



Myanmar migrant workers in Ranong (© IOM 2021)

## Background

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

- As a result of the increasing transmission of the Omicron variant in Thailand, the number of new positive COVID-19 cases in February was twice that reported during the previous month.
- Hospital bed occupancy in Thailand was around 50 per cent by mid-February. Despite the increasing caseload, bed occupancy has yet to reach levels seen during the peak of the Delta wave in 2021. However, figures do not include those in hospitals, or those undergoing community or home isolation.
- On 24 February, 4,663,331 foreign nationals residing in Thailand had received a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This figure includes 1,952,482 nationals from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (CLM).
- Second dose vaccination coverage among foreign nationals residing in Thailand stood at 19 per cent on 24 February.
- Thailand's *TEST & GO* scheme for international arrivals was reinstated on 1 February following its temporary suspension.
- As Omicron spreads throughout the region, a shift in policy towards home isolation for positive COVID-19 cases and their contacts was announced in Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

# THAILAND

## COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

By the end of February 2022, Thailand reported a cumulative total of 2,891,927 positive cases since the start of the pandemic, with 22,933 deaths. The number of positive cases in February (451,385) was more than double those in January (217,107), with 760 deaths (compared to 475 in January).

The Omicron variant had been reported in all provinces early in February, however the number of daily positive cases began to increase at a faster rate only towards the end of the month. According to the World Health Organization’s situation analysis at the time, this was likely due to previously introduced public health and social measures, strong adherence to personal protective measures by members of the public and increasing vaccination rates. Although it could also have been due to self-antigen testing without a confirmative RT-PCR test.

On 26 February, 25,615 new positive COVID-19 cases were reported, the highest daily rate since the start of the pandemic. With widespread community transmission across Thailand, Bangkok was reporting the highest daily number of cases, alongside its neighbouring provinces (see Figure 1).

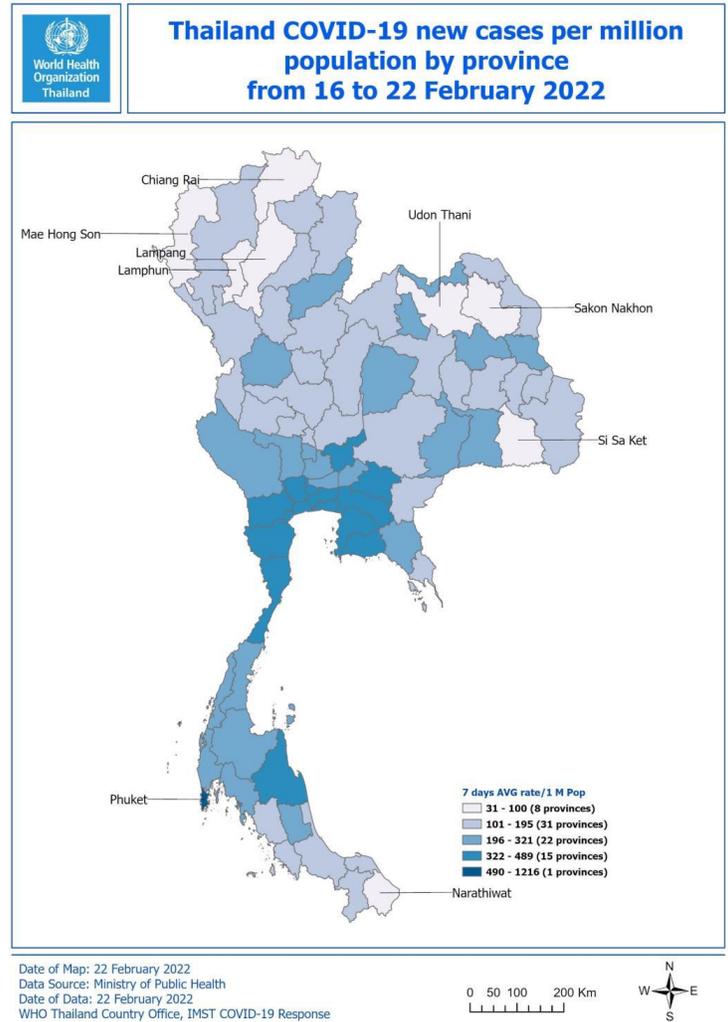
Despite the rise in new COVID-19 case numbers in February, and its resulting increase in the number of severe and ventilated cases in hospitals, the number of seriously ill COVID-19 cases remained much lower than the numbers seen in July and August 2021. This was considered encouraging and perhaps reflective of the lower levels of illness associated with Omicron infection. High vaccination rates in Thailand were also thought to be reducing the levels of severe illness and deaths, and thus the associated burden on the healthcare system.

## COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANTS

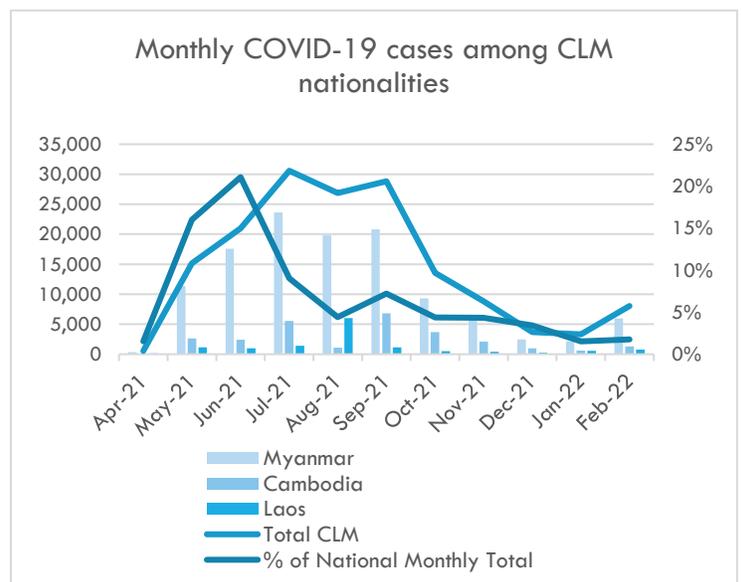
In February, 8,035 (+4,707) migrants from Myanmar (74%), Cambodia (16%) and Laos (10%) tested positive for COVID-19. Positive cases amongst CLM migrants comprised 2 per cent of monthly cases reported nationwide (451,385). Nevertheless, the disproportionate case burden continues to be felt among migrant communities in Thailand:

### CASE BURDEN AMONG MIGRANTS

55 people per 1,000 from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar were infected with COVID-19 by 23 February, compared to 35 per 1,000 Thai people in several locations in Thailand.



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



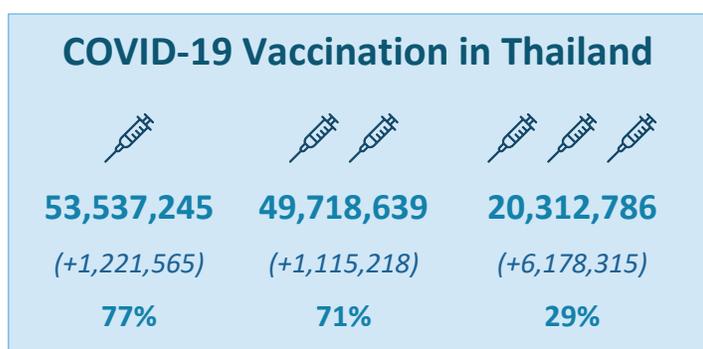
## COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANT CHILDREN

In February, data from the Royal College Pediatricians of Thailand, and the Pediatric Society of Thailand, showed that 83,886 positive COVID-19 cases were reported amongst children up to 18 years (45,408 more than the previous month), and represents 19% of the total number of cases nationwide. 706 of the monthly cases were CLM nationals (1%). Data shows a considerable increase in the number of children under the age of 18 testing positive for COVID-19.



## COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By 28 February, 123,768,847 doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in Thailand, with a second dose coverage of 71 per cent.



While there was a significant increase in the number of third, or “booster” doses administered in February, second dose vaccination coverage remain low in some important risk groups, as well across provinces, particularly in border areas (Mae Hong Son, Tak, Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces).

## COVID-19 VACCINATION AMONG MIGRANTS

Data released by the MOPH Department of Disease Control (DDC) on 24 February reported that a total of 4,664,331 (+145,345) doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to foreign nationals residing in Thailand. Within this figure, 1,952,482 (+30,145) doses were to CLM nationals, who continue to represent the top three nationalities:

	Myanmar	Cambodian	Lao
			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,352,100</b>	<b>400,633</b>	<b>199,749</b>
December	(+20,053)	(+7,202)	(+2,890)

It is important to note that the rate of increase in the number of foreign nationals receiving a dose of COVID-19 has slowed and is much lower compared to previous months. The number of doses

administered to CLM nationalities represents only 50 per cent of the estimated 3.9M population in Thailand. IOM can further report that eight migrants in Ranong IDC were provided with the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine in February.

The data currently available does not allow a conclusion to be made regarding the extent to which CLM migrants are *fully* vaccinated (i.e. have received two doses), and the UNMN is requesting more detailed data, both at provincial level and segregated by number of doses, from MOPH DDC. Such data will allow for greater analysis of coverage and where attention can be focused.

The current data does show, however, that since the launch of the national vaccination campaign, 2,180,703 first doses have been administered to foreign nationals (22% of the total population figure used by DDC) and 1,895,960 second doses (19%). The second dose coverage among non-Thais, therefore, is considerably lower than the 71 per cent reported at national level. It is recognized that recording and interpreting such data is not without its limitations (e.g. mobility and the possibility that some foreign nationals received doses outside Thailand), the proportion of the estimated population of CLM nationals who have received a dose of COVID-19 vaccine alone suggests there remains considerable scope to boost vaccination coverage among the non-Thai population in Thailand.



## POLICY UPDATE

### Policy updates: Entry requirements and vaccination

Having ordered its temporary suspension on 22 December 2021, Thailand’s Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) reinstated the quarantine exemption scheme for international arrivals effective 1 February.

With approval from the Thai FDA, vaccination for children aged 5-11 years was launched on 31 January at the Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health. Child vaccination will proceed using Pfizer’s paediatric formulation dose (orange cap vials) in hospitals and schools. Sinovac and Sinopharm were also approved for use in children aged 6 and older without requiring dose adjustments on 4 February.

### Policy updates: Migrant workers

The Royal Thai Government approved the guidelines for resuming recruitment of migrant workers under Section 64 (Border Pass workers) in 8 provinces including Sisaket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Trat, Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi and Ranong, as the employers in these border areas have been demanding for more than 30,000 migrant workers to meet the demand. However, it has not yet been determined when the cross-border resumption of Section 64 will start.

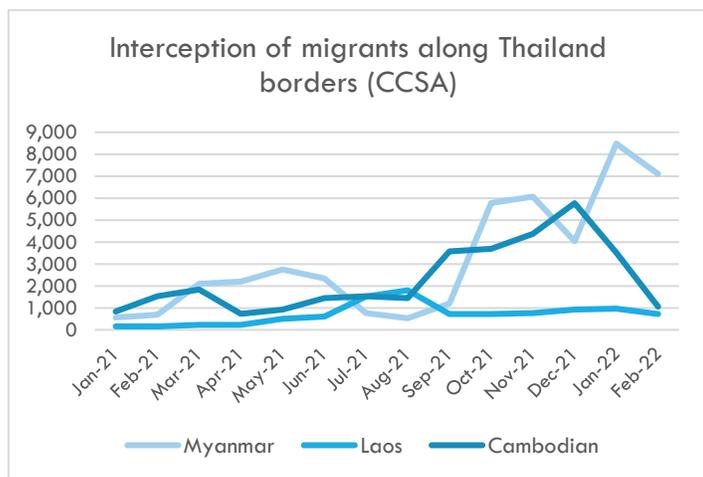
MOU workers from Cambodia have entered Thailand since the beginning of February 2022. The demand for migrant workers in the agricultural sector has been increasing, and the Royal Thai

