community affected by the second wave of COVID-19 outbreak in Samut Sakorn.
3. Support returning migrant workers through Migrant Resources Centres in Myanmar and Cambodia, as well as quarantine centres in Lao People's Democratic Republic, by providing IEC materials, non-food items, hygiene supplies, safe migration training, as well as referrals to skills development and job opportunities.
4. Support the private sector to maintain its commitment to ethical recruitment and decent employment of migrant workers considering the changing operational environment and challenges for the private sector in the context of the pandemic, through drafting practical guidelines and continued policy advocacy for more flexible employment policy for migrant workers.



Along the Pattaya Walking Street. Chonburi, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

BACKGROUND ON THE DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX

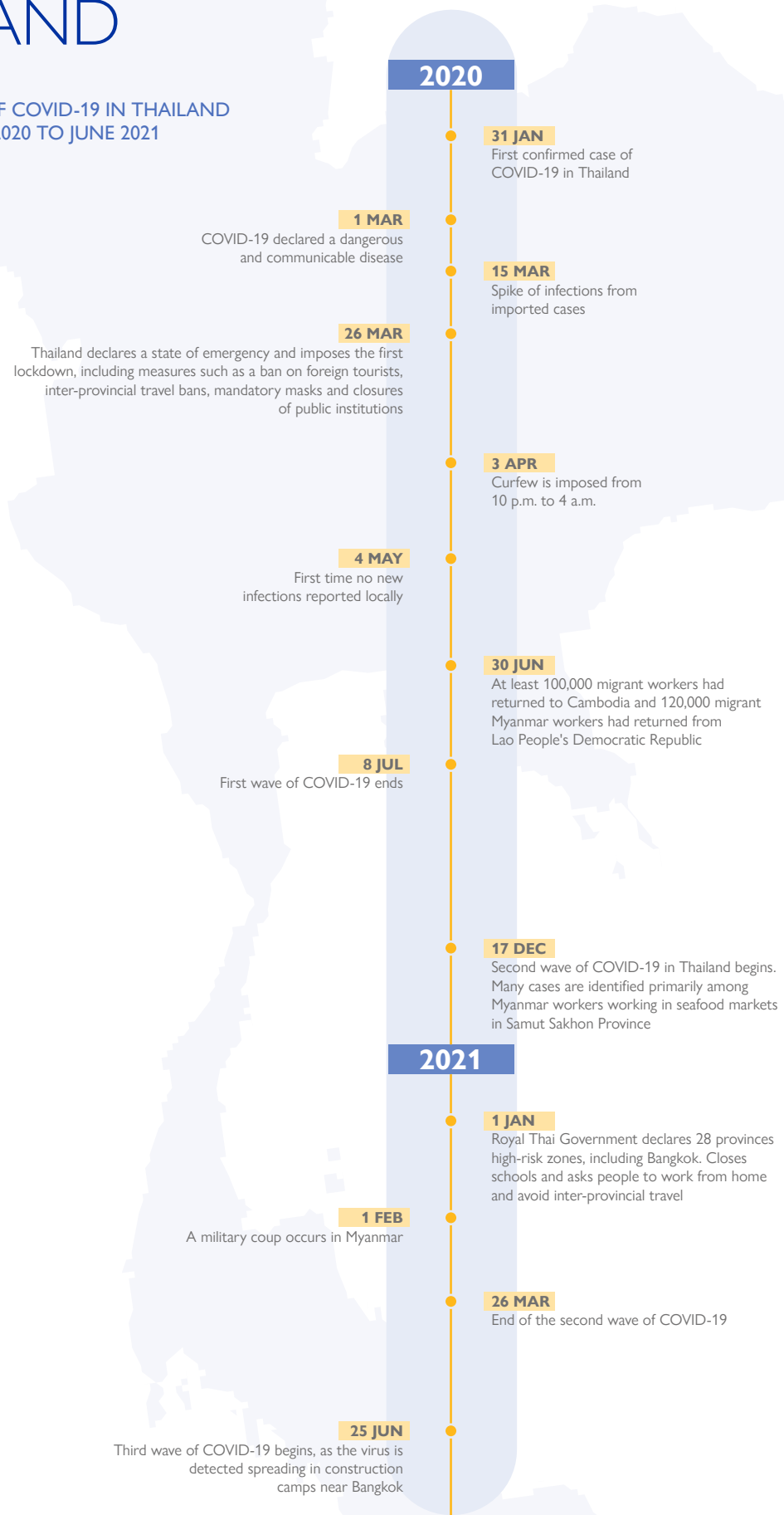
Survey data for this study was collected under the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The DTM is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility that is adapted to a specific context and needs. It gathers and analyses data to disseminate critical information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations that enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with better context-specific assistance. The DTM is active in more than 72 countries across the world. DTM has been active in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar since 2019, when it began conducting Flow Monitoring Surveys, meant to provide insights into the profiles and vulnerabilities of migrants to Thailand from each country. During the COVID-19 crisis, the DTM conducted assessments with migrants who returned from Thailand to Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Cambodia as well as several smaller rapid area-based assessments in the border districts monitoring the flow of migrants and perceptions and vulnerabilities of non-Thai populations.

The economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge, with PROMISE's target sectors (manufacturing, construction and hospitality) among the hardest hit. COVID-19 is a magnifier of existing risks for migrant workers. Poor living and working conditions, exploitative wages, migration-related debt and lack of gender-responsive labour protection mechanisms all existed prior to the pandemic, but their negative effects are compounded

by this unprecedented health and economic crisis. PROMISE has continued its work on the structural barriers faced by migrant workers that predate the COVID-19 pandemic and have been exacerbated by the pandemic, border closures and economic downturn. Skills development, decent work and ethical recruitment are all key areas for ensuring migrants are included in, and able to drive, socioeconomic recovery in Thailand.

1.2 TIMELINE OF COVID-19 IN THAILAND

FIGURE 8. TIMELINE OF COVID-19 IN THAILAND BETWEEN JANUARY 2020 TO JUNE 2021



1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

This research aims to assess the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on men and women migrant workers and their families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, and to generate evidence-based recommendations that inform a migrant-centred approach to socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in these countries.

The study was designed to fill information gaps in the existing body of literature on this subject. Socioeconomic research undertaken on the impact of COVID-19 so far has either been focused on a

single country, based on limited data or focused on macroeconomic projections. In addition, there are no comprehensive data available on the socioeconomic situation for stayees, whereas several studies have been carried out on returnees to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.⁸

This research seeks to provide robust socioeconomic analysis, analysis of cross-border trends and assessment of individuals at different stages of the migration cycle. It also seeks to provide a comparative analysis among countries and more detailed information on the situation for stayees.



Outside the home of a Myanmar migrant family in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

8. In Cambodia, a rapid assessment of 242 returned migrants was undertaken by IOM in July 2020 and UNFPA implemented research consisting of 1,054 returned migrants in November 2020. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, IOM conducted a rapid assessment of 326 migrants in September 2020 while the ILO and Oxfam conducted a survey with 999 migrants in November 2020. IOM also implemented a survey with 2,311 returned migrants in Myanmar in late 2020.

1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE

CHAPTER II provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents who were surveyed as part of this study, including both migrant workers who chose to stay in Thailand as well as those who returned to their countries of origin.

CHAPTER III provides an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers in Thailand from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. It extricates overarching trends and findings on the economic and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers looking specifically at how it impacted their decision to stay or return to their countries of origin, income, wages, employment as well as access to social protection, including health care.

CHAPTER IV provides a more in-depth analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers who chose to remain in Thailand during the pandemic.

CHAPTER V provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic including assessing employment opportunities in countries of return and aspirations to remigrate.

THE CONCLUSIONS SECTION highlights the final points of note of this report that play a role in determining the vulnerability faced by migrant workers during a crisis such as the pandemic.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION provides recommendations to stakeholders including government entities, business employers and CSO/ non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on ensuring the protection of the rights of migrant workers during and after COVID-19.





II

METHODOLOGY

2.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study drew from the analytical structure of the report *Risks and Rewards: Outcomes of Labour Migration in South-East Asia* released by IOM and the International Organization of Labour (ILO) in 2017. This report provided a useful reference point for measuring changes that have occurred based on pre-COVID-19 data. The analytical structure was adapted to address key concerns about the effect

of the economic downturn and border closures due to COVID-19 on the socioeconomic conditions of migrant workers in six key areas. This research was informed by the below 21 questions linked to six thematic areas and cross-cutting questions around identities and sectors of work.



TABLE 6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

THEME	QUESTIONS	APPLICABLE GROUP	
		RETURNEES	STAYEES
Employment and Employment Protections	How has COVID-19 impacted the employment statuses, workplace conditions and legal statuses for stayees from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar?		X
	What COVID-19 related risks do stayees face in the workplace and in society due to their immigration status?		X
Debt, Savings and Remittances	How have the debt levels of migrant workers and their households been affected by COVID-19?	X	X
	To what extent have debt levels factored into past and future decision-making around employment and migration during the COVID-19 crisis?	X	X
	How have remittance amounts and transaction methods been impacted by COVID-19?	X	X
	What has been the impact of reduced remittance levels on migrants' families?	X	X
Access to Information, Social Protection and Services	How have migrants stayed informed about COVID-19 related issues such as health, safety, immigration issues and employment opportunities?	X	X
	What forms of social protection assistance in response to COVID-19 are returned migrant workers aware of? Why have they been used/accessed at such low rates?	X	X
	Have migrants had access to critical services in response to COVID-19 such as health care, employment grievances, harassment, immigration issues or any other issues?	X	X
Return and Reintegration	How has COVID-19 affected the reintegration experience of migrant workers with their families and communities?	X	
	What are the main employment prospects for returned migrants?	X	
	How are returned migrants and their families coping with reduced income levels?	X	
Remigration and Re-Employment	To what extent do returned workers plan to remigrate to Thailand, and when? To which jobs do they plan on returning?	X	
	What are potential risks entailed in the remigration process?	X	
	How are returned workers staying informed about employment opportunities and recruitment channels to Thailand?	X	
Skills Development and Retraining	What kind of skills development would support migrant workers in their current or future work?	X	X
	What are the barriers (social, economic, practical, other) to workers engaging in skills development and training?	X	X
Cross-cutting	How has COVID-19 and the resulting conditions impacted men and women migrants differently?	X	X
	How has COVID-19 and the resulting conditions impacted employment and employment prospects in the PROMISE target sectors (manufacturing, construction, domestic work and hospitality)?	X	X

2.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study relied on a mixed-methods approach including an extensive literature review and a quantitative survey with a total of 2,187 migrants. Of these, 818 were returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic and 1,369 were stayees. In addition, data collection included 63 qualitative

community interviews with migrants, returnees, key informants and employers, and a quantitative survey with 156 employers. All data were collected between March and May 2021. The table below provides an overview of the data collection methods and their respective samples.

TABLE 7. STUDY DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND SAMPLE FRAME

Type	Data collection activity	Country				Total
		Cambodia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Myanmar	Thailand	
Quantitative	Migrant survey	401	417	0	1,369	2,187
	Employer survey	0	0	48	113	161
Qualitative	Interviews with migrant worker employers	4	4	0	6	14
	Interviews with migrant workers	8	8	0	6	22
	Interviews with UN organizations, trade unions, CSOs, non-governmental organizations and women's groups	4	5	0	18	27
Total		417	434	48	1,512	2,411

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

2.3.1 Literature review

One hundred documents were reviewed as part of this study, mainly research reports, programme documents and government policies. All research files were uploaded to NVIVO qualitative analysis

software and coded according to their geographic, sectoral and thematic subjects. Relevant findings were summarized and informed the survey tool design and methodology.

2.3.2 Quantitative Methods

Migrant survey

The survey sample frame was designed to reflect the best current understanding of migrant and returnee populations in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Data collection targets per migrant nationality in Thailand were meant to reflect estimates of the migrant populations in Thailand from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.⁹ To meet the objective of enabling comparative analysis among countries, targets in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar are all the same. Work sector targets were left as soft targets because according to consultations with country office staff, identifying work sectors of migrants interviewed would not always be possible in advance. The survey component collected data from migrant workers in the following groups:

Survey Locations.

Provinces with large or accessible populations of Cambodian, Laotian or Myanmar migrant workers were targeted for data collection in Thailand. Efforts were made to ensure the sample population reflected the demographics of migrant workers in Thailand, with Myanmar migrants making up most of the migrant population followed by Cambodians, then Laotians.

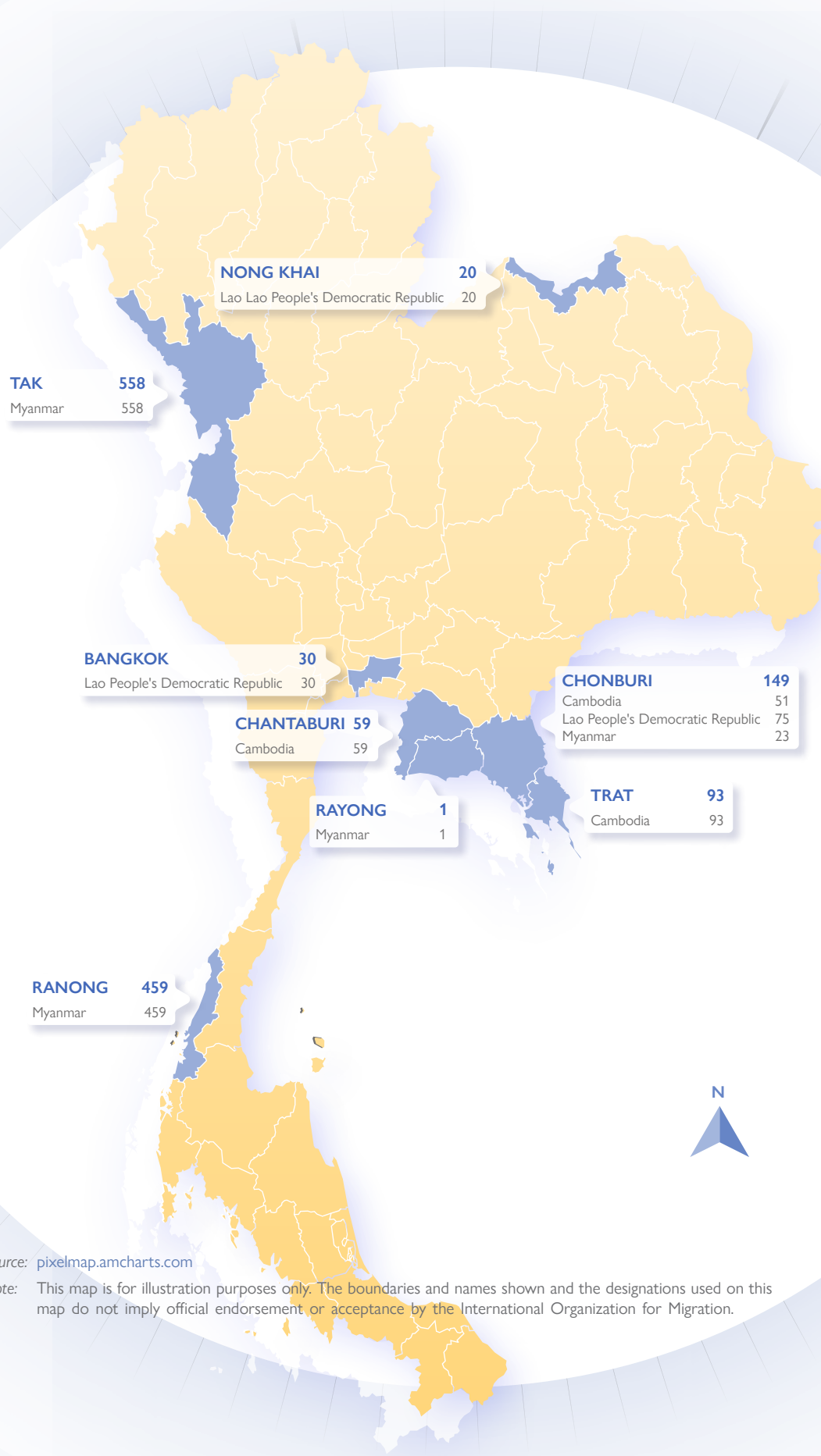
Half of Myanmar workers (54%) surveyed were in Tak Province, another 44 per cent in Ranong and a minority in Chonburi. Laotian workers were mostly in Chonburi (60%), with a minority in Bangkok (24%) and Nong Khai (16%). Almost half (46%) of Cambodian workers were surveyed in Trat Province, with the remaining in Chantaburi (29%) and Chonburi (25%).

TABLE 8. STUDY DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND SAMPLE FRAME

	Target group	Criteria	Sample
1	Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand (stayees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18–55 years old In Thailand at the time of survey, and have remained in Thailand during the 3 months prior to March 2020 (January, February, March) Were employed in Thailand during the three months prior to March 2020 	<p>1,369 total</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 125 Laotians (83 women, 15 men and 27 people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics) 203 Cambodians (75 women, 116 men, 12 gender minorities) 1,041 Myanmar (552 women, 486 men, 3 gender minorities or did not want to answer)
2	Returned migrants from Thailand in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic (returnees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18–55 years old Were present in Thailand during the 3 months prior to March 2020 (January, February, March) and only returned to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar within one month after lockdown began Were employed in Thailand during the three months prior to March 2020 	<p>818 total</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 417 Laotians (204 women, 213 men and no gender minorities) 401 Cambodians (210 women, 191 men and no gender minorities)

9. As per migration data from the Thai immigration Bureau in 2019, there were an estimated 1,100,000 migrants from Cambodia, 1,000,000 from Lao People's Democratic Republic, and nearly 3,000,000 from Myanmar in Thailand.

MAP 1. SURVEY PROVINCES AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS IN THAILAND

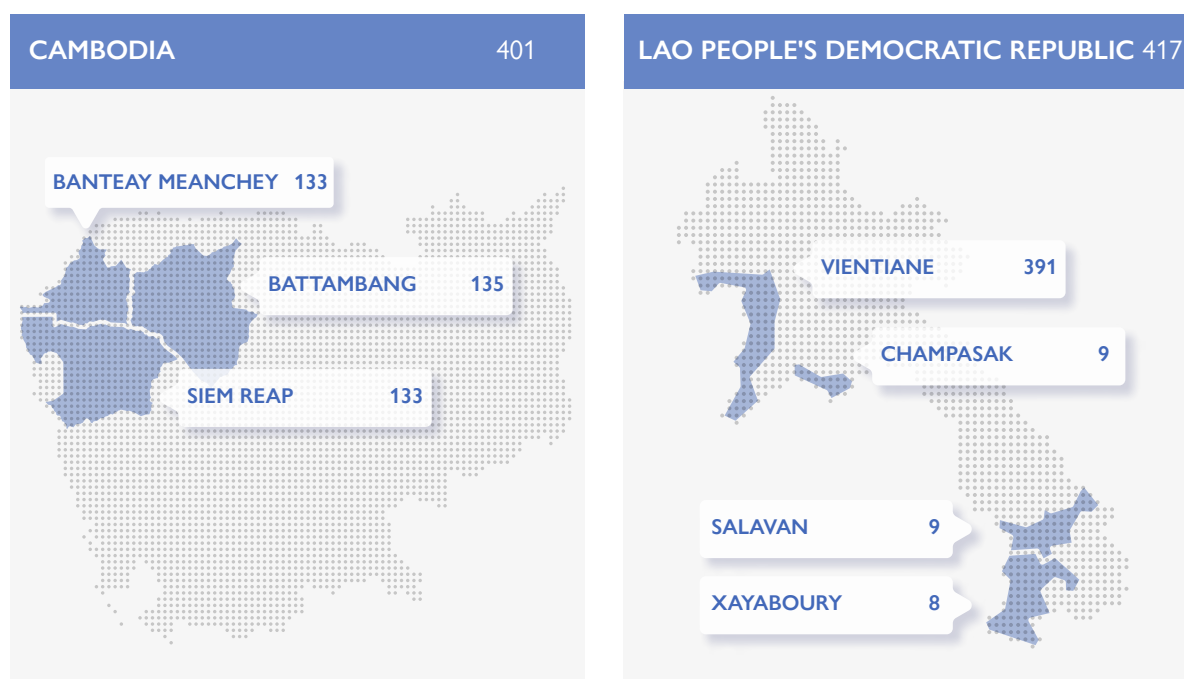


In Cambodia, provinces where returnee respondents were interviewed were based on data from IOM Cambodia on common provinces of origin for migrants to Thailand, and ended up being equally split among Banteay Meanchey, Battambang and Siem Reap.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic, almost all survey data were mostly collected at quarantine centres in Vientiane due to challenges with

government authorization for data collection at the provincial level. However, returnees in the quarantine centres were from various parts of the country, as the Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic mandated all returnees to quarantine in Vientiane. A small number of surveys were collected in Champasak, Salavan and Xayaboury provinces through a partnership with Village Focus International (VFI), a non-profit organization that conducts skills training for returned Laotian migrant workers.

MAP 2. SURVEY PROVINCES AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS IN CAMBODIA AND LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



Source: pixelmap.amcharts.com

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Respondent identification. In Thailand, community-based enumerators conducted mapping exercises to identify local community spaces with easily accessible migrant populations. Based on this identification, enumerators would make introductory visits to local areas, often reaching out to community leaders to introduce and describe the survey activity, after which they identified initial respondents and conducted snowball sampling. Enumerators from Chulalongkorn University, Rajabhat University and Sisters Foundation also tapped into their own migrant networks for

snowball sampling. In Cambodia, enumerators sought the support of provincial authorities, private recruitment agencies and local CSO networks to identify returnee migrants, also using snowball sampling when possible. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, respondents were made available to enumerators by quarantine centre authorities in Vientiane Capital. In Champasak, Salavan and Xayaboury enumerators visited VFI training centres and conducted snowball sampling.

Gender mainstreaming. Gender considerations were mainstreamed throughout this research. This was done by:

- Targeting respondents in highly gendered sectors of work as part of the eligibility criteria. For example, domestic workers were specifically targeted;
- Interviewing roughly 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men;
- Training enumerators on gender sensitivity;
- Ensuring the inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC. Through a partnership with the Sisters Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides support to the transgender community in Chonburi province, the study also includes data collected among migrants with diverse SOGIESC;
- Including representatives from CSOs specializing in gender as key informants;

- Disaggregating almost all questions by gender in the analysis;
- Conducting more detailed analysis on specific sectors in which women work.

Employer survey

Through its internal network, IOM identified private sector stakeholders in the target sectors that employ high numbers of migrant workers. This survey captured employer experiences, perceptions and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and their forecast for employing or re-employing migrant workers in the foreseeable future. In total, 113 employers were interviewed in Thailand and 48 in Myanmar (total of 161 employers). The 113 Thai survey respondents have been classified into the following industries: Garment/apparel and textiles (8), Hospitality, tourism and restaurants (18), Manufacturing (45) and all others (42).

2.3.3 Qualitative Methods

To deepen and further contextualize the initial findings of the migrant survey, IOM conducted qualitative interviews with migrants, returnees, employers and key informants, mainly representing UN agencies, (NGOs), CSOs and trade unions across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Sampling and tools were based on the results of the survey and designed to probe specific findings. Each is further described as follows:

Interviews with Migrants and Returnees (32)

Differences in experiences during COVID-19 emerged around a given migrant or returnee's sector of work and location. For this reason, a targeted sector-specific approach for the community interviews was adopted. In Thailand, a total of 16 interviews were conducted with migrants working in the fishing, manufacturing, construction, restaurant,

hospitality, sex work and entertainment industries. Interviews were proportionate to the number of survey respondents who worked in each sector. Of these, eight were men, five were women and three were people with diverse SOGIESC. The oldest was 44 years old while the youngest was 24 years old. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar nationalities were represented, with five Myanmar workers, four Laotian workers, and the remainder from Cambodia. In Cambodia, a total of eight community interviews were conducted with returned migrants working in construction (3) agriculture (3) and services (2). Of these, six were women and two were men. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, a total of eight interviews were conducted with returned migrants working in construction (2), hospitality (2), restaurant (1), fish processing (1), manufacturing (1) and domestic work (1). Of these, five were women and three were men.

TABLE 9. PROFILE OF INTERVIEWED STAYEES AND RETURNEES BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

	Nationality	Gender	# Interviewed	Total	Grand total
Returnees	Cambodians	Women	6	8	16
		Men	2		
	Laotians	Women	5	8	
		Men	3		
Stayees	Cambodians	Women	1	6	16
		Men	4		
		People with diverse SOGIESC	1		
	Laotians	Women	2	4	
		Men	0		
		People with diverse SOGIESC	2		
	Myanmar	Women	1	6	
		Men	5		
Total		32			

Interviews were structured around the sub-themes in the analytical framework as well as specific key findings from the survey. Due to the COVID-19 situation in each county at the time of qualitative data collection, all interviews were conducted remotely over the phone. Interview guides are included in Annex I.

Interviews with Employers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (14)

Employers were interviewed on the impact of COVID-19 on business operations, including employment of migrants and/or returned migrants, COVID-19 workplace policies and potential support to employers. Employers were identified from within IOM's existing network and interviewed over the phone.

Interviews with UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs and trade unions (27)

Key informant interviews workshopped key survey findings with individuals involved in service provision and advocacy for migrant workers to provide qualitative depth and additional context. These interviews were also designed to workshop recommendations to various stakeholders in response to the findings.

2.4 LIMITATIONS AND ANALYTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research has six main issues that should be considered in understanding the findings.

1. **Lack of reliable data to design the sample.**

The research sample was designed, among other objectives, to complement the *Risks and rewards: Outcomes of labour migration in South-East Asia* (Harkins et al., 2017). It is widely recognized that official migration statistics in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand do not capture the extent of irregular migration (see also Basir, 2020). Consequently, and as noted in that report, a reliable sampling frame does not exist and it is not possible to accurately determine the statistical significance of the data collected. The realities of COVID-19-related movement restrictions also prevented any attempt to stratify and randomly sample. Because of COVID-19 and safety concerns identified by enumerators in specific locations, 27 interviews in Thailand, 250 interviews in Cambodia and 26 in Lao People's Democratic Republic were conducted over the phone, meaning the interview approach was not fully consistent across the sample. In addition, despite assurances that the study was completely voluntary, respondents in quarantine centres in Lao may have felt pressured by quarantine officials to participate.

2. **Almost all interviews in Lao People's Democratic Republic were confined to quarantine centres and were conducted with migrants who had recently returned.**

Because in Lao People's Democratic Republic almost all interviews took place in quarantine centres with migrants who had returned within the previous two weeks and had therefore not yet gone back to their communities, it was not

possible to compare aspects of data collected in that sample to the samples collected in Thailand. For example, it was not possible to ascertain to what extent the pandemic impacts the income and working hours of returnees in Lao People's Democratic Republic compared to their situation in Thailand, along with changes in debt levels and/or remittance patterns, because they had not yet returned to their homes or found jobs. In addition, although respondents were assured the survey was voluntary, enumerators noted that respondents may have felt obligated to participate since they were asked by quarantine centre authorities if they were available for survey participation.

3. **The research was unable to target Myanmar returnees due to the political instability followed by the coup d'état in February 2021.**

This research originally intended to target returnees to Myanmar to ensure regional balance and to include Myanmar returnees in aggregated and comparative findings, as most migrants in Thailand are from Myanmar. However, conducting the survey in Myanmar was not possible due to the February 2021 political instability. This means that although Myanmar are the largest migrant population in Thailand, findings on Myanmar returnees are not included in the analysis. As an alternative, findings from the survey of returned Myanmar migrants conducted by IOM in September 2020 are integrated into this report where possible (given that data were collected using different tools) and relevant.

4. Because the sample targeted people who were employed in Thailand prior to the onset of COVID-19, the unemployment rates in this sample should not be considered reflective of the actual unemployment rate.
5. This survey only addresses the experiences of migrants prior to, during and one year after the initial March–June 2020 lockdown period. Gathering data on each wave of lockdowns in Thailand was not possible. Data was collected in March and April 2021, during which respondents were asked about their current situation and their situation prior to and during the initial March–June 2020 lockdown. Therefore, results must be read as a snapshot of those periods.
6. Lao migrant workers sampled in Thailand include many people with diverse SOGIESC. To capture respondents with diverse SOGIESC, enumerators interviewed migrants who were affiliated with a non-profit organization that supports transgender workers in Chonburi Province. Migrants with diverse SOGIESC interviewed ended up being mostly Laotian, meaning 21 per cent of the 125 Laotian respondents were people of diverse SOGIESC and of these, most were employed in entertainment and sex work. This information should be considered when considering findings that compare nationalities of migrants in Thailand.





III

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, AGE AND GENDER

A total of 2,187 migrants were surveyed as part of this study. Of these, 1,369 (63%) had remained in Thailand while 401 (18%) had returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic and 418 (19%) had returned to Cambodia.¹¹ There was a near-even gender balance in the sample along with representation of gender minorities: 47 per cent of respondents identified as men, 51 per cent identified women and 2 per cent identified as people with diverse SOGIESC.¹² Across

all migrants sampled, both in Thailand and in their countries of origin, 28 per cent were Cambodian, 25 per cent were Laotian and the remaining 48 per cent were Myanmar (all in Thailand). The sample consisted primarily of individuals aged 26–35 years (41%), while 26 per cent were aged 18–25, 22 per cent respondents were 36–45 years and the remaining 11 per cent were older than 45 years, with a maximum age of 67 years.

TABLE 10. PROFILE OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS AND RETURNEES BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

Gender	Stayees				Returnees			Grand total
	Cambodian	Laotian	Myanmar	Total	Cambodian	Laotian	Total	
Women	75	83	552	710	210	204	414	1,124
Men	116	15	486	617	191	213	404	1,021
People with diverse SOGIESC	10	27	1	38	0	0	0	38
Do not want to answer	2		2	4	0	0	0	4
Total	203	125	1,041	1,369	401	417	818	2,187

11. The research plan originally included a target of 400 surveys collected from returned migrants in Myanmar. However, due to the political instability that took hold in early February 2021, it was decided to suspend plans to collect a sample of Myanmar returnees.

12. People with diverse SOGIESC are those whose sexual identity, orientation or practices differ from the majority in the surrounding society. Primarily used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual or non-heterosexual individuals, it can also refer to transgender, non-binary or intersex individuals among other genders.



EMPLOYMENT STATUS, INCOME AND SECTORS OF WORK

Most migrants surveyed were working (or had previously worked) for a single employer. In Thailand, almost all respondents either worked for an employer or were working for an employer in Thailand at the time of survey. Very few workers were self-employed, unemployed, doing unpaid work for families or studying. A small proportion of workers (6%) reported having had more than one job before the lockdown. This figure was lower among returnees, 2 per cent of whom reported they had more than one job prior to the lockdowns. Steady work for a single employer was therefore the norm for migrant workers in the sample. This suggests that continuing employment opportunities played a role in the decision of some workers to remain in Thailand.

Cumulatively, construction (20%) and manufacturing (17%) were the most common sectors of work

within the sample prior to the pandemic, followed by approximately 12 per cent each of hospitality, tourism and restaurant industries. This distribution broadly reflects the key sectors employing migrant workers in Thailand. The remainder were engaged in a large assortment of other sectors. Cambodians were most commonly working in construction (33%) while Laotians (27%) and Myanmar (19%) were most commonly working in manufacturing. In addition, 18 per cent of Cambodians and 10 per cent of Laotians had been working in agriculture in Thailand.

Prior to March 2020, the average monthly income for women was THB 9,748 and THB 11,002 for men, indicating an 11 per cent income gap. The 2017 Risks and Rewards study found a similar gender wage gap of 14 per cent (Harkins et al., 2017, p. 51).

FIGURE 9. MOST COMMON JOB SECTORS AMONG SURVEYED MIGRANTS IN THAILAND (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)

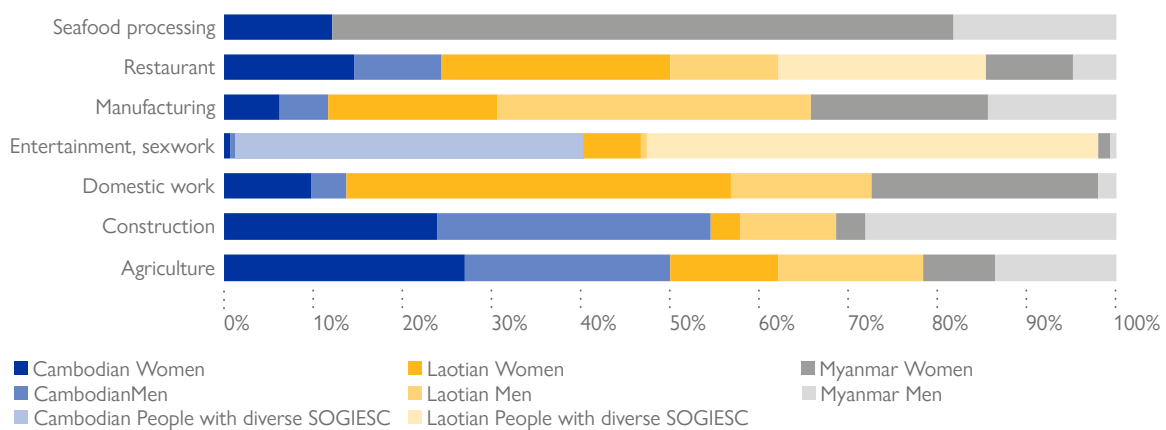


FIGURE 10. AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME IN THAILAND PRE-COVID-19 BY GENDER (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



MIGRATION STATUS

Overall, 30 per cent of respondents held a temporary work permit, 34 per cent held a pink card, 26 per cent had a border pass and 30 per cent held a passport, visa and work permit. These figures reflect the higher costs associated with travel under the bilateral MoUs signed by Thailand with Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar and the high number of workers who regularize their status after obtaining work in Thailand. Overall, Laotians were more likely to have migrated regularly. Around two

thirds (65%) of Laotians had traveled under the MoU process compared with 34 per cent of Cambodians and 9 per cent of Myanmar. About two thirds (67%) of Cambodians had previously held pink cards compared to 29 per cent of Laotians and 17 per cent of workers from Myanmar. The regularization through the pink card scheme is older than the MoU or green pass system, which may suggest that more Cambodians had stayed in Thailand over a long period.



IV

FINDINGS

OVERVIEW OF IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STAYEES AND
RETURNEES IN CAMBODIA, LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC, MYANMAR AND THAILAND

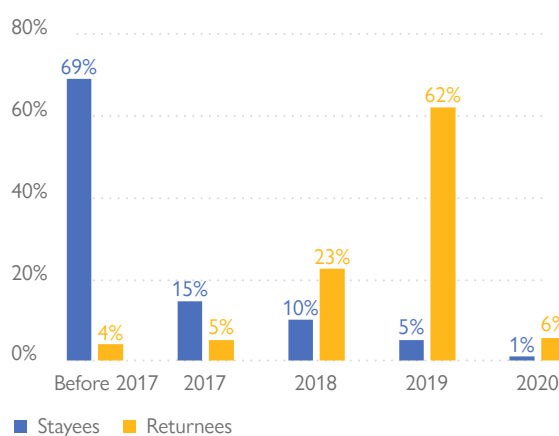
4.1 REMAIN, RETURN OR REMIGRATE | DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

The study found that migrants who had been in Thailand longer were more likely to have remained in Thailand during the pandemic: the majority (69%) of stayees had lived there for at least three years. An additional 30 per cent of stayees arrived between 2017 and 2019, while only 1 per cent (10 respondents) had arrived in January or February 2020. Nearly all (90%) of the returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic had migrated to Thailand after 2017. A separate study identified a similar pattern, where 77 per cent of returned Cambodian migrants surveyed had only been present in Thailand for 1–12 months (UNFPA Cambodia, 2020).

Qualitative interviews suggested that long-term migrants who have established roots, particularly families, in Thailand were less likely to have returned. Almost all migrants interviewed during the qualitative data collection process had also been in Thailand for more than two years with some having arrived 15 years ago. Key informants also corroborated this finding, with one stakeholder noting that

“[Migrants] who have families to feed chose to stay and work in Thailand”

FIGURE 11. YEAR OF MOST RECENT ARRIVAL TO THAILAND (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



and another noting that

“People stayed because there was more reason for them to stay here rather than go back... such as having children in school.”

4.1.1 Stayees

Among stayee respondents, 86 per cent reported that their main reason for staying was because it afforded them a better standard of living. Other reasons included having a family that depends on remittances (30%) and feeling that travelling back home was too complicated (27%).

Debt also featured as a reason to remain. One in four migrants stated that pre-existing debt informed their decision to remain or return to their country of origin: 26 per cent of stayee respondents said it was because they needed to repay their debt and 3 per cent (55 respondents) said it was because of debt incurred because of COVID-19.

It is important to note, however, that reasons to stay varied among nationalities. Families in Lao People's Democratic Republic appeared to be more reliant on remittances, as two thirds (67%) of Laotian migrants reported making the decision to stay in Thailand because their families depended on them for remittances (as opposed to 36% of Cambodian and 24% of Myanmar migrants). Laotian women (69%) were more likely than Laotian men (53%) to state needing to send remittances as a reason to stay in Thailand. Decision-making for Myanmar workers may have been impacted by the February 2021 political instability. Key informants noted how the events in February in Myanmar led to a situation where Myanmar workers are more hesitant to return to their country due to stringent border closures and fear of violence upon return.

4.1.2 Returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic

At the onset of the pandemic, migrant workers were reported to be suffering from major job losses globally, which were forcing mass return to countries of origin because workers were unable to support themselves (ILO, 2021). The situation in Thailand appeared to have been slightly more nuanced. Decision-making for migrants who decided to return to Cambodia or Lao People's Democratic Republic was largely linked to non-economic concerns, with nearly half (49%) of respondents reporting that they returned because their families wanted them to come back, with slightly more women (52%) than men (45%) giving this reason. Likewise, returnee interviewees in both Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia noted that primary reasons for returning included fear of COVID-19 and the desire to be closer to family during the pandemic, not loss of work.

That the decision to return was not solely motivated by job loss – as it was for migrants in other parts of the world – possibly reflects the easier and relatively cheaper travelling between Thailand and Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Harkins et al., 2017 similarly note that the vast majority (82%) of migrant workers surveyed returned home voluntarily, particularly because of family obligations (33%) and homesickness (23%). Only 18 per cent of migrant workers were forced to return home, primarily due to the end of their visa or work permit (12%); (Harkins et al., 2017).

FIGURE 12. TOP 5 REASONS FOR REMAINING IN THAILAND BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)

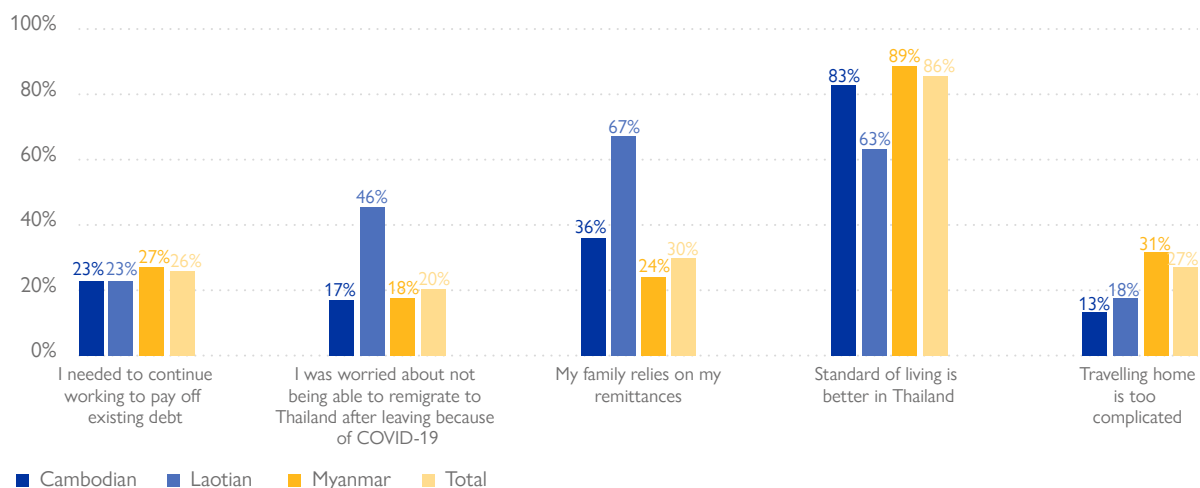
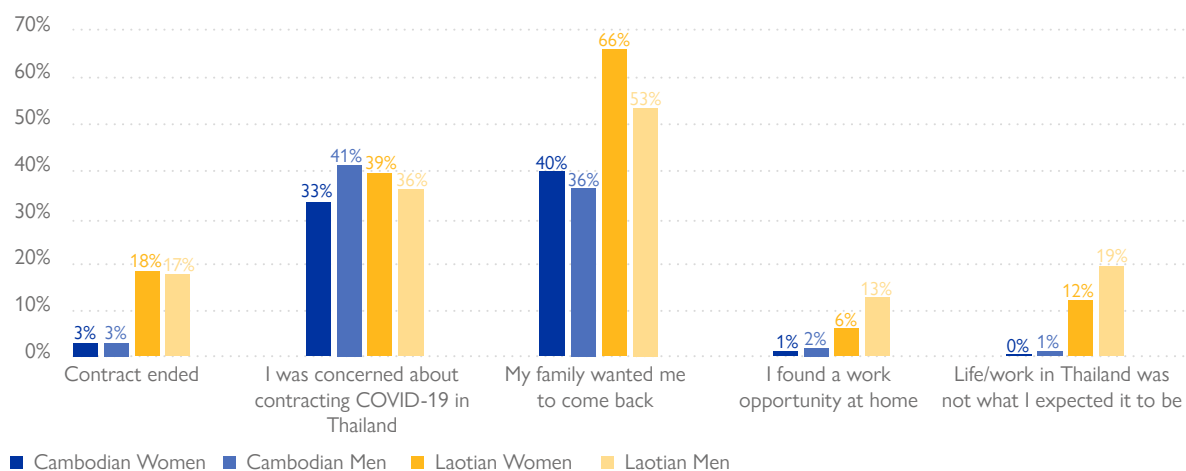


FIGURE 13. TOP 5 REASONS FOR RETURN BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)

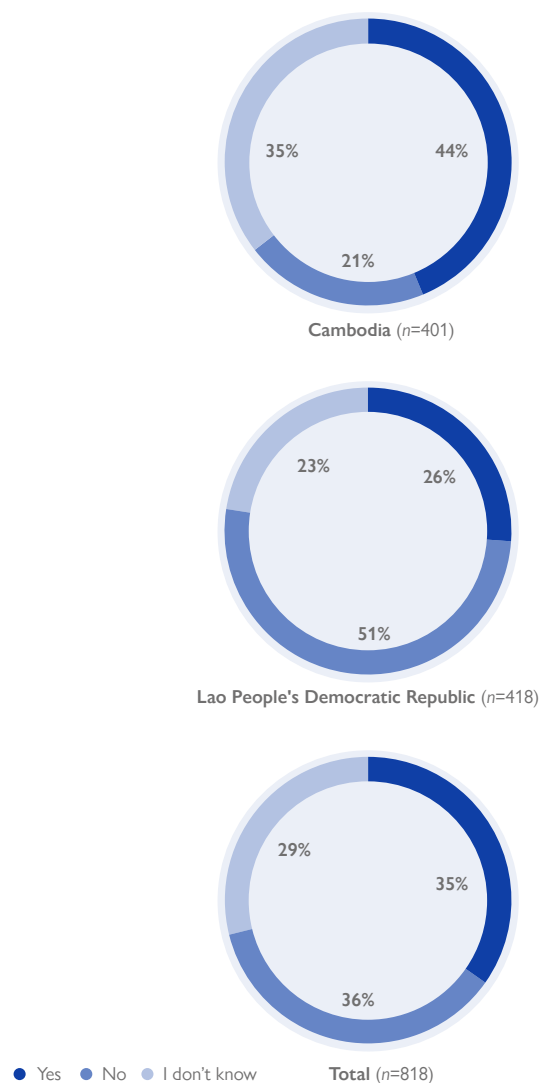


4.1.3 Remigration

Most returnees expressed a degree of uncertainty about remigrating to Thailand or said they did not want to remigrate. At the time of the survey in March 2021, only about one third (35%) of returnees surveyed intended to remigrate to Thailand. An additional 36 per cent said they did not intend to remigrate to Thailand and 29 per cent were unsure. In comparison, research from 2017 found that slightly fewer (29%) of migrants surveyed intended to remigrate (Harkins et al., 2017). There are a few possible explanations for the relatively low interest in remigration. One is that at the time of the survey, Thailand was going through a second wave of COVID-19 infections and a lockdown, so prospects of being able to remigrate and fear of the virus were potentially higher. Returnee key informants also stated family obligations and lack of documentation as the main reasons for not wanting to remigrate.

