



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANTS IN THAILAND SITUATION REPORT

APRIL 2022



Myanmar migrant worker in Chanthaburi (© IOM 2022)

Background

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

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

Highlights

- Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that from 1 April 2022, travelers entering Thailand will no longer require a pre-departure RT-PCR test within 72 hours of travel. However, an RT-PCR test is required upon arrival alongside a self-administered ATK on day 5.
- The Royal Thai Government is currently aiming for the eventual designation of COVID-19 as an endemic disease by July 2022.
- The number of confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 have steadily declined since the Songkran Festival in Thailand.
- Mandatory mask wearing in public spaces was lifted in Cambodia in April. While Cambodians can decide for themselves, they remain encouraged to wear a mask in crowded public places. Mask wearing remains mandatory for closed spaces and indoor settings.
- On 25 April, 5,043,816 (+127,098) foreign nationals residing in Thailand had received a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This figure includes 2,053,288 (+33,584) nationals from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (CLM).

THAILAND

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

On 30 April Thailand’s Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) reported that the cumulative number of cases had reached 4,250,949 (+622,602) with 28,526 (+3,396) fatalities.

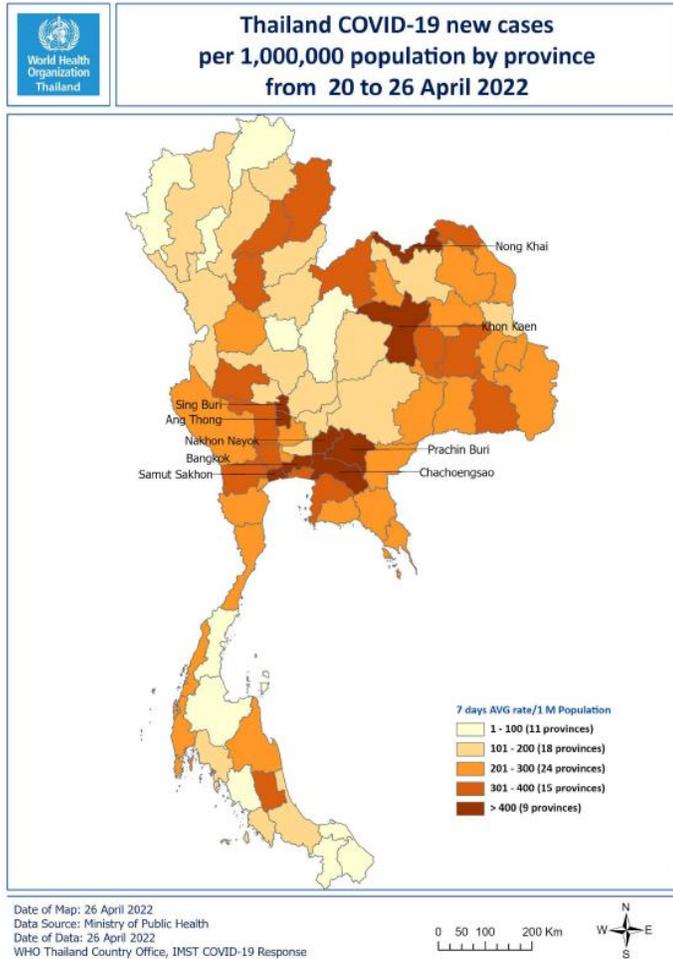
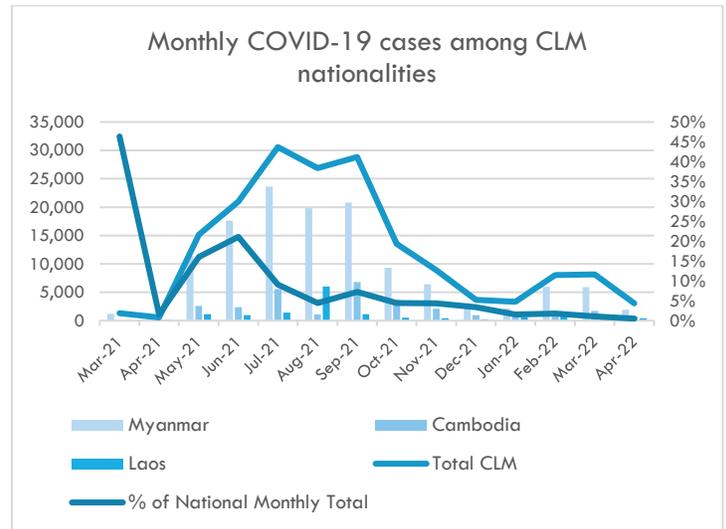