Government has prepared 17 quarantine areas with 476 rooms to accommodate 1,368 Cambodian workers arriving in Sisaket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Trat, and Chanthaburi. While Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ranong were preparing for the arrival Myanmar workers, as of 3<sup>rd</sup> March (and the date this Situation Report was sent) the Myanmar border remains closed.

The Ministry of Labor and the Thai Immigration Bureau, together with the Myanmar authorities established a Certification of Identity (CI) for consideration as a means of permission to stay in Thailand in Chonburi, Chiang Mai, Ranong, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon. According to the Cabinet Resolution on July 13, 2021, the service will be operational between January 10 - August 1, 2022, Monday - Saturday and closed on Sunday and Thai public holidays. The expected number of service users will be about 450 - 500 people per day or according to the disease control measures of each province.

**Updates on border control measures**

According to the CCSA, 8,863 CLM nationals were intercepted along the Thai border in February, a decrease from those in January (12,975). This figure includes 7,092 from Myanmar, 720 from the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and 1,051 from Cambodia. A further 18 persons were intercepted from Malaysia, and 54 individuals of other nationalities.



**THAILAND - CAMBODIA BORDER**

**Sa Kaeo**

From 1-28 February 2022, 836 Cambodian migrants under the MoU arrived in Thailand at the Ban Khlong Luek POE, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province. 86 tested positive for COVID-19. Those who tested positive stayed at the OQ and received medical treatment from the hospital. Prior to arrival in Thailand, all migrants must take an ATK test in Poi Pet. Once they arrive in Thailand, they have to take another ATK test at the mobile testing unit at the PoE in Aranyaprathet. Health screening and document checks are then conducted, followed by a baggage check. Migrants then have to quarantine for 7 days. The

quarantine facility is arranged by the companies (OQ) in Aranyaprathet District.

**THAILAND - MYANMAR BORDER**

**Ranong**

On 1 February 2022, 102 Myanmar migrants who were intercepted had been returned via the POE in Ranong. Ranong Immigration coordinated with the Myanmar authorities to receive the migrants and conduct COVID-19 ATK screening upon their return.

**THAILAND - LAO BORDER**

**Nong Khai**

From 1 March 2022, land border checkpoints in Nong Khai and Udon Thani will reopen. Fully vaccinated Thais and foreign travelers can enter Thailand. Travelers are required to submit a Thailand Pass and stay at an approved hotel for the first night. RT-PCR test will be conducted upon arrival. Travelers are required to self-report their ATK test result on day 5.

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

The Foreign workers Administration Office of the Department of Employment reported on 28 February that the total number of documented migrant workers in Thailand was 2,125,142.



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

As of 16 February 2022, Border Patrol Police reported that there are in total 362 Myanmar migrants in 5 OQs (M=182, F=180). All tested negative for COVID-19.

- Mueang, Prachuap Kirikhan: 1 (M)
- Mae Chan, Chiang rai: 33 (M=16, F=17)
- Tha Song Yang, Tak: 125 (M=69, F=56)
- Mae Ramat, Tak: 108 (M=54, F=54)
- Mae Sot, Tak: 95 (M=42, F=53)

At the OQ in Sa Kaeo, there are 2 Lao nationals (F), 2 Cambodians (M), and 39 Thais (M=17, F=22)

## CAMBODIA

### POLICY UPDATE

The Cambodian Ministry of Health announced its Standard Operating Procedure for Management Care and Treatment of COVID-19 patients at home on 14 February, and shortly after the extension of its ongoing vaccination campaign to include 3-5 year olds.