There was variation among nationalities in terms of intention to remigrate. Cambodians reported higher interest in remigrate than Laotians: of Cambodian returnees, 44 per cent said they wanted to remigrate to Thailand while 35 per cent were unsure. Only 21 per cent of Cambodians said they will not remigrate. In comparison, 51 per cent of respondents in Lao

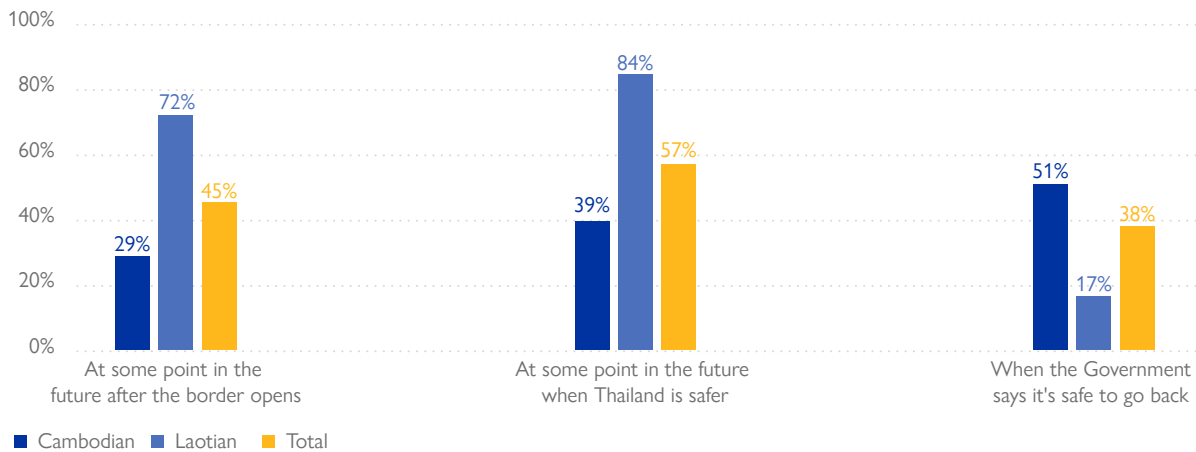
FIGURE 14. DO YOU INTEND TO REMIGRATE TO THAILAND? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



People's Democratic Republic said they would not remigrate. In addition, 55 per cent of returnees in Myanmar surveyed by IOM in September 2020 reported they intended to remigrate to Thailand, while 29 per cent did not want to remigrate and the remainder were unsure (IOM, 2020a). However, all results on remigrate intention are likely influenced by the timing of the survey, as the borders remained closed and return likely felt unviable. Most surveyed Laotians had also only recently returned from Thailand, meaning they may have been less likely to be contemplating remigration.

Respondents who intended to remigrate to Thailand said they would do so with the help of their former networks. The 284 total respondents who said they were going to remigrate reported that they were mostly waiting for Thailand to be safer, with a reduced number of infections (57%), for borders to open (45%), or for their home government or the Royal Thai Government announcing that it is safe to remigrate (38% and 33% respectively). There were no major differences between men and women on remigrate timing. Once one of these conditions are met, it is highly likely that Thailand can expect a significant wave of remigration from both countries.

FIGURE 15. TOP 3 RESPONSES TO: WHEN WILL YOU REMIGRATE TO THAILAND? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



Vendor in a market in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

Existing networks in Thailand, including former employers, will likely play a large role in facilitating remigration. More than half (57%) of respondents who intended to remigrate said they would rely on their employer or friends and family in Thailand (51%) to help them. Furthermore, the majority (61%) said they were going to try and go back to their previous job. Finally, nearly all (91%) respondents who planned to remigrate said they were still in contact with their

employer or other staff from their former jobs. There were no major differences between women and men in terms of network migrants plan on using for remigrate. It is also worth noting that returnees who had returned in 2020 and 2021 said they were keeping in touch with previous networks, possibly indicating that contact between employers and returnees continues for at least a year after remigrate.

FIGURE 16. RESPONSES TO: WHO WILL HELP YOU MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO REMIGRATE? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)

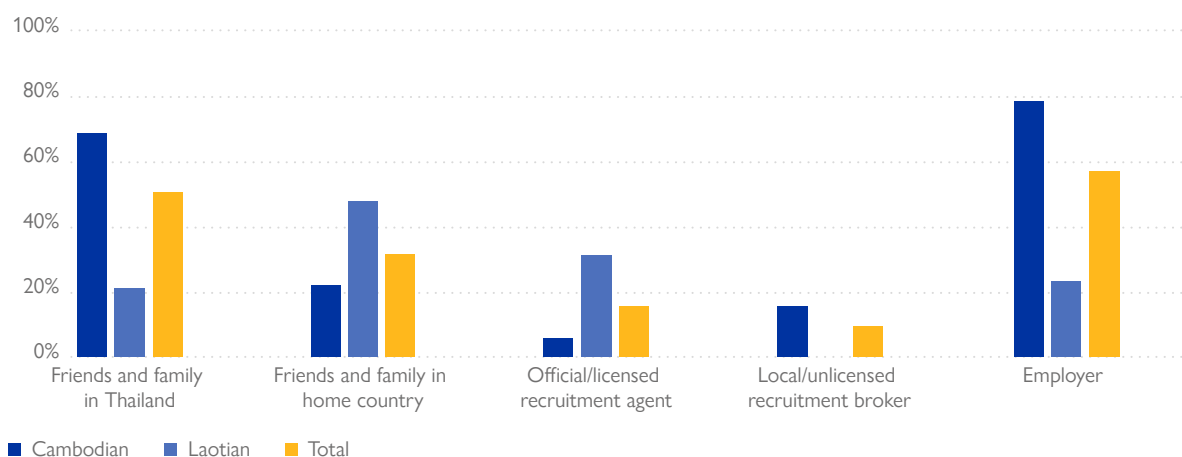
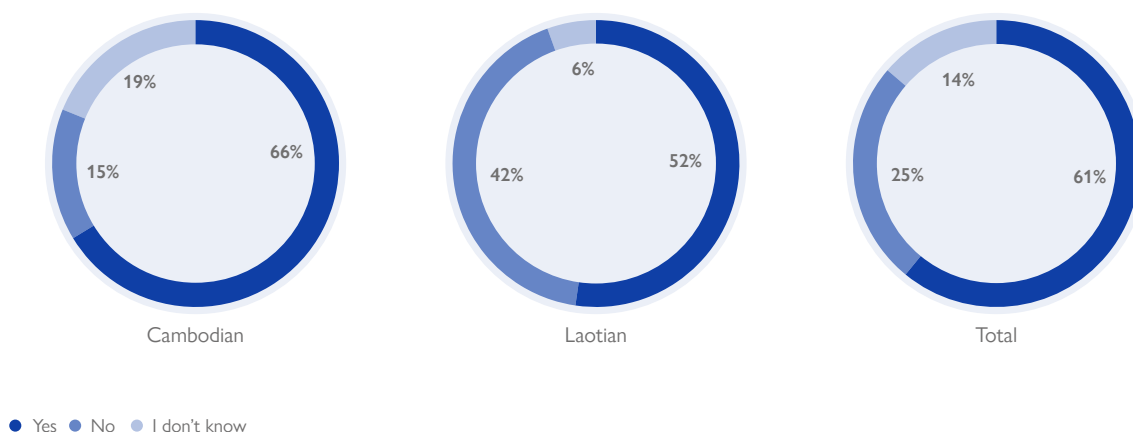


FIGURE 17. RESPONSES TO: DO YOU PLAN ON GOING BACK TO THE SAME JOB UPON REMIGRATION?? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)

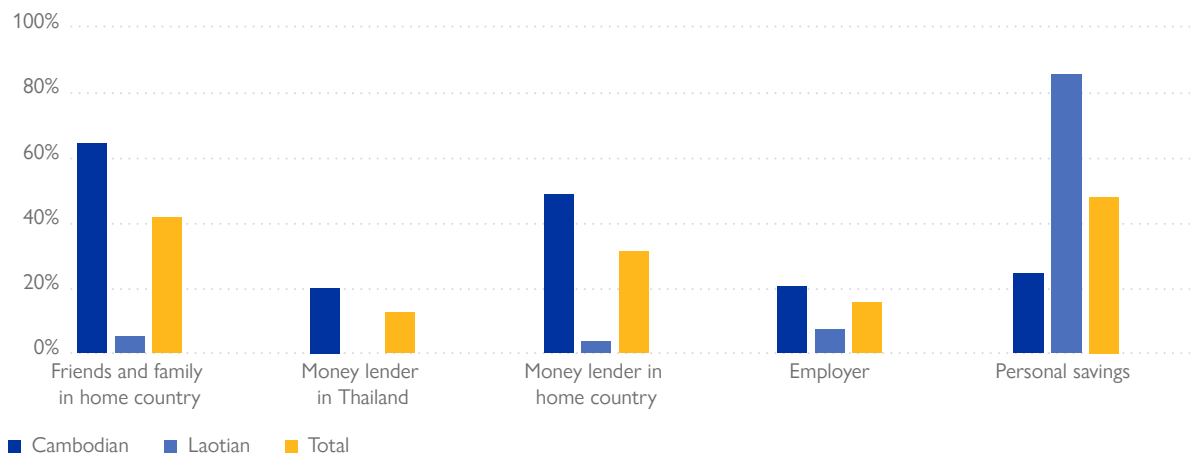


Remigration is likely to be largely financed by personal savings and by borrowing money from family and friends. Around half (48%) of the 284 respondents who had confirmed they were planning to remigrate said they will raise money from friends and family in their countries of origin to finance their remigration. Around the same number (48%) said they would use their personal savings in addition to borrowing from family and friends. At least 31 per cent were also prepared to seek a loan from a lender to remigrate (either at home or in Thailand). Only 15 per cent said they would get this money from their employer. Cambodians were more likely to use friends and family

(68%) or take out a loan (50%), whereas Laotians were likely to use personal savings (85%). There were no major differences between women and men returnees who intend to remigrate in terms of how they plan on financing remigration.

Very few (4%) of the respondents of the survey said they knew of someone who had remigrated to Thailand already. Of those who knew individuals who had already tried to remigrate, most were Cambodians who chose not to disclose the channels of migration to Thailand.

FIGURE 18. TOP 5 WAYS REMIGRATION WILL BE FINANCED BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



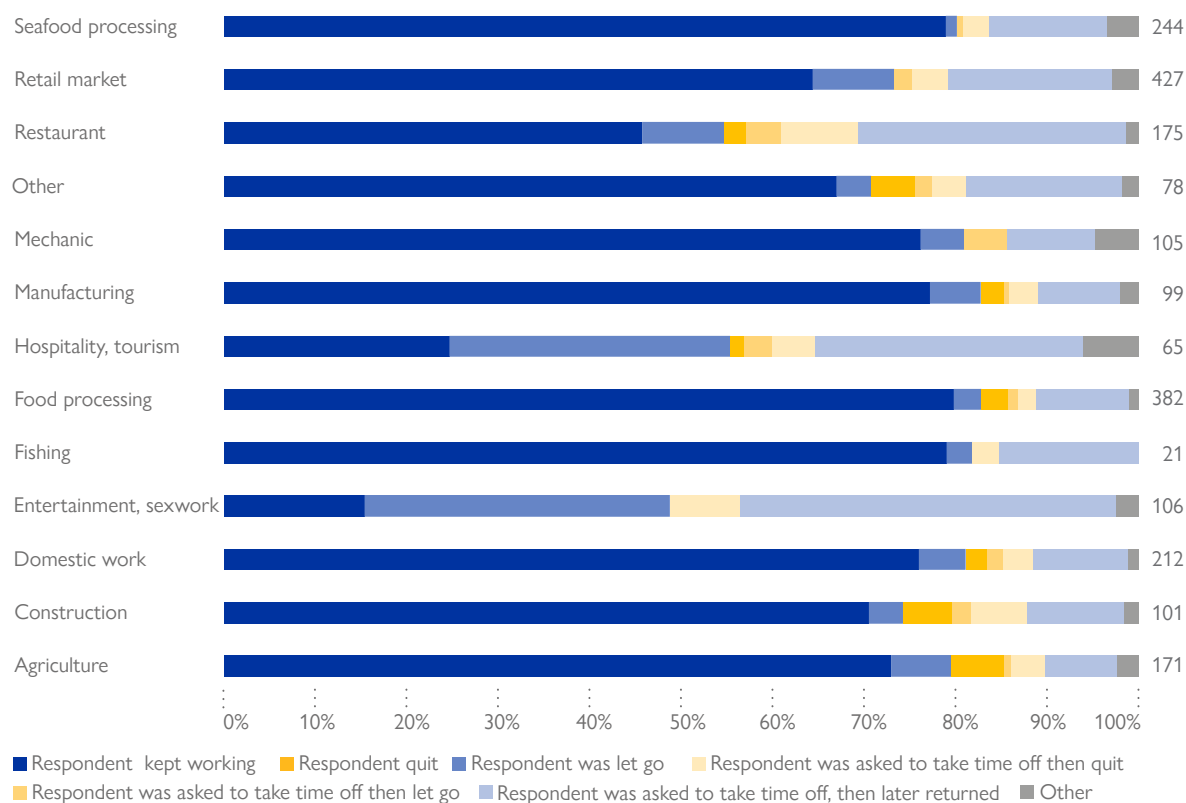
4.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT WORKERS

4.2.1 Jobs and Employment Status

The majority (68%) of respondents reported they had continued working in Thailand during the lockdown, with little difference between returnees and stayees. One in 10 respondents said they had been let go from their main jobs, either immediately or after a period of leave. Migrant workers in the hospitality and tourism sector (31%) and those who worked in entertainment and sex work (33%) were most likely to lose their jobs. Migrants working in

entertainment and sex work (41%), restaurants (33%), hospitality (29%) and retail stores (25%) were also commonly asked to take time off. Those working in hospitality (29%) were also likely to have taken time off and later returned. The fact that job losses were concentrated in tourism-focused jobs is unsurprising, given how COVID-19-related border closures deeply affected the Thai tourism industry. For example, the Thai Hotels Association reported that at least 1 million jobs were lost between March 2020 and January 2021 (Nikkei, 2021).

FIGURE 19. EFFECTS OF MARCH – JUNE 2020 LOCKDOWN ON EMPLOYMENT (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



Unemployment was high among returnees and low among stayees. Almost two thirds (63%) of returnees were unemployed, with returned Laotians (80%) more represented than Cambodians (46%) because interviews in Lao People's Democratic Republic occurred in quarantine centres with those who had recently returned. In comparison, only 8 per cent of stayees were unemployed. In addition, 20 per cent of returnees were doing unpaid work for family compared with only 1 per cent of stayees. Notably, among the 164 returnees who reported doing unpaid work for their families, 64 per cent were women, suggesting women were more commonly engaged in work at home than men.

Job opportunities were scarce for returnees in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic and those jobs that were available were low paid compared with jobs in Thailand. Combined with the loss of remittance income, the incomes of returnees' families were particularly impacted. Returned Cambodians who managed to find jobs reported an average income 37 per cent lower than their average income in Thailand prior to COVID-19.¹³ These findings are in line with the results of the World Bank's economic monitoring, which found that Cambodia's economy contracted by 3.1 per cent in 2020 and that the economy of Lao People's Democratic Republic slowed to 0.4 per cent in 2020, the lowest growth rate in 30 years (World Bank, 2021).

4.2.2 Income and Wages

Stayees largely continued working at the same jobs they had prior to the lockdown, but at reduced wages.¹⁴ A little more than one third (36%) of those who stayed in Thailand reported wage reductions following the March 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. On the other hand, almost all (98%) returnees reported reductions in wages when comparing their jobs in Thailand to their current situations, likely because Thailand offers higher wages and more opportunities

and that many returnees have struggled to find employment upon returning to their countries of origin. (Oxfam, 2020).

The pandemic has dramatically impacted migrants' wages, particularly women migrants. More than half (58%) of migrants reported their wages reduced because of the pandemic. Women (63%) suffered greater wage reductions than men (55%), which is concerning because women were already earning less than men prior to COVID-19. Laotian migrants in Thailand reported the largest wage reductions (41% drop in average monthly income), particularly among women (35%) and people with diverse SOGIESC (60%).

Before COVID-19, one in three (31%) migrants were being paid less than the minimum wage of 313 THB per day. As of March 2021, this number rose to nearly half (42%).¹⁵ Women were more likely to have been paid below the minimum wage prior to COVID-19, and now more than half of women migrant workers are being paid below the minimum wage.

TABLE 11. PERCENTAGE OF MIGRANTS PAID BELOW MINIMUM WAGE

	Women	Men	People with diverse SOGIESC	Total
Pre-COVID-19	41%	22%	0%	31%
At the time of survey	55%	30%	11%	42%

Returnees and stayees reported the same working hours both before the COVID-19 outbreak and at the time of the survey, meaning migrants continued working the same number of hours for less pay. Reported average normal working hours were 6.2 days per week and 8.3 hours per day at the time of the survey.

13. The survey was unable to assess current employment situations for Laotians as survey participants were still in quarantine centres.
14. It should be noted that the unemployment rates are at least partially informed by the sampling strategy, which sought to interview migrants who were working in manufacturing, construction, domestic work and hospitality.
15. Regular migrant workers in Thailand are entitled to receive the minimum wage. The daily minimum wage in Thailand in 2021 is between 313 THB and 336 THB. Under the Thai Labour Law, the general rule is that a working day shall not exceed 8 hours per day and no more than 48 hours per week. Employees must also have a minimum of one day off per week as per the Thailand, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare policy of 1998.

The largest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt by those who worked in the entertainment and sex work industry. Workers who were employed in these sectors prior to March 2020 saw their average monthly wage reduced by 32 per cent and their average working hours per month reduced by 5 per cent. Thus, these sectors were impacted both with a reduction in the number of days of work and reduction in incomes. The adverse impact of COVID-19 on Thailand's sex work industry due to tight restrictions on international tourism has been documented in several news articles that highlight the implications of such lost income on the health and well-being of sex workers (Amandral, 2021).

In total, average incomes have been reduced by 26 per cent, with returnees particularly hard-hit. While the average income for stayees was reduced by 9 per cent, it was reduced by 40 per cent for returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Women migrant workers' incomes overall reduced by 28 per cent, while men's incomes reduced by 21 per cent, with women from Cambodia particularly impacted (49%), widening the gender pay gap even further. People with diverse SOGIESC saw the highest average reductions of all of 41 per cent.

TABLE 12. AVERAGE INCOME REDUCTIONS BETWEEN PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)

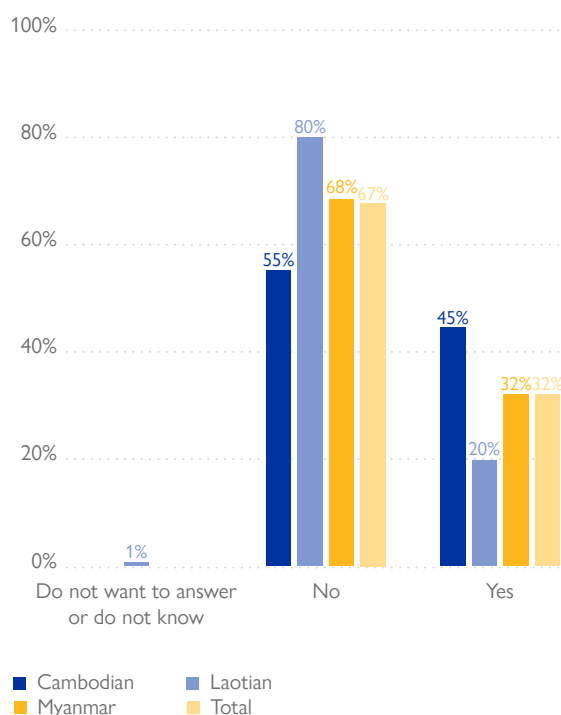
	Women	Men	People with diverse SOGIESC	Do not want to answer	Total
Cambodia	-49%	-33%	-127%	0%	-40%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	-17%	-25%	-152%		-68%
Myanmar	0%	-13%	0%	-18%	0%
Total	-28%	-21%	-141%	-9%	-26%

4.2.3 Debt

Pre-COVID-19 Debt Status

Around one third of surveyed migrants overall had debts before the pandemic, although returnees were more likely to have owed debt prior to March 2020 (36%) compared to those who ended up staying in Thailand (30%). Notable differences in terms of debt levels emerged among nationalities. Cambodians owed the most debt (45%) followed by Myanmar (32%) and Laotians (20%). Across all nationalities, slightly more women than men owed debt.

FIGURE 20. RESPONSES TO: DID YOU HAVE DEBT PRIOR TO MARCH 2020 (PRE-COVID-19)? BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



Debt Status at the Time of the Survey

While most surveyed migrants reported their debt levels had remained the same, a significant number reported this debt had increased during COVID-19. Overall, around one in six (17%) respondents reported owing higher levels of debt compared with their pre-COVID-19 debt. Notably, Myanmar

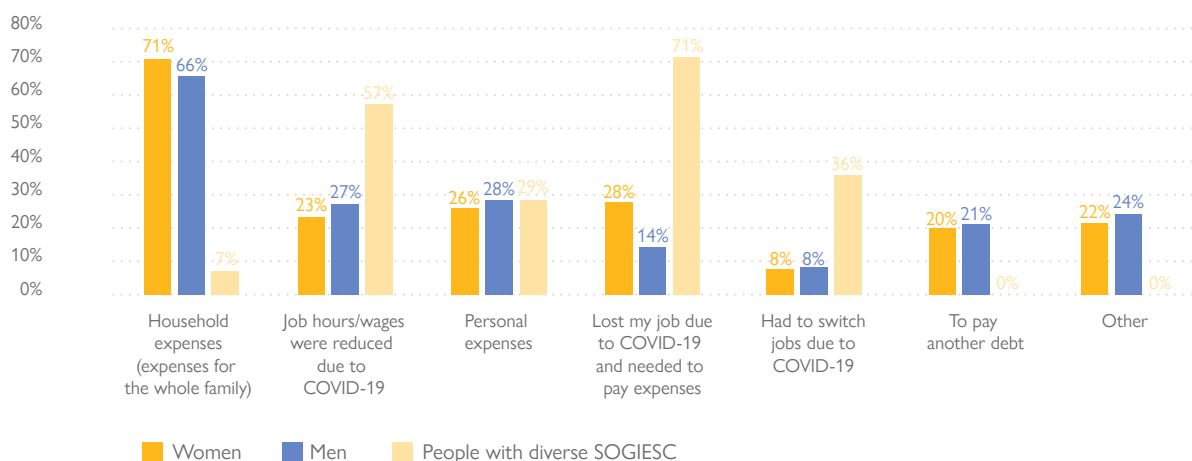
returnees surveyed by IOM in September 2020 reported similar levels of debt: 63 per cent did not have debt, 19 per cent reported having debt but the debt level not having been impacted by COVID-19, and 18 per cent reported their debt levels had increased because of COVID-19 (IOM, 2020a).

Differences in Debt Status between Returnees and Stayees

There were notable differences between returnees and stayees among respondents who reported higher levels of debt. Only 6 per cent of returnees with pre-

COVID-19 debt reported their debt had increased compared with 17 per cent of stayees. There were also differences in nationality. Myanmar migrants (17%) most commonly reported having higher debt. By comparison, 11 per cent of Cambodians and 5 per cent of Laotians reported the same. By far, the most common reason for migrants in Thailand (65%) to have taken on higher debt was to pay for household expenses. While past research has found that debt is strongly linked to migration-related expenses, these findings suggest migrants are now taking out loans to support themselves in Thailand, potentially as an alternative to returning.

FIGURE 21. RESPONDENT REASONS FOR INCREASED DEBT DURING COVID-19 (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



Sources of Debt

The most common source of debt for those who had higher debts at the time of the survey varied significantly according to migrants' nationalities. Myanmar respondents most commonly take loans from money lenders while Cambodians and Laotians tend to depend on family and friends. Around one third (35%) of Myanmar respondents with higher debt had taken debt from a lender compared to only two respondents from Cambodia and none from

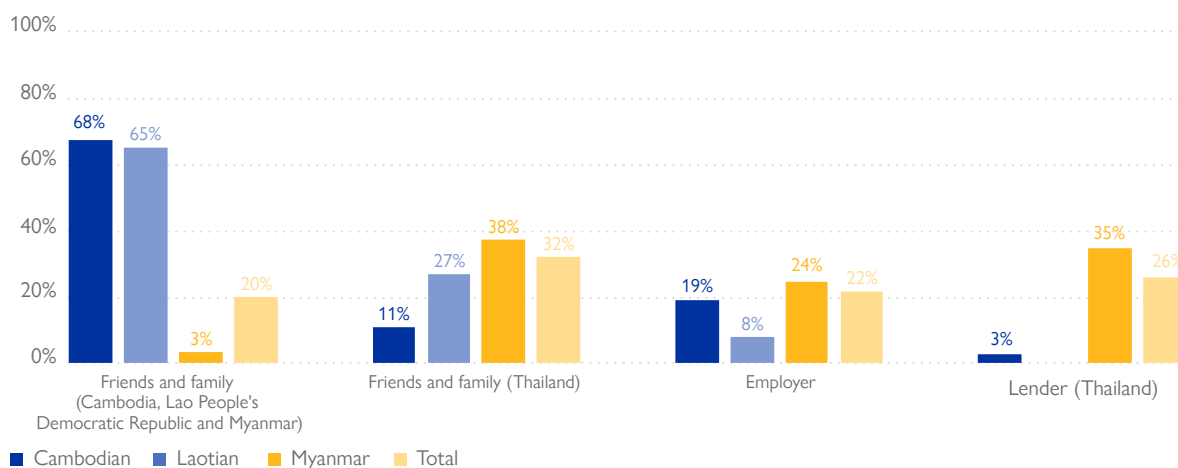
Lao People's Democratic Republic. An additional 36 per cent of Myanmar migrants with higher debt (all of whom in Thailand), also took loans from friends and family in Thailand, whereas the same was true for only seven Laotians and four Cambodians. Sources of debt did not vary significantly among men and women migrants. These findings are in line with previous research, which found that 49 per cent of Myanmar respondents had taken loans from a lender and 42 per cent had taken loans from friends and family (Harkins et al., 2017). Having connections with

lenders, family and friends in Thailand for loans again may suggest Myanmar migrants have stronger ties to Thailand.

On the other hand, Cambodians and Laotians who owed more debt at the time of the survey were more in debt with friends and family outside of Thailand (68% and 65% respectively). No returnee had current debt from lenders in Thailand and only

3 per cent of returnees had taken debt from lenders in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, suggesting returnees are finding different coping strategies for reduced incomes. These findings are also consistent with previous research, which found that 37 per cent of Cambodians and 89 per cent of Laotians had taken loans from family and friends to finance their migration (Harkins et al., 2017).

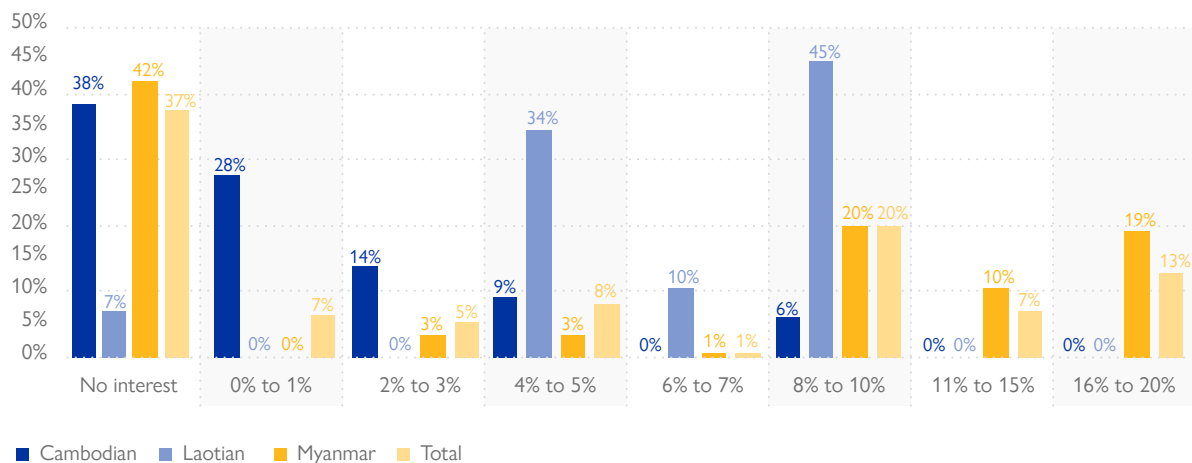
FIGURE 22. MAIN DEBT LENDERS PRE-COVID-19 BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



There was a significant difference in interest rates charged for migrants who owed higher debt at the time of the survey in Thailand compared with returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. Almost half (47%) of migrants in Thailand with debt incurred during COVID-19 had taken a loan at an interest rate higher than 8 per cent, while no returnees to Cambodia or Lao People's

Democratic Republic reported rates above 5 per cent. Of the 108 individuals with debt interest rates higher than 8 per cent, 91 were Myanmar, 13 were Laotian and 4 were Cambodian. While Myanmar migrants in Thailand may have connections for loans, some appear to be part of a lending system in which they were being charged exorbitant rates.

FIGURE 23. INTEREST RATES CHARGED TO SURVEYED MIGRANTS BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



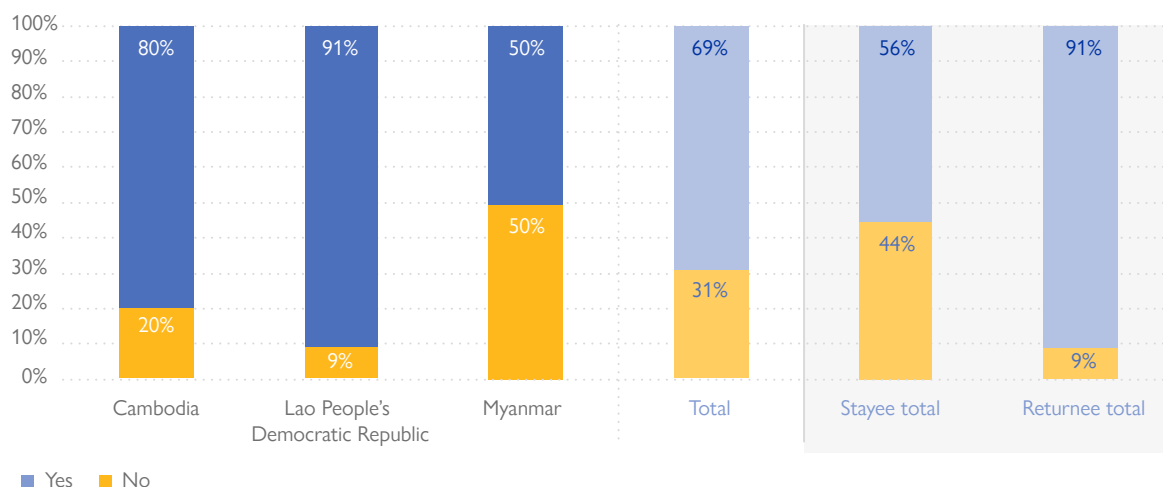
4.2.4 Remittances to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar

Trends in Remittances prior to COVID-19

Most migrants had been sending remittances prior to COVID-19 (69%), with a significant difference between returnees and stayees. Over 90 per cent of returnees were sending money home prior to March 2020, a finding consistent with another study from 2017 that found that 93 per cent of migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar remitted money (Harkins et al.). Only 56 per cent of stayee respondents reported having sent remittances prior to the pandemic. There were

no clear differences between men and women in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on remittances, but there were important variations in nationality. Laotians were the most likely to have been sending remittances (91%) prior to March 2020 followed by Cambodians (80%) and Myanmar migrants (50%). The relatively low percentage of Myanmar migrants remitting money is possibly due to Myanmar migrants more commonly having their families with them in Thailand, as suggested by multiple key informants. About 95 per cent of the 451 returned Myanmar migrants surveyed remitted money, suggesting Myanmar migrants who were less permanently established in Thailand and who still have families in Myanmar remit at similar levels to Cambodians and Laotians (Harkins et al., 2017).

FIGURE 24. RESPONSES TO: DID YOU SEND REMITTANCES PRE-COVID-19? BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)

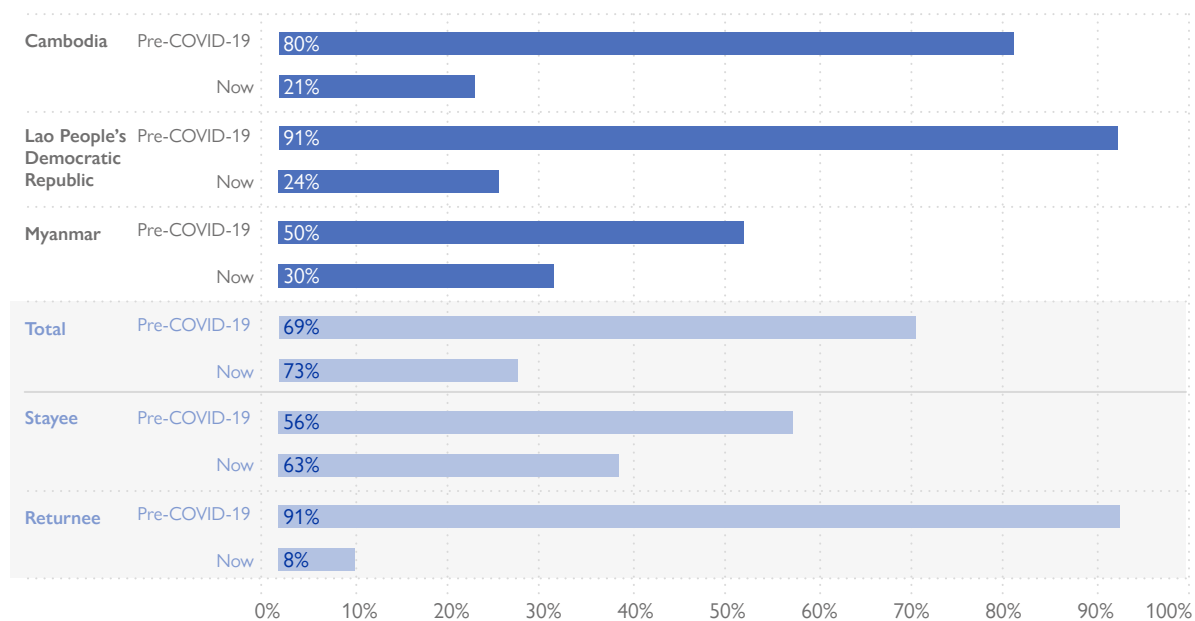


Trends in Remittances during COVID-19

Survey findings indicate COVID-19 had a profound impact on remittances from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. While over half (56%) of surveyed stayees reported sending remittances before the onset of COVID-19, this proportion dropped to 37 per cent by the time of the survey. In addition, those who continued

remitting after the onset of the pandemic reported sending less money home compared to before the pandemic. On average, the amount remitted from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar dropped by 25 per cent, with Laotians particularly affected. Average remittances from Thailand to Lao People's Democratic Republic (58%) dropped by far more than remittances to Cambodia (22%) and Myanmar (10%).

FIGURE 25. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO WERE SENDING REMITTANCES PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



Note: Returnees were asked whether their families were receiving remittances at at time of survey, as they were no longer remitting.

TABLE 13. AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO STOPPED SENDING REMITTANCES BETWEEN PRE-COVID-19 AND THE TIME OF SURVEY BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (STAYEES)

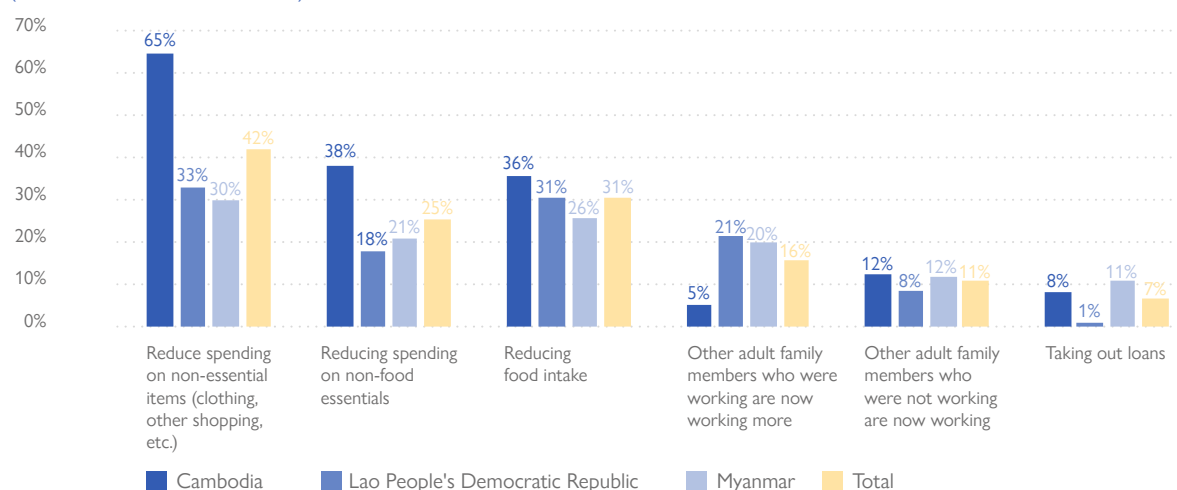
	Women	Men	Other	Do not want to answer	Grand Total
Cambodian	15%	11%	78%	0%	22%
Laotian	54%	19%	71%		58%
from Myanmar	11%	10%	0%	100%	10%
Grand Total	25%	9%	72%	0%	25%

Families of returnees saw the most drastic decrease in remittances, with almost all (90%) surveyed returnees reporting that their families were no longer receiving remittances at the time of the survey. This is most likely related to the interviewee having returned and therefore no longer being able to send remittances; prior to March 2020, 91 per cent of surveyed returnees said they had been sending money back home. A survey conducted by IOM in September 2020 on Myanmar returnees emphasizes the impact of the loss of remittances because of return: 56 per cent of surveyed Myanmar returnees reported that remittances were the main source of household income and that their families were no longer receiving remittances after the respondents' return.

Impact of Reduced Remittances on Families

The families of at least one third of Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar respondents were adversely impacted by the reduced or stopped remittances, with Cambodians and Laotians reporting greater impact than Myanmar. The effects of reduced remittances can be seen in decreases of household income reported by surveyed returnees. The average household income of migrants who had returned reduced by 69 per cent from 15,820 THB to 4,893 THB.¹⁶ The highest impact was seen in Cambodia, where household income of returnees dropped from 16,554 THB before March 2020 to 4,760 THB (-71%); while for Lao the income reduced from 9,464 THB to 6,672 THB (-29%).¹⁷

FIGURE 26. COPING MECHANISMS AMONG RESPONDENT FAMILIES EXPERIENCING REDUCED REMITTANCES (STAYEES AND RETURNEES)



16. Household income data were not collected for stayees as they were less likely to provide an accurate reading of their household situations in their home countries.

17. Laotian returnee respondents were less likely to know their household incomes compared to Cambodian returnees. As a result, there were fewer data points for Laotian household income compared to Cambodian household income. Twelve per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes pre-COVID, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women. Eight per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes at the time of the interview, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women.

As a result of reduced remittances, the families of both returnees and stayees have been forced to adopt coping mechanisms such as cutting spending on important goods and services, including food. Of the 1,504 respondents who had been remitting prior to COVID-19, 42 per cent reported their families were reducing their spending on non-essential items in response to reduced remittances, with almost two thirds (65%) of Cambodians reporting their families were doing this compared to 33 per cent of Laotians and 30 per cent of Myanmar families. In addition, 25 per cent overall were reducing their spending on non-food essential items, again with Cambodians reporting such reductions at higher rates (38%) than Laotians (18%) or Myanmar (21%). Concerningly, 31 per cent of respondents who were

remitting prior to COVID-19 reported their families were reducing their food intake, with Cambodians (36%) and Laotians (31%) reporting this at higher rates than Myanmar (26%). Income reductions due to COVID-19 therefore have had a ripple effect, affecting migrants as well as their families across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.

No major changes to remittance methods, which vary by nationality, were reported to have taken place because of the pandemic. The main remittance method was by far via brokers (54%), followed by money transfer offices (13%) and the bank office (12%).





Fishers in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

4.3 INCREASED VULNERABILITY AND INCREASED RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

COVID-19 further destabilized the working conditions of migrants in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand by causing job losses reducing income levels and reducing remittances. This was especially true for migrants that had been working in specific sectors, namely entertainment, sex work, hospitality, and restaurant jobs. Although most migrants continued working throughout the lockdown, many eventually decided to return to their countries of origin typically because of family concerns. The income levels of both stayees and returnees dropped, but due to fewer job opportunities and lower pay in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, income levels of returnees dropped the most. Around one third of

migrants had debt prior to COVID-19, and of these one in nine reported their debt levels had increased. Those with higher debt were commonly taking on this debt to pay for their household expenses. Remittance levels for families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar were dramatically impacted by COVID-19, as returnees stopped remitting altogether and fewer stayees were able to continue remitting. Looking to the future, ensuring fair pay and decent labour conditions so that migrants are able to regain (and improve on) their former income levels, pay their debts, and continue supporting their families will be essential to building back better after COVID-19.

This study involved many mainly Myanmar migrants who have been in Thailand for a long time and who chose to remain in Thailand because their families are with them and because they enjoyed a higher quality of life there. Despite having been living in Thailand for a long period of time, very few had regular work status, meaning they have been living as irregular migrants in Thailand for a long time.

Stayees continued to work in vulnerable employment situations that have become more pronounced because of COVID-19. The fact that most migrants continued working during the lockdown likely speaks to the essential nature of jobs migrants hold in Thailand and their importance for the Thai economy, as migrants continued working in agriculture, fishing, food processing, manufacturing and construction jobs throughout the pandemic. Most migrants work in low-wage positions as daily workers, often without full regular status and no social protection; therefore, if they do not have work, they are unable to feed their families.

This study shows that migrants without full regular status continue working in daily paid jobs – which makes them highly vulnerable to the economic impact of COVID-19. These migrants have been subjected to lay-offs and wage reductions; they do not have sick leave protections in case they or a colleague contracts COVID-19; they have been unable to lodge complaints in case of workplace violations; and violations have been increasingly reported during the second and third waves of COVID-19 in Thailand. Women workers, who earn 11–14 per cent less on average than men and who largely work for wages below the minimum wage, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. Regular migrants are meant to have access to social protection mechanisms; however, very few migrants have regular status. Even when they do, they are largely unaware of how to access their entitlements under Thailand's social protection schemes. Combined with the volatility of working informally, lack of social protection means migrants are highly vulnerable to economic shocks.

