



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



Cambodian migrant workers in Rayong (© 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

- In March Thailand experienced daily average case numbers of over 22,000 with widespread community transmission across the country. Significantly higher numbers of children below the age of 18 also tested positive for COVID-19.
- The rise in new COVID-19 cases in Thailand resulted in significant increases in the number of severe and ventilated cases in hospitals, although the number of seriously ill cases remained lower than the numbers seen in July and August 2021.
- On 28 March, 4,916,718 (+253,387) foreign nationals residing in Thailand had received a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This figure includes 2,019,704 (+67,222) nationals from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (CLM).
- The Royal Thai Government resumed border-passes for daily- and seasonal-workers (Section 64) on 15 March 2022 in 8 provinces including Srisaket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Trat, Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi and Ranong.

THAILAND

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

On 31 March Thailand’s Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) reported that the cumulative number of cases had reached 3,628,347 with 25,130 fatalities. The number of positive cases in March was reported at 744,379 (+292,994) with 2,197 (+1,437) deaths.

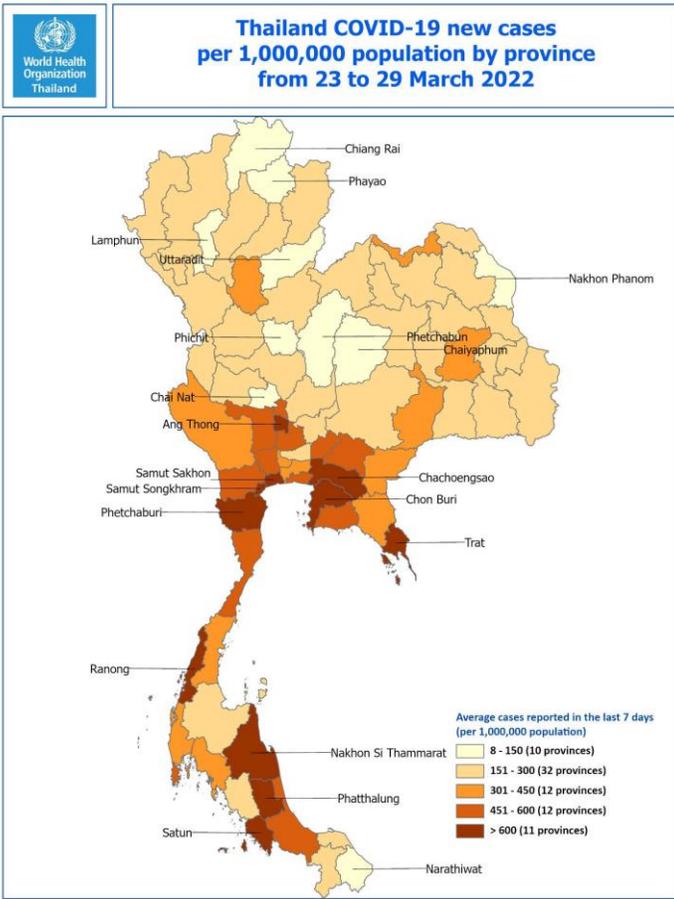
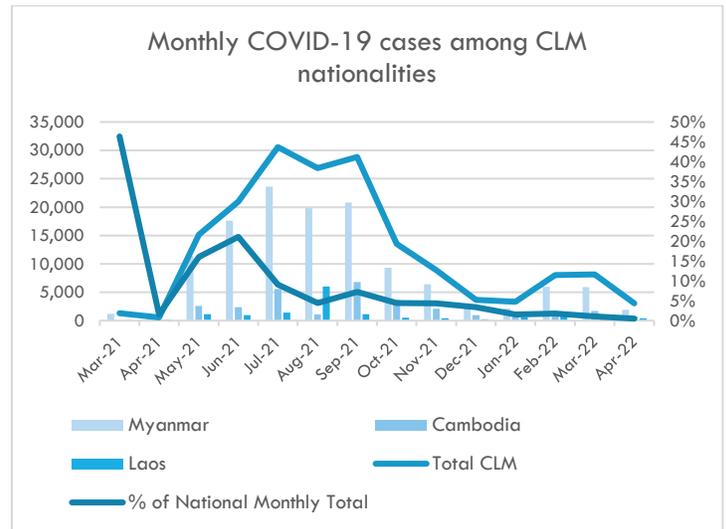


Figure 1: Distribution of new COVID-19 cases per million population by province (WHO)

COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANTS

In March, 5,959 (-73) migrants from Myanmar (72%), Cambodia (20%) and Laos (7%) tested positive for COVID-19. Positive cases amongst CLM migrants comprised 1 per cent of monthly cases reported nationwide.



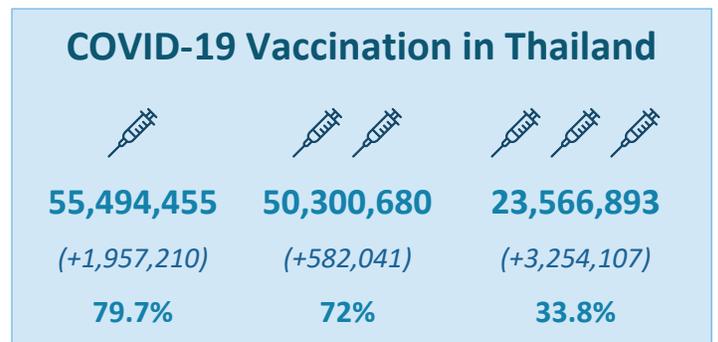
IOM can report that COVID-19 outbreaks occurred among beneficiaries and officials in Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) during March, including in Ang Thong, Nonthaburi, Phangnga, Ranong, Songkhla, Tak and Yala provinces. IOM followed up with officials and beneficiaries to provide medicine, personal protective equipment (PPE) and additional medical consultations. Overall, beneficiaries are in recovery and were quarantined upon producing a positive test. In addition, activities were changed to online activities where permitted. IOM will monitor the health of beneficiaries and follow up to ensure their well-being.