### COVID-19 CASES IN CAMBODIA

In February, 9,210 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported and 17 deaths, bring the cumulative total to 130,276 and 3,032 respectively.

Cambodia is experiencing a similar level of community transmission of the Omicron variant, and the government continues to promote its public health and safety measures during the New Normal.

### COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

The Royal Government of Cambodia continued to progress with its national COVID-19 vaccination campaign, particularly with regards to administering booster doses. Vaccination coverage among all age groups is reported at 100%.

### COVID-19 Vaccination in Cambodia



## LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

### POLICY UPDATE

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic released an updated Notice on COVID-19 on 3 February 2022 that agreed to relax control measures, allowing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue visas for group tours who intend to enter the country as part of the Green Travel Zone, based on approval from the Taskforce Committee.

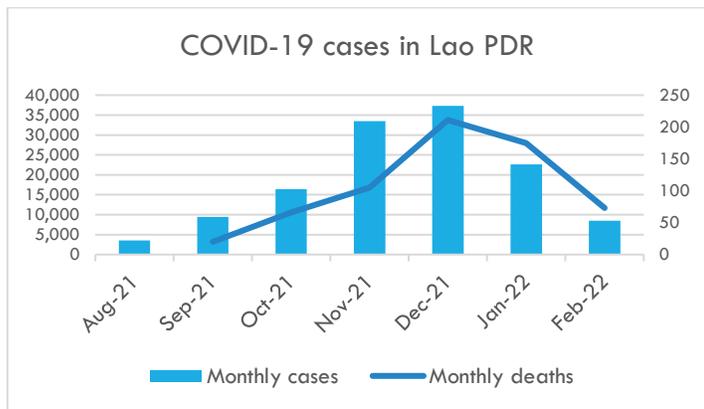
It further relaxes quarantine periods for all permitted travelers to the country, including Lao citizens returning home from foreign countries. All travelers must conduct a RT-PCR test for COVID-19 upon arrival and isolate at a venue designated by the Taskforce Committee for 48 hours while awaiting the results. Those with negative test results must continue to isolate at their own residence for seven days while strictly following COVID-19 preventive measures. The Notice also agrees in principle to reopen local and traditional border checkpoints for the transportation of goods.

The Government released an additional updated Notice on COVID-19 on 1 March 2022 that:

- Enables the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue visas for target groups who have had their vaccine certificate registered at [www.laogreenpass.gov.la](http://www.laogreenpass.gov.la) without having to go through the National Taskforce Committee.
- Cancels the medical tracking device requirement for all target groups entering the Lao PDR.
- Relaxes the quarantine period for:
  - traveler/visitor and Lao citizens returning home required to have their specimens collected and tested with RT-PCR for COVID-19 upon arrival, isolated at a venue approved by the task force committee for 48 hours to wait for a test result.
  - those with negative test results are allowed to be out of quarantine facilities but still required to maintain COVID-19 preventive measures strictly
- Enables the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to consider approving flights entering-exiting the Lao PDR without going through the National Taskforce Committee.

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

The Lao Ministry of Health reported 8,498 new COVID-19 cases in February, significantly lower than January (22,606), with 72 deaths. The cumulative number of cases was 142,743 at the end of February, with 621 deaths.



The average infection rate is 9.5% compared with the total tested. The number of reported infections has significantly decreased since the end of 2021. This is assumed to be a result of the amended control measures in place, such as rolling out home care guidelines, allowing for ATK self-tested increasing capacity of producing medicine "MOLACOVIR." Most of the reported cases are among the elderly population, and those with underlying health conditions that require close medical follow-up and care.