The data shows that COVID-19 has profoundly impacted families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Although the

decision to return is largely based on choice – as opposed to job loss – most respondents returned to few available jobs in their countries of origin and remain unemployed. Most returnees were uncertain about their plans to remigrate, but this could be due to the general uncertainty about the evolution of the virus and the reopening of borders. Returnees have returned to few available jobs in their countries of origin and are largely unemployed. Job scarcity, and families no longer receiving remittances from Thailand mean families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar have to cut their expenses, often on food. Dependency on remittances and lack of economic opportunities in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar also leaves many families across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar largely vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19.



V

FINDINGS

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STAYEES

This section focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar who chose to remain in Thailand during COVID-19. Of the 1,369 surveyed stayees, 76 per cent were from Myanmar, 15 per cent from Cambodia and 9 per cent from Lao People's Democratic Republic. About 52 per cent were women, with an average age of 32 years, 45 per cent men with an average age of 35, and 3 per cent of the sample identified as gender minorities. Those who identified as people with diverse SOGIESC were mostly Laotian (21 individuals) and Cambodian

(6 individuals) working in the entertainment sector. The sample consisted of respondents only older than 18 years, with 23 per cent younger than 25 years, 40 per cent between 26 and 35 years, 24 per cent between 36 and 45 years and the rest older than 45 years, with migrants from Lao People's Democratic Republic slightly younger on average than those from Cambodia and Myanmar. Overall, men migrants represented a slightly higher proportion of older migrants as 17 per cent were older than 46 years compared to 8 per cent of women migrants.

TABLE 14. PROFILE OF STAYEES IN THAILAND BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

GENDER	STAYEES			
	Cambodia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Myanmar	Total
Women	75	83	552	710
Men	116	15	486	617
People with diverse SOGIESC	10	27	1	38
Do not want to answer	2		2	4
Total	203	125	1,041	1,369



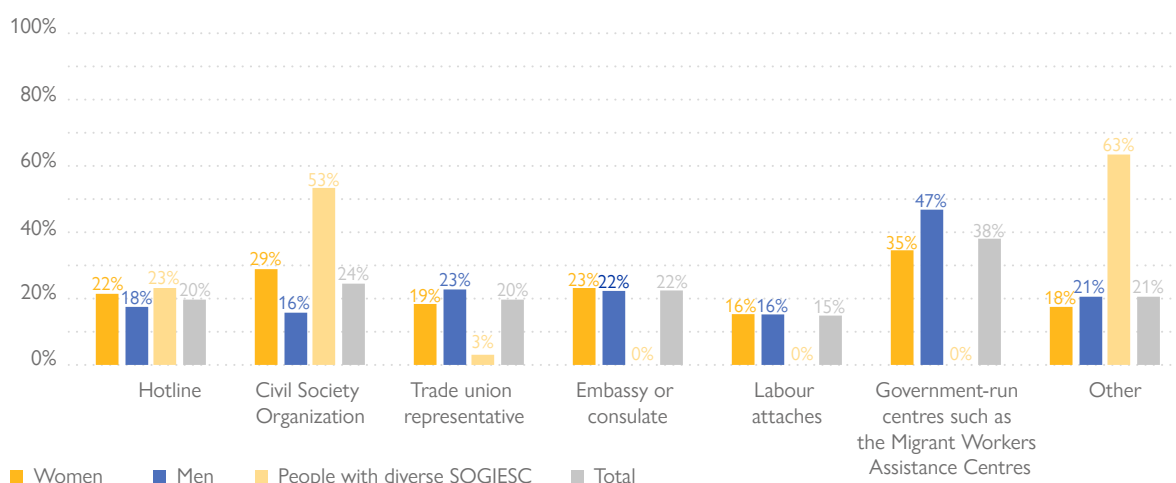
5.1 SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

5.1.1 Harassment, Movement Restrictions and Discrimination in Thailand

Among stayees, reported levels of harassment in the workplace did not see a notable spike following the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 5 per cent respondents who stayed in Thailand indicated they

were victims of harassment or discrimination in the workplace prior to March 2020, with no difference across genders. Reported harassment did not change noticeably during COVID-19.¹⁸ Around half (45%) of surveyed migrants were aware or knew of a recourse to complain if abuses happened to them in the workplace with no gender difference. At least 20 per cent of the respondents selected each of the following places to lodge their complaints: CSOs,

FIGURE 27. MOST COMMON COMPLAINT MECHANISMS BY GENDER (STAYEES)



embassies, hotline and trade union representatives. However, the most used channel was that of Government centres such as the Migrant Workers Assistance Centres (34%). While men and women both most commonly complained to Government centres, women (29%) were markedly more likely to complain to CSOs than men (16%). There was little difference across genders in likeliness to access the remaining complaints mechanisms.

Although many of the surveyed migrants knew about complaints channels, only 41 respondents had ever registered a complaint and only 25 of those said that the complaint they lodged was addressed. Consistent with prevailing research on the subject, these findings suggest it is not lack of avenues for complaint that lead to exploitation or harassment going unreported, but rather structural reasons such as informal and unstable working conditions and fear of retaliation,

18. Enumerators noted that some respondents were hesitant to answer these questions, as they perceived them as risky. They also noted how abuse and harassment would most likely and most often come from the employer in the form of wage theft and exploitation. Respondents were likely hesitant to discuss any harassment or abuse in the workplace because they think it potentially jeopardizes their job or finding a job in the future. For the same reason, they rarely report harassment to official channels.

conditions that have further deteriorated because of COVID-19 (Harkins et al., 2017).

Although harassment was not widely reported, possibly because respondents did not readily identify issues such as movement restrictions as harassment in the survey, qualitative interviewees addressed restrictions on migrant workers' movement and discrimination against migrants. One key informant reported that many Myanmar families live in rural camp-like settings in Tak province on the Myanmar border to work in agriculture or in manufacturing

businesses such as garment factories, many only possessing temporary border pass visas or "village headman cards" that serve as temporary permits to work in one specific area. Their lack of other formal work documentation restricts their movement to this area without being subject to arrest. With reduced agricultural production following COVID-19 and decreased demand from production factories, many Myanmar migrant workers are unemployed or in search of other work outside the area where they are permitted to work, potentially subjecting them to arrest or deportation.

BOX 1. KEY INFORMANTS RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON MIGRANTS' MOVEMENT

Accounts show employers limiting migrant workers' contact with the outside world, tracking their movements and forcing them to have escorts, particularly during the second (December 2020) and third (March 2021) waves of the pandemic. One key informant described:

"I have a friend who does business in a restaurant. Migrants working there are not allowed to contact their friends outside the company because they are worried someone will spread COVID. In Samut Sakhon in particular, they were worried migrants might have a friend who comes to visit. If a customer heard there was a visitor from Samut Sakhon, they would not buy the product."

Another key informant recounted how some construction employers force migrants to have escorts to move around:

"During COVID-19 the big camp is going to be still in lockdown so migrants can't move. Other camps¹⁹ with no case yet escort migrant workers from camps to worksites and do not allow them to contact other people."

A migrant representative also noted how migrants in construction work who need to move between provinces fear arrest due to these policies.

At least three key informants also noted concerns that companies "seal off" factories upon finding positive cases to avoid closure, and one also noted that companies were sending workers who tested positive back to their countries of origin. One such informant said, "For this wave (December 2020) of the pandemic, many factories did not report [cases] to officials because they are afraid it will be like the first wave. When the Government found infection cases, they closed the factories, so they don't report, and this causes further cases." Issues such as severe movement restriction and companies hiding COVID-19 cases from labour inspections are particularly concerning for migrant workers who often have no way to complain or take action in such situations.

19. Construction workers often live in makeshift camps either on-site or nearby the sites where they are working.



A woman biking in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

5.1.2 Access to social protection

Few respondents were enrolled in any form of social protection scheme and even fewer had accessed any provisions during COVID-19. Only one quarter (24%) of respondents said they were enrolled in any

kind of public or private sector benefit scheme as of March 2021. This percentage is consistent with a finding from 2017 that found 20 per cent of returnees interviewed had been enrolled in a public or private benefit scheme during their tenure in Thailand.²⁰

BOX 2. SOCIAL PROTECTION ENTITLEMENTS FOR REGULAR MIGRANT WORKERS

Thailand has three social protection programmes available for regular migrant workers, with differential access depending on the type of regular status the migrant worker has. These are the Social Security Fund (SSF) Article 33, the Workmen's Compensation Fund (WCF) and the Migrant Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS). The SSF and WCF are mandatory for eligible migrant workers whereas the MHIS is a voluntary scheme. Social protection programmes available to regular migrant workers is shown below based on their migration status.

In March 2020, the Thai Social Security Board began offering financial assistance to workers registered under the Social Security Fund who had either lost their jobs or were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple packages have been announced during the pandemic, but under the package announced in March, employees (including migrant workers) of businesses that closed during the applicable period were entitled to 50 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 7,500 THB, for a 6-month period. Employees (including migrant workers) of businesses suspended by the Royal Thai Government, such as pubs and entertainment venues, are entitled to 50 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 7,500 THB, for a 2-month period.

Employees (including migrant workers) who are dismissed during the applicable period due to issues related to COVID-19 are entitled to 70 per cent, up to an amount not exceeding 10,500 THB, of their basic salary for a 200-day period. Employees (including migrant workers) who resigned for reasons related to COVID-19 effects are entitled to 45 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 6750 THB, for a 3-month period.

20. Harkins et al., 2017.

Of the 300 respondents enrolled a social protection scheme, 58 per cent were enrolled in the Migrant

Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) and 44 per cent were enrolled in the (SSF).

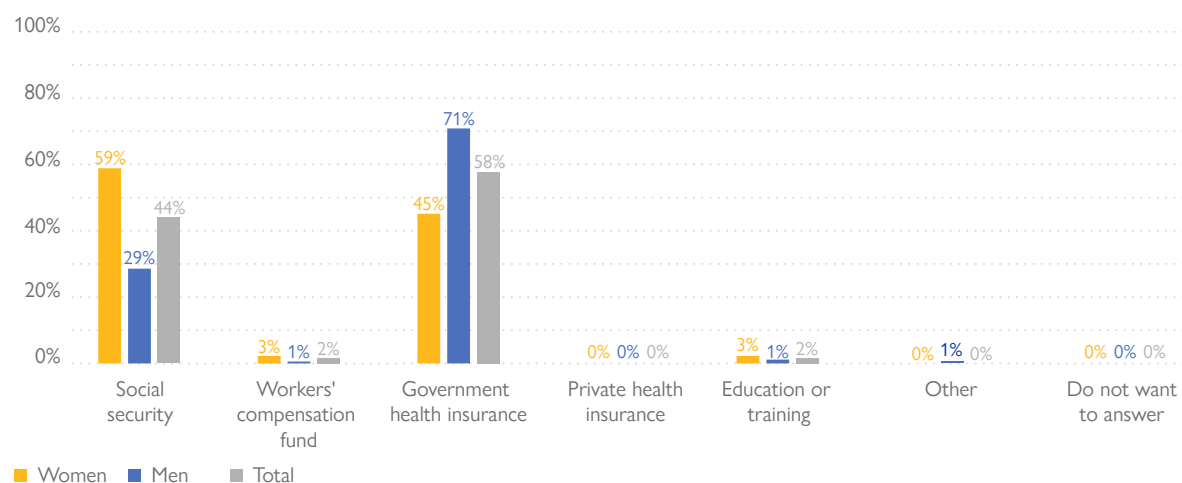
TABLE 15. ENROLMENT ELIGIBILITY IN SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES IN THAILAND

Migration status	Sector of employment	Social Security Fund (A33)	Workmen's Compensation Fund	Migrant Health Insurance Scheme
MoU migrant workers	Temporary and seasonal work	X	✓	✓
	Street vending and domestic work	X	X	✓
	All other sectors defined by the Ministry of Labour	✓	✓	X
Regularized migrant workers (NV process)	Temporary and seasonal work	X	✓	✓
	Street vending and domestic work	X	X	✓
	All other sectors	✓	✓	X
Border pass migrant workers	Temporary employment and domestic work	X	X	✓
	Working for a business establishment in year-round employment	✓	✓	✓
Irregular status	All sectors of employment	X	X	X

Migrants' enrolment in social protection schemes was influenced by their gender, nationality and length of time spent in Thailand. Women (59%) were twice as likely to be enrolled in the SSF than men (29%) while men (71%) were more likely to be enrolled in the MHIS than women (45%). In addition, almost all the surveyed migrants who were enrolled in either of these social protection schemes were Myanmar: 29 per cent of Myanmar migrants were enrolled compared to only one Cambodian respondent and

2 Laotian respondents (<1%). Notably, 82 per cent of the Myanmar respondents who were enrolled in a social protection scheme had arrived to Thailand prior to 2017, possibly suggesting longer-term migrants were more likely to be enrolled. A key informant who represented a business association suggested a reason for this could be that migrants who have been in Thailand for longer were more likely to understand how these systems work.

FIGURE 28. TYPES OF ENROLMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES BY GENDER (STAYEES)



Even when migrants retain the qualifying documentation, they were unlikely to be aware that benefits were made available to them during COVID-19 or to have accessed them. Most survey respondents (78%) were unaware that the Royal Thai Government was offering compensation to workers who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 under the SSF.²¹ Among migrants who were aware of the Social Security compensation scheme, few had tried to access any benefits. Of the 283 respondents who were aware of the Social Security compensation scheme, 257 (90%) had not yet tried to access compensation or benefits. Reasons provided were, not qualifying (54%) and not knowing how to access the fund (47%). An additional 25 per cent said they did not have the necessary documents and 17 per cent said their employers did not register them. These results are unsurprising as the Thai Social Security Office reported that only 27,882 migrants had applied for unemployment benefits from March to May of 2020 of an estimated 3.9 million migrants in Thailand (United Nations, 2020). Access could also have been low because due to the sampling strategy applied, most migrants surveyed did not lose their jobs or take time off.²²

Migrants' lack of access to social protection is a result of a combination of factors, namely not having the qualifying documentation, doing informal work, and not understanding the processes and procedures entailed, particularly since enrolment depends on employers. Lack of access is also due to exclusions based on sectors, as regular workers employed in

domestic or temporary work such as seasonal agriculture, forestry and livestock are not covered by the SSF (IOM, forthcoming). Key informants noted how small businesses with informal workers are unlikely to enroll migrants in social protection schemes. One key informant said, **“For the big companies, they usually put the workers under the scheme because it is safe for them and they don’t want to go against the law. But for small businesses, they will not put their workers under that scheme so they don’t have any protection under that law.”** Another potential reason is because migrants change jobs frequently and the scheme requires workers to have been on the job for a minimum period before qualifying.²³

Instead of relying on formal social protection schemes, most migrants reported depending on assistance from NGOs and charities and sometimes from their employers to support themselves during COVID-19. A key informant working for an NGO said, “[during the March 2020 lockdown], migrants were provided with food by the public. Local people and some organizations had to give them food and so that they can survive. Even the Royal Family provided a mobile kitchen to provide food to the migrant workers. So migrant workers got free food and some belongings.” Migrant and employer key informants described how some employers provided accommodation and food. A 29-year-old Laotian woman in the hotel industry said, “I was blessed that my boss gave me food and a place to stay. The boss said I can come eat at the shop.” An employer described having provided

-
21. In March 2020, the Social Security Board began offering financial assistance to workers registered under the Social Security Fund who had either lost their jobs or were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers who have lost their jobs due to business closures provided 50 per cent of their salaries – with a ceiling of up to 15,000 THB – for a maximum of 180 days. Workers suspended because of the Royal Thai Government's order that certain businesses temporarily close, were also paid 50 per cent of their salaries, with the same 15,000 THB, but for no more than 60 days.
 22. The sample for this study likely does not fully reflect the unemployment rate of migrants, which is likely high. According to figures published by the Thai Social Security Office, unemployment claims by insured migrant workers increased 30-fold, from 2 per cent in 2019 to nearly half of all claims made to the SSF in 2020, implying an increasing number of unemployed migrant workers. A 2020 report published by ILO, report also mentions that as many as 700,000 migrant workers, mostly in tourism, services and construction industries, have lost their jobs since the beginning of the pandemic.
 23. Each benefit requires a different contribution period before the recipient is eligible to receive the benefit. Health care and disability benefits require three months of contributions; maternity protection requires five months of contributions; unemployment benefits require six months of contributions; child allowance requires six months of contributions; and monthly pension requires 180 months (15 years) of contributions.

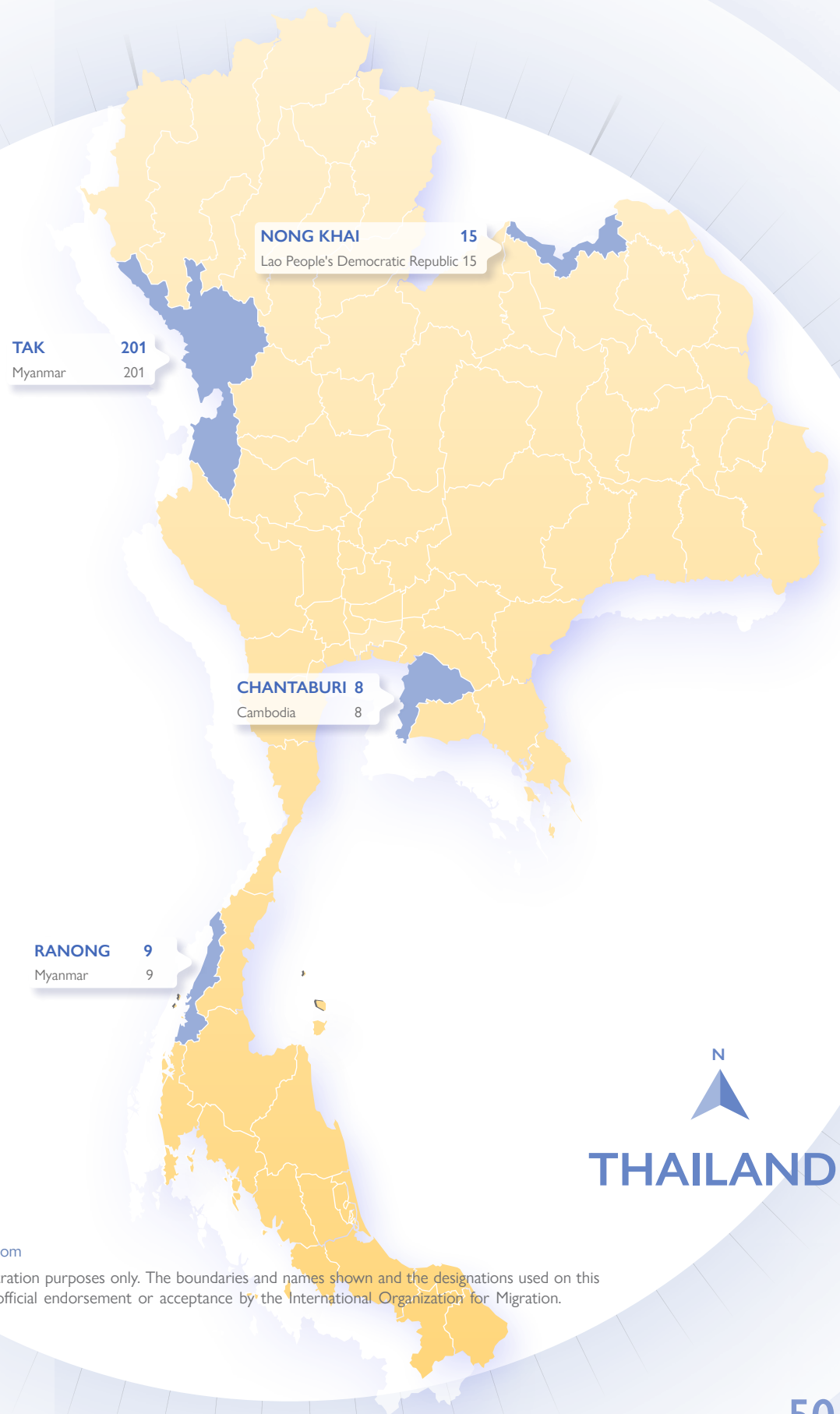
accommodation for many restaurant workers during lockdowns: "When the restaurant was closed, we provided food and housing for them, all 59 people. We fed them dinner daily and handed out cash to the staff every 10 days. We provided for them during the closure so that when we reopen, they can all come back to work for us immediately." In the absence of systematic support, migrants have turned to their immediate networks for assistance in times of need during the pandemic.

5.1.3. Access to Health Care

Overall, surveyed migrants reported having access to some form of health care. About 83 per cent indicated they had access to at least one kind of health-care service, with no gender variation. However, there was provincial variation, where almost all migrants reported having access to health care in Chonburi (99%) and Ranong (98%), but only 64 per cent had access in Tak Province. Of the 1,123 respondents who said they had access to health care, 82 per cent had access to a public hospital, while the remaining had access either to a private hospital (16%), received services through an NGO (5%) or had some other form of health care. Most of the 246 respondents who said they did not have access were Myanmar workers in Tak province. Of this group, almost three quarters (73%) said it was because they could not afford health care. A possible reason for this offered by a key informant who works for an NGO in Tak province is that the area is rural and located along a porous border where many migrants only have 90-day work permits or border passes, which confine them to a specific area and do not provide SSF coverage. There are also garment factories in the area and these employers may not readily allow employees to seek health services outside the compound. In a few cases, migrants reported not having access to health care because the hospital was too far away (19%) or because they were afraid of being reported to the authorities (9%).

Although most migrants have access to some form of health care, gaps in coverage and reports of discrimination exist. Key informants working with a trade union received complaints of unequal treatment of migrants within the hospitals or "public treatment areas". One respondent reported, "[at the public COVID-19 treatment centres] migrants sleep on the floor but Thai people are on beds in the public nursing area." Another migrant interviewee noted that "if you are Laotian, some hospitals require payment before providing care". In addition, a representative working for an NGO that assists sex workers noted these workers had no coverage. This respondent said, "Migrant workers in the sex industry have no documentation and have to pay out of pocket for their medicines or for a health-care package." Key informants went on to further note that transgender workers are unable to afford hormone treatment, which has a negative impact on their mental health: "We have to continue to use hormones, but in the COVID-19 situation, there are many people with low income who have to choose between hormones or food. So we worry about the lack of hormone levels in these people, which can affect mental health." Although health-care access for migrants in Thailand is high, it does not cover everyone equally.

MAP 3. NUMBER OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS WHO REPORTED NOT HAVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE BY PROVINCE AND NATIONALITY



Source: pixelmap.amcharts.com

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

5.2 IMPACT ON MIGRATION STATUS

5.2.1 Migration Status Prior to COVID-19

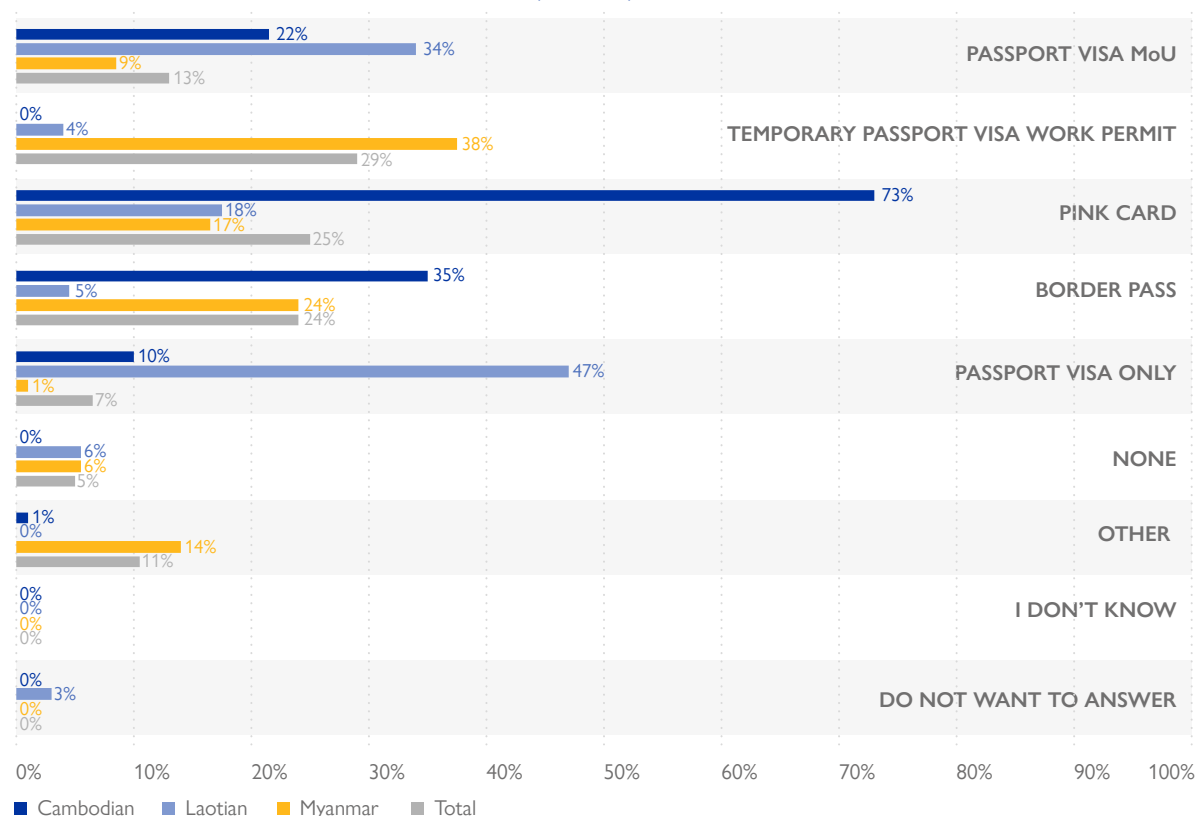
Most surveyed stayees held at least some form of documentation prior to COVID-19, but not necessarily adequate documentation to have regular status. Overall, 26 per cent of respondents held a temporary work visa, 22 per cent held a pink card, 22 per cent reported having a border pass and only 11 per cent held a passport, visa and work permit.

There was variation by nationality in terms of documentation status. Migrants from Myanmar were more likely to hold a temporary passport/certificate of identity, visa and work permit (38%) or a border pass (24%) while Cambodians were more likely to hold a pink card (52%) or a border pass (25%),

suggesting that more migrants from Myanmar had undergone the more recent National Verification process and that the majority of migrant workers from both countries arrived in Thailand without work permits and later regularized their status. Laotians most commonly possessed passports and entry visas only (40%) suggesting they were less likely to obtain work permits through the regular channels.

Cambodians in the sample were the most likely to have irregular status compared to counterparts from the other two countries. One possible reason is that travelling irregularly to Thailand from Cambodia took on average 33 days and cost about 992 THB in 2017 and to travel under the MoU in 2017 took 136 days and cost 3,870 THB (Harkins et al., 2017).

FIGURE 29. DOCUMENTATION BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



Only 15 per cent of Cambodians, 8 per cent of Myanmar and 30 per cent of Laotians held passports, visas and work permits – these documents are associated with regular migration under the MoU. These findings serve as further evidence that irregular pathways remain the most widespread modes of labour migration, likely because of higher costs and complicated, time-consuming processes associated with regular migration through pathways established under labour migration MoUs between Thailand and Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. These data also indicate that migrant workers were using regularization windows when offered by the Royal Thai Government.

5.2.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Migration Status

Maintaining regular migration status has become complex and expensive during COVID-19 for stayees and the system for regularizing established in response to the pandemic was largely inaccessible to them. Whereas prior to the COVID-19 outbreak workers would need to travel back to their home countries to renew their work permits, throughout the course of 2020 and 2021, the Royal Thai Government periodically opened an in-country process for workers to regularize their migration status.²⁴ This process was meant to be initiated by the employers and required migrants to go through multiple steps, each incurring costs. Steps included

obtaining a negative PCR COVID-19 test (at a cost of 3,000 THB), health check (1,000 THB for 2 years), 2-year health insurance (3,200 THB for those not eligible to enroll in the SSF), and applying for a visa (1,800 THB per year), work permit and pink card (1,980 THB for 2 years).

Migrants could not access this process for several reasons, including that it was employer-dependent, prohibitively expensive, and because of language and technological literacy barriers. Because the registration system was designed to be undertaken by employers, migrants working informally or whose employers did not want to register them would not be able to access it.²⁵ According to three key informants, many employers were not covering the cost of regularization and pushing the cost onto migrants who were largely unable to afford it.²⁶ In total, this process could amount to 8,000–9,000 THB, which is more than a month's salary at the minimum wage (7,512 THB). Migrants often depend on brokers who charge additional fees to facilitate this process, meaning the associated costs are likely even higher. Furthermore, this system was online and in Thai only, meaning non-Thai speaking migrants and those who struggle to use online portals may not have been able to fully understand the process. Given these shortcomings, it seems unlikely that all migrants will be able to obtain regular status by March 2022, as has been mandated by the Royal Thai Government.

24. Since the start of the pandemic in late March 2020, the Royal Thai Government opened three rounds of registrations in August, November and December 2020.

25. Unemployed migrants could also register but were required to find an employer to sponsor them by September 2021.

26. This process was supposed to cost less as migrant workers were not required to travel back to their countries of origin, but the visa fee increased from 500 THB to 1,900 THB and the process involved the additional cost of COVID-19 test.

BOX 3. SHORTCOMINGS IN THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

A Cambodian NGO worker described the challenges he observed for migrants accessing this process:

"There was a website for the employer... [the applicant] had to prepare personal data, ID card for the app and apply online. Later they had to go to the office to see the Ministry of Labour officials in person. The issue is that they cannot go through the process of applying for pink card because they do not know how to. It was complicated and they had to pay a lot of money. Normal people don't know how to apply for that because of their knowledge of technology and education. It doesn't make sense to them. Also, there was only one month where it was possible to apply. How can 2 million people apply in one month?"

A woman worker in the hotel industry, from Lao People's Democratic Republic, described her difficulties in getting a valid work permit:

"I applied for a work permit several times to access social security but was cheated twice (asked to pay substantial money and person disappeared – no work permit). I am afraid to apply again because of this bad experience. I'm not sure if these persons were from an authorized company. I trusted them because they were known to my sister, and I also spent time with that person socially – but once I paid the money the persons disappeared. Now I have applied for a labour card online and am still waiting for it to be granted".

Employers also shared their concerns over the regularization imperative:

In an interview, one fishing sector employer explained the impact of workers needing to apply for work permits continuously:

"We are concerned about the expiry of their work permits; however, we still have to bear the burden of employing them. In the fisheries sector, the tradition is that workers will request wages in advance so if the wages have already been paid, how will we be able to employ them any longer if their work permits cannot be renewed? If the workers have to re-register, they might run away to find a new employment elsewhere. There are a lot of workers who run away to find a new employer."

5.3 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STAYEES

5.3.1 Employment Status, Income and Job sectors prior to COVID-19

Prior to the March–June 2020 lockdown, women worked mostly in the manufacturing, domestic work and restaurant sectors while men worked in construction, manufacturing, agriculture or fishing. The most common sectors of work overall were the manufacturing and construction sectors, which employed 16 per cent of respondents (each).

Respondents who were construction workers were almost all Cambodian men working in Trat Province and Myanmar men working in Ranong and

Tak provinces. Migrants employed in manufacturing were almost all from Myanmar and working in Tak province, with more women (57%) than men (43%) represented. The hospitality, tourism and restaurant sector employed 13 per cent of the sample and employed Cambodian and Laotian men and women across a range of provinces. Seafood processing was the fourth most common sector of work, representing 12 per cent of the sample and mostly comprised of Myanmar and Cambodian women working in Ranong. Due to having over-sampled entertainment and sex workers to ensure representation of people with diverse SOGIESC, people with diverse SOGIESC were mostly Laotian and were mostly working in entertainment and sex work.



0

Average decrease in working days per week



-0.1

Average decrease in working hours per day



-9%

Average decrease in income



9%

Percentage of surveyed migrants who lost their jobs during lockdown



8%

Percentage of surveyed migrants who were unemployed at the time of survey



3%

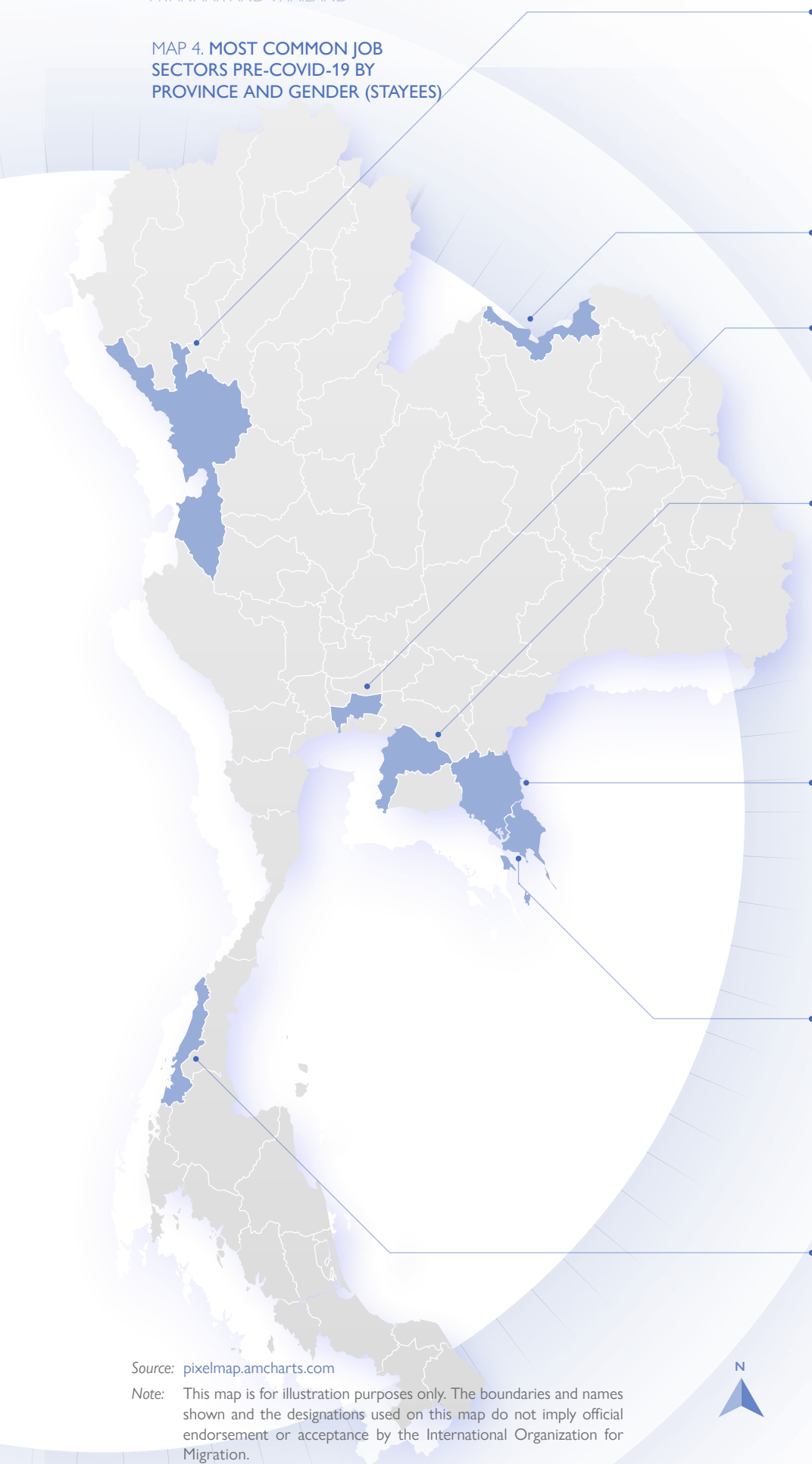
Percentage of surveyed migrants who received compensation from social security during lockdown



74%

Percentage of surveyed migrants who continued working at the same job before COVID-19 and at the time of survey

MAP 4. MOST COMMON JOB
SECTORS PRE-COVID-19 BY
PROVINCE AND GENDER (STAYEES)



Source: pixelmap.amcharts.com

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

WOMEN MEN PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE SOGIESC

TAK	377
Agriculture	71
Myanmar	41 30
Construction	91
Myanmar	77 14
Manufacturing	168
Myanmar	60 108
NONGKHAH	4
Restaurant	4
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2 2
BANGKOK	18
Manufacturing	12
Lao People's Democratic Republic	5 7
Restaurant	6
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1 5
CHANTABURI	43
Agriculture	29
Cambodia	16 13
Construction	1
Cambodia	1
Restaurant	13
Cambodia	4 9
CHONBURI	45
Construction	3
Myanmar	3
Manufacturing	7
Cambodia	4 1
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1
Myanmar	1
Restaurant	35
Cambodia	3 7
Lao People's Democratic Republic	5 2 11
Myanmar	6 1
TRAT	48
Agriculture	2
Cambodia	1 1
Construction	33
Cambodia	32 1
Seafood processing	33
Cambodia	32 1
RANONG	301
Agriculture	12
Myanmar	10 2
Construction	93
Myanmar	87 6
Manufacturing	28
Myanmar	17 11
Restaurant	15
Myanmar	1 14
Seafood processing	153
Myanmar	27 126

The remaining 43 per cent of respondents were employed in a variety of sectors, including agriculture (8%), retail market (8%), fishing (7%), domestic work (7%) food processing (3%), and as vehicle mechanics (2%), among other industries.²⁷ A small number of workers were working in more than one job (6%) but almost all were working in one job, suggesting workers were largely dependent on a single employer.

Spotlight: impact of COVID-19 on migrants with SOGIESC

To ensure representation of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics in the study, IOM worked with a non-profit in Chonburi province that supports transgender workers. IOM interviewed 38 people with diverse SOGIESC, that is, 3 per cent of the total sample. Respondents who identified as people with diverse SOGIESC were mostly Laotian (27 individuals) and Cambodian (10 individuals) and one Myanmar respondent. It should be noted that people with diverse SOGIESC were over-represented among the Lao sample, which had only 125 respondents. Almost all people with diverse SOGIESC were young, as 92 per cent were aged 18–25 years.

In addition to the survey respondents, one employer and three migrant workers who participated in the qualitative interviews also identified as people with diverse SOGIESC.

Prior to the pandemic, people with diverse SOGIESC were mostly working in entertainment and sex work. Twenty-seven individuals (71%) people with diverse SOGIESC were working in these sectors. An additional five individuals (13%) were working in restaurants and the remainder worked in hospitality, tourism, retail and other jobs. Most people (72%) with diverse SOGIESC were in Thailand with their passports and visas only.

Because entertainment, sex work and restaurant jobs are public-facing and close contact jobs, people with diverse SOGIESC were particularly hard-hit by the lockdown orders. During COVID-19, one third (34%) of people with diverse SOGIESC reported losing

their jobs compared with 9 per cent of the overall sample. Almost half (44%) of those in entertainment and sex work reported they were forced to take 2–3 months off and then later returned, and only one person reported receiving an income during this time. A key informant who works with migrants in the sex work industry observed that many of these workers stopped working during the initial lockdown period and then found ways to find customers online.

At the time of the survey, almost all people (95%) with diverse SOGIESC reported they had returned to work, but many had changed jobs. At least 11 individuals left their work in the entertainment and sex work sector due to the pandemic and started working in restaurants, with most stating this was because their previous employers had to close their businesses.

People with diverse SOGIESC reported longer working hours and earning far higher incomes prior to COVID-19 compared with men and women migrants in other sectors. However, their current earnings were far lower than their pre-COVID incomes and were closer to the incomes of men and women migrants in other sectors. All people with diverse SOGIESC had been remitting to their countries of origin prior to COVID-19, but at the time of the survey only 61 per cent reported they had been able to continue sending money, and most said their families were receiving less money.

People with diverse SOGIESC had access to health care (97%), but not always the full care they needed. One key informant noted that transgender people were struggling to access the care they needed during COVID-19, particularly hormonal treatments. No people with diverse SOGIESC were enrolled in any form of benefit scheme or had accessed social security compensation.

TABLE 16. SURVEYED MIGRANTS WITH DIVERSE SOGIESC

Migrants with diverse SOGIESC			
Cambodian	Laotian	Myanmar	Total
10	27	1	38

27. The same classification will be used to analyse the datasets for Thai employers and SER survey of returnees in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic.

5.3.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Jobs and Employment Status

Impact on Employment

Except for those working in tourism-focused jobs, migrants who stayed in Thailand continued working during the pandemic in most sectors. Most respondents (65%) said they kept working during the lockdown while 18 per cent said they were asked to take time off then later returned. Most (80%) of the 313 surveyed migrants who were given time off said they weren't paid for this period, while 18 per cent said they were either partially or fully paid during their time off. A further 48 per cent said they came back to reduced wages after the lockdown. A quarter (25%) of surveyed migrants reported they were not employed at all during the lockdown in April, May and June of 2020, with women (27%) more likely to have been unemployed than men (19%). Unemployed women were typically Myanmar (12%) who had been working in the hospitality, tourism and restaurant sectors while unemployed men were also Myanmar (7%) and typically in construction.

According to the Cabinet Resolution in March 2020, employees who lose their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be entitled to various compensation plans – including migrant workers who contribute to the SSF for no less than six months. Detailed compensation plans are summarized below:

- Employees (including migrant workers) of businesses that close during the applicable period are entitled to 50 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 7,500 THB, for a 6-month period.
- Employees (including migrant workers) of businesses suspended by the Royal Thai Government, such as pubs and entertainment venues, are entitled to 50 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 7,500 THB, for a 2-month period.

- Employees (including migrant workers) who are dismissed during the applicable period due to issues related to COVID-19 are entitled to 70 per cent, up to an amount not exceeding 10,500 THB of their basic salary for a 200-day period.
- Employees (including migrant workers) who resign for reasons related to COVID-19 effects are entitled to 45 per cent of their basic salary, up to an amount not exceeding 6,750 THB, for a 3-months period (IOM, 2020a).

Slightly fewer (61%) of those who came after 2017 retained their jobs, suggesting that migrants are more likely to lose their jobs in a crisis if they arrived recently or have been in the country for a shorter time. Laotian migrants were more likely to have taken time off and then returned, with 33 per cent reporting having done this compared with 25 per cent of Cambodians and 15 per cent of Myanmar. There was little gender variation in terms of job losses during lockdowns, but noticeable variation among provinces and sectors of work, discussed later in this section.