Figure 1: Distribution of new COVID-19 cases per million population by province (WHO)

COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANTS

In April, 3,040 (-5,126) migrants from Myanmar (64%), Cambodia (23%) and Laos (13%) tested positive for COVID-19. Positive cases amongst CLM migrants comprised 1 per cent of monthly cases reported nationwide.

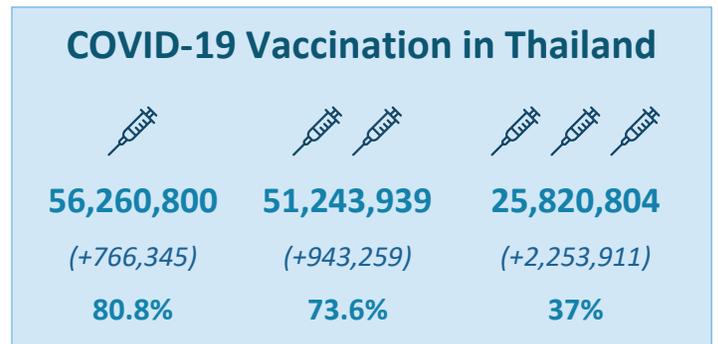


COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANT CHILDREN

In April, data from the Royal College Pediatricians of Thailand, and the Pediatric Society of Thailand, showed that 49,329 (-64,647) positive COVID-19 cases were reported amongst children up to 18 years of age. This figure represents 8 per cent of the total number of cases nationwide, the lowest proportion so far in 2022. 217 (-613) of these monthly cases were CLM nationals.



COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT



By 30 April 2022, 133,519,714 (+3,963,504) doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in Thailand, with a second dose coverage of 74 per cent, and third dose coverage of 37 per cent.