### QUARANTINE CENTRES (QCs)

The percentage of imported cases at Quarantine Centres (QCs) and assigned facilities was reported at 4.64 per cent in February (0.55% in January), an increase due to the relaxation of travel restrictions upon entering the country. These relaxed measures began in February and include decreasing the number of quarantine from 7 days to 48 hours, resulting in the closure of many temporary field hospitals and district QCs. However, Provincial QCs are being kept open.

It is worth mentioning that the management of the QCs is decentralized and relies on external funding support. While the National Taskforce Committee will provide guidance, it is the Provincial Taskforce who decides whether to keep them open depending on capacity and available funding. This results in different control measures in each province:

- **Vientiane:** Returning and vulnerable migrants who cannot afford the quarantine costs and COVID-19 testing, are required to use the Government QC for seven days (costs are free of charge).
- **Champasack:** The maximum quarantine period for a migrant is seven days. However, the duration is decided by the QC based on the number of inbound migrants and its capacity to accommodate them. Current capacity stands at 380, and related quarantine costs and PCR testing is free of charge.
- **Savannakhet:** All travelers, including returnee migrants, are required to complete seven days quarantine in assigned QC facilities. Migrants who stay in government QC are required to pay a service fee of 60,000 LAK/ person/day and for two PCR tests at 300,000 LAK/test. This presents a considerable

cost (1,020,000 LAK/person), and for those who cannot cover the costs will be issued with a Debit Note, which they are expected to pay at a later date to their local District Authority upon returning to their place of residence. This updated rule was imposed during the last week of February.

### COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

All provinces have reached at least 50 per cent full vaccination coverage apart from Houaphan, Xaisamboun, Savannakhet and Xiengkhouang. Having launched their booster dose campaign in January, the country continues to build on its vaccination coverage:

### COVID-19 Vaccination in Lao PDR

		
<b>65.9%</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
4,931,094	4,320,156	694,669
(+340,615)	(+677,136)	

Although Lao PDR has fully vaccinated more than 50% of its entire population, only around 60% of all districts (96/148) have reached this goal. The ongoing COVID 19 vaccination campaign aims to increase coverage in low performing districts, as well as ensure booster doses are administered to those due to receive one. There remains low coverage among the elderly population.

## MYANMAR

### POLICY UPDATE

On 23 February the Myanmar Ministry of Health (MOH) revised the guideline for the International Travelers arriving in the country. It reduced the number of days required to quarantine from ten to seven days, with an RT-PCR test to be schedule on day 1 and 6.

Precautionary COVID-19 measures related to control and prevention were extended from 28 February 2022 to 31 March 2022. These restrictions include the suspension of all types of visas, and travelers from all countries to Myanmar. UN personnel and diplomats who arrive on a relief flight will need to apply for a visa at their nearest Myanmar Embassy prior to their entry to Myanmar.

## COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

The MOH released a new management protocol for health care providers who test positive for COVID-19 on 16 February. This guideline stipulates that health staff who were asymptomatic or displayed mild symptoms can resume working after five days of quarantine.

On 13 February the MOH announced new guidelines for Home Isolation (HI) for positive COVID-19 cases. Confirmed COVID-19 patients who were admitted to a hospital or treatment centre must complete 5 days of isolation once returning home. Home quarantine guidelines for individual and family members were revised (version 5.0) whereby the primary contact must complete a 10-day quarantine at home, hotel or community-based quarantine center according to the recommendation from the respective health staff.

These guidelines followed the announcement on 10 February that the discharge criteria for COVID-19 positive patients would depend on the patient's condition and whether they had any comorbidities. If the positive patients are fully vaccinated, asymptomatic, and had no comorbidity, they can do quarantine at home.

## COVID-19 CASES IN MYANMAR

In January 2022, 4,698 (-3,734) confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported in Myanmar and 206 (+42) related deaths.

 Monthly total	Cumulative total	
<b>Confirmed cases</b>	76,719	587,891
<b>Deaths</b>	58	19,368

The COVID-19 test positivity rate was higher in February (6.8%) compared with the two previous months (1.8% in December 2021 and 1.5% in January 2022). The number of deaths, however, have fallen since the previous month.