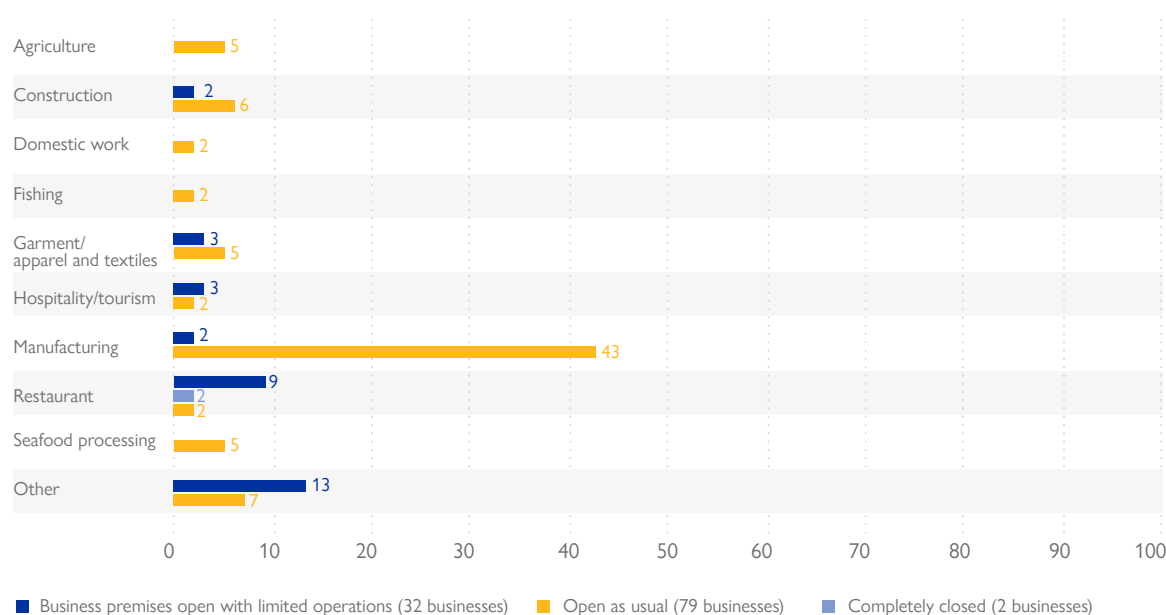
Employers reported that their businesses remained open during the March–June 2020 lockdown, corroborating the finding that migrants continued working during this period. Most businesses assessed had remained open as usual during lockdown: 28 per cent of surveyed business owners in Thailand said that they were open with limited operations between March and November 2020 while two had closed and the rest were open as usual. Businesses that closed or limited operations were typically smaller: 55 per cent of small and micro businesses and 23 per cent of medium businesses were open with limited operations. Only one large business said they were open with limited operations while the remaining 32 large businesses indicated they were open as usual.

Both key informants and surveyed migrants noted that migrants largely continued working during the lockdowns due to the essential nature of their jobs and because of the pressing need for them to

work, as most work for daily wages. A key informant working for an NGO that assists migrant workers noted that “everyone tried to continue to work, and it depended on the type of work. Some places reliant on tourism were really hurt and closed down so people had to find other jobs, normally daily labour like construction... whatever it was, they were willing to do it.” Combined with the fact that 24 per cent of returnees reported having returned to their countries of origin due to job losses, these

findings suggest job losses were concentrated among small, informal businesses and that most migrants felt it was better to stay in Thailand and try to continue working than to return home. It is likely this remains the case in 2021, as borders remain closed and migration flows from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar are still low relative to the overall number of migrants living in Thailand.²⁸

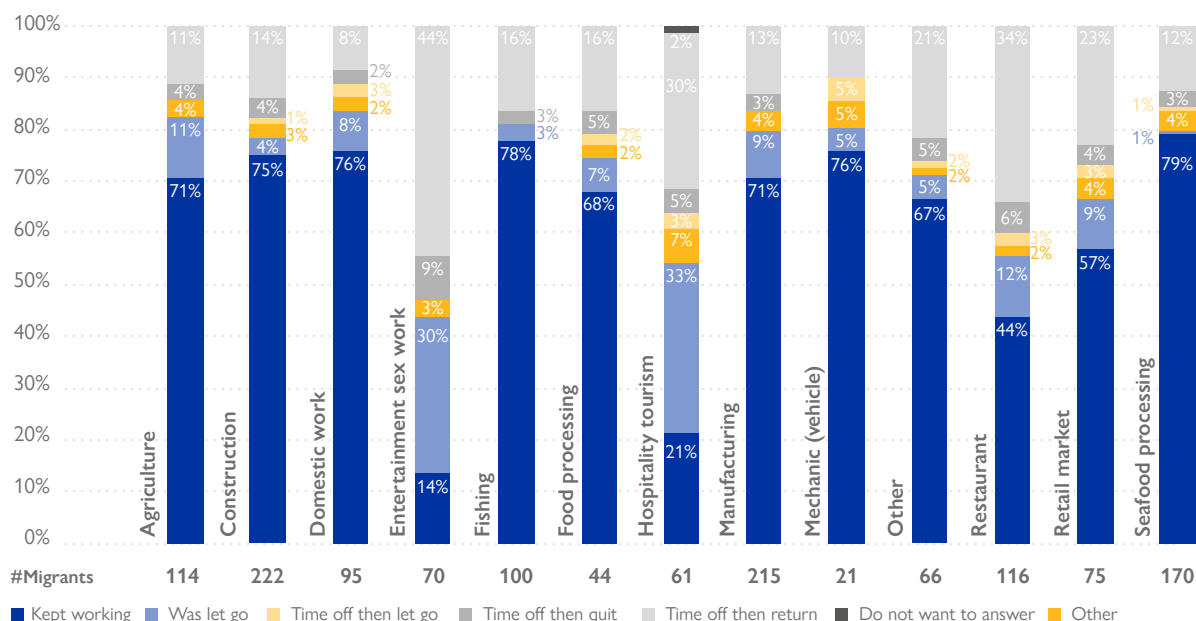
FIGURE 30. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BUSINESS DURING LOCKDOWN? BY SECTOR



28. According to the most recent data from the Thai Government immigration services, the outflow of Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar workers was 16,709 individuals between January and April 2021, with most departures consisting of Laotians (9,032), Myanmar (6,549) and Cambodians (1,228).



FIGURE 31. RESPONSES TO: WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MAIN JOB DURING LOCKDOWN? (STAYEES)



Job losses

Overall, one in ten (10%) of the respondents were let go from their main job during the lockdown and another 4 per cent were asked to take time off then later quit. Hospitality and service jobs were the hardest hit: migrants working in the hospitality sector (33% of those working in this sector) were the most likely of any sector to have been let go, followed by the entertainment sector (30% of those working in this sector). Most of these workers were in Chonburi Province. Notably, two thirds of the hospitality, tourism and restaurant business assessed in the employer survey were open with limited operations and the two businesses that closed were from these sectors, corroborating that the most significant losses were in these sectors. A July 2020 assessment of Thai Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) also found that “informal and part-time employees were more likely to be laid off,” and that migrant workers most commonly held those positions (The Asia Foundation, 2020).

The entertainment and/or sex worker and hospitality sectors that were a part of this survey let go of over 30 per cent of workers. Of stayees, Laotian workers in entertainment and sex work, all of whom were women, and people with diverse SOGIESC in Chonburi most commonly reported having taken time off and returned, typically after 2–3 months. Nearly half (44%) of entertainment and sex workers overall reported this was the case. A key informant who works with migrants in the sex work industry observed that many of these workers stopped working during the initial lockdown period and then found ways to find customers online. A small number of mostly women Myanmar agriculture workers in Tak Province also reported disproportionate job losses compared with other sectors. Compared to the entertainment and sex work sectors, the proportion of migrants in other sectors who lost their jobs during lockdowns was less than 10 per cent.

Employment status at the time of survey

Migrants given time off

Of surveyed migrants who said they were employed at the time of the survey but were on time off (50 surveyed migrants), 40 per cent worked in the manufacturing sector. Of these, 36 (65%) were generating some income, mostly from a partial income paid by their employers. Survey enumerators observed that people who were taking time off were daily workers who know an employer who employs them regularly, but at the time of the survey the employer had asked them to stop working, with the understanding that once the employer has work available, they will call the migrant to return to work. This shows how daily workers were disproportionately impacted by the lockdowns and how they are beholden to the day-to-day needs of employers, lacking clear employment terms.

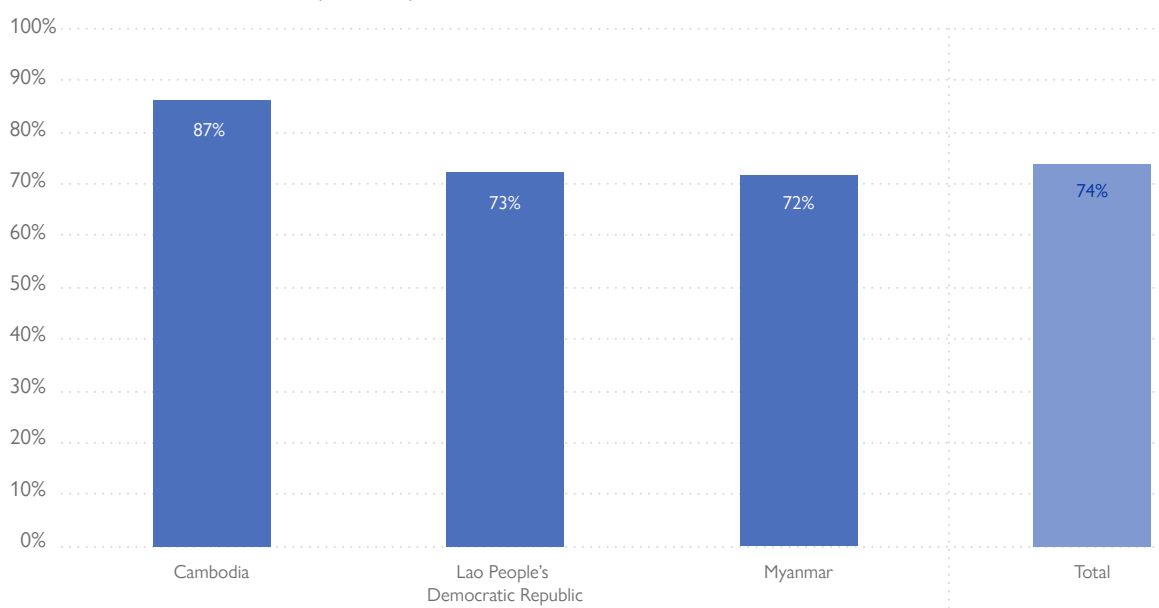
Key informants noted that with curfews and reduced operations, work became less stable for many migrants. One NGO worker observed, **“some people worked two days per week in a formal job, scrambling to find work the rest of the time. Many couples would alternate trying to find**

work between the two of them.” Stakeholders also highlighted that the fluidity of the COVID-19 situation, with periodic lockdowns and continued reductions in business operations, means that those in informal employment are constantly struggling to make ends meet. As one informant put it, “for migrants, it’s no work, no pay.”

Although particular sectors, namely hospitality and service sectors, suffered job losses and significant wage reductions overall, the vast majority of workers (87%) continued working at the same jobs or returned to the same job following time off, with no notable differences across genders. Almost all (93%) of respondents returned to their sector of employment prior to the lockdown and only 7 per cent switched employment sectors, with migrants who switched sectors most commonly in those that experienced the greatest job losses.

As of March 2021, 85 per cent of respondents were working for an employer while only 8 per cent were unemployed. Women (10%) were slightly more likely than men (6%) to be unemployed. The remainder were performing unpaid work for family, taking time off from work or were not working for other reasons. One per cent had attempted to open a business or become self-employed. The latter may reflect the

FIGURE 32. PERCENTAGE OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS WHO WORKED AT THE SAME JOB AT THE TIME OF SURVEY AS THEY DID PRE-COVID-19 (STAYEES)



significant barriers and obstacles faced by migrants attempting to start and run their own businesses.²⁹ Employment status was not notably impacted by COVID-19, as migrants were equally likely to work for employers both before and after the March–June 2020 lockdown period.

Of the 111 respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey, 38 per cent said they were let go while 48 per cent quit their jobs. Laotian respondents working in hospitality and entertainment/sex work were the most likely than other nationalities to have lost or quit their employment (24%) at the time of the survey. Notably, around half (46%) of the 111 unemployed respondents had not looked for a job,

and 41 (82%) of them were women. Of the 60 unemployed respondents who tried to look for a job, 42 said that the main challenge was that jobs were not available and another 15 said that they weren't being hired due to their migration status.

The pandemic disproportionately affected women. Eighty per cent of women were able to retain their employment at the time of the survey, as opposed to 88 per cent of men respondents. Women who were either unemployed, doing unpaid work for their families or taking time off were almost all Myanmar women who had been working in agriculture, manufacturing and restaurant businesses in Tak Province on the border with Myanmar.

BOX 4. MIGRANT WORKERS' EXPERIENCES DURING THE MARCH–JUNE 2020 LOCKDOWN

In-depth interviews with migrant workers showed that many were forced to take time off work in the initial period and that working days and hours remained unstable in the foreseeable future.

“During the first outbreak, I did not have work. There was no money at all for about four months. It was very difficult. I was blessed that my boss gave me food and a place to stay. The boss said I could come to eat at the shop. There were no jobs available until I got a job at the hotel, working as temporary staff. Initially I worked two or three days a week. Only recently did I get to work full-time.”

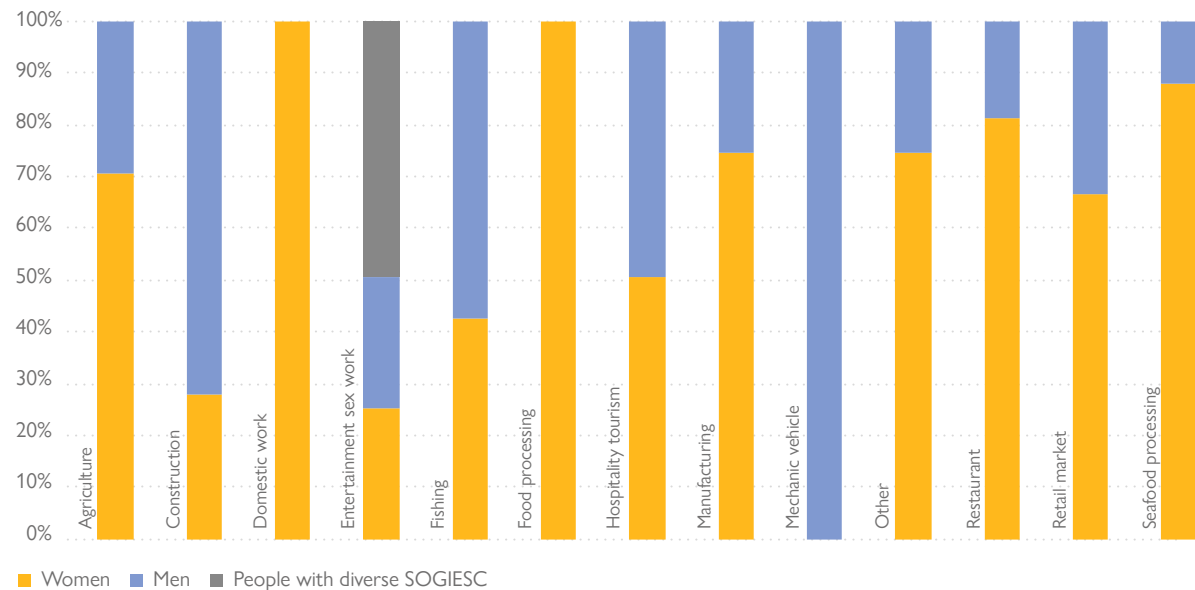
– Woman hotel worker from Cambodia in Chonburi Province

“I was severely affected by COVID-19 because there were no customers or tourists. I had no income and was directly affected. But I am still better off than those in debt like the business owners. We all have to adjust and survive through this period. During the first lockdown, I did not work at all. I didn't even leave my room because I was afraid to go anywhere. I only left my room on occasions, like around 5:00 p.m., and immediately went back to my room once lockdown time began. My co-workers went back home in the provinces or their home countries and only I stayed here. I endured being here alone as much as I could. My friends who went back home also told me not to return home yet as there were no jobs to do either. Some changed to becoming street vendors back in Laos. Also, if I return to Laos now, I would not be able to remigrate to Thailand again because of COVID-19.”

– Person with diverse SOGIESC sex worker in Pattaya, Chonburi province

29. There is very little research on unpaid employment or self-employment by migrant workers in Thailand, although it is known that self-employment is likely to be occurring in the informal economy (OECD and ILO, 2017). These figures may suggest that migrant workers who have resided in Thailand for long periods of time as waged workers have limited options to sustain themselves without waged work during crisis periods while waiting for employment to resume.

FIGURE 33. PRE-COVID-19 JOB SECTOR OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS WHO WERE UNEMPLOYED AT THE TIME OF SURVEY BY GENDER (STAYEES)



5.3.3 Changes to Wages, Income and Working Hours

While most workers continued working in some capacity, findings show COVID-19 destabilized working hours and wages. Findings indicate significant reductions in wages for migrants, both during the lockdown and in the aftermath, with women's wages the most severely impacted. The average monthly income before March 2020 was 9,700 THB across the surveyed respondents. Average income for men was 9,760 THB; for women, it was 9 per cent lower at 8,849 THB. The highest average earnings were in the entertainment and sex work industry at 23,528 THB per month and the lowest average income was

in manufacturing and other sectors, at around 8,400 THB. Domestic workers earned an average of 8151 THB. These findings correlate with global reports of significant wage loss and wage theft experienced by migrant workers because of the pandemic (Migrant Forum in Asia, 2021).

In total, average incomes across the sample reduced by 18 per cent during the first lockdown period of three months before recovering by 11 per cent as of March 2021. However, the current average income levels are still 8 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels.

The lockdown affected women more severely, as their incomes fell but average reported working

TABLE 17. AVERAGE WAGE REDUCTIONS BETWEEN PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY

	Do not want to answer	Women	Men	People with diverse SOGIESC	Total
Cambodia	0%	-14%	-7%	-56%	-14%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	-	-35%	-4%	-60%	-41%
Myanmar	-15%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	-8%	-9%	-2%	-59%	-9%

FIGURE 34. REDUCTIONS IN INCOME AND WORKING TIME FOR MEN AND WOMEN PRE-COVID-19, LOCKDOWN, AND AT TIME OF SURVEY

	PRE-COVID-19	MARCH – JUNE 2020 LOCKDOWN	TIME OF SURVEY
 Average working days per week	6.2	5.7	6.2
 Average working hours	8.2	7.8	8
 Average income	9,700 THB	8,000 THB	8,900 THB

hours remained largely the same as men. This means that, on average, during lockdown women's hourly/daily income rate fell by far more than it did for men. Women's incomes reduced by 18 per cent during the lockdown and recovered by 11 per cent, ending up at an average income THB 8,095 (11% lower to pre-pandemic levels). Men's income reduced by only 10 per cent in comparison and has recovered to nearly pre-pandemic levels. Average income reported for men was only 2 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Although there were instances of long working hours for migrants, they worked an average 8.2 hours on a six day-working week. Thai labour law requires employers to pay workers overtime rates if working hours exceed 48 hours per week. Further, worker must be granted one full rest day in every seven days.

The average number of working hours and days reduced marginally during the lockdown period but had returned to pre-pandemic levels as of March 2021. The manufacturing industry, which usually works in shifts, had the longest working hours, and domestic work had the highest occurrence of 7-day

work weeks. According to ILO's Domestic Worker Convention 189, domestic workers should be granted at least 24 consecutive hours of rest per week. There was no discernible difference across genders in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on working hours.

Almost all the migrants who were interviewed also noted that employers had reduced their wages, explaining that their employers said reductions were largely due to increased operational costs and lower consumer demand. The fact that wages have dropped yet working hours remain largely the same suggests that while demand for migrant workers is similar to pre-pandemic levels, employers may be exploiting the situation to pay migrants lower wages. This decrease confirms concerns raised early in the pandemic about the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns on wages and employment conditions of migrant workers (ICC-IOM, 2020). It also reflects longstanding and ongoing issues with employment conditions experienced by low-wage migrant workers in Thailand (as in many other countries of destination) and their vulnerability to sudden changes of working hours and wages due to largely informal employment arrangements (IOM, 2019).

5.3.4 COVID-19 Workplace Policies, Access to Information

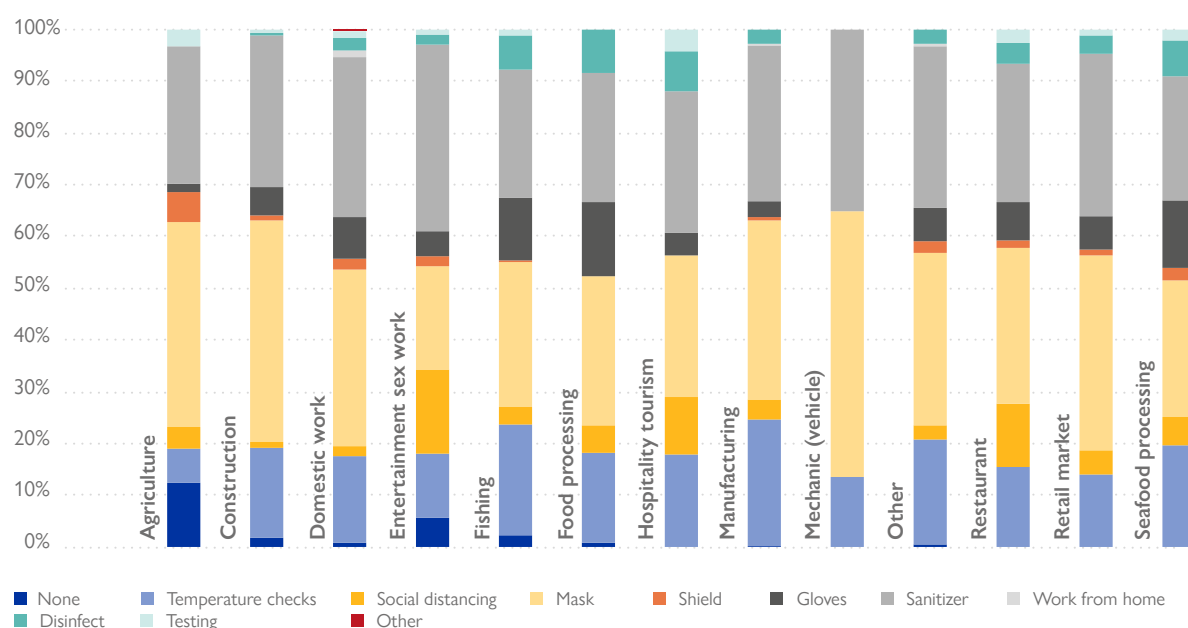
Migrants typically depended on social media to stay informed about COVID-19. Over two thirds (68%) of the respondents said they get their information about COVID-19 from social media (non-direct/public information pages). Other sources included colleagues, friends and family (via messaging apps both from home and in Thailand).

Most migrants reported their workplaces had imposed at least some COVID-19 prevention measures. Respondents most commonly reported that their employers required them to wear masks (92%), use hand sanitizer (79%) and conduct regular temperature checks (51%). Only 15 per cent of migrants reported social distancing as a measure adopted, an issue that is particularly pressing for those working in indoor factory settings. For example, 452 workers in a factory in Mae Sot tested positive for COVID-19 on 28 June 2021 (Bangkok Post, 2021). Frequency of COVID-19 prevention measures varied slightly by sector. Mask usage, sanitizer and social distancing was the lowest in the domestic work, entertainment and sex work sector (76% use of mask

compared with over 91% for all other sectors), likely because these jobs, by nature, require close proximity to others and/or the general public. Surveyed migrants noted how some employers provided masks and sanitizer, but otherwise workers had to source and pay for personal protective equipment for themselves. This expense constitutes an extra cost for workers who are already largely earning below the minimum wage. Although the standard price announced by the Ministry of Commerce for a piece of surgical face mask is 2.5 THB, market prices are much higher depending on demand. At the peak of the outbreak, a sanitary mask could cost as much as 10 THB. This means that a migrant worker who earns the minimum wage has to spend at least one full daily wage to purchase 30 sanitary masks a month. The inflated pricing also applies to hand sanitizer due to the high demand following each outbreak or a Government announcement in relation to COVID-19 prevention and control. Furthermore, migrants face an extra financial burden if they wish to find a new accommodation that is less crowded for themselves and their family members.

Workplace policies granting allowances for workers to seek treatment and receive time off in case they

FIGURE 35. COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES BY SECTOR (STAYEES)



contracted the disease were lacking. While 79 per cent of respondents said that their employer requires them to quarantine should they or another colleague become sick, 88 per cent of respondents said they would not be paid or were not aware of any payment as compensation. None of the migrant key informants had employment situations where they would be protected from losing wages if they contracted COVID-19 or had to quarantine. A representative from the Migrant Working Group noted that “[migrants] feel insecure if they test positive and get sent to the hospital because they are afraid that they would not be able to come back to work and would face difficulties afterwards.” Because migrant workers typically have informal employment situations, the lack of adequate provisions adds to the current insecurity that migrant workers are facing, makes them highly vulnerable to wage loss, and creates conditions that discourage workers from reporting symptoms when they have them.

According to the Labour Protection Act, the employer must pay the workers’ normal wage during the period that the employer instructs the worker to quarantine. However, the worker is entitled to receive half of their monthly wage as an insured of the SSF for 14 days if a certified doctor advises them to quarantine, and for a maximum of 90 days if they are tested positive for COVID-19. In both cases, the employer is not required to pay the worker’s wage during the payment period covered by the SSF. As such, compensation is available to those insured under the SSF only, many migrant workers in informal employment outside the SFF including those hired as daily workers are excluded of this support scheme.

Another option workers may choose to handle the quarantine requirement, is to use a combined quota of paid annual and sick leave, foreseen by law. However, the arrangement still requires approval from the employer, and a sick leave of more than three consecutive days may require a medical certificate depending on the workplace policy. Again, workers hired as daily workers normally do not have such leave benefits.

In addition to the lack of workplace policies on time off in case of COVID-19 infections, key informants raised concerns about migrants needing to bear the cost of COVID-19 testing if they need to move between provinces or change jobs, as testing was only free for those with symptoms as of July 2021. For example, one key informant working for a migrant-focused NGO noted that in some provinces “when [migrants] change employers, [they] have to notify the employment department, but if workers come from another province they have to get a COVID test from the province they are coming from, and then obtain another negative test in the destination province. This costs a lot of money.”

COVID-19 has created an entirely new set of out-of-pocket expenditures for workers, and migrants – particularly those in low-wage employment positions – will likely struggle to cover these expenses. Another consideration for potential returnees is the cost of quarantine upon return, a cost that was expected to be borne by the workers and not employers at the writing of this report.

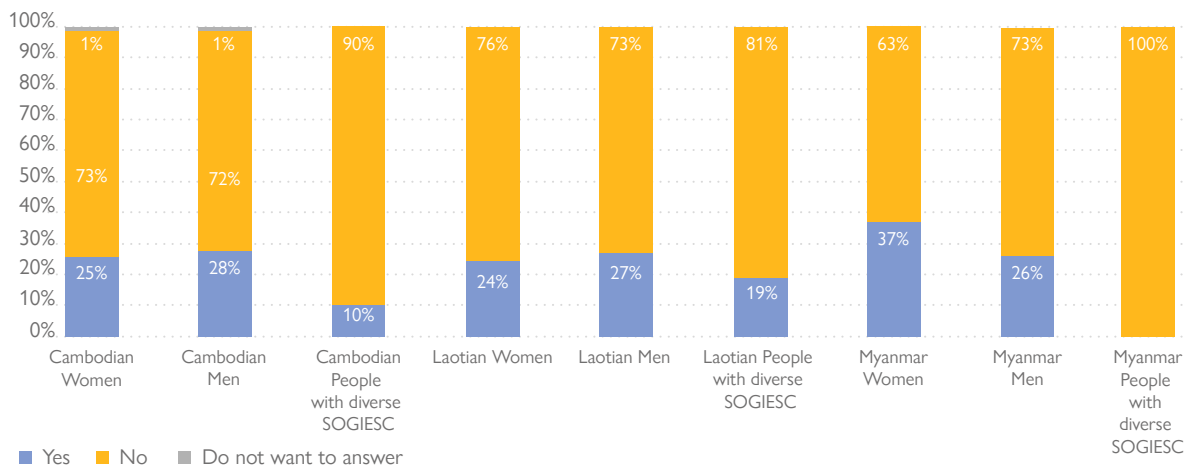
5.3.5 Debt and Remittances

Debt (prior to COVID-19 and at the time of the survey)

Approximately one third (30%) of respondents reported owing debt prior to March 2020. Of migrants who owed before March 2020, 80 per cent were from Myanmar and women (34%) were more likely to owe debt than men (26%). Notably, reported debt levels among returnees were also slightly higher (38%). Prior to the pandemic, the top three reasons for borrowing were household expenses (80%), personal expenses (44%) and to pay off another debt (36%), with little difference across genders. Migrants who had arrived in Thailand before 2017 were more likely to have owed debt than those who arrived in or after 2017.

Approximately one in six (16%) migrants surveyed reported their debt levels had increased following

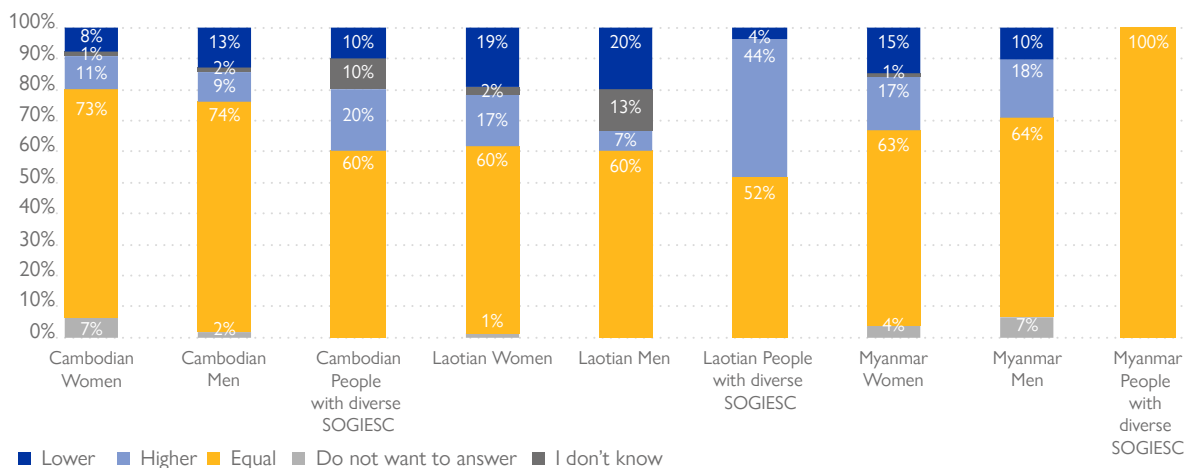
FIGURE 36. RESPONSES TO: DID YOU HAVE DEBT BEFORE MARCH 2020 (PRE-COVID-19)? BY GENDER AND NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



March 2020, with no difference across genders. While similar numbers of men and women owed debt, the average debt owed by women increased more than the average debt for men. Women reported their debt increased by an average of 13,050 THB while men's debt increased by 10,041 THB. Overall, the number of migrants who incurred more debt as a result of COVID-19 was lower than

expected given the significant concern over rising debt levels.³⁰ However, increased debt levels as a result of COVID-19 are concerning, as previous research shows that indebted migrants, who are disproportionately women, are more likely to remain in risky and/or exploitative situations and that needing to return to country of origin abruptly is also linked with having to take on more debt.³¹

FIGURE 37. REPORTED DEBT LEVEL CHANGE BETWEEN PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY (STAYEES)



30. Rapid national assessments conducted globally by ILO in 2020 indicated that migrant worker debts are highly likely to have increased because of COVID. Jones et al., 2021. Low levels of indebtedness could be because wage deductions by employers who finance migration costs are common, but not always considered a debt by workers. This is because employers are providing migrants with advances on their wages, or because employers are facilitating loans for their employees. For example, three migrant key informants mentioned receiving cash advances from their employers to pay for rent, which was later deducted from their salaries.

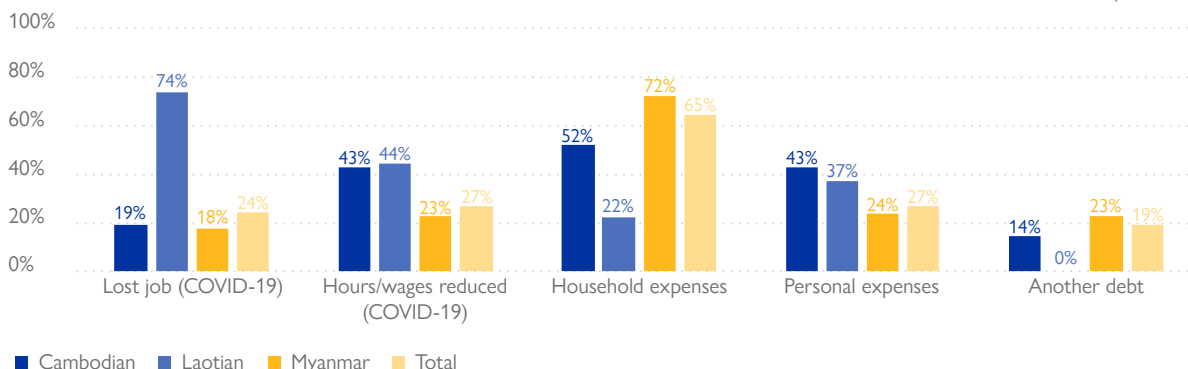
31. IOM, 2019. Debt and the Migration Experience.

Reasons for Increased Debt

Migrants who already owed debt for household and personal expenses continued incurring debt for this reason during COVID-19. The main reason migrants said their debt increased was household expenses (65%) while the second most frequent reason was

to finance personal expenses (27%). For a segment of the surveyed migrant population, it seems that debt to pay for personal and household expenses might be a common occurrence, regardless of the pandemic. This segment is particularly vulnerable to negative income shocks such as those created by the pandemic.

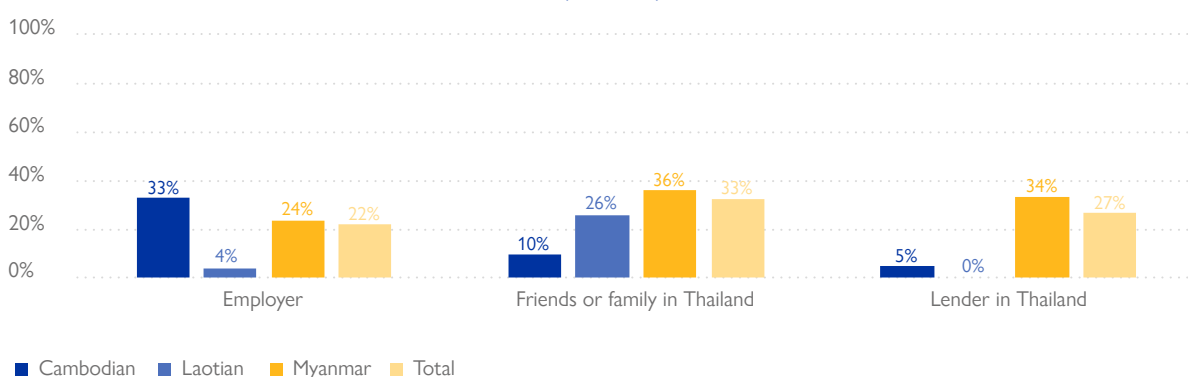
FIGURE 38. TOP 5 REASONS FOR INCREASED DEBT SINCE THE ONSET OF COVID-19 BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



Wage reductions and job losses because of COVID-19 were other frequent reasons for migrants having taken on more debt. Of migrants who reported increased debt, 27 per cent said it was because their work hours or wages had been reduced following COVID-19 and 24 per cent said it was specifically due to a job loss. Twice as many women (28%) than men (14%) linked the increase in their debt to a job loss. In addition, one in four people with diverse SOGIESC who participated in the survey reported their debts had increased because of job losses.

Most debt incurred following the onset of the pandemic was owed to friends and family, money lenders and employers, with no major differences across genders. Of the 229 respondents who reported higher debt levels after March 2020, 33 per cent had borrowed from friends and family in Thailand, 27 per cent from a money lender in Thailand and 22 per cent from their employer.³²

FIGURE 39. TOP 3 DEBT LENDERS BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



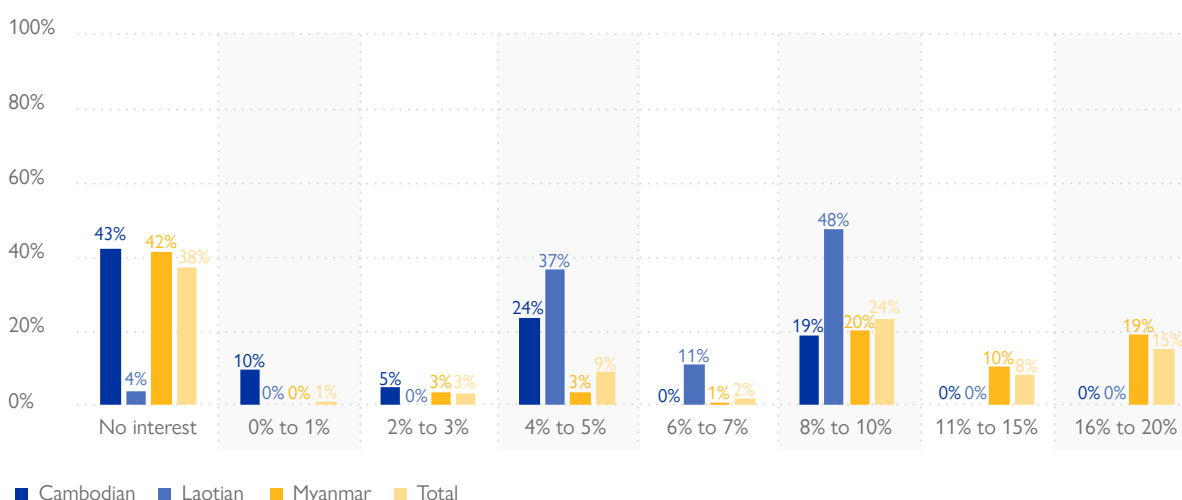
32. According to key informants, the distinction between employers, friends, family and lenders is not always clear-cut, as someone might, for example, ask a friend to facilitate borrowing money from a lender the friend knows, or an employer might facilitate a loan but not directly provide it.

Sources of Debt and Means of Repayment

Interest rates surveyed migrants reported paying were high and could take up more than one third of their monthly wages. Almost half (47%) of the 229 individuals who owed more debt after COVID-19 paid interests higher than 8 per cent per month on their loans, and one third of those paid interest higher than 16 per cent per month. Given the average amount of debt surveyed migrants owed as of March 2021, this means migrants could be paying between 19 per cent and 37 per cent of a minimum wage salary in interest. These interest rates are not unusual for personal loans in this region and contribute to migrants being in situations of debt bondage and exploitation (IOM, 2019).

Most migrants who owed more debt after the onset of the pandemic were servicing their debt from their personal incomes. Around half (52%) of the 229 respondents said they were paying the debt back from their personal income and 33 per cent said they were using family income to repay the debt. Women (41%) were more likely to depend on their family's incomes (as well as their own) than men (28%). Servicing debts with direct wage reductions was also common, as 40 per cent of the respondents said that debt was being deducted directly from their wages. Men (51%) more commonly reported servicing debts with wage deductions than women (34%). Owing a large amount of debt to employers is also concerning, as such situations can lead to exploitative labour conditions.

FIGURE 40. INTEREST RATES CHARGED TO SURVEYED MIGRANTS BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



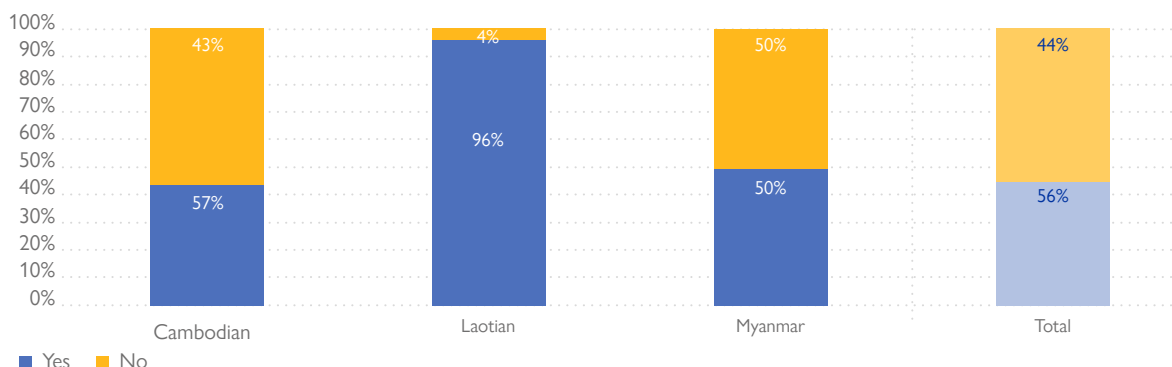
Remittances

Remittances prior to COVID-19

A little over half (56%) of the surveyed migrants said they remitted money to their countries of origin prior to March 2020. Almost all (96%) surveyed migrants from Lao People's Democratic Republic remitted money prior to COVID-19, but this was true for only around half of migrants from Cambodia (43%) and Myanmar (50%). The fact that only half of respondents were remitting money prior to COVID-19, and that those who are not remitting

are mostly Myanmar, possibly reflects the fact that a significant portion Myanmar migrants surveyed had been in Thailand for a long time. Long-term presence in Thailand increases the likelihood that migrants are accompanied by their families, and migrants mostly remit money to support their families in their countries of origin. This result also contrasts with findings among returnees to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, 89 per cent of whom had been remitting to their families before the pandemic, meaning families of returnees may have been more affected by the pandemic.

FIGURE 41. RESPONSES TO: WERE YOU SENDING REMITTANCES BEFORE MARCH 2020 (PRE-COVID-19)? BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



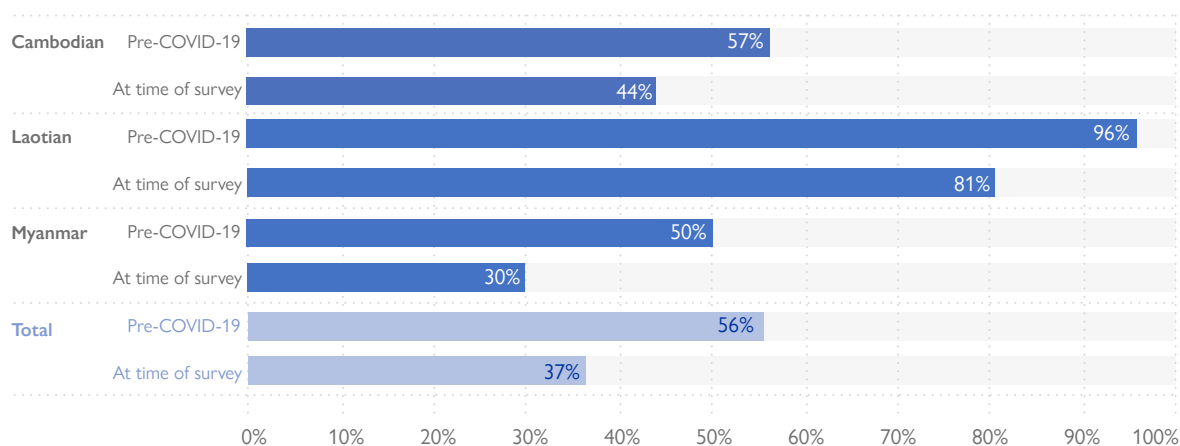
Remittances during COVID-19

The pandemic had an important impact on migrants who were remitting before March 2020. The proportion of migrants remitting money to their home countries dropped from 56 per cent to 37 per cent after March 2020 and the average amount remitted every month reduced by 25 per cent across the sample. The largest impact was on remittances sent by Laotians, which decreased by 58 per cent, with Laotian women (59%) reporting far higher reductions than men (19%). Amounts remitted by Myanmar workers reduced by 10 per cent with no gender difference while for Cambodians, remittance levels reduced by 15 per cent for women and 11 per cent for men. Migrant key informants confirmed needing to reduce amounts remitted due to “breaks from work” while others who continued working

regularly said their remittance levels remained the same.