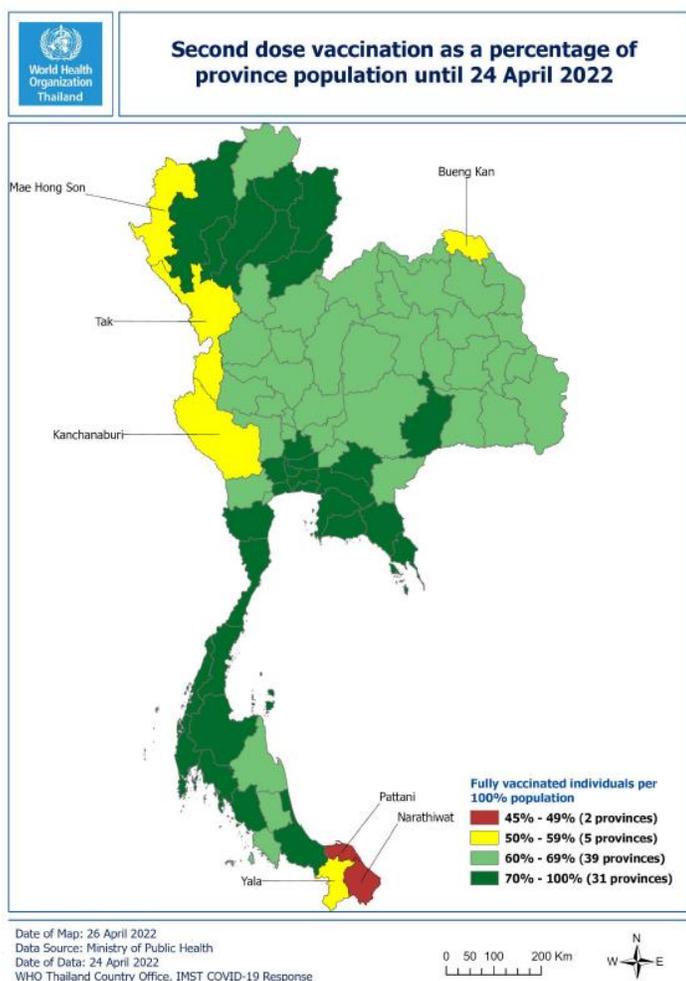


Figure 2: Second dose COVID-19 vaccination coverage by province (WHO)

COVID-19 VACCINATION AMONG MIGRANTS

Data released by the MOPH Department of Disease Control (DDC) on 25 April reported that a total of 5,043,816 (+127,098) doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to foreign nationals residing in Thailand. Within this figure, 2,053,288 (+33,584) doses were to CLM nationals, who continue to represent the top three nationalities:

	Myanmar	Cambodian	Lao
Total	1,421,895	421,285	210,108
December	(+23,296)	(+6,966)	(+3,322)

The total number of second doses administered to non-Thais suggests only a 20 percent coverage. In parallel, the rate of increase of monthly doses administered to CLM migrants continues to reduce compared to previous months.

THE UN NETWORK ON MIGRATION CONTINUES TO ADVOCATE FOR SCALING-UP VACCINATION COVERAGE AMONG NON-THAI POPULATIONS RESIDING IN THAILAND.

POLICY UPDATE

Policy updates: Migrant workers

As of February 2022, 1,650,419 migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar have benefited from the regularization window.

Migrant workers whose work permits (pink cards according to the Cabinet Resolutions dated 20 August 2019 and 4 August 2020) expired on 31 March 2022 and failed to re-register with the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour prior to the expiry date can apply for a new work permit by 30 May 2022. However, the applicants are not eligible to work while awaiting for the issuance of a new work permit. The new work permit would allow migrant workers to continue working in Thailand until 13 February 2024 at the maximum subject to the validity of their identity documents.

Former MOU migrant workers who complete the 4-year employment term between 1 January and 31 December 2022 can apply to renew their work permits in Thailand within 6 months after the expiry date of their work permit. The maximum duration for the extension of permit is 2 years subject to the validity of the workers' personal documents.

In April, the official demand from employers for MOU workers accounted for 167,961 people (117,029 from Myanmar, 38,933 Cambodians, and 11,999 Lao). Between December 2021 and February 2022, approximately new 6,000 MOU migrant workers from Cambodia and Lao PDR arrived in Thailand.

Since 1 May 2022, new migrant workers arriving in Thailand through the MOU or cross-border seasonal workers schemes who have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccines are no longer required to quarantine. The quarantine period for those who are not yet fully vaccinated is reduced to a maximum of 5 days.

Updates on border control measures

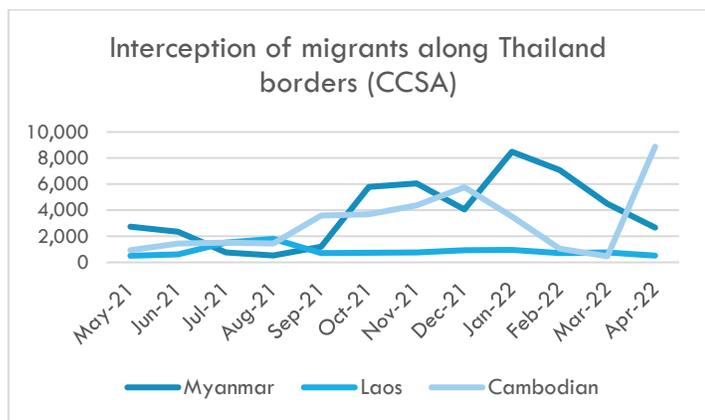
CCSA has announced the reopening of land border checkpoints in 17 provinces (Nongkhai, Loei, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Buengkan, Sisaket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi, Trat, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ranong, Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun) starting on 1 May 2022. Thai nationals have to show proof of vaccination or a COVID-19 test result, passport, and completion of Thailand Pass registration. For persons who are unvaccinated, they have to show a passport/border pass, completion of