## ACTIVITY UPDATES FROM UN NETWORK ON MIGRATION MEMBERS



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.

### IOM

#### IOM Thailand

IOM Thailand has completed the data collection and analysis of COVID-19 Vaccination Perception Survey, with responses from 4,429 migrants in Ranong (763), Tak (1,729), Chantaburi (350), Trat (423), Chonburi (293) and Greater Bangkok (367). IOM is preparing to share the findings with project stakeholders, UNMN partners, and MOPH DDC as efforts continue to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines among migrants in Thailand.

IOM and its partner World Vision Foundation of Thailand continue to support RTG's COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakarn, and Pathum Thani. The project started in November 2021 with a target of supporting 2,000 migrants receive full COVID-19 vaccination. The identification and training of Migrant Health Volunteers (MHVs) is complete, and they began conducting vaccine education sessions and facilitating their access to the vaccine centres this month. The same approach was extended to include Songkhla and Pattani provinces through a partnership with Stella Maris, and preparations are underway to launch activities in March.



**Figure 2:** Training of MHVs ahead of their outreach activities to support access to COVID-19 vaccination (World Vision Foundation of Thailand)

As part of the same project, IOM is supporting the Raks Thai Foundation train an additional 30 operators to support the continuation of the COVID-19 1422 Hotline in migrant languages: Myanmar, Khmer and Lao.

## COVID-19 Hotline 1422

This information hotline aims to increase access to information among the migrant community in Thailand about COVID-19 vaccine registration, certificates, Adverse-Effects Following Immunisation, and other COVID-19 related information and entitlements.

This activity is part of a project funded by the Australian Government, the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and WHO.

**COVID-19  
MIGRANT  
HOTLINE**

CALL 1422

**EXTENSIONS**

	81
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	83

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

Between 24-25 February 2022, IOM conducted Points of Entry (PoEs) assessment in Chanthaburi Province to assess the readiness and preparedness of border officials in the context of COVID-19. The multi-stakeholder assessment team comprising officials from the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Interior and IOM visited the PoEs at Ban Laem and Ban Pakkad, bordering Cambodia.

## IOM Myanmar

Only four COVID-19 positive patients were reported in February in IDP camps, and IOM supported the meal costs for these patients in Myitkyina.

Difficulties with cash withdrawal limited other COVID-19 response activities in Rakhine state.

## UNICEF

This month UNICEF has worked with Raks Thai Foundation and trained 101 community/migrant health volunteers (81 men, 20 women) on prevention and protection measures related to COVID-19. Their roles include providing health services, coordination with related agencies and on access to vaccination and literacy in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The trained migrant/community health volunteers reached more than 1,191 people in migrant communities (727 adults and 464 children) on risk communication about COVID-19 vaccine information and prevention measures.

In addition, UNICEF and Raks Thai Foundation distributed hygiene supplies to curb the increase in COVID 19 cases in high-risk provinces including Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Pattani, Samut Sakhon, Samut Prakan and Ayutthaya to more than 7,000 children and families in migrant communities. Supplies will 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 conducting Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities (RCCE), Health Case Management (screening, tracking, first aid consultation, referral, and follow up until cases are closed). UNICEF further supports Community Mass Rapid Testing in migrant communities, and also worked with partners to distribute essential non-food items and hygiene supplies to migrant communities affected by lockdown, in home isolation.

## ILO

ILO's Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Koh Yoi, Phetchaburi, established as part of their COVID-19 Response, has provided support for a total of 1,186 migrant workers (620 men; 566 women) via its community outreach activities. The MRC offers support by providing COVID-19 information and consultation, PPE and IEC material distribution. The MRC continued to provide capacity building for MHVs throughout February, training a total of 8 this month (7 men; 1 women). The training module is based on the Training Curriculum for MHV (2021 edition) from the Department of Health Support Service, Ministry of Health.