A potential reason that Myanmar migrants are not remitting money is the political instability in Myanmar. Key informants noted Myanmar migrants had become reticent to remit money to Myanmar through banks, given the February 2021 deterioration of the political situation; moreover, transferring money through someone into Myanmar is not possible due to COVID-19 border closures. This is concerning because in a separate study IOM undertook with returnees to Myanmar in September 2020, 58 per cent of migrants returning from Thailand reported remittances were the main or only source of income for their households, and that their families were no longer receiving such remittances.³³

FIGURE 42. PERCENTAGE OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS REMITTING PRE-COVID-19 AND AT THE TIME OF SURVEY BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



33. IOM RMS in Myanmar.

BOX 5. A MIGRANT WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON REDUCED REMITTANCES

“Prior to COVID-19, my monthly salary was 8,000 THB, so I sent my mother around 3,000 THB. Some months ago, my mother said it was not enough as she had to take my father to see the doctor and needed more, around 4,000–5,000 THB per/month. Then my salary was reduced to 2,000 THB. Now that I am by myself, I try to send around 2,000 THB and to save money. Can I save money? It is very difficult. I try to transfer what I can now but there are so many other expenses.”

—Laotian woman working in a hotel in Chonburi

Impact of Reduced Remittances

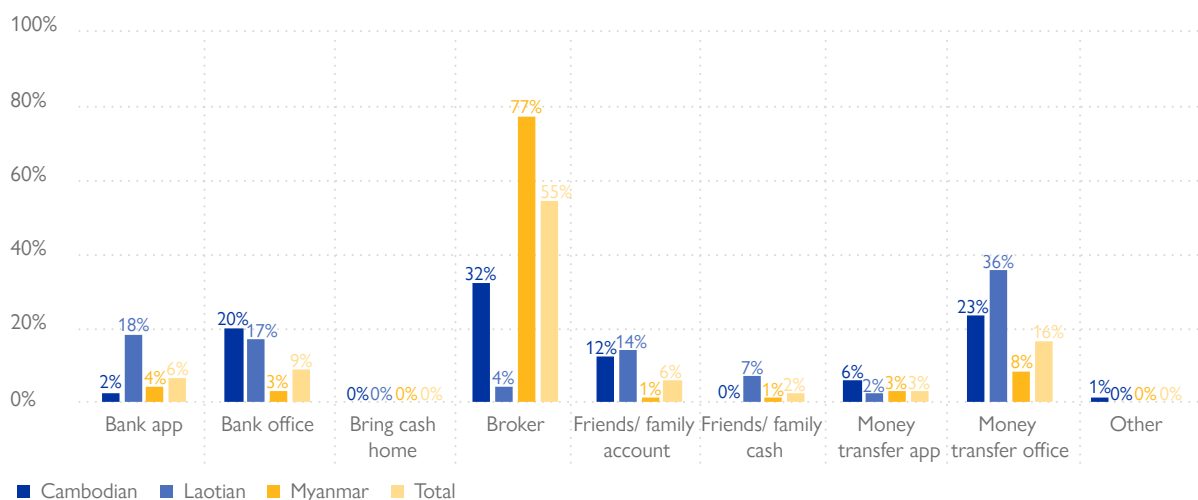
Reduced remittances significantly affect the families of migrants in their countries of origin, as they are a key source of income in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. According to the Asian Development Bank, 9 per cent of households in Cambodia, 7 per cent in Myanmar and 12 per cent in Lao People's Democratic Republic received international remittances in 2019. The World Bank has found that for households in the ASEAN region that receive remittances, these remittances typically account for more than half of household income. Thirty-two per cent of all respondents said that their families in their countries of origin were receiving less money, meaning many families will struggle to make ends meet in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. More than half (58%) of

surveyed migrants reported their families were reducing spending on non-essential items, 30–32 per cent reduced essentials and food consumptions and 23 per cent said that other adult members of their family were working more than before the pandemic to cope with the loss of income. In seven cases, children were now working, 15 people have had to sell assets and several families were taking loans or buying goods on credit back home.

Channels of Remittances

Migrants of each nationality preferred different channels for remitting money and these preferences were not notably impacted by COVID-19. For Cambodians, the most preferred channels to send remittances were the broker system (32%), money transfer operator offices (23%) and bank offices (20%).

FIGURE 43. REMITTANCE CHANNELS BY NATIONALITY (STAYEES)



Laotians mostly relied on money transfer operator offices (36%), bank offices or bank web applications (35%) and via the bank accounts of friends or relatives (18%). Myanmar migrants overwhelmingly (77%) used the broker system to remit money, with a minority remitting via money transfer offices (8%) or banks (7%). Remittance mechanisms were largely the same as they were before COVID-19, where only 8 per cent of respondents said they had changed their method of remitting; of these, 14 moved to sending money through brokers in the shops; 12–13 of these respondents said that the travel restrictions did not permit them or their friends and family to travel, preventing them from sending money back home. Ten respondents said that they changed their payment method because they found better rates.

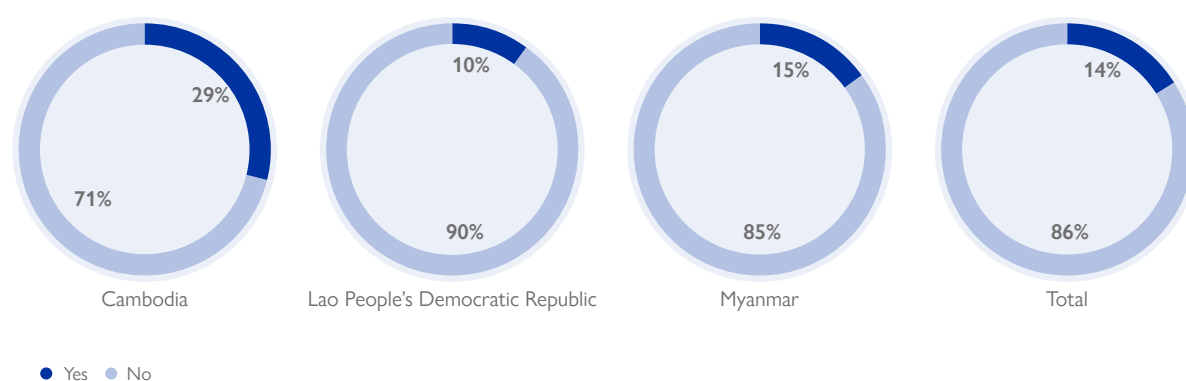
5.3.6 Skills Development³⁴

Migrants typically depended on social media to stay Skills training attendance was relatively low, with 18 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men respondents saying they had attended a skills training

in the past. Those who attended reflected well on such trainings: 113 of the 126 women and 79 of 84 men (over 90%) who had attended these trainings said the trainings allowed them to access better opportunities for work. Of the 214 respondents who received training, 73 per cent said they received it in Thailand and only 31 per cent said they received it in their own country. The most common training amongst the sample was technical/ vocational skills (67%) followed by labour rights (20%) and Thai language (17%). Approximately half (50%) of surveyed migrants said they had received this training from the employer or recruiter. About 19 per cent of respondents said they received this training from various other sources not listed as a category in the survey.

On the other hand, the main skill employers said they required was the ability to communicate with them. Four out of five (80%) businesses said that they look for some general skills in the migrant worker and the most prominently mentioned general skill was the ability to communicate in Thai.

FIGURE 44. RESPONSES TO: HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY SKILLS TRAININGS? (STAYEES)

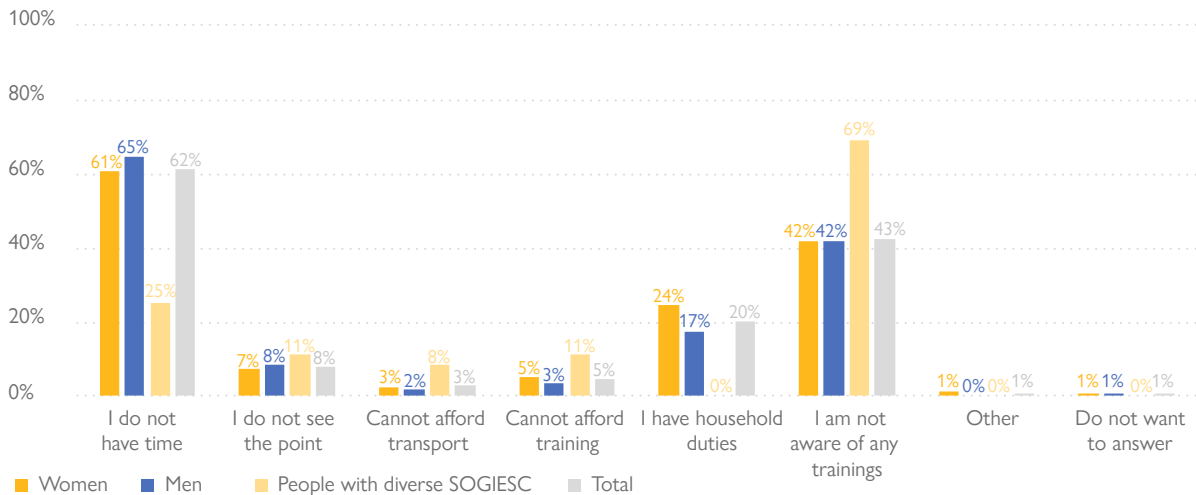


Of the remaining 1,155 respondents who had not received any training in the past, 62 per cent said they did not have enough time outside of work and 43 per cent said they were not aware that such trainings are available. An important reason that women had not attended such trainings was because they had

household duties to perform. Surveyed migrants said that their main concern about skills training was losing income during the process. They were interested in undertaking skills development if their employer allowed them time off, paid them to do the course or if they received assistance from the government.

34. Categories of skills development assessed were: (1) Vocational skills, (2) Thai language, (3) Thai culture, (4) Financial literacy (5) Labour rights in Thailand (6) Entrepreneurship skills and (7) Other.

FIGURE 45. REASONS FOR NOT ATTENDING SKILLS TRAINING BY GENDER (STAYEES)



Not being granted paid leave for skills development is an important barrier, as around 31 per cent Thai businesses said that workers were not allowed paid leave to complete the relevant skills training for their work. Several of these businesses said that it was not convenient for them to give their workers

paid leave for skills training. The most popular choice for vocational training amongst women was cooking (26%) or beauty salon/hairdresser (25%) while for men it was mechanics (34%) or agriculture (19%).

5.4 INCREASED VULNERABILITY AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

Findings show migrants working in sectors that were particularly impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns suffered the highest job losses and reductions in wages. However, it appears these losses may have been mostly temporary as most workers continued working in the same jobs. However, with curfews and reduced operations, work became less stable for many migrants, and wages and work conditions have been affected. This is particularly true for women workers who were more likely to lose their jobs, report higher levels of unemployment and suffer

larger reductions in wages. The fact that wages have dropped yet working hours remain largely the same suggests that while demand for migrant workers is similar to pre-pandemic levels, employers may be exploiting the situation to pay migrants less.

Workplace measures were insufficient to protect most workers from COVID-19. Although most migrants were taking basic protection measures at work such as wearing masks, low levels of social distancing were reported and migrants often had

to pay for masks and other equipment. In addition, migrants are unable to take time off if they get sick, meaning they stand to lose income if they contract COVID-19. This puts migrants, their colleagues and employers at risk, as it de-incentivizes migrants from reporting symptoms. Inability to take time off also heightened vulnerability to wage losses. Aside from workplace requirements, COVID-19 has created a new set of expenses for workers if they need to get new jobs or attempt to regularize, namely a COVID-19 test. Migrants in low-wage employment positions will likely struggle to cover such expenses.

Debt levels were impacted to a degree, and many migrants reported taking debt to cover for daily expenses. Rising debt levels is a concern, particularly as interest rates were also high. Indebtedness can lead to suboptimal work environments and labour bondage, and it is very possible COVID-19 has enhanced these vulnerabilities. The pandemic impacted remittances, causing fewer migrants to send remittances and lowering the average amount remitted. That far fewer families in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar will be receiving reduced amounts of money means the economic shut-down in Thailand has a regional impact, as these economies are closely interlinked.





VI

FINDINGS

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RETURNEES FROM THAILAND TO
CAMBODIA AND LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

A total of 818 returnees participated in this survey. Of these, 417 were from Lao People's Democratic Republic and 401 were from Cambodia. There was an equal ratio of men to women among surveyed returnees and no people with diverse SOGIESC represented. The average age of surveyed returnees was 30.3 years, and on average Laotians (28.6 years) were younger than Cambodians (32 years). There was no difference in the average ages of men and women Cambodians, but Laotian men (29.4 years) were slightly older than Laotian women (27.8 years).

Almost all (96%) of surveyed returnees had arrived to Thailand after 2017, with the majority (62%) having arrived in 2019. Most (86%) surveyed returnees had returned in the first three months of 2021, but more Laotians had arrived more recently than Cambodians. Three quarters (74%) of the sample had returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic in March 2021, as most interviews in Lao People's Democratic Republic took place in returnee quarantine centres with those who had recently returned.

TABLE 18. PROFILE OF RETURNEES BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

	Cambodian	Laotian	Total
Women	210	204	414
Men	191	213	404
People with diverse SOGIESC	0	0	0
Total	401	417	818

6.1 IMPACT ON MIGRATION STATUS

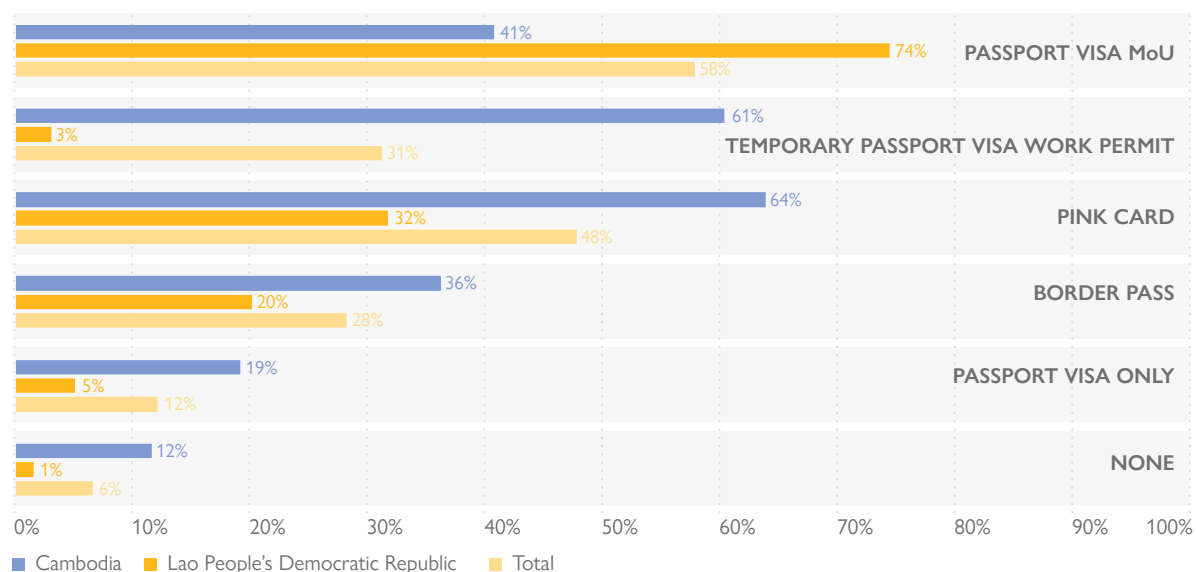
6.1.1 Migration Status in Thailand prior to COVID-19

There were differences between Cambodians and Laotian returnees in documents they had possessed while in Thailand, with Cambodians less likely than Laotians to have had regular status. About two thirds (64%) of Cambodian returnees reported possessing a pink card for work in Thailand and 61 per cent reported having a temporary work permit. Another 41 per cent reported being part of the MoU programme, while 36 per cent had border passes and 19 per cent had passports and visas only (but were not under an MoU). Around one in nine

(12%) of Cambodian returnees reported they had no documents whatsoever in Thailand. These findings indicate that most migrant workers from Cambodia arrived in Thailand and sought work before attempting to regularize their status. These figures also confirm findings elsewhere that the regularization processes implemented in Thailand did not provide lasting regular status for migrant workers, in part because of the complex rules associated with maintaining regular status and the limited time periods for which regular status is offered (Mekong Migration Network, 2020).

On the other hand, the majority (74%) of Laotian surveyed returnees had passport, visa and MoU

FIGURE 46. DOCUMENTATION HELD IN THAILAND BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



status in Thailand. About one third (32%) possessed a pink card and 20 per cent had border passes, with slightly more women (24%) than men (16%) reporting working on border passes. These data indicate that returnee Laotian migrant workers in Thailand were significantly more likely to have regular status. The fact that Laotian returnees more commonly had MoU status in Thailand could be a result of the sampling

strategy, where Laotian returnees were interviewed in Government quarantine centres and therefore were more likely to have had regular status. Either way, the higher number of Laotian returnees who had followed regular migration procedures could suggest that regular migration did not necessarily result in greater job security.

BOX 6. RETURNEES' PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION STATUS IN THAILAND

Migrant community interviewees seemed to have different and sometimes conflicting understandings as to which documentation would provide them with rights, support and authority to work in Thailand. Whether this is due to the COVID-19 situation or whether this lack of understanding predated the COVID-19 outbreak is unclear. Two interviewees raised concerns over arrest as reasons to return to Lao People's Democratic Republic. One 20-year-old man who worked in hospitality stated that even though he was in Thailand "legally" (as in he travelled using his passport) and signed an MoU contract, he still risked arrest.

"Even with MoU the immigration officer will still arrest you...I was considering getting an MoU but I saw many people get arrested so I decided not to do that. Even with an MoU, when immigration officers check they will arrest everyone who is from Laos regardless of whether they are a passport or MoU holder."

A woman worker in the fishing industry stated that she had no work permit and this also influenced her to return to Laos: "For those who don't have a work permit, if they work at a place that doesn't get checked by the police they can stay, but they can't go out. If they get caught, then they go back." These responses suggest a lack of understanding of formal migration processes as well as a high degree of anxiety and fear for Laotian migrants in Thailand over documentation, detention and arrest.

Cambodian returnee interviewees had struggled with their documentation status in Thailand, reporting having been afraid of detention and arrest and having been cheated in their efforts to obtain documents. They also mentioned how lack of documentation impacted whether they were able to seek government assistance. As stated by a 40-year-old man working in construction:

“I was very afraid because I did not have formal working documents such as passport and working permit letter... I was afraid of disclosing my personal information because I did not have formal documentation to prove my working condition in Thailand. No passport, no work certificate. I went to Thailand with my relative, spending around 3,500 Baht to travel from my homeland to the province in Thailand.”

Another construction worker had a similar story:

“I did not have formal documents for work in Thailand such as a passport... I did not know how to process the formal documentations, passport, work permit or other accessing information.”

For this reason, this worker will not remigrate to Thailand once the pandemic subsides. Yet another worker (woman, general construction) described how she and her husband were cheated twice:

“Because we did not have formal paperwork,”

and they faced threats in the workplace from their last Thai employer. These accounts suggest a lack of understanding of formal migration processes as well as a high degree of anxiety and fear of Cambodian migrants in Thailand over documentation, detention and arrest.

6.1.2 Decision to Return and Challenges of Reintegrating During COVID-19

Reasons for Return

For Laotian returnees, the decision to return was most commonly attributed to wanting to be home with family. Three out of five (59%) surveyed Laotian returnees said the main reason for return was because their families wanted them back, with women (66%) reporting this as the reason more frequently than men (53%). The second most common reason for return was out of concern about COVID-19 in Thailand (37%). Similar proportions of Laotian men

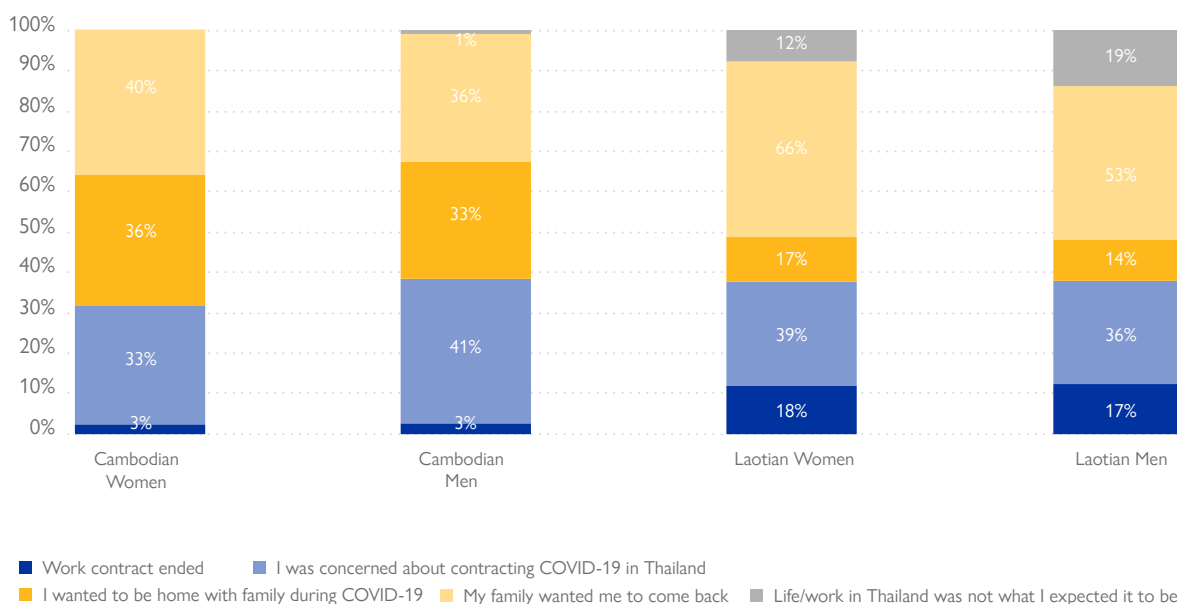
and women said they had been concerned about this issue. These data contradict the findings of an earlier survey with 999 Laotian returnees, 52 per cent of whom reported they returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic due to a job loss (Oxfam, 2020). This contradiction could be because surveyed Laotian returnees had only recently returned, suggesting they had managed to keep working in Thailand for a longer period during the pandemic whereas Cambodians and Laotians from the previous survey had returned earlier in 2020.

Among surveyed Cambodian returnees, the most common reason for return was related to job loss in Thailand, however, family-based decision-making was also important. 177 respondents (44%)

reported that their main reason for returning home was due to having lost jobs in Thailand, with men (48%) slightly more represented than women (40%) in this group. This was closely followed by 38 per cent of surveyed Cambodian returnees who said they returned because their families wanted them to and 37 per cent said they returned because they were concerned about contracting COVID-19 in Thailand. Twenty-three per cent reported deciding to return because they had been unable to find work. Men were slightly more likely to say they came back

because of job loss and concern over COVID-19 while women were slightly more likely to link their return to wanting to be with family or family having wanted them to come back. These findings slightly diverge from a 2020 survey that found only 10 per cent of migrants came back because they lost their jobs (IOM, 2020a). Yet another survey from late 2020 found 29 per cent of returned Cambodians had come back because they lost their jobs (UNPFA, 2020).

FIGURE 47. TOP 5 REASONS FOR RETURN BY GENDER AND NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



Manner of Return

Cambodians had returned irregularly while Laotians had returned through regular means. More than half (55%) of Cambodians had returned irregularly whereas almost all Laotians (89%) had returned through a regular border crossing, probably because most interviewees were in quarantine centres.

Challenges of Reintegration upon Return

Surveyed returnees were concerned about finding a job and income reductions. Most (68%) returnees said reduced income was a concern and a similar

proportion (65%) said finding a job was a key concern. Cambodians reported these concerns more frequently than Laotians, likely because they had been back in Cambodia for longer and were interviewed in the areas where they lived. Four out of five (79%) Cambodians said reduced income and finding jobs were challenges they faced upon return compared with 57 per cent of Laotians, with no difference between women and men.

Most surveyed returnees said their main source of information on employment opportunities in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic was friends and families, either in person (51%) or

via social media (22%). An additional quarter (23%) relied on colleagues to help find a job. Men (54%) were slightly more likely than women (48%) to say they depended on friends and family (in person) for information on jobs, but otherwise there were

no major differences between men and women in this regard. There were also no major divergences between Laotians and Cambodians on ways of finding jobs.

FIGURE 48. TOP 5 REINTEGRATION CONCERNS BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)

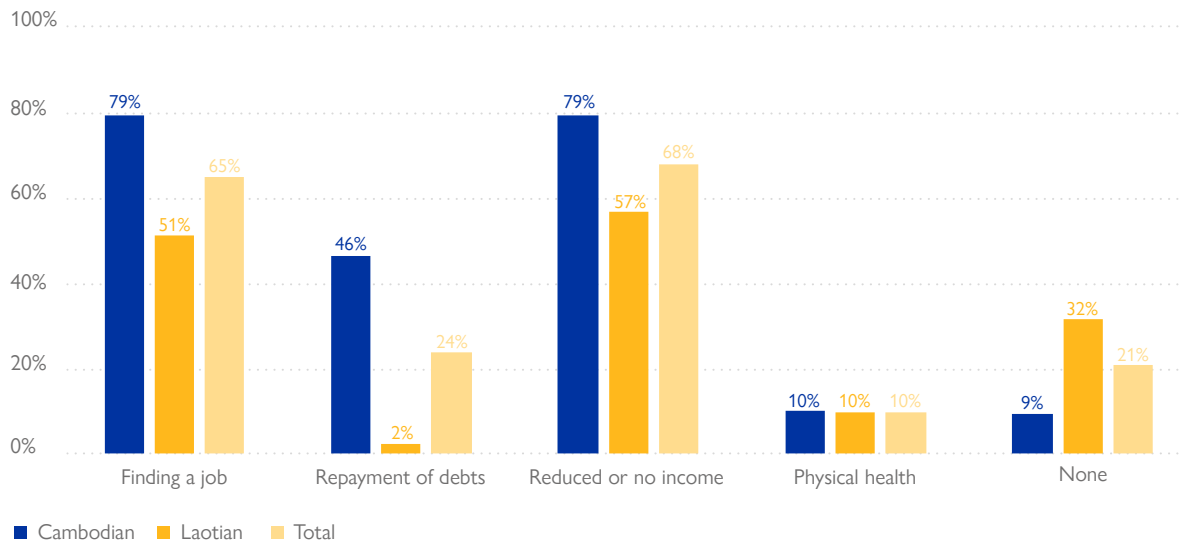
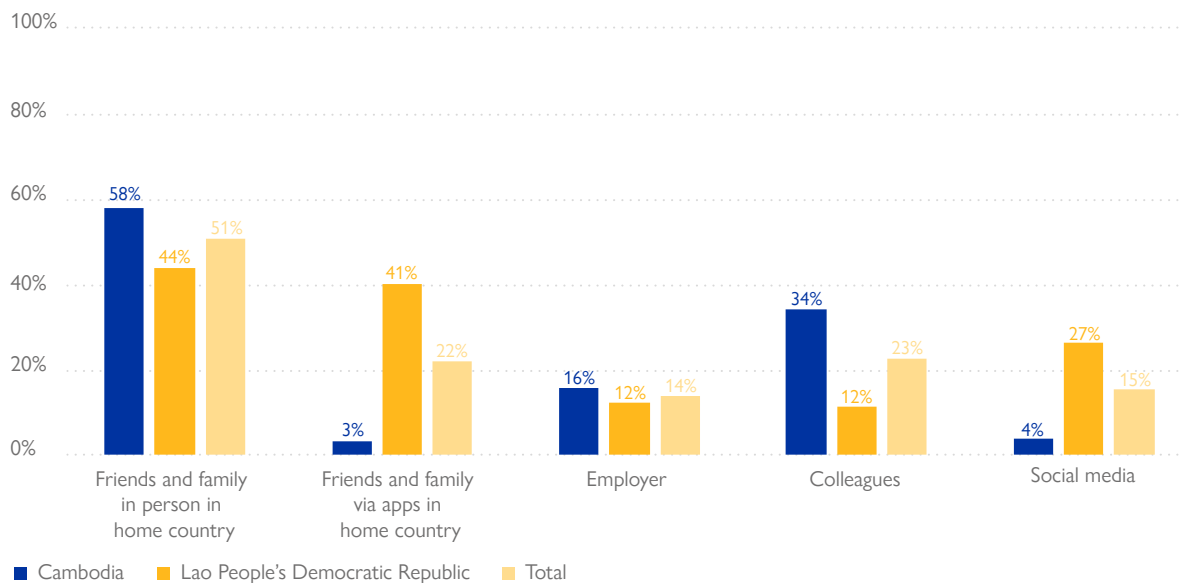


FIGURE 49. TOP 5 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT IN CAMBODIA AND LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (RETURNEES)



BOX 7. CAMBODIAN KEY INFORMANTS DISCUSS THE CHALLENGES THEY FACED UPON THEIR RETURN

While overall, survey respondents did not report facing stigmatization and discrimination upon their return, this issue was raised by two key informants in Cambodia, one key informant in Lao People's Democratic Republic and three Cambodian respondents.

One key informant said:

"In Cambodia, people felt that returnees will bring COVID-19 from Thailand. A lot of stigma and issues have been raised. [Communities] had to be made to understand that migrant workers wanted to be reunited with their families. We had to fight the misconception that migrant workers who returned from Thailand had COVID-19."

One Cambodian community respondent shared her experience of being stigmatized upon return:

"There was complete stigmatization. I had been isolated in Toeuk Thla school Quarantine Center for 14 days. The villagers and the neighbours did not speak to me and they assumed that we had brought COVID-19 from Thailand. Village heads and councils had announced in public (in my village) that my family had returned home so that my family and I needed to be quarantined and not allowed to come into the village until we completed their 14-day quarantine. At that time, I felt ashamed and not happy with my local authorities and some of the neighbours. However, there were more people in the same Quarantine Centre so I felt I was not alone."

This respondent also noted she was unaware she would need to quarantine before she returned to Cambodia, so this experience was particularly difficult.

Another Cambodian woman community respondent also noted how needing to pay for food and hygiene products during quarantine was a financial burden for returnees.

Other workers' experiences highlight reintegration difficulties in communities where there is a lack of understanding about how COVID-19 is transmitted. A 25-year-old woman working in retail said:

"I stayed in a quarantine centre for 14 days before arriving at my village, but some community people were still afraid I would transmit COVID-19. They did not allow me to visit their home and walked far away from me. At first I felt upset with their actions but around one month later, they became more trustful."

These accounts suggest the return process has been difficult at least in part due to a lack of accurate information on what returning entails, both for returnees and for their communities.

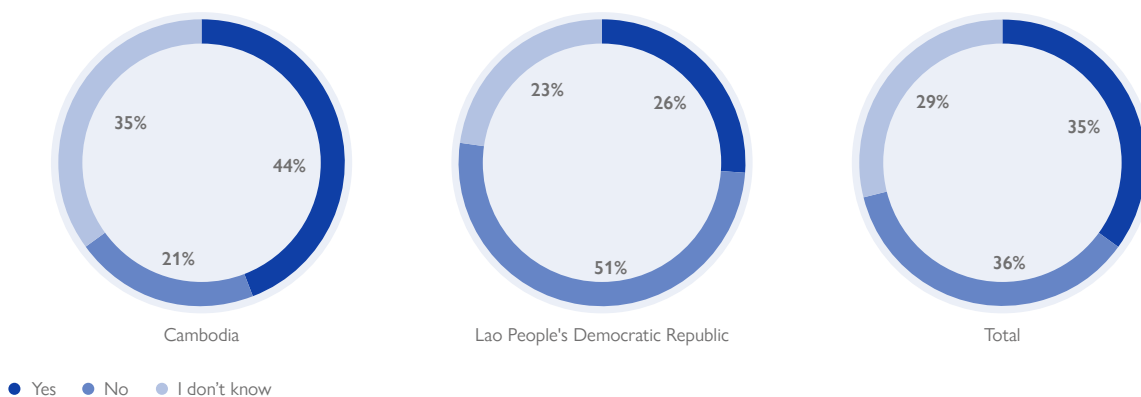
6.1.3 Remigration to Thailand

Reasons for Remigration

Overall, surveyed returnees were evenly split on whether they intended to remigrate to Thailand. As of March 2021, about one third (35%) intended to remigrate while an additional 36 per cent did not intend to remigrate. The remainder (29%) were

undecided. More Cambodians (44%) than Laotians (26%) intended to remigrate, possibly because surveyed Laotians had only recently returned and were perhaps not yet considering whether they wanted to remigrate. Cambodian women (49%) were more likely than Cambodian men (38%) to state they intended to remigrate. There was no major difference between Laotian women and men in remigration intentions.

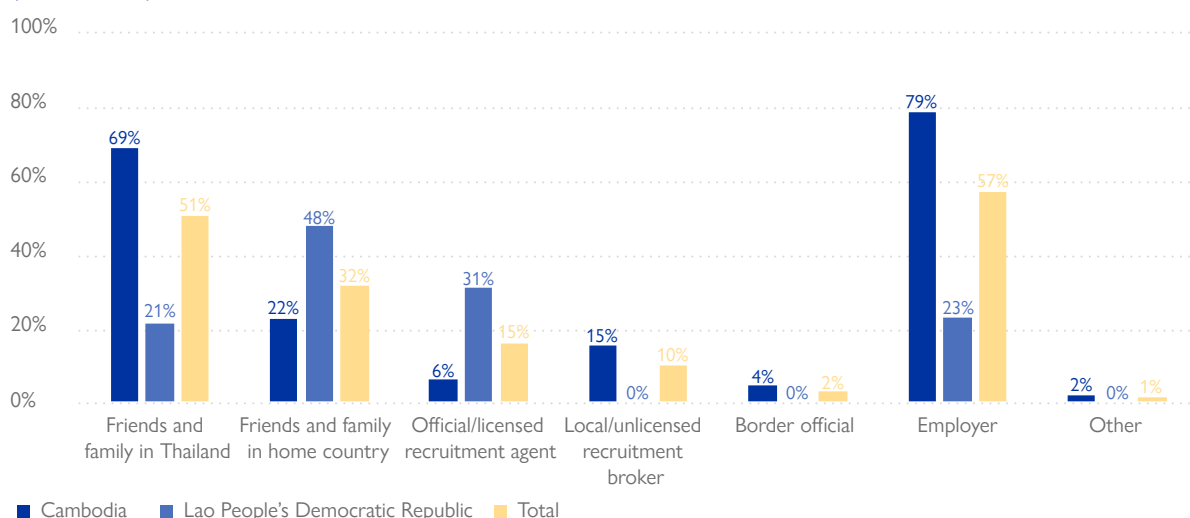
FIGURE 50. RESPONSES TO: DO YOU INTEND TO REMIGRATE TO THAILAND? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



Surveyed returnees who planned on remigrating to Thailand did not have any concrete plans of doing so. More than half (57%) said they would remigrate at some point in the future when Thailand is safer, and 45 per cent said they would wait for the border to open, with little difference between men and women. It appears Laotians will decide when to remigrate for themselves while Cambodians will depend more on Government guidance. Laotians who intended to remigrate were more likely to do so when they believed Thailand was safe (84%), while Cambodians were more likely to say they would wait for either the Cambodian (51%) or Thai Government (52%) to say that it is safe.

When the time comes, surveyed returnees said they would seek assistance from employers and friends and family who remained in Thailand to help them remigrate. More than half (57%) of the returnees who plan to remigrate to Thailand said their employers would help them and 51 per cent said their family and friends who remained in Thailand would help. Cambodians were more likely to seek help from employers, while Laotians will seek support from friends and family. Four out of five (79%) Cambodians who planned on remigrating said they would do so with the help of their employer, with no difference between women and men. In comparison, only 23 per cent of Laotians said employers would support them in returning.

FIGURE 51. RESPONSES TO: WHO WILL HELP YOU MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO REMIGRATE TO THAILAND? (RETURNEES)



Laotians, on the other hand, said they would get help to remigrate from family and friends in Lao People's Democratic Republic. About half (48%) of surveyed Laotian returnees said they would seek help from their immediate communities to remigrate. Laotians were more likely than Cambodians to seek help from licensed recruitment agents: about one third of Laotian returnees (31%) said they would get help from a licensed recruitment agent compared with only 6 per cent of Cambodian returnees. Laotian men were more likely to say they would seek help from a recruitment agent or an employer, while women were more likely to seek support of friends and family in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

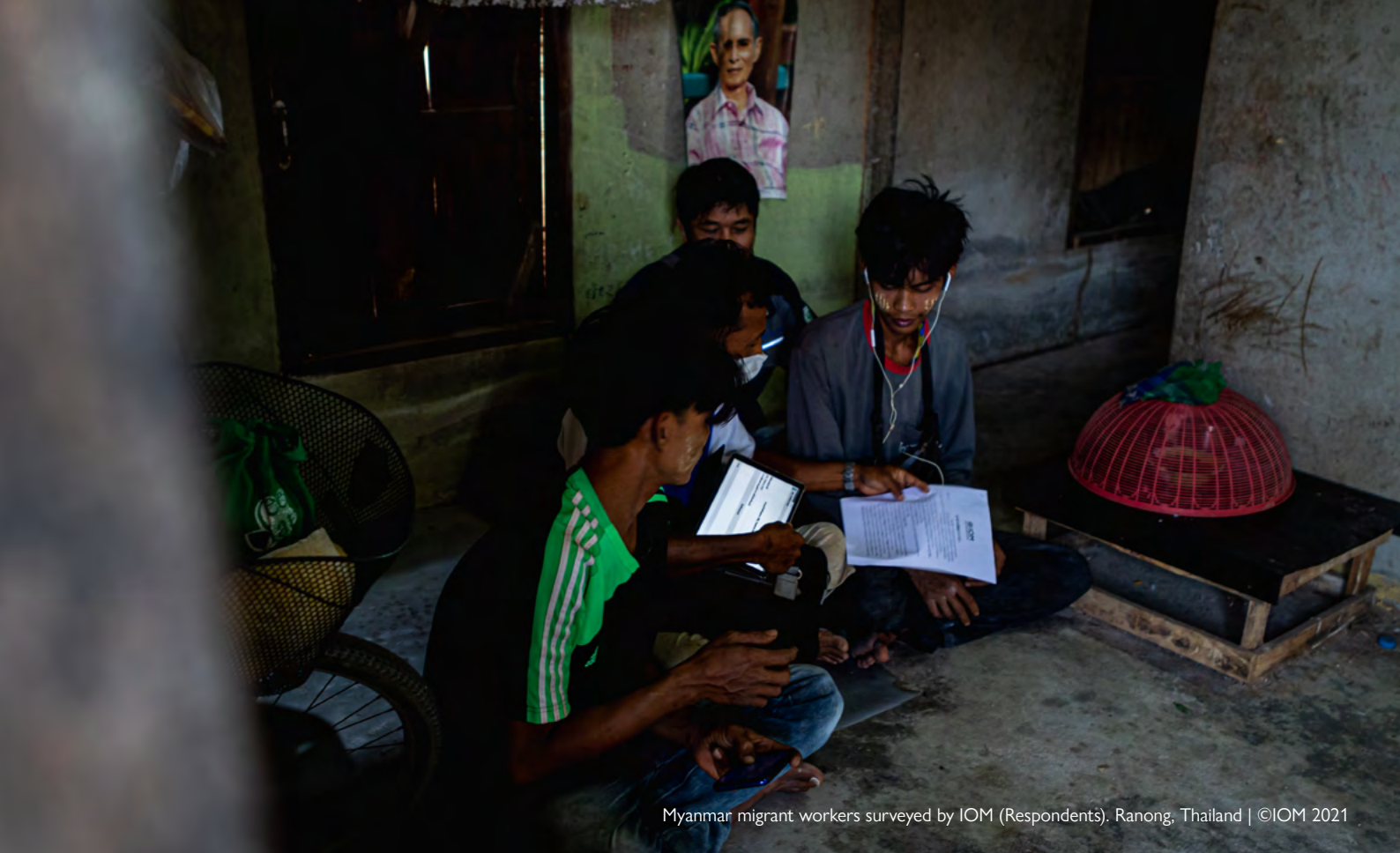
Surveyed returnees who intended to remigrate to Thailand were staying in touch with their existing networks to keep them informed about job opportunities, and largely planned on returning to the same job. **Three out of five (61%) surveyed returnees who planned on remigrating to Thailand said they were planning to return to the same job, with no difference between men and women. Cambodians (66%) were more commonly planning on returning to the same job than Laotians (52%).** The vast majority had remained in touch with their former employers and colleagues or both. Very few returnees had taken concrete steps to remigrate at the time of the survey and most planned on financing their remigration with personal savings (48%) or friends and family (42%). Very few (4%) returnees had taken concrete steps to

remigrate. All those who had taken steps to remigrate were Cambodian and said they had contacted their friends, family and employers in Thailand about job opportunities.

Existing connections in Thailand, especially with employers, makes remigration much easier as the MoU recruitment process begins with a submission of request to hire migrant workers by employer to the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour of Thailand. Moreover, migrant workers who have completed a 4-year employment in Thailand are required to leave the country for at least 30 days and remigrate with a renewal of work permit following the same process as entry of newly recruited migrant workers.

A few surveyed returnees (4%) said they knew of someone who had already returned to Thailand but did not know how this person managed to do so. Key informants raised concerns about Cambodians risking arrest in their attempt to remigrate to Thailand during the border closure. One key informant said: "Every day, Thai authorities arrest people crossing the border, people travelling from place to place to find jobs." Irregular migration back to Thailand has been documented by numerous news articles, describing how migrants are regularly being detained at the border. According to one article, 5,464 Cambodians had been detained at the border between January and May 2021 through "natural" border crossings.³⁵

35. *Khmer Times*. 2021. Thai government hastens to plug border holes. Available from: www.khmertimeskh.com/50861029/thai-government-hastens-to-plug-border-holes/.



Myanmar migrant workers surveyed by IOM (Respondents). Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

BOX 8. RETURNEES' VIEWS ON REMIGRATING TO THAILAND

Four out of eight interviewed returnees to Lao People's Democratic Republic did not want to remigrate, preferring to stay in Lao People's Democratic Republic and be closer to family. One 29-year-old woman who had worked as a domestic worker stated:

"I don't think I can enjoy any rights or benefits [in Thailand] so staying home would be better."

Other returnee community interviewees felt differently:

A 21-year-old Cambodian woman working in retail said:

"I want to work in Thailand because I can earn more money to pay for my debt. I will work at the same job because it is easy and get more money. If I go back to Thailand, I will seek support from my boss to arrange transport and working documents for me. And when I arrive there, I will stay with my friend, so I can cut down some expenses."

One 25-year-old Cambodian woman described how the remigration process would work:

"When COVID is finished, I will remigrate to Thailand again and work at the same job because it provides me more income and it will be easier for my husband to find another job around there. I will contact my boss and friends over there to support on transport and working documents."