Thailand Pass registration. No quarantine is required if the traveler presents a negative RT-PCR test result taken within 72 hours of departure. However, if no test result is presented, the traveler has to undergo a 5-day quarantine and get RT-PCR test on day 4 or 5. Border pass holders must provide proof of complete vaccination. Period of stay for non-Thai holders of border pass must not exceed 3 days.

As of 3 May 2022, provinces where permanent land border checkpoints have reopened are Loei, Nong Khai, Mukdahan, Bueng Kan, Si Sa Ket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi, Trat, Kanchanaburi, Ranong, Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala, and Satun.

Interceptions at the border with Thailand

Statistics from the CCSA on 18 April 2022 show that 12,060 (+6,351) persons were intercepted at different points along the Thai border, a significant increase since March. Among those intercepted, 22 per cent were from Myanmar, 4 percent from Lao PDR and 74 per cent from Cambodia.



THAILAND - CAMBODIA BORDER

Baan Haad Lek POE, Trat Province, reopened on 1 May 2022. There are still not a lot of travelers, only trucks transporting goods from Thailand to Cambodia.

THAILAND - MYANMAR BORDER

The permanent land border checkpoint in Mae Sot, Tak (the First Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge) have yet to reopen following reports that it cannot reopen as scheduled on 1 May 2022 due to the situation in Myanmar.

On 26 April 2022, it is reported that Mae Sai District Chief requested an establishment of a sub-committee to discuss the reopening and assess the impact of the reopening of the Friendship Bridge in Mae Sai. The committee met on 25 April 2022. The proposal is to permit 2,000 pedestrians who are fully vaccinated per day and have got ATK test conducted to cross the

border. Trade will still be at the second border checkpoint in Mae Sai. This proposal also depends on the agreement with Myanmar which has yet to happen.

Ranong land border has reopened on 1 May 2022.

THAILAND - LAO BORDER

As of 3 May 2022, two permanent checkpoints in Nakhon Phanom cannot reopen as scheduled due to the late return of necessary documents from Khammouane province in Laos. The paperwork is expected to clear and the checkpoints reopen later in the week.

NUMBER OF DOCUMENTED MIGRANT WORKERS (as of 28 February 2022)

Data from the Foreign Workers Administration Office of the Department of Employment regarding the total number of documented migrant workers in Thailand has not been updated since February, and thus remains at 2,125,142.



IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS (IDCs) AND ORGANIZATIONAL QUARANTINES (OQs)

As of 29 April 2022, Border Patrol Police reported that there are in total 152 Myanmar migrants in 4 OQs (M=72, F= 80), and 3 Lao migrants (M=2, F=1).

- Mae Chan, Chiang Rai: 48 (M=23, F=25)
- Mae Sot, Tak: 92 (M=39, F=53)
- Mueang, Ranong: 1 (M)
- Sadao, Songkhla: 11 (M=9, F=2)
- Mueang, Nongkhai: 3 (M=2, F=1) *Lao migrants

All 155 migrants in OQs tested negative for COVID-19.

CAMBODIA

POLICY UPDATE

On 10 April 2022, Samdech Prime Minister announced the lifting of mandatory mask wearing in four provinces (Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Stung Treng and Preah Vihear). The Cambodian Ministry of Health released a press statement on 12 April 2022 stating that people in the four provinces can decide by themselves whether to wear masks or not, but mask wearing is still mandatory outside of the four provinces. Provincial authorities were instructed to ensure health system capacity for early detection and timely response, with daily reports from health departments to monitor the impact on transmission, and people who show COVID-19 symptoms to self-test (WHO).