6.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

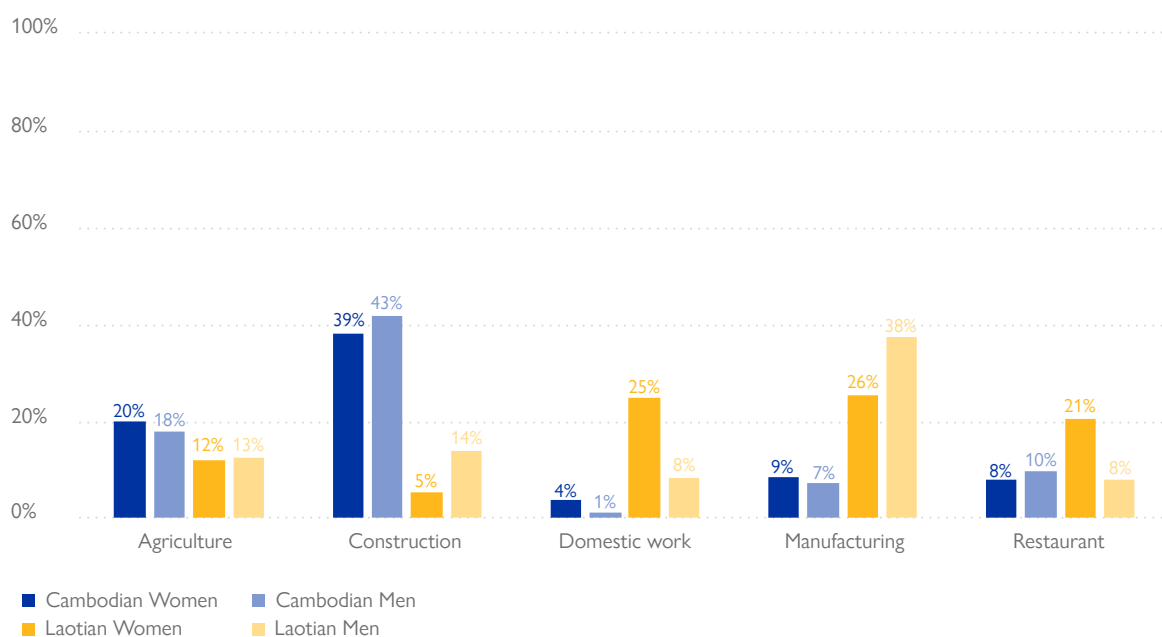
6.2.1 Employment Profile in Thailand prior to COVID-19

As per the sampling design, all surveyed returnees had worked for an employer in Thailand as opposed to having been self-employed, unemployed, doing unpaid work for families or studying. There were differences between Cambodian and Laotian returnees in the types of jobs they had in Thailand as well as notable differences between genders. Manufacturing was the most common sector of work for both Laotian men and women in Thailand. About one third (32%) of Laotian returnees overall had worked in this sector with men (38%) accounting for a larger share of manufacturing workers than women (26%). A quarter (25%) of returnee women had worked in domestic work in Thailand and a further 21 per cent of women had worked in restaurants. The remainder

of women worked either in agriculture (12%) or a variety of other sectors such as construction, retail and food processing (>5%). Following manufacturing, men were most commonly employed as construction workers (14%) and as agricultural workers (13%). Domestic work, restaurant workers and “other” categories accounted for 8 per cent of the Laotian men sample each.

On the other hand, over 40 per cent of surveyed Cambodian returnees had worked in construction in Thailand, with little difference between men and women. Other common sectors of work for men and women Cambodian returnees when they were in Thailand included agriculture (19%), food processing (10%), restaurants (9%) and manufacturing (9%), with a small number of workers employed in retail, domestic work, entertainment and domestic work (>5%).

FIGURE 52. TOP 5 JOB SECTORS IN THAILAND BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)



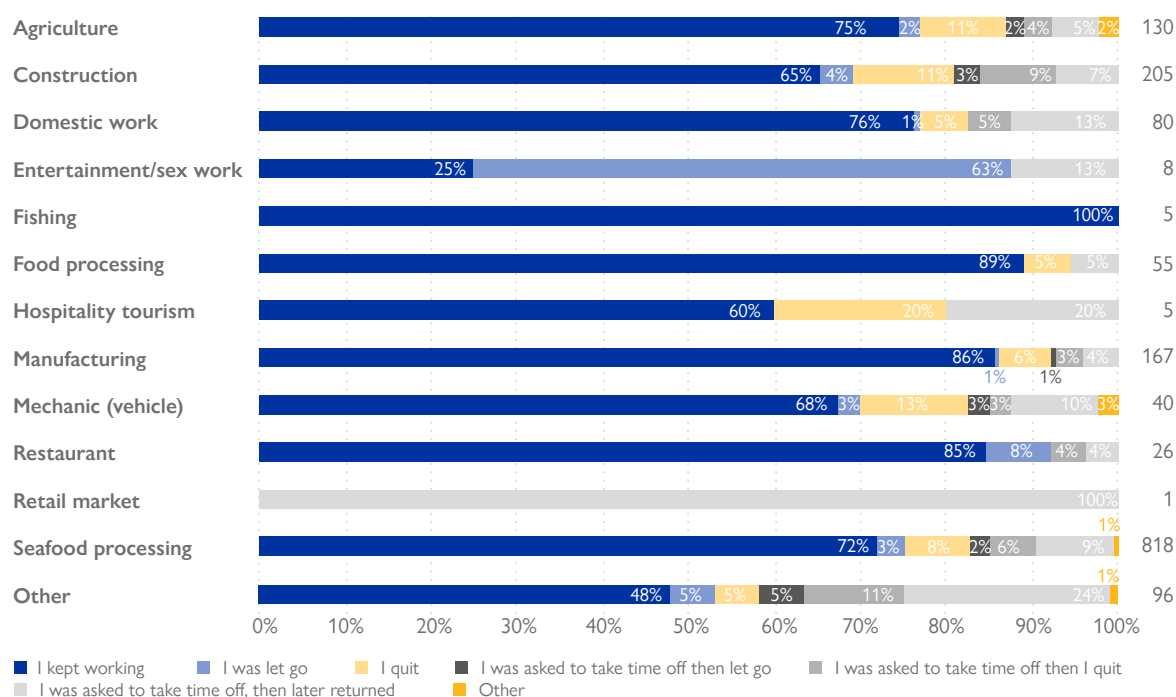
6.2.2 Jobs and Employment Status during COVID-19

The majority (72%) of surveyed returnees had continued working during the March–June 2020 lockdown in Thailand, with Laotian returnees (76%) more likely than Cambodians (68%) to report having kept working. An additional 9 per cent reported they had been asked to take time off then later returned to work, with twice as many women (12%) than men (6%) reporting this was the case. Eight per cent of returnees overall had quit their jobs voluntarily while a small number of returnees (3%) reported having been let go from their job immediately after the

outbreak. Since fewer Cambodians had kept working during the initial lockdown and everyone who had been let go was Cambodian, Cambodians may have been in a more precarious employment situation.

Cambodian returnees also reported greater wage reductions and losses in working hours while working in Thailand than Laotian returnees. One in three Cambodians (37%) reported their wages had been reduced following COVID-19 compared with one in six Laotians (15%). A similarly high number of Cambodian returnees (35%) reported their working hours had reduced, but only 12 per cent of Laotians reported the same.

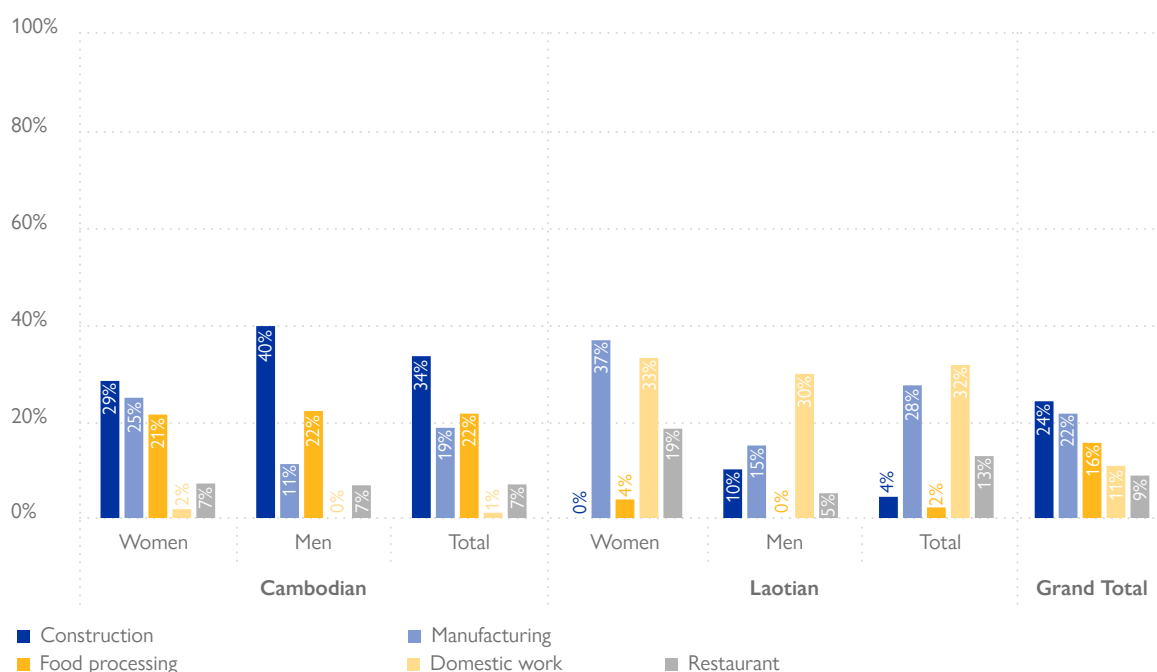
FIGURE 53. RESPONSES TO: WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MAIN JOB DURING LOCKDOWN? BY SECTOR (RETURNEES)



Both surveyed Cambodian and Laotian returnees whose wages were reduced were working in specific sectors in Thailand and overall, women were more likely to have had their wages reduced. Cambodian returnees who suffered wage reductions in Thailand were most commonly working in construction (34%), food processing (22%) and manufacturing (19%) while Laotians whose wages were reduced were most commonly working in domestic work (32%) and manufacturing (28%). Although equal

numbers of Cambodian men and women surveyed worked in construction, men (40%) in construction were more likely to have their wage reduced than women (29%). On the other hand, Cambodian returnee women in the manufacturing sector (25%) were more likely to experience wage reductions than their men counterparts (11%). Laotian women returnees (18%) were also more likely to have seen wage reductions than Laotian men (12%).

FIGURE 54. PERCENTAGE OF SURVEYED RETURNEES WHO EXPERIENCED WAGE REDUCTIONS DURING LOCKDOWN IN THAILAND BY JOB SECTOR, GENDER AND NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



BOX 9. MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON WAGE REDUCTIONS AND RETURN

Two returnee key informants had their wages and working hours reduced following COVID-19. A 20-year-old Laotian man who had worked as a cook said:

"My salary was reduced from 9,000 THB to 3,000–3,500 THB and I had to work a longer shift from 3:00 a.m. to 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. – so a more than 12-hour shift. Less salary, longer shift, and more work."

This worker returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic due to the workload:

"I was exhausted from the workload. COVID-19 wasn't the problem, but because they reduced my salary while increasing my workload, it (situation) wasn't ideal. It was exhausting and it wasn't worth the wages so I decided to return."

A 28-year-old Laotian woman who had worked in hospitality said she had a similar experience:

"My salary was reduced, before it was 10,000 THB but it was reduced to 2,000–3,000 THB because I was...only able to work 8 days per month."

A 21-year-old Cambodian woman who had worked as a vegetable retailer in Bangkok discussed being unable to find a job after losing the job she had:

“My workplace was closed, and my boss let me go after giving all my wage. I tried to find another job but could not because of the COVID-19 outbreak in Bangkok at the time.”

However, this was not the case for all returnees. One 39-year-old Laotian man who had worked in agriculture stated:

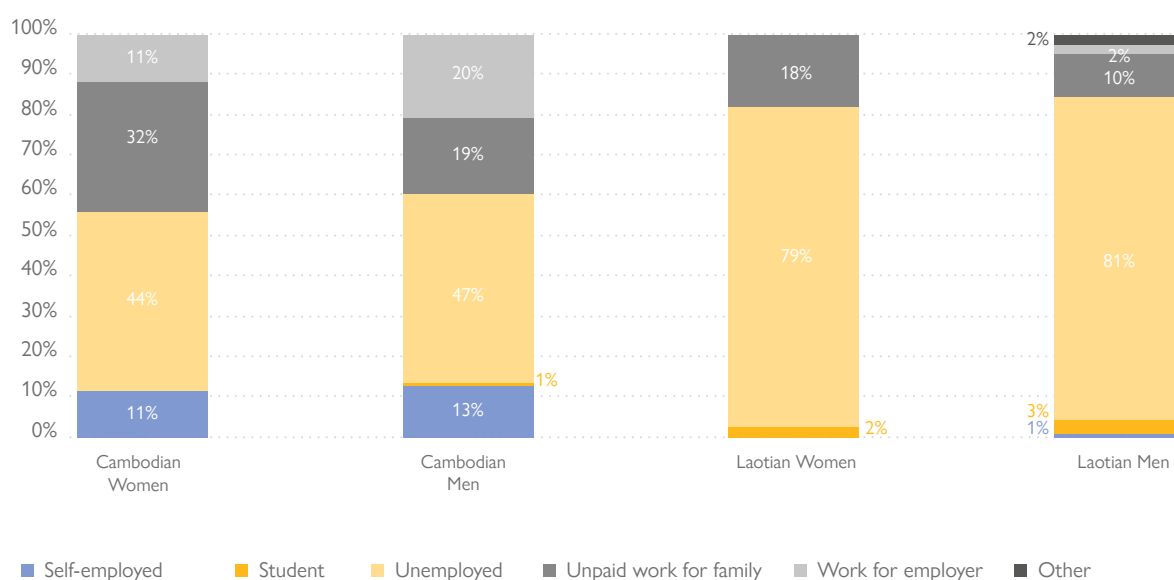
“I had been working as normal in the sugar canes farming. This was because it is located in a remote province and there were no confirmed cases in my farming sites.”

6.2.3 Jobs and Employment upon Return

Unemployment was very high among surveyed returnees. As of March–April 2021, 63 per cent of returnees were unemployed. Laotians (80%) reported higher unemployment rates than Cambodians (46%) because almost all had returned recently and had not yet had time to find a job. However, that 80 per cent of Laotian returnees had no employment plans following the end of their quarantine speaks

to returnees largely lacking clear income-generating plans prior to their return. In addition, the findings of a separate survey found a high rate of unemployment (46%) of Laotian returnees (Oxfam, 2020). IOM found a similarly high (38%) unemployment rate among Cambodian returnees in June 2020 (IOM 2020b). The World Bank reported unemployment rose to 31 per cent in Cambodia and to 25 per cent in Lao People’s Democratic Republic in 2020 to, and findings from multiple surveys indicate unemployment among Laotian returnees is even higher.

FIGURE 55. EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT THE TIME OF SURVEY BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)

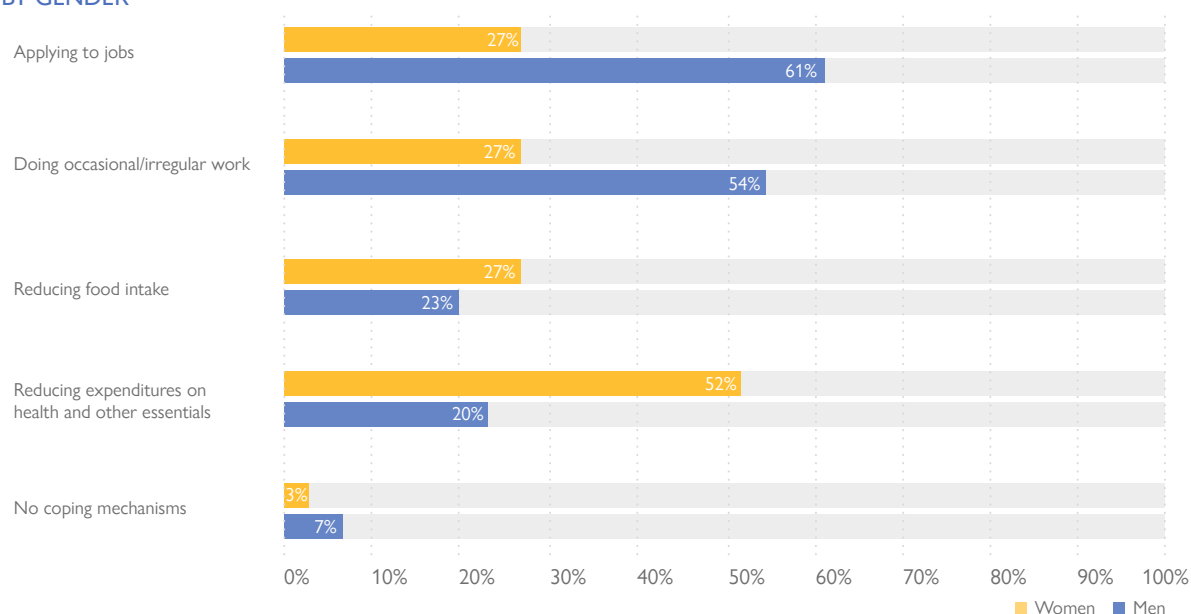


Unemployed Cambodians were searching for work yet unable to find any and had to cut expenses wherever they could. Of unemployed Cambodian returnees, 77 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men said they were looking for a job at the time of survey, but said they were unaware of how to find work; they also doubted any jobs were available. Cambodian returnees were applying to jobs (44%), taking on irregular or occasional work (40%), reducing expenditures on essential items (38%) and taking loans (30%) to cope with being unemployed, with no differences between men and women. Concerningly, nearly one quarter of Cambodian returnees (23%) also said they were reducing their food intake to cut down on costs. Key informants raised significant concerns over the rising debt levels and reduced food intake of Cambodian returnees to

cover for basic expenses in the absence of available jobs.

A quarter (26%) of Cambodian returnees were doing unpaid work for their families, with women (32%) more likely than men (19%) to report this as their current occupation. Key informants noted that women doing unpaid work for their families were commonly working on family farms in their villages. One respondent suggested this trend was also in part due to women not having employment networks: "Women go and work in a small rural farm and some just move around to work in plantations. They cannot look for jobs in urban areas now because of restrictions but they also don't have the network for the job."

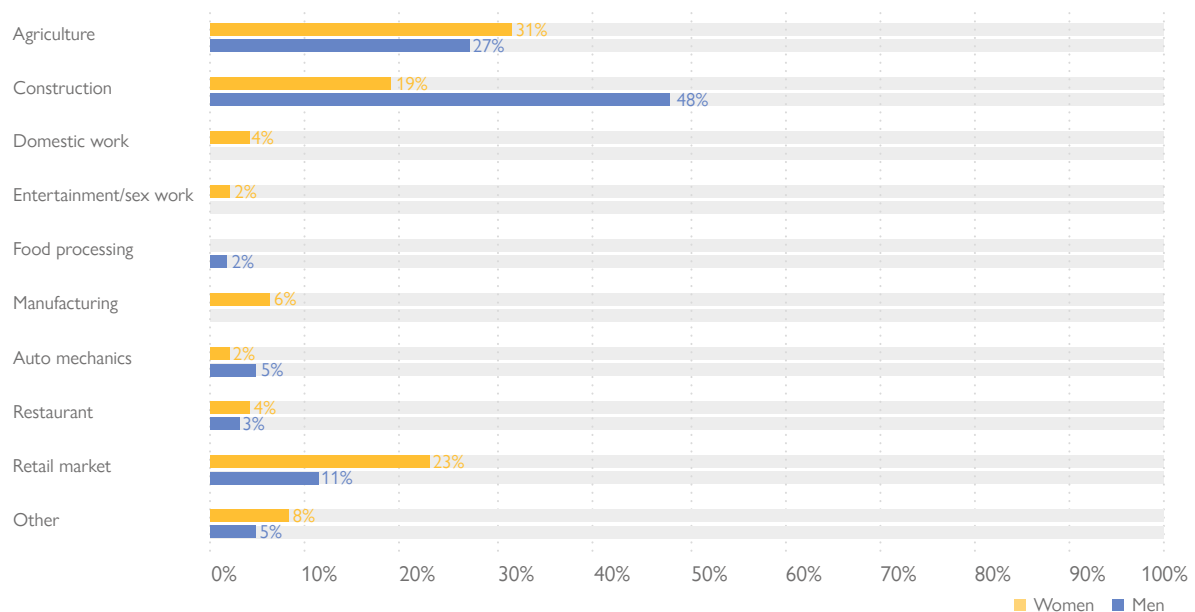
FIGURE 56. TOP 5 COPING MECHANISMS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG SURVEYED CAMBODIAN RETURNEES BY GENDER



The remainder of surveyed Cambodian returnees were either employed by an employer (16%) or self-employed, with men more commonly than women employed in both categories. Of the 48 women who reported being employed at the time of the survey, 15 were working in agriculture, 11 in retail and 9 in

construction, with the remainder employed in other sectors. Around half (48%) of the 63 men who were employed were in construction and 27 per cent were working in agriculture, while a small number were in retail, restaurants, mechanics shops and other sectors.

FIGURE 57. JOB SECTORS AT THE TIME OF SURVEY AMONG EMPLOYED SURVEYED CAMBODIAN RETURNEES BY GENDER



Returned Cambodians reported working longer hours for less pay compared with their jobs in Thailand. Despite working the same average number of hours per day, Cambodians reported a 37 per cent drop in income compared with their incomes in Thailand, again pointing to dramatic income reductions for families of returnees in Cambodia.

Because Laotian returnees were not yet working or looking for work, they were unable to discuss coping strategies and it was not possible to deduce the

extent to which returning to Lao People's Democratic Republic had impacted their incomes or working hours compared to their employment in Thailand. When asked about how returnees would address being unemployed, the most common responses were: doing occasional/irregular work (58%), reducing food intake (58%), reducing expenditures on health or other essentials (34%), and applying to jobs (30%). Notably, more women (38%) reported they would reduce expenditures on health or other essentials than men (29%).³⁶

36. This question was multiple choice, so percentages do not add up to 100 per cent.



BOX 10. RETURNEES' EXPERIENCES SEEKING WORK UPON RETURN

Key informants noted that Laotians were commonly returning to their villages, where they are unemployed or working on as daily paid workers on farms for little or no pay. A key informant working for an NGO that provides support to returnees said:

"The difficulty in [a returned migrant's] hometown is that it's in remote areas where there are no jobs...People are moving between districts trying to survive."

They also noted how migrants had returned not only from Thailand; internal migrants working in Vientiane Capital who lost their jobs had also returned, suggesting a high level of competition over jobs on farms in these rural areas.

"Many people who were fired from Vientiane Capital went back to their home village. Jobs are already competitive for those working on farms. Then those who returned also are working on farms."

Key informants noted that women are being pushed into unpaid household work and informal work such as foraging for food. One respondent noted that construction jobs are the main type of work still available, but are mostly going to men and also said:

"Women in Lao People's Democratic Republic are looking after their family."

Another key informant working for an NGO said: "For women, it's a big change compared to their work in Thailand where they would work in factories. We have no factories in remote areas, so they have to now work to find food or fish in the river to sell it. Some have started gardens and are selling vegetables. No specific produce, just informal markets." A third informant said: "Women in Vientiane work as street vendors, as these are the main jobs in the city."

Returnee key informants who managed to find work complained of low pay and grueling hours. A 20-year-old Laotian woman working in seafood processing said:

"Here in Laos, the salary is between 2,500 and 2,800 Baht but they (the employer) work me to the bone, I cannot stand it and I don't even have time to eat."

Another 26-year-old Laotian woman working as a food server explained how it was difficult to find work without having completed school, whereas in Thailand because she spoke and wrote Thai and had a work permit/labour card:

"It is easier in Thailand because I have a pink card and I can read and speak Thai and they would hire me. They don't care about the level of education, if we can communicate then that means we are capable of working."

One unemployed Cambodian woman said: "Currently, my whole family depends on my husband to work at a cassava warehouse in the district, but he cannot find regular work. My family has lost income and the wage is not as high as in Thailand. My husband and I are have difficulty in finding a job in the village and we do not know other places."

6.2.4 Debt and Remittances

Debt

More than one third of surveyed returnees had debt and debt was particularly widespread among Cambodians. Around one in three (36%) returnees had incurred debt prior to COVID-19 and women (38%) were slightly more likely to have had debt

than men (34%). Cambodians (54%) were far more likely than Laotians (19%) to have had debt before COVID-19. Cambodian women reported being in debt more often than Cambodian men. More than half (56%) of Cambodian women had debt before COVID-19 compared with 51 per cent of Cambodian men. Laotians of both genders were equally likely to have debt.

TABLE 19. AVERAGE DEBT LEVELS PRE-COVID-19 BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)

	Women	Men	Total
Cambodian	313,876 THB	141,942 THB	236,385 THB
Laotian	1,378,057 THB	1,705,592 THB	1,544,008 THB
Total	569,556 THB	585,365 THB	576,912 THB

Although more Cambodians reported having debt before COVID-19, Laotians reported far higher levels of debt. Before COVID-19, the average amount of debt reported by Cambodian returnees was 263,385 THB compared with 1,544,008 THB for Laotian returnees, meaning Laotians reported six times more debt on average than Cambodians. In addition, both Cambodian and Laotian women reported higher levels of debt than men. Cambodian returnee women had over twice the amount of debt as Cambodian returnee men: the average pre-COVID-19 debt for women was 313,876 THB compared with 141,942 THB for men.

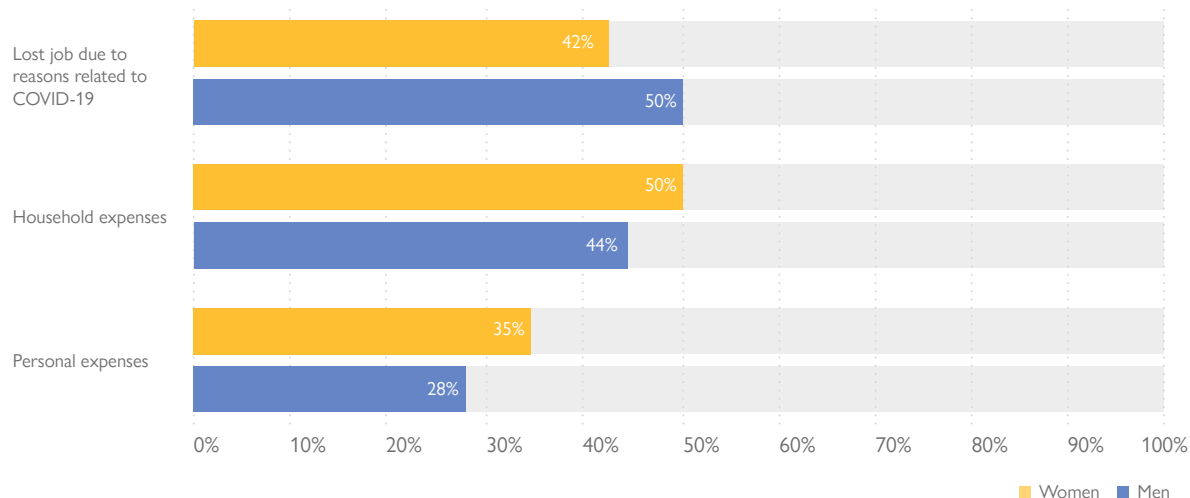
Overall, surveyed returnees had borrowed money to migrate and support themselves while they were in Thailand. More than half (57%) of returnees had incurred into debt for migration-related expenses (57%), household expenses (55%) and personal expenses (34%), with a small number of respondents reporting they also obtained loans for agricultural production (12%), servicing another loan (10%) and

other reasons. There were no major differences between Cambodian and Laotian returnees in their reasons for taking loans nor any notable differences between men and women.

Of returnees with debt, a relatively small number (6%) reported their debt had increased after COVID-19 and almost all were Cambodian.³⁷ Cambodians who had increased their debt said this was the case because of household expenses (48%) and because they had lost their jobs (43%), with little difference between men and women. On average, Cambodians reported their debts had increased by 71,010 THB, with debt levels among Cambodian returnee women almost twice those of men. Women owed five times more than men: the average current debt level was 722,929 THB among women and 137,206 THB among men. Notably, individuals of both genders who reported high levels of current debt were also more likely to have reported high levels of debt prior to COVID-19, suggesting those who already had debt were likely to go further into debt.

37. All but two (2) of the 46 respondents who reported higher debt were Cambodian.

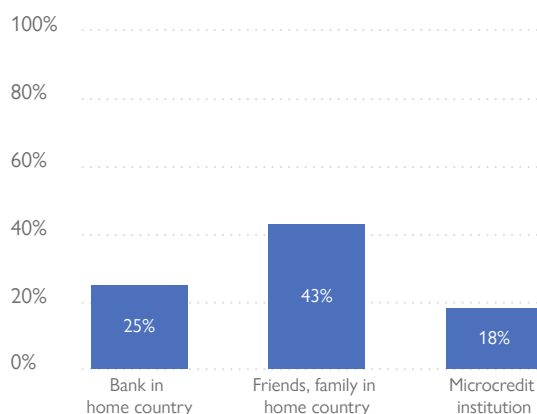
FIGURE 58. TOP 3 REASONS FOR INCREASED DEBT SINCE THE ONSET OF COVID-19 AMONG SURVEYED CAMBODIAN RETURNEES BY GENDER



The most common debt lenders for Cambodian returnees were friends and family (43%), a bank (25%), and microcredit institutions (18%), with little difference between men and women. Most of those in debt said they did not owe any interest and planned to pay back their debts using their family's resources as well as their own.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic, the sample pool for returnees who had higher debt was too small to report on the impact of COVID-19 on average debt levels, common lenders, interest rates or repayment plans.

FIGURE 59. TOP 3 DEBT LENDERS AMONG SURVEYED CAMBODIAN RETURNEES



BOX 11. KEY INFORMANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON DEBT DURING COVID-19

Key informants raised concerns over Laotians taking loans on the black market at exorbitant interest rates. One informant noted:

"[loans come] from the black market. If you have money, you loan it to your friends. The black market charges more than twice the interest rates of official loans but they have no choice."

and shared an example of a street vendor who had had to borrow money to support her daily expenses.

At least two key informants were concerned that COVID-19 had directly led to higher debt for Cambodians. One said:

"Some migrant workers have problems with finances to pay back debts and support family in Cambodia. Due to COVID-19, the loans have continued to build up, resulting in local money lenders demanding properties to pay debt, which migrant workers in Thailand are unable to pay back in Cambodia."

Three community interviewees also discussed the impact of COVID-19 on their levels of debt. A 39-year-old Cambodian man working in agriculture reported he still had debts from before his travel to Thailand that he was still repaying.

Two other women workers reported they had to take out loans upon return to Cambodia due to loss of income. One woman working in agriculture said:

"[I had to take a loan] because I could not find a job when I arrived in Cambodia, and I also need to pay interest on the debt that I had before I went to Thailand."

Another woman who was also working in agriculture said:

"When I arrived in Cambodia, I could not find a job, so I decided to borrow money from others to run a small business (selling goods, fruits and vegetables). In addition to this business, I also kept an amount for family daily expenses such as food, medicine and others."

These findings suggest that while perhaps small numbers of people (disproportionately women) have taken on debt, those who already had debt were more likely to take on more.

Remittances

The pandemic caused a dramatic reduction in remittances from Thailand to Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. Almost all (91%) returnees were sending remittances prior to their return to their countries of origin following COVID-19 and about the same number (90%) reported their families were no longer receiving remittances following the respondents' return. Findings that remittances have reduced were also reflected in other recent studies. One found that 74 per cent of Laotian remittance-receiving households with migrants that had returned from Thailand had experienced remittance reductions (Oxfam, 2020). Another also found that 74 per cent of returned

migrants were remitting before they returned to Cambodia and had stopped (IOM, 2020a).

On average, surveyed returnees were remitting 4,493 THB per month prior to COVID-19, with Cambodians remitting more than Laotians. Cambodian returnees were remitting an average of 4,973 THB per month compared with 4,026 THB for Laotians. In many cases, remittances accounted for around half of the respondent's income, particularly for Cambodians. Remittances amounted to 44 per cent of returnees' incomes, with no difference between men and women. However, Cambodians reported remitting a higher percentage of their income than Laotians. Cambodian returnees remitted 51 per cent of their income compared with 37 per cent of Laotians.

TABLE 20. AVERAGE REMITTANCE AMOUNT PRE-COVID-19 BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)

	Women	Men	Total
Cambodian	4,641 THB	5,319 THB	4,973 THB
Laotian	3,780 THB	4,263 THB	4,026 THB
Total	4,213 THB	4,774 THB	4,493 THB

Reduced remittances from Thailand have clearly impacted the well-being of families in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. Prior to COVID-19, the average household income for returnee families was 15,821 THB per month, while at the time of the survey it was 4,893 THB, representing a 69 per cent reduction in income overall. Cambodian returnee men reported greater reductions than Cambodian returnee women while

Laotian women reported greater reductions than Laotian men.

Because Cambodian returnees reported higher pre-COVID-19 average household incomes, their incomes dropped by more than Laotian returnees. For Cambodians, the average household income respondents reported to have in Thailand was 16,555 THB compared with 4,760 THB in Cambodia

TABLE 21. AVERAGE REPORTED HOUSEHOLD INCOME REDUCTIONS BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER (RETURNEES)

	Women	Men	Total
Cambodian	-69%	-74%	-71%
Laotian	-39%	-28%	-29%
Total	-68%	-71%	-69%

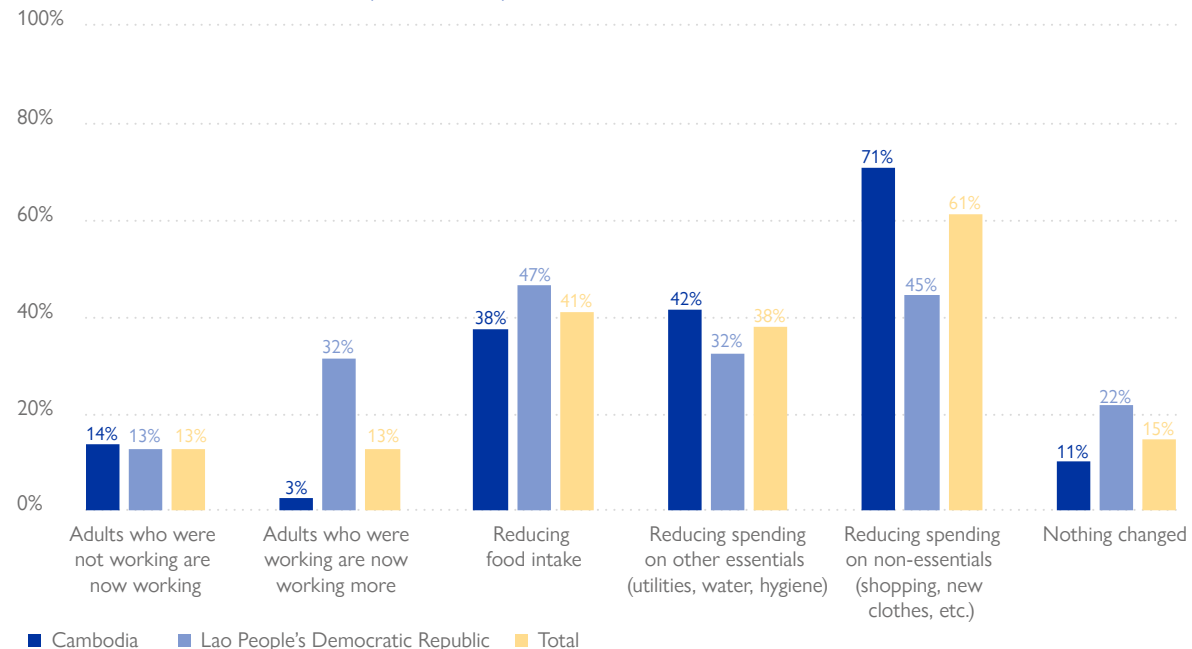
at the time of the survey, showing a 71 per cent drop. There was a small difference between men and women, where men reported their families' incomes reduced by 74 per cent and women reported incomes reduced by 68 per cent. This significant drop in household income was also found in previous research, where 62 per cent of respondents reported income reductions and 36 per cent reported a reduction of 40 per cent or more (IOM, 2020b).

Laotians had lower average household incomes than Cambodians prior to COVID-19 and therefore reported lower income reductions. Prior to COVID-19, the average household income for Laotian returnees was 9,465 THB per month, while now it is 6,673 THB, a 29 per cent decrease in income overall. Laotian returnee women reported their households had suffered higher average income losses than men. Female respondents said their households' incomes had dropped by 39 per cent whereas men reported a 28 per cent decrease. A separate study also found that 69 per cent of households with returned

migrants from Thailand had experienced reductions of half or more than half of their household incomes (Oxfam, 2020).³⁸

Respondents' families were resorting to concerning behaviours in response to reduced remittances, particularly the families of women workers. The majority (61%) of respondents' families were reducing their spending on non-essential items to cope with reduced remittances and 38 per cent were reducing their spending on essentials such as utilities, water and hygiene items. Concerningly, 41 per cent of respondents said their families were reducing food intake, with women (46%) reporting their families were doing this more frequently than men (36%). Overall, both women and men Cambodians reported reducing their spending to cope with reduced remittances more than Laotians did. On the other hand, almost half (47%) of Laotians reported their families were reducing their food intake, compared with 38 per cent of Cambodians. There were striking differences between men and women: more than

FIGURE 60. TOP 5 COPING MECHANISMS AMONG RESPONDENT FAMILIES EXPERIENCING REDUCED REMITTANCES BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



38. Laotian returnee respondents were less likely to know their household incomes compared to Cambodian returnees. As a result, there were fewer data points for Laotian household income compared to Cambodian household income. Twelve per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes pre-COVID, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women. Eight per cent of Laotian returnees were able to report their household incomes at the time of the interview, 53 per cent of whom were men and 47 per cent of whom were women.

half (55%) of Laotian women returnees said their families were reducing food intake compared with 38 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women reduced spending on essentials compared with 22 per cent of men. According to another study, around 40 per cent

of households reported price increases for the food they normally buy (Oxfam, 2020). Food insecurity in Lao People's Democratic Republic is a concerning and pressing issue that deserves attention.

BOX 12. CONCERNS OVER FOOD INSECURITY IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Food scarcity and reduced food intake was a concern raised by three key informants, one of whom noted that families were foraging in the forest for food.

"If there's no food in the family, they go to the forest and find mushrooms, vegetables, rats, mice or fish. This becomes their food. They can survive every day by eating what they find in the forest."

Another key informant said that people have

"No money to buy food. They eat one egg for a meal, for example."

6.2.5 Skills Development

Few returnees had ever attended skills trainings, and fewer Cambodians than Laotians had attended such trainings. Overall, only one in five (21%) returnees had attended a skills training in the past, with no difference between men and women. Laotians (33%) were far more likely to have attended skills training than Cambodians (8%). The majority (76%) of returnees who had attended skills training had done so in Thailand, and most training had been provided by the respondent's employer. By far the most

common type of training returnees had attended was on vocational skills (64%), with no difference between women and men. A smaller number had attended trainings on labour rights (15%), with far more men (22%) than women (8%) having attended such training. Employers had most commonly provided vocational trainings while UN agencies and NGOs had most commonly provided labour rights trainings. Almost all (94%) returnees who had attended skills training felt the training had resulted in better opportunities.

FIGURE 61. RESPONSES TO: HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY SKILLS TRAININGS? BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)

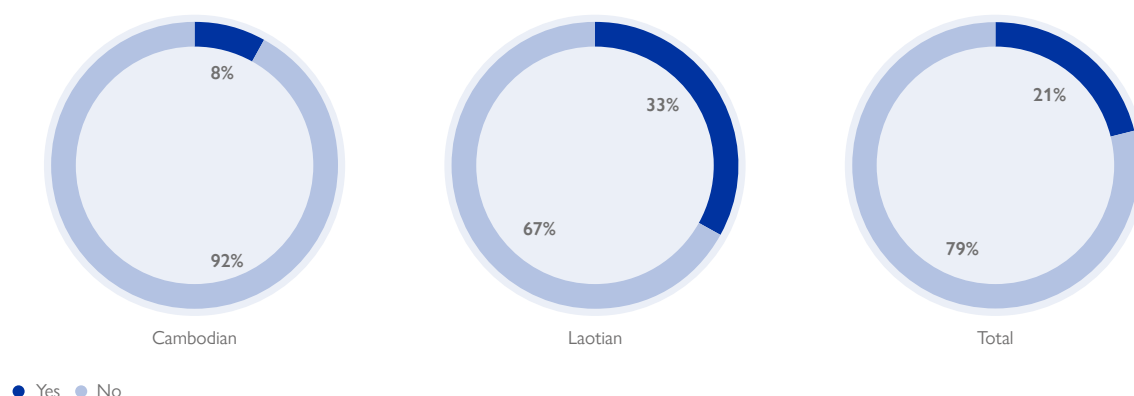
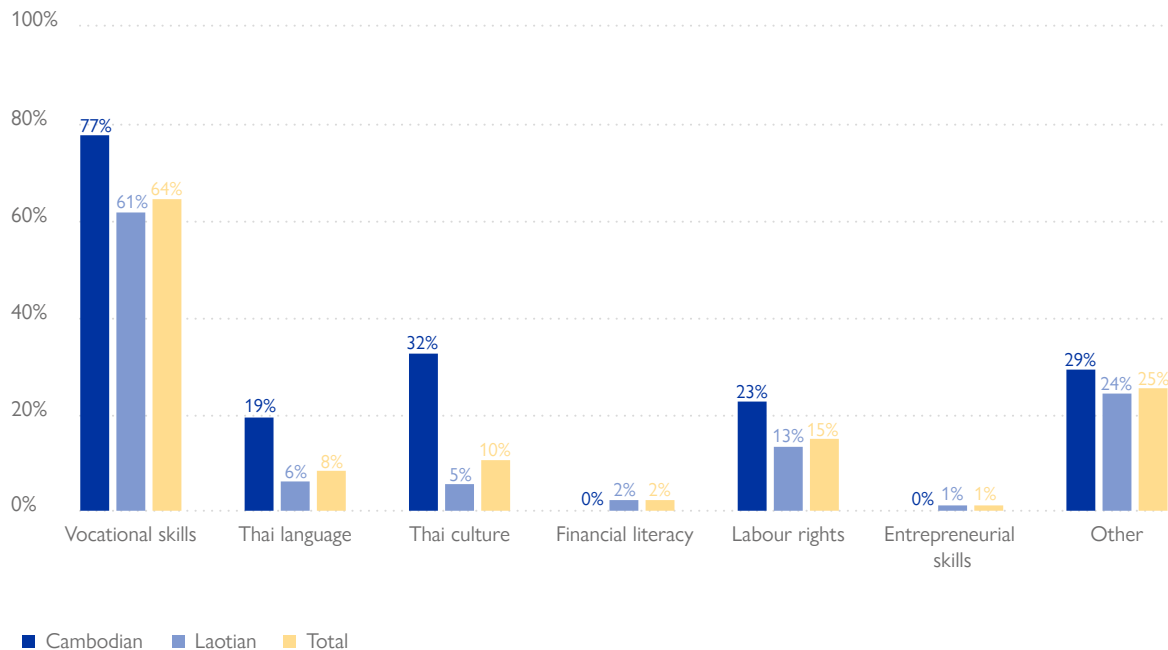


FIGURE 62. TYPES OF SKILLS TRAINING ATTENDED BY RESPONDENTS BY NATIONALITY (RETURNEES)



Respondents showed the highest interest in additional vocational skills, ranking their interest at 3.7 on a scale of 5 and the lowest interest in Thai cultural skills (2), although employers said their main interest was hiring migrants who could communicate in Thai. Agriculture trainings were particularly in demand for both men and women returnees. Around half (47%) of all returnees listed agriculture training as an interest, with 53 per cent of men interested and 41 per cent of women. After agriculture, women were most interested in tailoring and sewing (35%), cooking (33%) and beauty care (29%). Globally, this is a common preference for women in livelihoods programmes; however, this is commonly rooted in a gendered division of labour. Besides agriculture, men were also interested in learning about mechanics (55%) and did not generally say they were interested in other types of trainings.

The majority (71%) of those who had not participated in skills training said it was because they were unaware of any opportunities, with no difference between women and men. In addition, around half (56%) said it was because they did not have enough time outside of work, with more Cambodians (56%) than Laotians (31%) reporting this as a barrier. Cambodians were also more likely to say they had not attended skills training because they had household duties and because they could not afford them, with no difference between women and men.

All returnee community interviewees were interested in developing their skills, but were worried about logistics: A 26-year-old Laotian woman working as a food server said, “What if we are interested, are there any fees? If we participated, where would we live, sleep and eat?”



A woman riding a tricycle with a child in Pattaya, Chonburi, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

6.3 INCREASED VULNERABILITIES AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

Returnees decided to go back to their countries of origin for a variety of reasons, as some wanted to be closer to family and were afraid of COVID-19 while others had lost their jobs in Thailand. COVID-19 has dramatically impacted the lives of returnees and their families because of the extent of reduction in their income. Many returnees had suffered wage reductions already in Thailand, and upon return are unable to find jobs. Returnees must find new jobs upon return – and these are scarce, more difficult to find, and have a lower pay than positions in Thailand. Returnees were largely searching for jobs, but said they were unable to find any and instead were doing occasional work whenever they could find it. Almost all returnees were remitting prior to COVID-19 and had now stopped, putting an additional strain on their families. Lack of jobs and reduced remittances

mean returnees' families have resorted to concerning behaviours to cut their expenses, sometimes on essential items such as food. Debt was particularly frequent among Cambodian returnees, particularly women, who were more likely to have had debt prior to COVID-19 and who reported far higher debt increases.

Returnees were uncertain about whether they hoped to remigrate to Thailand or said they had no plans. Surveyed Laotians had only recently returned, so it is likely that remigration was not yet a main concern for them. Those who plan to remigrate will use their former networks and attempt to return to the same job, meaning that businesses that have historically employed migrant workers are most likely to see large waves of remigration.

VII

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a large body of empirical data on the ways in which the lives and livelihoods of migrants in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic – and at least until the time of the survey. This impact had not previously been assessed in a large-scale regional survey, and such data contribute to providing an evidence base to develop an effective response at the regional, bilateral and individual country levels. This section summarizes the main takeaways on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, based on the findings of this study.

Decision-making on returning to countries of origin or staying in Thailand

This study found that the migrants who had spent a longer time in Thailand remained in the country during the pandemic, whereas those who had a shorter work history in Thailand had tended to return to their countries of origin. It follows that returned workers were perhaps more likely to be younger, to have been in less stable employment situations and/or working in sectors that witnessed significant losses of revenue. Beyond the loss of jobs, concerns about the virus and family wanting them to return played a large role in deciding whether to stay in Thailand or go back. The main reason for staying that surveyed stayees provided was that staying afforded them a better standard of living, irrespective of job status.

Impact of COVID-19 on jobs and working conditions in Thailand

Except for those working in the hospitality sector, migrants in most sectors continued working during the lockdown. However, those who continued to work do so in more insecure environments and for longer hours and lower wages. Around three in five migrants reported receiving wages below the minimum wage following the outbreak of pandemic and wage reductions were widespread. Migrants working in the hospitality sector were the most likely

of any sector to have been let go, followed by the entertainment sector. Notably, a large proportion of these workers were women.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected the wages, working conditions and employment of women migrant workers, who reported greater reductions. Wage reductions have had further knock-on effects including the ability of migrants to pay for maintaining regular migration status and its associated costs and service debts, and reductions in remittances. This study shows such reductions have forced many migrants to cut their spending on necessary items, in many cases food. The fact that wages have dropped yet working hours remain largely the same suggests that while demand for migrant workers is similar to pre-pandemic levels, conditions of work seem to be deteriorating, raising protection concerns. This situation confirms concerns raised early in the pandemic about the impact of COVID-19 and economic shutdowns on employment conditions, especially on the protection of wages of migrant workers (ICC-IOM, 2020).

One concern that deserves further attention is the fact that COVID-19 has created a new set of worker-borne expenses associated with recruitment, and migrants – particularly those in low-wage employment positions – will likely struggle to cover them. As discussed above, wage reductions have made it even more difficult for migrants to cover new expenses related to COVID-19, as migrants are already struggling to cover for their basic expenses.

Impact of COVID-19 on remittances and debt

COVID-19 had a profound impact on remittances to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, and even more so for the families of migrants who returned. Most migrants had been sending remittances prior to COVID-19 and had either stopped entirely or significantly reduced the amounts. The families of Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar respondents had been adversely impacted by the reduced or stopped remittances, with

Cambodians and Laotians reporting greater impact than Myanmar. Average remittances dropped by half for stayees, but for most families of returnees, remittances stopped entirely upon the return of the migrant family member. Reduced wages of migrant workers are likely to have contributed to remittance reductions and are likely to continue to do so until wages increase and stabilize.

Greater social protection and financial assistance is needed in these countries, as many families are not resilient against economic shocks.

While past research has found that debt is strongly linked to migration-related expenses, findings suggested that migrants are now taking out loans to support themselves in Thailand, potentially as an alternative to returning. Migrants who owed more debt following COVID-19 were most likely have taken on more debt. This indicates migrants and returnees are finding other ways of coping with reduced wages and remittances, namely cutting expenditures on essential and non-essential items and reducing food intake.

Access to social protection

Access to social protection schemes among migrants was low. Few respondents were enrolled in any kind of social protection scheme and even fewer had accessed its provisions for paid leave and government benefits during COVID-19, even when such provision was an entitlement for those enrolled in the Social Security Fund. Almost all who accessed protection were Myanmar respondents who had arrived prior to 2017, suggesting longer-term migrants were more likely to be enrolled in this programme. In contrast to many other countries of destination, Thailand has established social protection schemes that migrant workers are allowed to join. However, these schemes exclude many migrant workers and are often too complex, meaning migrant workers experience significant difficulties in obtaining access to them.

Instead of relying on formal social protection, migrants reported depending on assistance from NGOs and charities and sometimes from employers.

In the absence of systematic support, migrants have turned to their immediate networks for assistance in times of need during the pandemic.

Remigration

Interest in remigrating to Thailand was split almost evenly between those who wanted to migrate, those who did not and those who were unsure. Migrants will largely depend on their existing networks to find jobs in Thailand again, meaning information dissemination and advocacy should be done within these networks. More than half of respondents said they would rely on their employer or friends and family in Thailand to help them make arrangements to remigrate to Thailand, and the majority were going to try and go back to their previous job. Of these, almost all said they were in touch with either the employer or colleagues. This remained true for those who had returned to their countries of origin in 2020 and 2021, possibly indicating good relationships with employers and colleagues and that contact remains for at least a year after return.

Skills development

Few migrants had undergone training courses and those who had largely undertook vocational training at their former positions in Thailand. Migrants were mostly interested in taking courses to enhance the vocational skills necessary for their previous positions in Thailand for those who wanted to remigrate, and for job prospects in their countries of origin but felt that training was insufficient unless it came with a clear pathway to income generating opportunities. Their main concern about skills training was losing income during the process, and migrants were interested in undertaking skills development if their employer allowed them time off, paid them to do the course or they received assistance from the government. Loss of income if migrants were to attend skills development programmes is an important barrier, as most Thai businesses said that workers were not allowed paid leave to complete the relevant skills training for their work. At the time of survey, several of these businesses said that it was not convenient for them to give paid leave to their workers for skills training.

VIII

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that the pandemic has had a widespread impact on migrant workers in Thailand and those who returned to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. It has also shown that migrant workers, especially women and gender minorities, were already vulnerable before the outbreak. Over the last year, their ability to maintain a decent standard of life and to be resilient to future shocks has been greatly reduced. In addition to the economic consequences of the pandemic such as reduction of wages, reduced income generating opportunities and job losses for migrant workers, COVID-19 reduced access to health services and social protection systems for workers, their children and dependent family members. Such reduced access has in turn reduced the resilience of migrant workers and created or exacerbated vulnerability to exploitation.

The recommendations provided in this section focus on three areas of concern arising from the results of this study and designed to address: a) the **pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities** faced by migrant workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, b) the **specific challenges** faced by migrant workers because of the pandemic and c) the need for increased resilience to enable migrant workers to withstand **future shocks and volatility**. All these areas require the governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand to strengthen policy and regulatory environments that protect the rights of migrant workers, including and with a particular focus on women migrant workers. These recommendations also require other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, NGOs, advocacy groups and activists to advocate for access to and improved conditions of work and living for migrant workers and returnees. Alongside these efforts, employers across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand must be responsible, and be held responsible for, following the law and protecting employees.

The primary research conducted for this study confirms the need for policies that consider and

encompass the entire labour migration journey and that are created through dialogue and cooperation among and between Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Thailand. The recommendations outlined below are addressed to all the stakeholders engaged in the multi-stakeholder response to labour migration issues in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, particularly Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments, ASEAN/regional bodies, and businesses/employers/private sector actors, working together with UN agencies, CSOs and workers' organizations and representatives.

Recommendation 1:

Recognize and enhance the role of migrant workers in socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, through simplified access to regular migration status for migrant workers.

The findings indicate that accessible, reliable and predictable systems to facilitate regular migration benefit migrant workers and their employers during crises. The Royal Thai Government was flexible in recognizing the importance of regularization, by introducing a range of registration windows during 2020–2021. These welcome efforts recognized the multiplier effect of regularization, particularly in the context of a health crisis, namely that: regular status made it more likely migrant workers would access COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccinations; regular status makes it easier for employers to fill labour force gaps and maintain productivity; and regular status protects migrant workers from exploitation and abuse.

The findings in this research demonstrate that regularization schemes are mutually beneficial (to workers and employers, and to Thailand and countries of origin), effective, and most importantly, feasible. The introduction of the amended Royal Ordinance in 2018 and revision of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in 2016–2017 were proactive steps towards regularizing all migrant workers in

Thailand, but the findings in this report show that more efforts are needed to ensure migrant workers and their employers have procedural certainty.

The research findings show that a considerable number of migrant workers had been in Thailand for longer than two years and have switched between regular and irregular status during this period. Since the 1990s, Thailand has periodically initiated short-term regularization drives, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, which shows that the need for such initiatives is ongoing. The continued presence of longer-term, irregular migrant workers may be in part the result of a mismatch between available regular migration channels and labour market realities that demand migrant workers in a wide range of industries, occupations, sectors and business sizes. The pandemic presents an opportunity to take stock and address these mismatches to develop a labour market-responsive labour migration system which will facilitate a faster return to economic efficiency and productivity as part of Thailand's socioeconomic recovery.

These findings show that making it easy for migrant workers to come to and remain in Thailand with a regular status is positive for Thailand's economy. The following actions would enhance the benefits of labour migration to Thailand and countries of origin, in terms of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Create cheaper, more efficient, safer and less complex regular labour migration pathways:** The Royal Thai Government, in partnership with the Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, should review the content of labour migration MoUs to streamline recruitment and migration procedures to incentivize regular migration by making it cheaper, more efficient, safer and less complex than irregular pathways.
- **Conduct a review of the experience of workers, employers and regulators during their participation in the worker-registration process during the COVID-19 pandemic,** to collect lessons learned and inform future actions to transition irregular migrant workers already in Thailand to regular migration

status. The review could be led by the Ministry of Labour with support from international organizations.

- **Streamline the implementation of MoUs to promote and monitor regular migration and ethical recruitment** through bilateral and subregional policy dialogue, inclusive of employers and recruitment agencies. This action should be undertaken in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the International Organization of Labour (ILO) General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) Principles and Montreal Recommendations. Doing so will streamline the costs and administrative requirements related to compliance with national laws and MoUs, which are currently borne by both migrant workers and their employers, thus ensuring migrant workers, their families and Thai businesses are more likely to be resilient to future economic shocks.
- **Establish rules and procedures for regular labour migration when borders reopen, and ensure these measures are clearly understood by migrant workers, employers and private recruitment agencies in advance of reopening.** Measures to facilitate regular remigration can be established in preparation for an easing of COVID-19 related restrictions in the future. Dissemination of clear information on these rules and procedures in advance of reopening will make for a quicker and more efficient recovery. This could be done through bilateral and subregional dialogue between the Government of Thailand and Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.
- **Establish a clear schedule of costs related to recruitment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic,** and clarify who is responsible for bearing those costs, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, IRIS Principles and Montreal Recommendations; and with reference to IOM's [Global Guidance on International Recruitment and Protection of Migrant Workers](#).

- **Establish mechanisms for pre-departure orientation with the Government of countries of origin and recruitment agencies** to provide migrant-centric trainings, especially on labour rights and responsibilities and Thai language, in line with [IOM's Good Practices Guidelines on Skills Development for Migrant Workers](#) and [Regional Guidance and Management System for Pre-Departure Orientation in Abu Dhabi Dialogue Countries](#). The main objective is to support aspiring migrant workers in preparing for their journey, adjustment period, life and work in the country of destination, along with providing guidance on ways to get access to social services, support channels and grievance mechanisms.
- **Recognize the role of employers in facilitating the remigration of migrant workers to Thailand during economic recovery.** The findings show that significant numbers of migrant workers plan to leverage their networks with employers in Thailand to facilitate their remigration and re-employment in Thailand. Likewise, the employer survey shows an anticipated ongoing demand for migrant workers during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand can work bilaterally and regionally to explore pragmatic solutions to facilitate and simplify the role of employers in direct recruitment of migrant workers, taking into account international standards and principles related to ethical recruitment.
- **Support Thai businesses to build back better through labour migration governance that responds more pragmatically to the demands of the labour market.** The findings show that the current legal framework does not fully reflect the realities of labour migration or the labour market in Thailand, including that the fact that migrant workers who have stayed in Thailand longer-term were most likely to remain in Thailand, thus allowing businesses in the country to continue operating. To ensure readiness in the labour market to respond to the needs of Thai businesses, Governments of

Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand should exchange labour market information to expand the categories of workers eligible for regular migration pathways, and longer-term stay in Thailand, including in businesses that employ migrant workers but have high levels of informality and irregularity, such as (SMEs), domestic work, agriculture, and hospitality and services. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments could also consider exploring the implications of allowing free movement for limited categories of workers in response to labour migration demand and realities, to provide more flexibility for employers particularly when unexpected changes (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) take place.

- **Ensure preparedness to build back better and consolidate competitive advantage through development of skills recognition systems across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand** that are responsive to the needs of lower- and semi-skilled workers and their employers. Almost all (97%) of Thai businesses surveyed were either likely or very likely to hire a migrant worker if the worker had a skills certificate from a recognized body, especially the Government. Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand Governments can partner with the private sector to develop and implement mechanisms for skills assessment and certification for migrant workers, especially on recognition of prior learning and mutual recognition of skills. Doing so would enable migrant workers to find better employment opportunities both in Thailand and countries of origin through their newly acquired and officially recognized skills – required and valued by the employers.

Recommendation 2:

Leverage lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance protections and economic resilience of migrant workers in Thailand.

The findings confirm that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the economic vulnerability of migrant workers. Migrant workers reported reduced incomes and significantly reduced remittances and household incomes, and they were borrowing to cover living costs. Importantly, the findings show that when social protection was available, migrant workers lacked awareness of their eligibility and knowledge of how to access these schemes. Findings also show that workers who are among the most likely to need financial support due to job losses and reduced income have in some cases been excluded from specific, COVID-19 related compensation schemes.

The experience of migrant workers and their employers during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of ensuring a conducive environment for the protection of the rights of migrant workers to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations below consider the importance of migrant workers to key growth industries in Thailand that are geared towards foreign investment and trade, and in which reputational issues related to protection gaps are of increasing concern.

- **The Ministry of Labour is encouraged to engage with employers of migrant workers to reiterate that national minimum wage laws apply to all migrant workers** and explain, in simple language, the responsibilities of employers in each sector to migrant workers. This should take place alongside longer-term efforts to create stronger enforcement methods and sanctions for employers that do not pay the minimum wage to migrant workers.
- **Reduce barriers to accessing social protection among migrant workers in Thailand**, including by removing sectoral exclusions for domestic work and seasonal agriculture, promoting and enforcing requirements for employers to enroll workers regardless of migration

status, and facilitating application processes for receipt of benefits and compensation in migrant languages. Effective coordination as well as a real-time integrated database among the relevant Royal Thai Government agencies including the Ministry of Labour, Immigration Bureau and Ministry of Interior would shorten the procedure for migrant workers to receive protection, benefits and compensations they are entitled to. A detailed assessment and set of recommendations on expanding access to social protection for migrant workers, including in the context of COVID-19, is provided in Thailand Social Protection Diagnostic Review Background study on social protection for migrant workers and their families in Thailand conducted by IOM, ILO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UN-Women (forthcoming).

- In the interim and during the COVID-19 pandemic, **the Royal Thai Government should continue its efforts to guarantee access to essential services and expand access to compensation schemes to migrant workers regardless of their occupation or migration status.** Findings are overall positive in demonstrating widespread access to at least one kind of health care in Thailand, regardless of nationality, occupation and migration status. Findings do however indicate that migrant workers experiencing job losses and reduced income were facing more challenges in meeting their subsistence costs, and in some cases were taking on new debts to cover the cost of essentials such as food. Eligibility gaps in compensation schemes related to force majeure closures excluded many of the migrant workers who, findings show, were most likely to lose their job, especially those in employment that is likely to be informal (for example, entertainment and sex work).
- **Ensure equality for women migrant workers and migrant workers with diverse SOGIESC, and address gender-based discrimination.** This study verified existing evidence that women migrant workers generally experience additional socioeconomic barriers compared to men,

including lower wages, higher debts and greater difficulties in obtaining work upon return; and demonstrates that this gap widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of these recommendations should take into account the need to ensure equality in wages, job opportunities and access to regular migration pathways for women and SOGIESC people, including through tailored initiatives to ensure that women migrant workers are able to build resilience against crisis situations such as sudden loss of income in the event of a pandemic, natural disaster or conflict.

- **Support initiatives led or supported by migrant workers** to address worker exploitation in general and arising from the COVID-19 pandemic such as the Migrant Forum in Asia's campaign 'Justice Mechanism for Repatriated Migrant Workers Now' to provide migrant workers with redress for wages stolen and illegally withheld due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant workers' access to justice should also be facilitated, and workers' voice in the development of measures to monitor employers and employment conditions should be prioritized.

Recommendation 3:

Continue with and improve measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the health of migrant workers and productivity of Thai businesses.

The findings show overall that migrant workers and their employers had endeavoured to adapt to the unexpected challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but highlight gaps and lessons learned to ensure preparedness to respond to future disasters and crises. Since data collection, the emergence of the Delta variant and acceleration of the spread of COVID-19 in Thailand and neighbouring countries demonstrates the ongoing importance of integrating health-based measures into overall migration and labour management. Effective measures to contain COVID-19, such as quarantine, physical distancing

and self-isolation come with associated opportunity costs for workers and employers, including lost productivity and income. Implementing clearer regulations to enhance measures to contain infectious diseases such as COVID-19 will enhance the resilience of the Thai economy to future shocks.

One in four business surveyed in Thailand said they were likely to very likely at risk of closing and never reopening. More than one third (36%) reported a decrease in revenue during the first lockdown, which started in March 2020, highlighting the importance of strengthening measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in the first place, including COVID-19, in workplaces. Using the findings and lessons learned, the following actions can mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and infectious diseases on the Thai economy, allowing businesses to reopen more quickly and to stay open:

- **Establish and implement arrangements for safe working conditions.** Employers should follow [the Royal Thai Government's guidelines on COVID-19 safety for their employees](#) and the Government should enhance monitoring and enforcement, and reduce barriers to compliance. For example, workers reported not having access to compensation for lost income associated with self-isolation or quarantine arrangements, which could be addressed by expanding access to and enrolment in social protection and compensation schemes.
- **Establish clear regulatory frameworks to ensure safe workplaces and accommodation for migrant workers.** Findings show a lack of consistency in workplace-based measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Given the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Royal Thai Government could consider incorporating COVID-19 and other infectious disease measures into Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Act B.E.2554 (2011) and Regulations. The Royal Thai Government could also consider introducing stronger legal requirements and standards for migrant

workers' accommodation, to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, and to guarantee safe and dignified living conditions for all workers including migrants. Such standards could build upon guidelines already provided in the Labour Welfare Committee Announcement on Provision of Accommodations by Employers for Construction Workers. Once established in law, labour inspectors could be trained to monitor and enforce these measures.

- **Provide all employers with clear and simple-to-follow guidance on COVID-19 safety requirements in the workplace and in public spaces related to employment.** The rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for migrant workers and their employers to understand their legal obligations and access reliable information on recommended/best practice measures to stop the spread of the virus. Providing timely and accurate information on laws and policies regarding COVID-19 safety requirements would be an effective way to promote voluntary compliance.
- **Establish firewalls to ensure migrant workers, regardless of their nationality or migration status, have access to COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccinations,** including through assurances that public health authorities will not require documentation or pass information to immigration authorities.

Recommendation 4:

Leverage lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance protections and economic resilience of migrant workers, including returnees to countries of origin.

Results related to the economic situation of returnee migrant workers and their families are cause for significant concern. Migrants were very likely to report reduced wages and remittances, leading to an overall 69 per cent reduction in household income and increased debt levels. Returnees face limited job prospects upon return – and with lower wages than positions in Thailand. Three out of five returnees

are unemployed, with many resorting to cutting expenses on food, hygiene and utilities as a coping strategy.

More positively, migrant workers returned with skills and are well situated to contribute to the recovery of businesses in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, with many hesitant to remigrate to Thailand amid the pandemic. One in five were trained in Thailand. Returnees are eager to find regular employment and demonstrated high interest in additional vocational skills training.

The following measures are designed to enhance the economic resilience of returnee migrant workers and the economies of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, in the context of mass returns during the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced household income due to lost remittances and reduced (GDP) in countries of origin:

- **Develop reintegration plans and/or include returnee migrant workers in socioeconomic recovery plans,** to generate income and employment opportunities for returnee migrant workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. These plans can be achieved through cooperation among skills development providers, private sector, and civil society organizations to promote market-driven skills development and employment opportunities, in turn ensuring that migrant workers have access to decent employment upon return. This process should be led by the Governments of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, and may benefit from sharing lessons learned across countries of origin within ASEAN. International corporations with supply chains in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar could play an important role in generating and sustaining economic opportunities for returnees and could be engaged in reintegration planning.
- **Introduce portability of social protection among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic**

- Republic, Myanmar and Thailand and/or explore ways to include migrant returnees in social protection in countries of origin:** The significant reduction in income experienced by returnees also indicates a need for compensation schemes or inclusion of returnees in unemployment schemes in countries of origin, particularly considering that their substantial contribution to GDP and household income helps to subsidize social protection in countries of origin. The Royal Thai Government, with the support of UN agencies, could consider mobilizing the private sector to provide seed capital, and international donor governments could provide support to develop required policies, capacity and infrastructure to implement the initiative. Alternatively, portable social protection across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand could guarantee access to social protection regardless of mobility and citizenship.
- **Invest in income generating opportunities in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar,** especially for women, including access to entrepreneurship support, financial management trainings, community revolving funds and other startup capital. Findings show that 63 per cent of returnees surveyed are unemployed. Of those unemployed and seeking work at the time of survey, 69 per cent reported that there were no jobs available. Being self-employed could be an alternative given adequate support. SMEs are key drivers of long-term economic growth in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand, and will have a vital role to play in socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic. Enhancing access to these opportunities for returning migrants, especially women, by having information about such opportunities standardized as part of reintegration processes and systems through collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSO)s and Community Based Organizations, is also recommended.
 - **Further support skills development trainings for migrant workers to encourage sustainable investment from employers.** A business case must be clearly established for employers to recognize the value of investing in both soft and technical and vocational training for migrant workers. Employers should be actively engaged in curriculum design and delivery of trainings. Investment in skills development trainings for migrant workers should be tax-exempt. Support mechanism must be in place to incentivize migrant workers to participate in skills development programme-s, including paid time off, stipend, access to free childcare services and clear career development pathways based on improved skills.
 - **In partnership with local financial institutions, explore mechanisms to provide migrant workers with access to regulated, reliable and affordable loan services.** Migrant workers overwhelmingly obtain informal loans that are not subject to monitoring or regulation (Harkins et al., 2017). Workers routinely borrow to cover costs related to migration, often at high interest. Better mechanisms to finance the costs of migration are urgently needed, in addition to advancing the employer pays principle. Improving and diversifying sources of finance requires multistakeholder dialogue building on the existing knowledge base on recruitment and migration costs and debt sources among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar migrants in Thailand. CSOs, skills development providers and recruitment agencies can also be engaged to incorporate financial literacy and management trainings in pre-departure orientation and reintegration support for migrant workers, including access to credit.



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APPENDIX I

SER TOOL 1 – Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar Migrants in Thailand survey

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO A KOBO DATA COLLECTION FORM (THIS CHANGES THE LAY-OUT AND MAKES IT MORE USER FRIENDLY).

1. Migrant profiles
2. Employment status and documentation
3. Debt
4. Remittances
5. Access to information, social protection and services
6. Skills development

A) Interview coding		
A.1	Date of interview: <i>kobo automated</i>	
A.2	Start time: <i>kobo automated</i>	End time: <i>kobo automated</i>
A.3	Geopoint	
A.4	Enumerator ID:	
A.5	Interview ID:	
A.6	Is this survey being conducted in person or by phone call?	<input type="radio"/> In person <input type="radio"/> By phone
A.7	Location of the interview	District: _____ Province: _____
A.8	<p>Does the respondent consent to this interview?</p> <p>Before asking for consent remember to explain the purpose of the study and go over the following checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is entirely voluntary. • Respondents can end the survey at any time. • If respondents do not feel comfortable or do not want to answer a question, it is completely fine. They can tell you "I do not want to answer" any time they feel like it. • There is no direct benefit in participating in this study. • Information collected by IOM is kept anonymous and is held to IOM data protection standards. • Participation in the study is and will remain anonymous. • Ask if the respondent has any question before starting the interview. <p>Hello. My name is _____, and I would be grateful if you could spend about 40 minutes of your time answering my questions. This research will help us to better understand the situation of men and women like you, who have remained in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has been commissioned by the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help the organization understand better the socioeconomic impacts and challenges people like you have faced because of the pandemic. Our work as researchers is not to provide any direct assistance but to make sure that your concerns are voiced upwards, to those who can help you.</p> <p>This interview is anonymous, and your name will not be mentioned in any report or document. Personal identifying information will be kept secure, confidential, and will be removed from the dataset. You are not obliged to answer any question, and you can stop at any moment you want. I thank you for accepting to help me.</p> <p>Do you want to ask me anything about the interview before you decide to participate?</p> <p>Have you said the text above to the respondent?</p> <p>If yes, click "yes".</p>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

B) Migrant Profiles		
B.1	Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Other, add sexuality <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say
B.2	Age (hint: if respondent is younger than 18 years, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> _____ (fill out number) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer <input type="radio"/> Does not know
B.3	What is your nationality? (if respondent is not Cambodian, Laotian or from Myanmar, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> Cambodian <input type="radio"/> Laotian <input type="radio"/> Myanmar <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (end the survey)
B.4	When did you arrive in Thailand? (if respondent arrived after February 2020, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> Before 2017 <input type="radio"/> 2017 <input type="radio"/> 2018 <input type="radio"/> 2019 <input type="radio"/> January 2020 <input type="radio"/> February 2020 <input type="radio"/> March 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> After March 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> I do not remember (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (end the survey)

C) Employment		
Prior to March 2020		
C.1	What was your employment situation prior to March 2020 (January and February 2020)? (if they were not employed for an employer prior to March 2020, please end the survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.1.2) ○ Student and working for an employer (go to C.1.2) ○ Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (end of survey) ○ Unemployed (end of survey) ○ Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (end of survey) ○ Only a student, not working (end of survey) ○ Other, please specify_____ (end of survey) ○ Do not want to answer (end of survey)
C.1.2	How many jobs did you have prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 (go to C.1.3, skip C.1.4) ○ 2 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3+ (go to C.1.3)
C.1.3	<p>In which sector did you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most)</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.1.4	<p>In which sector(s) did you work in your other job(s)?</p> <p>Up to two answers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.2	What was your total monthly income prior to March 2020? (hint: if monthly income is irregular, use the average of January and February 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ THB ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

C.3	How many days per week did you work on average prior to March 2020? (hint: if days per week is irregular, use the average of January and February 2020)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.3.1	How many hours did you work per day on average prior to March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.4	Did you face hostility, harassment or discrimination in any of your workplaces before March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.4.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.5) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to C.5) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.5)
C.4.1	If yes, from who? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Employer <input type="radio"/> Colleagues (Thai nationals) <input type="radio"/> Colleagues (other migrant workers of my nationality) <input type="radio"/> Colleagues (other migrant workers of different nationality) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify: _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.5	Which documents did you hold prior to March 2020? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Passport, visa and work permit (MoU) <input type="radio"/> Temporary passport/certificate of identity (CI), visa and work permit (NV) (green pass) <input type="radio"/> Registration card ("pink card" or Tor Ror 38/1) <input type="radio"/> Passport and visa only <input type="radio"/> Border pass <input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Lockdown		
C.6	Were you employed during lockdown? (April, May, June 2020)	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.6.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.6.4) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.6.4)
C.6.1	What was your monthly income during lockdown? (hint: monthly income from work only; if income different per month add the totals for April, May and June and divide by 3)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.6.2	How many days per week did you work on average during lockdown?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.6.3	How many hours did you work per day on average during lockdown?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.6.4	Did you receive any compensation from Social Security office during lockdown?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.7	What happened to your main job during lockdown ?	<input type="radio"/> I kept working (go to C.8) <input type="radio"/> I was let go (go to C.8) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off, then later returned (go to C.7.1) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off, then was later let go (go to C.7.1, skip C.7.4) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off, then I quit (go to C.7.1, skip C.7.4) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to C.8) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.8)

C.7.1	If yes, for how long were you asked to take time off or told not to come to work at your main job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A few days ○ 1–2 weeks ○ 3–4 weeks ○ 2–3 months ○ 4–6 months ○ 7–12 months ○ Indefinitely/not given a timeline ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
C.7.2	Were you paid for this time off?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, the full amount (go to C.7.4 or C.8) ○ Yes, but only a partial amount (go to C.7.3) ○ No, I was not paid at all (go to C.7.3) ○ Other, please specify_____ (go to C.7.4 or C.8) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.7.4 or C.8)
C.7.3	Were you eventually reimbursed for the money you lost during the time off?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, completely ○ Yes, partially ○ No ○ Do not want to answer
C.7.4	When you came back to the job, were your wages reduced compared to the amount before March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No ○ Do not want to answer
Lockdown		
C.8	What is your employment status now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.8.1) ○ I have a job, but I am currently on time-off (go to C.16) ○ Student and working for an employer (go to C.8.1) ○ Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (go to D.1) ○ Unemployed (go to C.18) ○ Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (go to C.D.1) ○ Only a student, not working (go to D.1) ○ Other, please specify_____ (go to D.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.8.1	How many jobs do you have right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 3+
C.8.2	<p>In which sector do you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most)</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer

C.8.3	<p>If you have more than one job, in which sector(s) do you work in your other jobs?</p> <p>Up to two answers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Domestic work <input type="radio"/> Fishing <input type="radio"/> Seafood processing <input type="radio"/> Food processing (not seafood) <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing <input type="radio"/> Construction <input type="radio"/> Hospitality/tourism <input type="radio"/> Restaurant <input type="radio"/> Entertainment/sex work <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> I do not want to answer
C.9	<p>What is your monthly income now? (hint: if income is irregular, take the average income of the last 2 months)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.10	<p>How many days per week do you work on average now? (hint: if days per week is irregular, take the average days of the last 2 months)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.10.1	<p>How many hours do you work per day on average now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.11	<p>you held prior to March 2020 ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.12) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.11.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.12)
C.11.1	<p>If not, why?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I was let go from my previous job after COVID-19 started <input type="radio"/> My employer did not have work for me anymore <input type="radio"/> The business I was working at closed <input type="radio"/> I was let go from my previous job due to my legal migration status <input type="radio"/> My previous employer did not pay my wages <input type="radio"/> I was worried about COVID-19 at my old job, so I left <input type="radio"/> I was not being treated well at my old job, so I left <input type="radio"/> I found a new job with higher wages <input type="radio"/> I found a new job with better benefits (insurance, leave days, sick leave, etc.) <input type="radio"/> I found a new job in a better location <input type="radio"/> I found a new job that suits my skills better <input type="radio"/> I moved locations due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> I moved locations for non-COVID-19-related reasons <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.12	<p>In your main job: Which types of COVID-19 prevention measures are used in your current workplace? (hint: if they say none, then you cannot choose any other answers)</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Temperature checks <input type="radio"/> Social distancing <input type="radio"/> Using masks <input type="radio"/> Using face shields <input type="radio"/> Using gloves <input type="radio"/> Hand sanitizer <input type="radio"/> Work from home scheme <input type="radio"/> Disinfecting and sterilizing surfaces <input type="radio"/> Periodic COVID-19 tests <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

C.13	In your main job : If you get sick with COVID-19, does your employer require you to quarantine/isolate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to C.13.1) ○ No (go to C.13.2) ○ I do not know (go to C.13.2) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.13.2)
C.13.1	If yes, are you paid during the quarantine/isolation days?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, full wages ○ Yes, partial wages ○ No ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.13.2	In your main job : If someone in your workplace gets sick with COVID-19, does your employer require you to quarantine/isolate if you have been in contact with that person?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to C.13.3) ○ No (go to C.14) ○ I do not know (go to C.14) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.14)
C.13.3	If yes, are you paid during the quarantine/isolation days?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, full wages ○ Yes, partial wages ○ No ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.14	In your main job : were you ever forced to take a COVID-19 test by your employer, even if you were not sick?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
C.15	In any of your jobs : Have you faced hostility, harassment or discrimination in the workplace towards you after March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
C.15.1	If yes, from who? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employer (go to C.17) ○ Colleagues (Thai nationals) (go to C.17) ○ Colleagues (other migrant workers of my nationality) (go to C.17) ○ Colleagues (other migrant workers of different nationality) (go to C.17) ○ Other, please specify: _____ (go to C.17) ○ I do not know (go to C.17) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.17)
C.16	If you are on time off from a job, what sector is the job in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.16.1	Are you still generating income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to C.16.2) ○ No (go to C.17) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.17)
C.16.2	If so, how? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My job is still paying my full wages ○ My job is still paying partial wages ○ I am doing small occasional jobs ○ I am being paid workers' compensation from Social Security ○ I am working part-time for friends or family ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

C.16.3	If so, how much is your current monthly income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
C.17	Which documents do you currently have? <i>(hint: if they answer none, then you cannot choose any other answers)</i> Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Passport, visa and work permit (MoU) (go to C.17.2) ○ Temporary passport/certificate of identity, visa and work permit (NV) (green pass) (go to C.17.2) ○ Registration card ("pink card" or Tor Ror 38/1) (go to C.17.2) ○ Passport and visa only (go to C.17.2) ○ Border pass (go to C.17.2) ○ New online registration with Ministry of Labour (Announced January 2021) (go to C.17.2) ○ None (go to 17.1) ○ Other, please specify _____ (go to D.1) ○ I do not know (go to D.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.17.1	If none, have you made any efforts to obtain any of these documents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to D.1) ○ No (go to D.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.17.2	Did you (only you) have to pay for this documentation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to 17.3) ○ No (go to D.1) ○ I do not know (go to D.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.17.3	If yes, how much did it cost you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ THB ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
C.17.4	To whom did you pay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent (go to D.1) ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker (go to D.1) ○ Employer (go to D.1) ○ Friend/family member (go to D.1) ○ Other, please specify _____ (go to D.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.18	If you are unemployed, were you let go or did you decide to quit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I was let go (go to C.18.1) ○ I decided to quit (go to C.19) ○ Other, please specify _____ (go to C.19) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.19)
C.18.1	Why were you let go from your job? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff downsized due to fewer orders ○ Business I worked for closed temporarily ○ Business I worked for closed permanently ○ Outbreak of COVID-19 ○ Employers discrimination and fear that migrants have COVID-19 ○ My migration status (legal status) changed ○ My contract ended ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
C.19	Have you tried to find another job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to C.20) ○ No (go to C.21) ○ Do not want to answer (go to C.21)
C.20	What are the main challenges you are facing related finding a job? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are no jobs available ○ I am not hired due to my migration status (legal status) ○ Available jobs do not pay enough ○ Available jobs do not suit my skills ○ Available jobs do not have COVID-19 prevention measures, so I would be worried for my safety ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

C.21	<p>What coping strategies have you used to address being unemployed?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Applying to new jobs <input type="radio"/> Doing small occasional work or assignments <input type="radio"/> Taking loans <input type="radio"/> Purchasing items on credit <input type="radio"/> Receiving remittances from elsewhere <input type="radio"/> Reducing food intake <input type="radio"/> Reduce expenditures on health and other non-food essentials <input type="radio"/> Downgraded accommodations (cheaper or more crowded) <input type="radio"/> Moved locations/cities <input type="radio"/> Applying for government assistance <input type="radio"/> Applying for NGO/UN assistance <input type="radio"/> Depending on donations/support from friends/family <input type="radio"/> Depending on donations/support from other sources <input type="radio"/> Selling assets <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> No coping mechanisms <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D) Debt		
Prior to March 2020		
D.1	<p>Did you owe debt prior to March 2020? (January and February 2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes (go to D.1.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to D.2) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to D.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.2)
D.1.1	<p>For what purpose did you get this debt?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Employment or recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Migration costs (recruiting, employment placement, arranging interviews, submitting documents for government clearances, confirming credentials, organizing travel and transportation) <input type="radio"/> Household expenses (expenses for the whole family) <input type="radio"/> Personal expenses <input type="radio"/> Agricultural production in home country <input type="radio"/> Start a business in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Start a business in home country <input type="radio"/> Pay another debt <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.1.2	<p>To how much did your debt amount prior to March 2020?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Current situation		
D.2	<p>Is your current debt higher, lower or equal to your debt before March 2020?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Higher (go to D.2.1) <input type="radio"/> Lower (go to D.7) <input type="radio"/> Equal (go to D.7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to D.7) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.7)

D.2.1	<p>Why is your debt higher?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to COVID-19 and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to non-COVID-19-related reason and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced (non-COVID-19-related reason) <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to non-COVID-19-related reason <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location (non-COVID-19-related) <input type="radio"/> Tried to travel home due to COVID-19 concerns <input type="radio"/> Tried to travel home due to non-COVID-19-related concerns <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for a COVID-19 test <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for quarantine <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for COVID-19 treatment <input type="radio"/> Employment and recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Household expenses (expenses for the whole family) <input type="radio"/> Personal expenses <input type="radio"/> Agricultural production in home country <input type="radio"/> Start a business in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Start a business in home country <input type="radio"/> To pay another debt <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know
D.3	How much does your current debt amount to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.4	To whom do you owe the biggest portion of your current debt? (Who do you owe the most money to)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Bank in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Bank in home country <input type="radio"/> Microcredit institution <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in home country <input type="radio"/> Employer <input type="radio"/> Money lender in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Money lender in home country <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.5	What is the monthly interest rate on your current debt to this lender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> No interest <input type="radio"/> 0–1% <input type="radio"/> 2–3% <input type="radio"/> 4–5% <input type="radio"/> 6–7% <input type="radio"/> 8–10% <input type="radio"/> 11–15% <input type="radio"/> 16–20% <input type="radio"/> Over 20% <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

D.6	How do you currently plan to repay the debt? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deductions from my wages ○ Borrowing money from family/friends ○ Income/job earnings from family members ○ Income made through business activities of my household (non-farming) ○ Income made through crop-harvest/farming ○ Personal income made through my job ○ Selling household/family assets ○ Selling personal assets ○ Selling land ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
D.7	Why did you decide to remain in Thailand? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I needed to continue working to pay off my existing debts ○ I needed to continue working to pay off debts related to COVID-19 ○ I thought it would be safer here than in my home country during COVID-19 ○ I was worried I would not be able to re-migrate if I left because of COVID-19 ○ My family depends on me to send them money (back home) ○ The standards of living is better here ○ Travelling back home is too complicated ○ I do not want to quarantine when I arrive back home ○ My employer told me I couldn't leave ○ My employer/broker has retained my passport ○ The borders are closed ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer

E) Remittances

E.1	Were you sending money to your family in your home country prior to March 2020? (January and February 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to E.1.1) ○ No (go to E.3) ○ Do not want to answer (go to E.3)
E.1.1	If yes, how much money did you send home per month on average? (January and February 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ (THB) ○ Do not want to answer
E.2	Which transfer method did you primarily use to send money home prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office ○ Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app ○ Via banks office ○ Via banks website or app ○ Via friends and relatives in cash ○ Via friends and relatives from their bank account ○ I bring cash with me when I return to my home country ○ I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country ○ I pay someone (not friends/family) to bring money back ○ Broker system/via a shop ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer

Post March 2020		
E.3	Are you currently sending money to your family in your home country?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.3.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to E.5) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.5)
E.3.1	If yes, how much money do you send home per month on average? (average of 2 months)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.4	Have you changed your primary transfer method since lockdown?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.4.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to E.5) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.5)
E.4.1	If yes, which transfer method do you primarily use now?	<input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office <input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app <input type="radio"/> Via banks office <input type="radio"/> Via banks website or app <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives in cash <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives from bank account to bank account <input type="radio"/> I will bring cash with me when I return to the home country <input type="radio"/> I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I pay someone to bring money back <input type="radio"/> broker system <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.4.2	Why did you change your primary transfer method? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> I found a new transfer method with a better transfer fee <input type="radio"/> The old rate changed/became more expensive <input type="radio"/> Service stopped being offered/they were closed <input type="radio"/> I could not send through relatives and friends because of travel restrictions <input type="radio"/> I could not bring cash back with me because I cannot travel due to travel restrictions <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.5	Is your family back home receiving less money from you compared to before March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.6) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.1)
E.6	What coping strategies has your family back home used to address reduced or stopped remittances? (What has your family back home done to deal with you sending less money to them?) Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Other adult family members who were not working are now working <input type="radio"/> Other adult family members who were working are now working more <input type="radio"/> Children are taken out of school <input type="radio"/> Children are working <input type="radio"/> Taking loans <input type="radio"/> Purchasing items on credit <input type="radio"/> Reducing food intake <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on health <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on non-food essentials <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on non-essential items (clothing, other shopping) <input type="radio"/> Downgraded accommodations (more crowded, smaller living space, cheaper) <input type="radio"/> Moved locations/cities <input type="radio"/> Applying for government assistance <input type="radio"/> Applying for NGO/UN assistance <input type="radio"/> Depending on donations <input type="radio"/> Selling assets <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Nothing has changed for my family <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

F) Access to Information, Social Protection and Services		
Information about COVID-19		
F.1	<p>What are the main sources of information on COVID-19 in Thailand?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in person in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family via messaging apps at home <input type="radio"/> Employer or manager <input type="radio"/> Colleagues <input type="radio"/> Embassy or consulate <input type="radio"/> Recruitment agency or broker <input type="radio"/> CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs <input type="radio"/> Community leader/community village news update <input type="radio"/> Community health post/volunteer <input type="radio"/> Thai Government sources <input type="radio"/> Police <input type="radio"/> Trade union <input type="radio"/> Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) <input type="radio"/> Self-searched information from the internet <input type="radio"/> Car with speaker <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
F.2	Do you have access to health-care services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.2.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.2.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.3)
F.2.1	<p>If so, what are they?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Private hospital (go to F.3) <input type="radio"/> Public hospital (state hospital under Social Security fund or Ministry of Public health schemes) (go to F.3) <input type="radio"/> NGO services (go to F.3) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to F.3) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.3)
F.2.2	<p>What are the main barriers to access of health-care services?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Not affordable <input type="radio"/> Too far away <input type="radio"/> Overburdened staff/hospital <input type="radio"/> Poor quality <input type="radio"/> I do not trust these services (they might report me) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Information about COVID-19		
F.3	<p>What are the main sources of information on obtaining permission from the Thai Government to work in Thailand? (hint: how do they keep up to date or learn new things about regularization, pink cards, legal status, work permits, etc.)</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in person in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family via messaging apps at home <input type="radio"/> Employer or manager <input type="radio"/> Embassy or consulate <input type="radio"/> Recruitment agency or broker <input type="radio"/> CSO/Non-profit organizations/NGOs <input type="radio"/> Community leader/community village news update <input type="radio"/> Thai Government sources <input type="radio"/> Police <input type="radio"/> Trade union <input type="radio"/> Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) <input type="radio"/> Self-searched information from the internet <input type="radio"/> Car with speaker <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

F.4	Are you currently enrolled in any government or private sector benefit schemes now?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.4.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.5) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to F.5) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.5)
F.4.1	If yes, which ones? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Social security <input type="radio"/> Workers' compensation <input type="radio"/> Government health insurance <input type="radio"/> Private health insurance <input type="radio"/> Education or training <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
F.5	Are you aware that the Thai Government offers compensation to workers, including migrants registered under the Social Security Fund, who lost their jobs due to COVID-19?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.5.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.6) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.6)
F.5.1	Have you ever tried to access this compensation?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.6) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.5.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.6)
F.5.2	If no, why not? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> I do not qualify <input type="radio"/> My employer did not register me <input type="radio"/> I do not have the legal documents to access it <input type="radio"/> I don't know how <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
F.6	Are you aware of any way to complain when something wrong/illegal happens to you in the workplace? (hint: for example, abuse, exploitation, wage theft, etc.)	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.6.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to G.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to G.1)
F.6.1	If yes, where/to whom do you report your complaints? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Hotline <input type="radio"/> Civil Society Organization <input type="radio"/> Trade union representative <input type="radio"/> My embassy <input type="radio"/> Labour attaches <input type="radio"/> Government-run centres such as the Migrant Workers Assistance Centres <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
F.7	Have you ever reported a complaint?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to F.7.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to G.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to G.1)
F.7.1	If yes, was the complaint addressed?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
G) Skills Development		
G.1	Have you attended any skills trainings?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to G.1.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to G.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to G.3)
G.1.1	If so, in which country? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Thailand <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

G.1.2	<p>If so, which ones?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vocational skills ○ Thai language ○ Thai culture ○ Financial literacy ○ Labour rights in Thailand ○ Entrepreneurship skills ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
G.1.3	<p>Who provided them?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My employer ○ Recruiters ○ UN/NGOs ○ Trade Unions ○ Thai Government ○ Home country government ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
G.1.4	<p>Did this training result in you having better opportunities for work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to G.3) ○ No (go to G.3) ○ Do not want to answer (go to G.3)
F.7.1	<p>If yes, was the complaint addressed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
G.2	<p>Why haven't you participated in skills trainings?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I do not have enough time outside of work ○ I do not see the point ○ I cannot afford transportation ○ I cannot afford the training ○ I have household duties ○ I am not aware of any trainings ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
G.3	<p>Please rate your interest in each type of training on a scale of 1 to 5:</p> <p>1 – no interest</p> <p>2 – a little interest</p> <p>3 – some interest</p> <p>4 – interested</p> <p>5 – very interested</p>	
	Vocational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
	Thai language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

	Thai culture	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Financial literacy	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Labour rights in Thailand	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Entrepreneurship skills	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
G.4	If you rated above a 2 for vocational skills, which vocational skills are you interested in? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Tailoring/Weaving <input type="radio"/> Mechanics Vehicle <input type="radio"/> Cooking <input type="radio"/> Beverage (coffee, tea milk, cocktails, herb drinks) <input type="radio"/> Beauty Salon/ Hairdresser <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Others, please specify <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
G.5	Are there any other skills you are interested in? Please specify:	<input type="radio"/> Please specify _____

COMMENTS



APPENDIX II

SER TOOL 2 – Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar Returnees

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO A KOBO DATA COLLECTION FORM (THIS CHANGES THE LAY-OUT AND MAKES IT MORE USER FRIENDLY).