Mandatory mask wearing in public and open spaces in Cambodia was lifted on 25 April 2022. People can decide for themselves but are still encouraged to wear mask in crowded public places. Mask wearing remains mandatory for closed spaces and indoor settings.

Updates on border control measures

The Khmer New Year Celebrations were held between 14 and 16 April. An increase on returning migrants coming from Thailand were identified especially during the week prior to the festival. Furthermore, internal movements around the country were seen during the celebrations, including large gatherings with no use of masks.

On 21 April the Government of Cambodia announced reducing mandatory quarantine from 14 days to 7 days for incoming, unvaccinated travellers. Unvaccinated air travellers will be required to test on day 7, while travellers through land borders are required to test on day 1 and day 7. Testing and quarantine have not been required for fully vaccinated travellers since 17 March 2022.

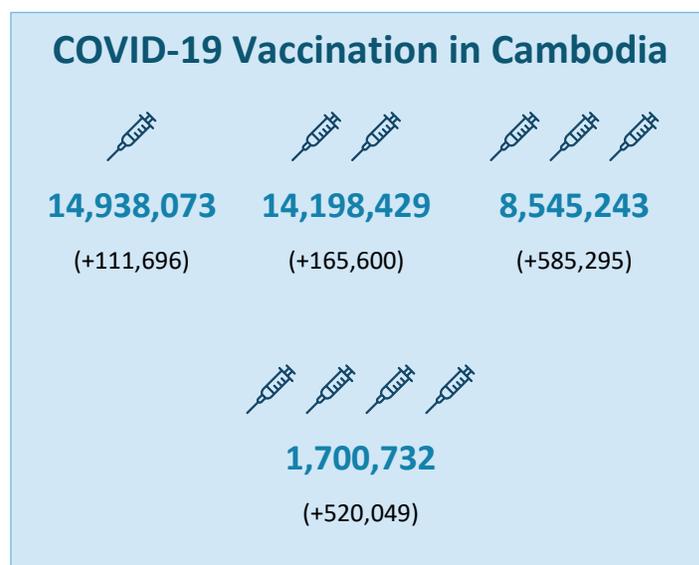
- The border checkpoint in Poipet at the Cambodia-Thailand border is re-opening for travellers starting 1 May 2022.
- Osmach POE in Oddor Meanchey was announced to open during first week of May.
- In Battambang, the only POE used is Doung POE, Kamrieng District as Thai authorities have decided to close their side at Ou' Anlok POE, which has been the most popular among returning migrants during the last few months.

COVID-19 CASES IN CAMBODIA

In April, 626 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases were reported and 2 deaths, bringing their cumulative totals to 136,251 and 3,056 respectively. Only 11 imported cases of COVID-19 were reported (-461).

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

The Royal Government of Cambodia reported the following vaccination coverage on 30 April:



IOM Cambodia can further report that in March QCs in two provinces had provided vaccination to migrants as follows:

- 211 migrants in Oddor Meanchey QC, and
- 185 in Banteay Meanchey Province QC

COVID-19 vaccination campaigns were conducted during and following the Khmer New Year for those who had not yet completed their primary course and booster dose. Delivery methods included:

- Increasing mobile vaccination sites at pagodas, factories, schools, public places and tourist sites;
- Conducting catch-up COVID-19 vaccination in urban poor, minority and high risk communities;
- Coordination among health sectors and local authorities, public and private sectors for clear guidance to the people on the importance of the completion of primary course and a booster dose;
- Mobilizing local supporters to identify and register missed and under vaccinated people, communicate with the public for increasing awareness/demand, conduct outreaches, monitor and follow-up;
- Mobilizing vaccinators outside of the MOH (e. Ministry of National Defence Ministry of Interior Volunteer Medical Doctor of Samdech Vibol Sena Pheakdey Sau Chhum and Medical Doctor of Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia.



IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS (IDCs) AND ORGANIZATIONAL QUARANTINES (OQs)

Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey have reduced the number of facilities for quarantine and treatment for migrants found to have tested positive for COVID-19. Battambang and Oddor MEanchey each have 1 QC and 1 TC. BMC decided to close Kabthom QC and all migrants have been transferred to Kongva QC in SreySophon District.



THAILAND - LAO BORDER

Updates on border control measures

Given the recent announcement on 7 May reported above, many POEs had not yet updated their protocols, which is anticipated to create confusion and challenges for returning migrants in the coming weeks.

COVID-19 CASES IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Lao Ministry of Health reported 30,442 (-3,360) new COVID-19 cases in April, with 78 (+36) deaths. The cumulative number of cases reached 207,469 at the end of April, with 744.

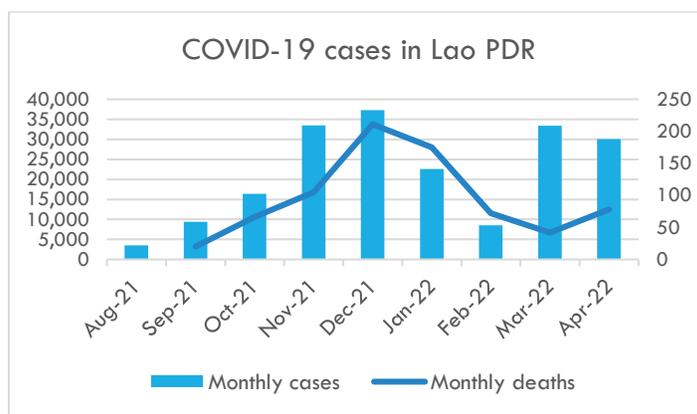
LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



POLICY UPDATE

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic made preparations during April ahead of its announcement that it would declare it will fully reopen the country and update its entry-exit measures starting from 7 May 2022 as follows:

1. All international checkpoints will open and allow Lao citizens, foreign nationals, and stateless to enter and exit Lao PDR.
2. Allow citizens of any country with bilateral and multilateral visa exemption agreement with the Lao PDR to enter the country without applying for a visa.
3. For those coming from countries with no visa exemption agreement with the Lao PDR, visitors can apply for a visa via the Lao Embassy or Consulate-General located in their country or through an e-visa system or apply for a visa on arrival directly at the international checkpoint where a visa service is available.
4. Lao citizens, foreign nationals, and stateless at the age of 12 years or above, who do not have a vaccination card certifying their fully vaccinated status, must present an ATK test result valid within 48 hours before their departure. Upon arriving at Lao PDR, the person will not have to be tested for COVID-19 again at the airport or border checkpoint. Fully vaccinated visitors holding a vaccination card can enter the Lao PDR normally without having to be tested for COVID-19 again, both before departing from their home country and once arriving at Lao PDR.
5. Foreign nationals entering Lao PDR and getting infected with COVID-19 will have to take responsibility for all costs incurred from medical treatment on their own. Patients can receive medical treatment from a public hospital, or private hospital or do self-care at home (home isolation) by following instructions provided by the Ministry of Health.
6. Allow all types of vehicles to enter-exit Lao PDR as they would normally be prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Assign the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to issue further instructions regarding the use of private, transport, and tourism vehicles in entering-exiting Lao PDR, in alignment with bilateral and multilateral agreements partied by Laos.



The presence of the Omicron variant since early March has resulted in a continued increase in the number of cases, and remained the dominant variant in April. While the total number of positive cases in April was slightly lower than those in March, the number of deaths in April was nearly twice that of the previous month.

There were a total of 514 imported positive cases in April which is equivalent to 1.7 per cent of the total infection rate, and lower than that reported in March (2.13%).



IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS (IDCs) AND ORGANIZATIONAL QUARANTINES (OQs)

The number of Quarantine Centers operating remained the same between February to April, however with the new regulations announced at the beginning of May, all QCs and field hospital at the national, provincial, and district level were to close on 9 May.



COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By 26 April, the Government of the Lao PDR reported that 10,954,480 doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered.

- **5,768,033** individuals received at least one dose
- **4,842,288 (66%)** individuals completed the primary series
- **1,389,610** individuals received a first booster dose
- **57,566** individuals received a second booster dose.

ACTIVITY UPDATES FROM UN NETWORK ON MIGRATION MEMBERS



RESPONSE

The UNMN sub-group on COVID-19 continues to be the platform for stakeholders to share best practices and lessons learnt with the objective of achieving a migrant-inclusive pandemic response. MOPH DDC Office for International Cooperation has been invited to participate in the meetings on a monthly basis, with the aim of channeling the challenges highlighted by the group to the relevant authorities and seek resolution.

MYANMAR



POLICY UPDATE

The Myanmar Ministry of Health released the announcement regarding the public health requirements for Myanmar citizens and foreigner on 27 April 2022. Myanmar citizens can return with commercial flight or commercial flight to Myanmar. Foreigners can enter Myanmar with commercial flights only. Requirements such as being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, a negative RT-PCR test result obtained 72 hours before arrival, and a health declaration form are mandatory for all passengers. Additionally, foreigners have to submit proof of health insurance. A rapid test will be carried out on arrival and those with a negative result can continue their plan.

COVID-19 CASES IN MYANMAR

In April the Ministry of Health reported 1,296 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 3 deaths, bringing the cumulative totals to 612,883 and 19,434 respectively. According to MOH data, the test positivity rate and death rate in Myanmar have declined gradually since February.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

By the end of April 2022, a total of 30,637,522 people in Myanmar had received a COVID-19 vaccination including a booster dose. The Ministry of Health expanded its vaccination programme to include persons from the age of 12.

IOM

IOM Thailand

With support from its donor CDC, IOM delivered relief packages of food, non-food and hygiene items were delivered to support migrants in Nonthaburi and Pathum Thani.

IOM continues to support the national COVID-19 1422 Hotline, available in three migrant languages, aiming to increase the availability of, and access to information about vaccine safety among migrants in Thailand.

COVID-19 MIGRANT HOTLINE

CALL 1422

EXTENSIONS

	81
	82
	83

Receive accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19 and how to get vaccinated in multiple languages.

USA, Australian Government, IOM UN MIGRATION, World Health Organization

Figure 3: Contact details for the national 1422 COVID-19 Hotline that is available in migrant languages.

UNICEF

UNICEF worked with Raks Thai Foundation and World Vision trained 40 community/migrant health volunteers (33 men, 7 women) on prevention and protection measures related to COVID-19, their roles in providing health services, coordination with related agencies and on access to vaccination and literacy in Bangkok, Pattani, Kanchanaburi and Chiang Mai. The trained migrant/community health volunteers reached more than 2,193 people in migrant communities (1951 adults and 242 children) on risk communication about COVID-19 vaccine information and prevention measures.

In addition, UNICEF distributed hygiene supplies to curb the increase in COVID 19 cases to Raks Thai Foundation and World Vision in high-risk provinces including Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Pattani, Samut Sakhon, Samut Prakan and Ayutthaya and expect to reach 15,000 children and families in migrant communities to protect the most disadvantaged groups of children in these high-risk provinces facing ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.

UNICEF continues its work with World Vision Thailand on Health Case Management (screening, tracking, first aid consultation,

referral, and follow up until cases are closed). UNICEF continues to support Community Mass Rapid Testing in migrant communities, and also worked with partners to distribute essential non-food items and hygiene supplies to migrant communities affected by lockdown, in home isolation.

UN WOMEN

Through Safe and Fair Programme, 30 women migrant workers and girls in Mae Sot (Tak) and Chiang Mai who experienced violence received psychosocial counselling provided by Rights Beyond Border, Women Migrant Project (Mae Sot), and MAP Foundation. Of these 30 women migrant workers and girls, 9 women and girls were referred to essential services including health, social, and justice.