1. Migrant profiles
2. Employment status and documentation
3. Debt
4. Remittances
5. Return and reintegration
6. Access to information, social protection and services
7. Remigration
8. Skills development

A) Interview coding		
A.1	Date of interview: <i>kobo automated</i>	
A.2	Start time: <i>kobo automated</i>	End time: <i>kobo automated</i>
A.3	Geopoint	
A.4	Enumerator ID:	
A.5	Interview ID:	
A.6	Location of the interview	Country: _____ District: _____ Province: _____
A.7	<p>Does the respondent consent to this interview?</p> <p>Before asking for consent remember to explain the purpose of the study and go over the following checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is entirely voluntary. • Respondents can end the survey at any time. • If respondents do not feel comfortable or do not want to answer a question, it is completely fine. They can tell you "I do not want to answer" any time they feel like it. • There is no direct benefit in participating in this study. • Information collected by IOM is kept anonymous and is held to IOM data protection standards. • Participation in the study is and will remain anonymous. • Ask if the respondent has any question before starting the interview. <p>Hello. My name is _____, and I would be grateful if you could spend about 40 minutes of your time answering my questions. This research will help us to better understand the situation of men and women like you, who have returned to your country of origin during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has been commissioned by the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help the organization understand better the socioeconomic impacts and challenges people like you have faced because of the pandemic. Our work as researchers is not to provide any direct assistance but to make sure that your concerns are voiced upwards, to those who can help you.</p> <p>This interview is anonymous, and your name will not be mentioned in any report or document. Personal identifying information will be kept secure, confidential, and will be removed from the dataset. You are not obliged to answer any question, and you can stop at any moment you want. I thank you for accepting to help me.</p> <p>Do you want to ask me anything about the interview before you decide to participate?</p> <p>Have you said the text above to the respondent?</p> <p>If yes, click "yes".</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>

B) Migrant Profiles		
B.1	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male ○ Female ○ Other, add sexuality ○ Prefer not to say
B.2	Age (<i>hint: if respondent is younger than 18 years, please end the survey</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ _____ (fill out number) ○ Do not want to answer ○ Does not know
B.3	What is your nationality? (if respondent nationality does not match current country location, please end the survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cambodian ○ Laotian ○ Myanmar ○ Other, please specify (end the survey) ○ Do not want to answer (end the survey)
B.4	When did you last migrate to Thailand? (if respondent arrived after January 2020, please end the survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before 2017 ○ 2017 ○ 2018 ○ 2019 ○ January 2020 ○ February 2020 (end the survey) ○ March 2020 (end the survey) ○ After March 2020 (end the survey) ○ I do not remember (end the survey) ○ Do not want to answer (end the survey)
B.5	When did you return to your home country? (if respondent returned before April 2020, please end the survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before 2020 (end the survey) ○ 2020 (end the survey) ○ January 2020 (end the survey) ○ February 2020 (end the survey) ○ March 2020 (end the survey) ○ April 2020 ○ May 2020 ○ June 2020 ○ July 2020 ○ August 2020 ○ September 2020 ○ October 2020 ○ November 2020 ○ December 2020 ○ January 2021 ○ February 2021 ○ March 2021 ○ April 2021 ○ I do not remember ○ Do not want to answer

C) Employment		
Prior to March 2020		
C.1	What was your employment situation in Thailand prior to March 2020 (January, February, March 2020)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.1.2) ○ Student and working for an employer (go to C.1.2) ○ Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (end of survey) ○ Unemployed (end of survey) ○ Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (end of survey) ○ Only a student, not working (end of survey) ○ Other, please specify _____ (end of survey) ○ Do not want to answer (end of survey)
C.1.2	How many jobs did you have prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 (go to C.1.3, skip C.1.4) ○ 2 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3+ (go to C.1.3)
C.1.3	In which sector did you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.1.4	In which sector(s) did you work in your other job(s)? Up to two answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.2	What was your daily/monthly income prior to March 2020 in Thailand? (if income is irregular, take the average of January and February)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ THB ○ Daily ○ Monthly ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

C.3	How many days per week did you work on average prior to March 2020 in Thailand?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.3.1	How many hours did you work per day on average prior to March 2020 in Thailand?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.4	Which documents did you hold prior to March 2020? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Passport, visa and work permit (MoU) <input type="radio"/> Temporary passport/certificate of identity (CI), visa and work permit (NV) (green card) Registration card ("pink card" or Tor Ror 38/1) <input type="radio"/> Passport and visa only <input type="radio"/> Border pass <input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Post March 2020 in Thailand		
C.5	What happened to your main job in Thailand right after March 2020? (April and May 2020)	<input type="radio"/> I kept working (go to C.5.1) <input type="radio"/> I was let go (fired) (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I quit (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then later returned (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then later let go (fired) before I could return (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then I quit before I could return (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.6)
C.5.1	If you kept working at your main job, were your wages reduced after March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.5.2	If you kept working at your main job, were your working hours reduced after March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.6)
Current situation		
C.6	What is your employment situation now?	<input type="radio"/> Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.6.1) <input type="radio"/> Student and working for an employer (go to C.6.1) <input type="radio"/> Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (go to 6.1) <input type="radio"/> Unemployed (go to C.9) <input type="radio"/> Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Only a student, not working (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.1)

C.6.1	How many jobs do you have right now?	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 3+
C.6.2	<p>In which sector do you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most)</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<input type="radio"/> Domestic work <input type="radio"/> Fishing <input type="radio"/> Seafood processing <input type="radio"/> Food processing (not seafood) <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing <input type="radio"/> Construction <input type="radio"/> Hospitality/tourism <input type="radio"/> Restaurant <input type="radio"/> Entertainment/sex work <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> I do not want to answer
C.6.3	<p>If you have more than one job, in which sector(s) do you work in your other jobs?</p> <p>Up to two answers</p>	<input type="radio"/> Domestic work <input type="radio"/> Fishing <input type="radio"/> Seafood processing <input type="radio"/> Food processing (not seafood) <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing <input type="radio"/> Construction <input type="radio"/> Hospitality/tourism <input type="radio"/> Restaurant <input type="radio"/> Entertainment/sex work <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> I do not want to answer
C.7	What is your current daily/monthly income? (if irregular, take the average of the last two months)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> Daily <input type="radio"/> Monthly <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.8	How many days per week do you work on average now?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.8.1	How many hours per day do you work on average now?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.9	Was your last employment in Thailand or in your home country?	<input type="radio"/> Thailand <input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.10	Are you currently looking for a job?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

C.11	What are the main challenges you are currently facing related to finding a job? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are no jobs available ○ I do not know where to find a job ○ Available jobs do not pay enough ○ Available jobs do not suit my skills ○ Available jobs do not have COVID-19 prevention measures, so I would be worried for my safety Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
C.12	What coping strategies have you used to address being unemployed? Rank top 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applying to new jobs ○ Doing small occasional work or assignments ○ Taking loans ○ Purchasing items on credit ○ Receiving remittances from elsewhere ○ Reducing food intake ○ Reducing expenditures on health and other non-food essentials ○ Downgraded accommodations (cheaper or more crowded) ○ Moved locations/cities ○ Applying for government assistance ○ Applying for NGO/UN assistance ○ Depending on donations/support from friends/family ○ Depending on donations/support from other sources (religious institution, community funds, banks) ○ Selling assets ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ No coping mechanisms ○ Do not want to answer

D) Debt		
Prior to March 2020		
D.1	Did you owe debt prior to March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to D.1.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to D.2) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to D.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.2)
D.1.1	For what purpose did you get this debt? Rank top 3	<input type="radio"/> Employment or recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Migration costs (recruiting, employment placement, arranging interviews, submitting documents for government clearances, confirming credentials, organizing travel and transportation) <input type="radio"/> Household expenses <input type="radio"/> Personal expenses <input type="radio"/> Agricultural production in home country <input type="radio"/> Start a business in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Start a business in home country <input type="radio"/> Pay another debt <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.1.2	To how much did your debt amount prior to March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Post March 2020		
D.2	Is your current debt higher, lower or equal to your debt before March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Higher (go to D.2.1) <input type="radio"/> Lower (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> Equal (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.1)
D.2.1	Why is your debt higher? Rank top 3	<input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to COVID-19 and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to non-COVID-19-related reason and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced (non-COVID-19-related reason) <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to non-COVID-19-related reason <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location (non-COVID-19-related) <input type="radio"/> Travel home due to COVID-19 concerns <input type="radio"/> Travel home due to non COVID-19-related concerns <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for a COVID-19 test <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for quarantine <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for COVID-19 treatment <input type="radio"/> Employment and recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Household expenses (expenses for the whole family) <input type="radio"/> Personal expenses <input type="radio"/> Agricultural production in home country <input type="radio"/> Start a business in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Start a business in home country <input type="radio"/> To pay another debt <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

D.3	How much does your current debt amount to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ THB/USD/country currency ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
D.4	<p>To whom do you owe the biggest portion of your current debt? (Who do you owe the most money to)</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bank in Thailand ○ Bank in home country ○ Microcredit institution ○ Friends or family in Thailand Employer ○ Friends or family in home country ○ Employer ○ Money lender in Thailand ○ Money lender in home country ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
D.5	What is the monthly interest rate on the debt to this lender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No interest ○ 0–1% ○ 2–3% ○ 4–5% ○ 6–7% ○ 8–10% ○ 11–15% ○ 16–20% ○ Over 20% ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
D.6	<p>How did you currently plan to repay the debt?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Borrowing money from family/friends ○ Income/job earnings from family members ○ Income made through business activities of my household (non-farming) ○ Income made through crop-harvest/farming ○ Personal income made through my local job ○ Receiving remittances from family members abroad ○ Selling household/family assets ○ Selling personal assets ○ Selling land ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

E) Remittances		
Prior to March 2020		
E.1	Were you sending money to your family in your home country prior to March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.1.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to E.3) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.3)
E.1.1	If yes, how much money did you send home per month on average? (if irregular, average from January and February 2020)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.2	Which transfer method did you primarily use to send money home prior to March 2020? Single answer	<input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office <input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app <input type="radio"/> Via banks office <input type="radio"/> Via banks website or app <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives in cash <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives from their bank account <input type="radio"/> Private transfer operator with a bank account <input type="radio"/> I bring cash with me when I return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I pay someone (not friends/family) to bring money back <input type="radio"/> Broker system/via a shop <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.3	Before March 2020, what was your household's average monthly income?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB/USD/country currency) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Current situation		
E.4	What is your household's current average monthly income?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB/USD/country currency) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.5	Are you/your family currently receiving money in your home country from someone else from abroad?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.5.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to E.7) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.7)
E.5.1	If yes, how much money do you receive per month on average? (if irregular, average of the last 2 months)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.6	Which transfer method do you/your family primarily use to receive money now?	<input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office <input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app <input type="radio"/> Via banks office <input type="radio"/> Via banks website or app <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives in cash <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives from their bank account <input type="radio"/> Private transfer operator with a bank account <input type="radio"/> I bring cash with me when I return to the home country <input type="radio"/> I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I pay someone (not friends/family) to bring money back <input type="radio"/> Broker system/via a shop <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

E.7	Is your family currently receiving less money from abroad compared to before March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to E.7.1) ○ No (go to F.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to F.1)
E.7.1	<p>What coping strategies has your family used to address receiving less money from abroad?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other adult family members who were not working are now working ○ Other adult family members who were working are now working more ○ Children are taken out of school ○ Children are working ○ Taking out loans ○ Purchasing items on credit ○ Reducing food intake ○ Reducing spending on health ○ Reducing spending on non-food essentials (electricity, water, etc.) ○ Reducing spending on non-essential items (clothing, other shopping) ○ Downgraded accommodations (more crowded, smaller living space, cheaper) ○ Moved locations/cities ○ Applying for government assistance ○ Applying for NGO/UN assistance ○ Depending on donations ○ Selling assets ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Nothing has changed for my family ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

F) Return and reintegration

F.1	<p>Why did you return to your home country?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My contract ended and it did not get renewed ○ Lost my job due to downsizing because of COVID-19 ○ Lost my job because business I was working for closed temporarily ○ Lost my job because business I was working for closed permanently ○ Lost my job due to changing (legal) immigration status in Thailand ○ Lost my job due to discrimination of migrants in Thailand ○ Lost my job because there was a COVID-19 outbreak in the company I worked in ○ I was concerned about infection of COVID-19 in Thailand ○ I wanted to be home with my family during COVID-19 ○ I could not find work ○ Deportation ○ End of visa or work permit ○ My family wanted me to come back ○ I found a work opportunity at home ○ Life/work in Thailand was not what I expected it to be ○ Saved enough money ○ To get married ○ For health reasons ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
F.2	<p>From where did you re-enter Cambodia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cham Yeam International Checkpoint (Koh Kong – Trat) ○ Poi Pet International Checkpoint (Banteay Meanchey – Sa Kaeo) ○ Osmach International Checkpoint (Odor Meanchey – Surin) ○ Anglong Veng International Checkpoint (Odor Meanchey – Si Saket) ○ Prum International Checkpoint (Pailin – Chanthaburi) ○ Doung International Checkpoint (Battambang – Chanthaburi) ○ Phnom Dey International Checkpoint (Battambang – Sa Kaeo) ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
F.3	<p>What are the main challenges you face upon return to your current location?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty finding a job/income generating activity ○ Repayment of debts ○ Reduced or no income ○ Finding housing ○ Physical health problems ○ Access to affordable health care ○ Mental/psychosocial health problems ○ Negative response towards return from friends/family ○ Negative response towards return from community ○ No social support network of friends and family in community ○ None ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

G) Access to Information, Social Protection and Services		
G.1	<p>What are the main sources of information on COVID-19 in your current location?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
G.2	<p>What are the main sources of information on employment opportunities in Cambodia in your current location?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government sources ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

H) Remigration		
H.1	Do you plan to remigrate to Thailand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.2.1) ○ No (go to H.9) ○ I do not know (go to H.9) ○ Do not want to answer (go to H.9)
H.1.1	<p>If so, when?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1–2 weeks ○ 3–4 weeks ○ Next month ○ In the next two months ○ At some point in the future after the border opens ○ At some point in the future when Thailand is safer (has fewer cases of COVID) ○ When I run out of money and need to earn more ○ When I have a job offer ○ When the Government says it's safe to go back ○ When the Thai Government says it's safe to return to Thailand ○ After I get a vaccine ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
H.1.2	<p>Who will help you make arrangements to remigrate to Thailand?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends and family in Thailand ○ Friends and family in home country ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ Border official ○ Employer ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
H.2	Will you try to go back to the same job you had before you left Thailand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.3) ○ No (go to H.4) ○ I do not know (go to H.4) ○ Do not want to answer (go to H.4)
H.3	Are you still in contact with your former employer or someone who works at the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, my employer ○ Yes, other staff ○ Yes, both ○ No ○ Do not want to answer
H.4	<p>In which sector would you prefer to work when you remigrate to Thailand?</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Any sector/doesn't matter ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer

H.5	Have you already taken action to prepare to remigrate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.5.1) ○ No (go to H.9) ○ Do not want to answer (go to H.9)
H.5.1	<p>If so, which have you done to prepare so far?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I have found a facilitator for my travel/journey ○ I have contacted friends/family in Thailand about job opportunities ○ I have made the payment for the travel/journey to my intermediary ○ I have spoken about the costs but not made a final agreement yet ○ I have applied for a visa/work permit ○ I have found an employer ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
H.6	<p>Where will you get the money to re-migrate?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bank in Thailand ○ Bank in home country ○ Microcredit institution ○ Friends or family in Thailand ○ Friends or family in home country ○ Money lender in Thailand ○ Money lender in home country ○ Employer ○ Community fund ○ Personal savings ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
H.7	<p>What are the main sources of information about job opportunities in Thailand?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Center (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

H.8	<p>What are the main sources of information on remigration (process of how to migrate, documents, transportation, border regulations) to Thailand in your current location? (alternative wording: how do you hear about information on remigration to Thailand?)</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
H.9	<p>Since you have returned, has anyone you know already migrated or remigrated to Thailand?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.9.1) ○ No (go to I.1) ○ I do not know (go to I.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to I.1)
H.9.1	<p>If so, from where did they re-enter Thailand?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cham Yeam International Checkpoint (Koh Kong – Trat) ○ Poi Pet International Checkpoint (Banteay Meanchey – Sa Kaeo) ○ Osmach International Checkpoint (Odor Meanchey – Surin) ○ Anglong Veng International Checkpoint (Odor Meanchey – Si Saket) ○ Prum International Checkpoint (Pailin – Chanthaburi) ○ Doung International Checkpoint (Battambang – Chanthaburi) ○ Phnom Dey International Checkpoint (Battambang – Sa Kaeo) ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

I) Skills Development		
I.1	Have you attended any skills trainings?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to I.1.1, skip I.2) <input type="radio"/> No (go to I.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to I.3)
I.1.1	If so, in which country? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Thailand <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.2	If so, which trainings? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Vocational skills <input type="radio"/> Thai language <input type="radio"/> Thai culture <input type="radio"/> Financial literacy <input type="radio"/> Labour rights and responsibility in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Entrepreneurship skills <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.3	Who provided them? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> My employer <input type="radio"/> Recruiters <input type="radio"/> UN/NGOs <input type="radio"/> Trade Unions <input type="radio"/> Thai Government <input type="radio"/> Home country Government <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.4	Did this training result in you having better opportunities for work?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to I.3) <input type="radio"/> No (go to I.3) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to I.3)
I.2	Why haven't you participated in skills trainings? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> I do not have enough time outside of work <input type="radio"/> I do not see a reason to go <input type="radio"/> I cannot afford transportation <input type="radio"/> I cannot afford a training <input type="radio"/> I have household duties <input type="radio"/> I am not aware of any trainings <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.3	If you had the opportunity in the future to do any of the below type trainings, please rate your interest in each type of training on a scale of 1 to 5: 1. no interest 2. a little interest 3. some interest 4. interested 5. very interested	
	Thai language	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

	Thai culture	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Financial literacy	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Labour rights in Thailand	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Entrepreneurship skills	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Vocational skills	<input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.4	If you rated above a 2 for vocational skills, which vocational skills are you interested in? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Tailoring/Weaving <input type="radio"/> Mechanics Vehicle <input type="radio"/> Cooking <input type="radio"/> Beverage (coffee, tea milk, cocktails, herb drinks) <input type="radio"/> Beauty Salon/ Hairdresser <input type="radio"/> Agriculture Others, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Any other skills you are interested in, please specify:	<input type="radio"/> Please specify _____

COMMENTS



APPENDIX III

SER TOOL 2 – Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar Returnees

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO A KOBO DATA COLLECTION FORM (THIS CHANGES THE LAY-OUT AND MAKES IT MORE USER FRIENDLY).

1. Migrant profiles
2. Employment status and documentation
3. Debt
4. Remittances
5. Return and reintegration
6. Access to information, social protection and services
7. Remigration
8. Skills development

A) Interview coding		
A.1	Date of interview: <i>kobo automated</i>	
A.2	Start time: <i>kobo automated</i>	End time: <i>kobo automated</i>
A.3	Geopoint <i>kobo automated</i>	
A.4	Enumerator ID:	
A.5	Interview ID:	
A.6	Location of the interview	<input type="radio"/> Country: _____ <input type="radio"/> District: _____ <input type="radio"/> Province: _____
A.7	Quarantine centre	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to A.7.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to A.8)
A.7.1	Quarantine centre location	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____
A.8	<p>Does the respondent consent to this interview?</p> <p>Before asking for consent remember to explain the purpose of the study and go over the following checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is entirely voluntary. • Respondents can end the survey at any time. • If respondents do not feel comfortable or do not want to answer a question, it is completely fine. They can tell you "I do not want to answer" any time they feel like it. • There is no direct benefit in participating in this study. • Information collected by IOM is kept anonymous and is held to IOM data protection standards. • Participation in the study is and will remain anonymous. • Ask if the respondent has any question before starting the interview. <p>Hello. My name is _____, and I would be grateful if you could spend about 40 minutes of your time answering my questions. This research will help us to better understand the situation of men and women like you, who have returned to your country of origin during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has been commissioned by the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help the organization understand better the socioeconomic impacts and challenges people like you have faced because of the pandemic. Our work as researchers is not to provide any direct assistance but to make sure that your concerns are voiced upwards, to those who can help you.</p> <p>This interview is anonymous, and your name will not be mentioned in any report or document. Personal identifying information will be kept secure, confidential, and will be removed from the dataset. You are not obliged to answer any question, and you can stop at any moment you want. I thank you for accepting to help me.</p> <p>Do you want to ask me anything about the interview before you decide to participate?</p> <p>Have you said the text above to the respondent?</p> <p>If yes, click "yes".</p>	

B) Migrant Profiles		
B.1	Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Other <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say
B.2	Age (hint: if respondent is younger than 18 years, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> _____ (fill out number) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer <input type="radio"/> Does not know
B.3	What is your nationality? (if respondent nationality does not match current country location, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> Cambodian <input type="radio"/> Laotian <input type="radio"/> Myanmar <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (end the survey)
B.4	When did you last migrate to Thailand? (if respondent arrived after January 2020, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> Before 2017 <input type="radio"/> 2017 <input type="radio"/> 2018 <input type="radio"/> 2019 <input type="radio"/> January 2020 <input type="radio"/> February 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> March 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> After March 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> I do not remember (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (end the survey)
B.5	When did you return to your home country? (if respondent returned before April 2020, please end the survey)	<input type="radio"/> Before 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> January 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> February 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> March 2020 (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> April 2020 <input type="radio"/> May 2020 <input type="radio"/> June 2020 <input type="radio"/> July 2020 <input type="radio"/> August 2020 <input type="radio"/> September 2020 <input type="radio"/> October 2020 <input type="radio"/> November 2020 <input type="radio"/> December 2020 <input type="radio"/> January 2021 <input type="radio"/> February 2021 <input type="radio"/> March 2021 <input type="radio"/> April 2021 <input type="radio"/> I do not remember (end the survey) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (end the survey)

C) Employment		
Prior to March 2020		
C.1	What was your employment situation in Thailand prior to March 2020 (January, February, March 2020)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.1.2) ○ Student and working for an employer (go to C.1.2) ○ Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (end of survey) ○ Unemployed (end of survey) ○ Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (end of survey) ○ Only a student, not working (end of survey) ○ Other, please specify _____ (end of survey) ○ Do not want to answer (end of survey)
C.1.2	How many jobs did you have prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 (go to C.1.3, skip C.1.4) ○ 2 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3 (go to C.1.3) ○ 3+ (go to C.1.3)
C.1.3	<p>In which sector did you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most)</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.1.4	<p>In which sector(s) did you work in your other job(s)?</p> <p>Up to two answers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic work ○ Fishing ○ Seafood processing ○ Food processing (not seafood) ○ Agriculture ○ Manufacturing ○ Construction ○ Hospitality/tourism ○ Restaurant ○ Entertainment/sex work ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer
C.2	What was your daily/monthly income prior to March 2020 in Thailand? (if income is irregular, take the average of January and February)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ THB ○ Daily ○ Monthly ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

C.3	How many days per week did you work on average prior to March 2020 in Thailand?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.3.1	How many hours did you work per day on average prior to March 2020 in Thailand?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.4	Which documents did you hold prior to March 2020? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Passport, visa and work permit (MoU) <input type="radio"/> Temporary passport/certificate of identity (CI), visa and work permit (NV) (green card) <input type="radio"/> Registration card ("pink card" or Tor Ror 38/1) <input type="radio"/> Passport and visa only <input type="radio"/> Border pass <input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Post March 2020 in Thailand		
C.5	What happened to your main job in Thailand right after March 2020? (April and May 2020)	<input type="radio"/> I kept working (go to C.5.1) <input type="radio"/> I was let go (fired) (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I quit (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then later returned (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then later let go (fired) before I could return (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I was asked to take time off (suspended), then I quit before I could return (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.6)
C.5.1	If you kept working at your main job, were your wages reduced after March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.5.2	If you kept working at your main job, were your working hours reduced after March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to C.6) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to C.6)
Current situation		
C.6	What is your employment situation now?	<input type="radio"/> Work for an employer (wage worker) (go to C.6.1) <input type="radio"/> Student and working for an employer (go to C.6.1) <input type="radio"/> Self-employed or business owner (farmer, street vendor, handyman) (go to 6.1) <input type="radio"/> Unemployed (go to C.9) <input type="radio"/> Unpaid work for family (working at home, family business, family farm without pay) (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Only a student, not working (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.1)

C.6.1	How many jobs do you have right now?	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 3+
C.6.2	In which sector do you work in your main job? (hint: if they had more than one job, pick the sector where they worked the most) Single answer	<input type="radio"/> Domestic work <input type="radio"/> Fishing <input type="radio"/> Seafood processing <input type="radio"/> Food processing (not seafood) <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing <input type="radio"/> Construction <input type="radio"/> Hospitality/tourism <input type="radio"/> Restaurant <input type="radio"/> Entertainment/sex work <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> I do not want to answer
C.6.3	If you have more than one job, in which sector(s) do you work in your other jobs? Up to two answers	<input type="radio"/> Domestic work <input type="radio"/> Fishing <input type="radio"/> Seafood processing <input type="radio"/> Food processing (not seafood) <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing <input type="radio"/> Construction <input type="radio"/> Hospitality/tourism <input type="radio"/> Restaurant <input type="radio"/> Entertainment/sex work <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> I do not want to answer
C.7	What is your current daily/monthly income? (if irregular, take the average of the last two months)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> Daily <input type="radio"/> Monthly <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.8	How many days per week do you work on average now?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (1-7) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.8.1	How many hours per day do you work on average now?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ hours (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to D.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to D.1)
C.9	Was your last employment in Thailand or in your home country?	<input type="radio"/> Thailand <input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
C.10	Are you currently looking for a job?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to C.11) <input type="radio"/> No (go to C.12) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (D.1)

C.11	What are the main challenges you are currently facing related to finding a job? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no jobs available I do not know where to find a job Available jobs do not pay enough Available jobs do not suit my skills Available jobs do not have COVID-19 prevention measures, so I would be worried for my safety Other, please specify_____ Do not want to answer
C.12	What coping strategies have you used to address being unemployed? Rank top 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying to new jobs Doing small occasional work or assignments Taking loans Purchasing items on credit Receiving remittances from elsewhere Reducing food intake Reducing expenditures on health and other non-food essentials Downgraded accommodations (cheaper or more crowded) Moved locations/cities Applying for government assistance Applying for NGO/UN assistance Depending on donations/support from friends/family Depending on donations/support from other sources (religious institution, community funds, banks) Selling assets Other, please specify_____ No coping mechanisms Do not want to answer
D) Debt		
Prior to March 2020		
D.1	Did you owe debt prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (go to D.1.1) No (go to D.2) I do not know (go to D.2) Do not want to answer (go to D.2)
D.1.1	For what purpose did you get this debt? Rank top 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment or recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) Migration costs (recruiting, employment placement, arranging interviews, submitting documents for government clearances, confirming credentials, organizing travel and transportation) Household expenses Personal expenses Agricultural production in home country Start a business in Thailand Start a business in home country Pay another debt Other, please specify_____ I do not know Do not want to answer

D.1.2	To how much did your debt amount prior to March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
Current situation		
D.2	Is your current debt higher, lower or equal to your debt before March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Higher (go to D.2.1) <input type="radio"/> Lower (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> Equal (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> I do not know (go to E.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.1)
D.2.1	Why is your debt higher? Rank top 3	<input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to COVID-19 and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Lost my job due to non-COVID-19-related reason and needed to pay expenses <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Job hours/wages were reduced (non-COVID-19-related reason) <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to switch jobs due to non-COVID-19-related reason <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location due to COVID-19 <input type="radio"/> Had to move accommodation/location (non-COVID-19-related) <input type="radio"/> Travel home due to COVID-19 concerns <input type="radio"/> Travel home due to non COVID-19-related concerns <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for a COVID-19 test <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for quarantine <input type="radio"/> Had to pay for COVID-19 treatment <input type="radio"/> Employment and recruitment costs (applications, uniforms, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Household expenses (expenses for the whole family) <input type="radio"/> Personal expenses <input type="radio"/> Agricultural production in home country <input type="radio"/> Start a business in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Start a business in home country <input type="radio"/> To pay another debt <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.3	How much does your current debt amount to?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/USD/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
D.4	To whom do you owe the biggest portion of your current debt? (Who do you owe the most money to)	<input type="radio"/> Bank in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Bank in home country <input type="radio"/> Microcredit institution <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Friends or family in home country <input type="radio"/> Employer <input type="radio"/> Money lender in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Money lender in home country <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

D.5	What is the monthly interest rate on the debt to this lender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No interest ○ 0–1% ○ 2–3% ○ 4–5% ○ 6–7% ○ 8–10% ○ 11–15% ○ 16–20% ○ Over 20% ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
D.6	How did you currently plan to repay the debt? Multiple answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Borrowing money from family/friends ○ Income/job earnings from family members ○ Income made through business activities of my household (non-farming) ○ Income made through crop-harvest/farming ○ Personal income made through my local job ○ Receiving remittances from family members abroad ○ Selling household/family assets ○ Selling personal assets ○ Selling land ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

E) Remittances

Prior to March 2020

E.1	Were you sending money to your family in your home country prior to March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to E.1.1) ○ No (go to E.3) ○ Do not want to answer (go to E.3)
E.1.1	If yes, how much money did you send home per month on average? (if irregular, average from January and February 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ (THB/country currency) ○ Do not want to answer
E.2	Which transfer method did you primarily use to send money home prior to March 2020? Single answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office ○ Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app ○ Via banks office ○ Via banks website or app ○ Via friends and relatives in cash ○ Via friends and relatives from their bank account ○ Private transfer operator with a bank account ○ I bring cash with me when I return to my home country ○ I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country ○ I pay someone (not friends/family) to bring money back ○ Broker system/via a shop ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
E.3	Before March 2020, what was your household's average monthly income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fill in answer: _____ (THB/USD/country currency) ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

Current situation		
E.4	What is your household's current average monthly income?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ (THB/USD/country currency) <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.5	Are you/your family currently receiving money in your home country from someone else from abroad?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.6.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to E.7) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to E.7)
E.5.1	If yes, how much money do you receive per month on average? (if irregular, average of the last 2 months)	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.6	Which transfer method do you/your family primarily use to receive money now?	<input type="radio"/> Fill in answer: _____ THB/country currency <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer <input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) office <input type="radio"/> Via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc.) website or app <input type="radio"/> Via banks office <input type="radio"/> Via banks website or app <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives in cash <input type="radio"/> Via friends and relatives from their bank account <input type="radio"/> Private transfer operator with a bank account <input type="radio"/> I bring cash with me when I return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I have someone else bring my cash with them when they return to my home country <input type="radio"/> I pay someone (not friends/family) to bring money back <input type="radio"/> Broker system/via a shop <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
E.7	Is your family currently receiving less money from abroad compared to before March 2020?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to E.8.1) <input type="radio"/> No (go to F.1) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to F.1)
E.7.1	What coping strategies has your family used to address receiving less money from abroad? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Other adult family members who were not working are now working <input type="radio"/> Other adult family members who were working are now working more <input type="radio"/> Children are taken out of school <input type="radio"/> Children are working <input type="radio"/> Taking loans <input type="radio"/> Purchasing items on credit <input type="radio"/> Reducing food intake <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on health <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on non-food essentials (electricity, water, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Reducing spending on non-essential items (clothing, other shopping) <input type="radio"/> Downgraded accommodations (more crowded, smaller living space, cheaper) <input type="radio"/> Moved locations/cities <input type="radio"/> Applying for government assistance <input type="radio"/> Applying for NGO/UN assistance <input type="radio"/> Depending on donations <input type="radio"/> Selling assets <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Nothing has changed for my family <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

F) Return and reintegration		
F.1	<p>Why did you return to your home country?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My contract ended and it did not get renewed ○ Lost my job due to downsizing because of COVID-19 ○ Lost my job because business I was working for closed temporarily ○ Lost my job because business I was working for closed permanently ○ Lost my job due to changing (legal) immigration status in Thailand ○ Lost my job due to discrimination of migrants in Thailand ○ Lost my job because there was a COVID-19 outbreak in the company I worked in ○ I was concerned about infection of COVID-19 in Thailand ○ I wanted to be home with my family during COVID-19 ○ I could not find work ○ Deportation ○ End of visa or work permit ○ My family wanted me to come back ○ I found a work opportunity at home ○ Life/work in Thailand was not what I expected it to be ○ Saved enough money ○ To get married ○ For health reasons ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
F.2	<p>From where did you re-enter Lao People's Democratic Republic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge I ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge II ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge III ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge IV ○ Vangtao Official Border ○ Boten Official Border ○ Wattay Airport ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
F.3	<p>What are the main challenges you face upon return to your current location?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty finding a job/income generating activity ○ Repaying debts ○ Reduced or no income ○ Finding housing ○ Physical health problems ○ Mental/psychosocial health problems ○ Access to affordable health care ○ Negative response towards return from friends/family ○ Negative response towards return from community ○ No social support network of friends and family in community ○ None ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

G) Access to Information, Social Protection and Services		
G.1	<p>What are the main sources of information on COVID-19 in your current location?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand ○ Friends or family via messaging apps at home ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
G.2	<p>What are the main sources of information on employment opportunities in Lao People's Democratic Republic?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand ○ Friends or family via messaging apps at home ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer

H) Remigration		
H.1	Do you plan to remigrate to Thailand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (go to H.1.1) No (go to H.9) I do not know (go to H.9) Do not want to answer (go to H.9)
H.1.1	<p>If so, when?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1–2 weeks 3–4 weeks Next month In the next two months At some point in the future after the border opens At some point in the future when Thailand is safer (has fewer cases of COVID) When I run out of money and need to earn more When I have a job offer When the Government says it's safe to go back When the Thai Government says it's safe to return to Thailand After I get a vaccine Other, please specify_____ I do not know Do not want to answer
H.1.2	<p>Who will help you make arrangements to remigrate to Thailand?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends and family in Thailand Friends and family in home country Official/licensed recruitment agent Local/unlicensed recruitment broker Border official Employer Other, please specify_____ I do not know Do not want to answer
H.2	Will you try to go back to the same job you had before you left Thailand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (go to H.3) No (go to H.4) I do not know (go to H.4) Do not want to answer (go to H.4)
H.3	Are you still in contact with your former employer or someone who works at the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, my employer Yes, other staff Yes, both No Do not want to answer
H.4	<p>In which sector would you prefer to work when you remigrate to Thailand?</p> <p>Single answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic work Fishing Seafood processing Food processing (not seafood) Agriculture Manufacturing Construction Hospitality/tourism Restaurant Entertainment/sex work Other, please specify_____ Any sector/doesn't matter I do not know I do not want to answer

H.5	Have you already taken action to prepare to remigrate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.5.1) ○ No (go to H.9) ○ Do not want to answer (go to H.9)
H.5.1	<p>If so, which have you done to prepare so far?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I have found a facilitator for my travel/journey ○ I have contacted friends/family in Thailand about job opportunities ○ I have made the payment for the travel/journey to my intermediary/facilitator/broker/recruiter ○ I have spoken about the costs but not made a final agreement yet ○ I have applied for a visa/work permit ○ I have found an employer ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer
H.6	<p>Where will you get the money to remigrate?</p> <p>Multiple answer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bank in Thailand ○ Bank in home country ○ Microcredit institution ○ Friends or family in Thailand ○ Friends or family in home country ○ Money lender in Thailand ○ Money lender in home country ○ Employer ○ Community fund ○ Personal savings ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer
H.7	<p>What are the main sources of information about job opportunities in Thailand?</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand ○ Friends or family via messaging apps at home ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify_____ ○ Do not want to answer

H.8	<p>What are the main sources of information on remigration (process of how to migrate, documents, transportation, border regulations) to Thailand in your current location? (alternative wording: how do you hear about information on remigration to Thailand?)</p> <p>Rank top 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Friends or family in person ○ Friends or family via messaging apps in Thailand ○ Friends or family via messaging apps at home ○ Employer or manager ○ Colleagues ○ Embassy or consulate ○ Official/licensed recruitment agent ○ Local/unlicensed recruitment broker ○ CSOs/non-profit organizations/NGOs ○ Community leader/community village news update ○ Community health post/volunteer ○ Thai Government sources ○ Home country Government sources ○ Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) ○ Local government authorities ○ Police ○ Trade union ○ Social media platform (not direct from a contact but public information e.g. Facebook page) ○ Self-searched information from the internet ○ Car/tuk-tuk with speaker ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ Do not want to answer
H.9	<p>Since you have returned, has anyone you know already migrated or remigrated to Thailand?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes (go to H.9.1) ○ No (go to I.1) ○ I do not know (go to I.1) ○ Do not want to answer (go to I.1)
H.9.1	<p>If so, from where did they re-enter Thailand?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge I ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge II ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge III ○ Lao - Thai Friendship Bridge IV ○ Vangtao Official Border ○ Boten Official Border ○ Wattay Airport ○ Other, please specify _____ ○ I do not know ○ Do not want to answer

I) Skills Development		
I.1	Have you attended any skills trainings to improve your job opportunities?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to I.1.1, skip I.2) <input type="radio"/> No (go to I.2) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to I.3)
I.1.1	If so, in which country? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Thailand <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.2	If so, which trainings? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Vocational skills <input type="radio"/> Thai language <input type="radio"/> Thai culture <input type="radio"/> Financial literacy <input type="radio"/> Labour rights and responsibility in Thailand <input type="radio"/> Entrepreneurship skills <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.3	Who provided them? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> My employer <input type="radio"/> Recruiters <input type="radio"/> UN/NGOs <input type="radio"/> Trade Unions <input type="radio"/> Thai Government <input type="radio"/> Home country Government <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.1.4	Did this training result in you having better opportunities for work?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (go to I.3) <input type="radio"/> No (go to I.3) <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer (go to I.3)
I.2	Why haven't you participated in skills trainings? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> I do not have enough time outside of work <input type="radio"/> I do not see a reason to go <input type="radio"/> I cannot afford transportation <input type="radio"/> I cannot afford a training <input type="radio"/> I have household duties <input type="radio"/> I am not aware of any trainings <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.3	If you had the opportunity in the future to do any of the below type trainings, please rate your interest in each type of training on a scale of 1 to 5: 1. no interest 2. a little interest 3. some interest 4. interested 5. very interested	
	Thai language	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer

	Thai culture	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Financial literacy	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Labour rights in Thailand	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Entrepreneurship skills	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
	Vocational skills	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.4	If you rated above a 2 for vocational skills, which vocational skills are you interested in? Multiple answer	<input type="radio"/> Tailoring/Weaving <input type="radio"/> Mechanics Vehicle <input type="radio"/> Cooking <input type="radio"/> Beverage (coffee, tea milk, cocktails, herb drinks) <input type="radio"/> Beauty Salon/ Hairdresser <input type="radio"/> Agriculture <input type="radio"/> Others, please specify _____ <input type="radio"/> I do not know <input type="radio"/> Do not want to answer
I.5	Any other skills you are interested in, please specify:	<input type="radio"/> Please specify _____

COMMENTS



A man outside his home in Ranong, Thailand | ©IOM 2021

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT WORKERS

IN CAMBODIA, LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC,
MYANMAR AND THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

THAILAND NOVEMBER 2021