COVID-19 CASES AMONG MIGRANT CHILDREN

In March, data from the Royal College Pediatricians of Thailand, and the Pediatric Society of Thailand, showed that 113,966 (+30,090) positive COVID-19 cases were reported amongst children up to 18 years. This shows a significant increase compared to previous months, however with the increased caseload at national level, this figure represents 15 per cent of the total number of cases nationwide (in February it was 19%). 830 of these monthly cases were CLM nationals.



COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT



By 31 March 2022, 129,362,028 doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in Thailand, with a second dose coverage of 72 per cent, and third dose coverage of 34 per cent.

COVID-19 VACCINATION AMONG MIGRANTS

Data released by the MOPH Department of Disease Control (DDC) on 28 March reported that a total of 4,916,718 (+398,732) doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to foreign nationals residing in Thailand. Within this figure, 2,019,704 (+67,622) doses were to CLM nationals, who continue to represent the top three nationalities:

	Myanmar	Cambodian	Lao
			
Total	1,398,599	414,319	7,037
December	(+46,499)	(+13,686)	(+7,037)

The total number of second doses administered to non-Thais suggests only a 19 percent coverage. In parallel, the rate of increase of monthly doses administered to CLM migrants continues to reduce compared to previous months. Between December 2021 and January 2022, 147,779 doses were administered to CLM migrants, 68,585 between January and February, and 67,222 Between February and March.

Members of the UN Network on Migration and their partners continue with their efforts to support the scaling up vaccination efforts to boost coverage amongst migrant communities in Thailand. Based on the experience of IOM and its partner World Vision Foundation of Thailand, the process to identify and accompany migrants to vaccination centres, and facilitate their registration requires considerable time and accompaniment. Challenges continue in terms of the registration process and the central database system.

**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

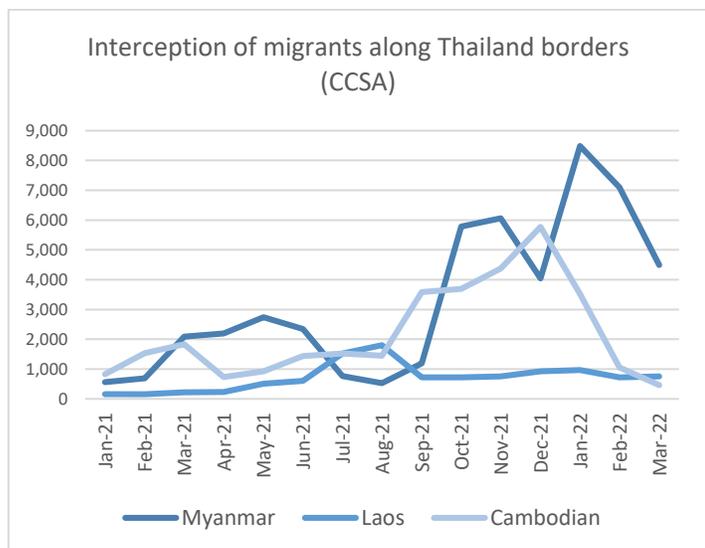
The Royal Thai Government resumed border-passes for daily- and seasonal-workers (Section 64) on 15 March 2022 in 8 provinces including Srisaket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Trat, Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi and Ranong. The Department of Employment has prepared guidelines to allow Cambodian and Myanmar migrant workers to enter Thailand to work, and 5 steps are to be followed:

1. The employer coordinates the workers to prepare necessary documents (evidence of COVID-19 testing by RT-PCR method or ATK test results certified no later than 72 hours prior to arrival, documents certifying 2 doses of vaccination, a border pass issued by the country of origin and/or other documents as announced by the Director-General of the Department of Employment)
2. The International Communicable Disease Control Office will review the COVID-19 related documents, and the hospital staff will perform the disease examination in accordance with the ministerial regulations specifying the qualifications and prohibited disease, issue a Tor.8 certificate and health insurance for a period of 3 months
3. Immigration checkpoints are to review the border pass provided by the country of origin, issue a stamp granting permission to stay in the Kingdom for a period of 30 days
4. Workers who have been vaccinated in the country of origin are required to be quarantined for at least 7 days and have to be tested for COVID-19 by RT - PCR two times. The employer is responsible for the cost of treatment.
5. Regarding the application for a work permit, the Provincial Employment Office will review the following documents:
 - i. Application for a work permit for migrant workers under Section 64 (Form Bor Tor 29);
 - ii. A copy of a border pass or document announced by the Director-General of the Department of Employment and a copy of evidence of permission to stay in the Kingdom;
 - iii. Medical certificate (6 diseases);
 - iv. Three photos size 3 x 4 cm.;
 - v. Employment contract and employment certificate;
 - vi. Employer documents and
 - vii. Evidence of completed quarantine and no COVID-19 infection found.

In the situation where 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 who 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, in such a situation, migrants 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 subject to the validity of their identity documents.

Updates on border control measures

Statistics from the CCSA on 18 March 2022 show that 4,490 persons from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos were intercepted along the Thai border, a decrease from those in February (8,863). Within this figure, 79 per cent were from Myanmar, 13 percent from Laos and 8 per cent from Cambodia.



The CCSA also reported that 2 persons were intercepted from Malaysia, 80 from Thailand, and 48 persons of other nationalities.

THAILAND - CAMBODIA BORDER

On 22 March 2022, Trat province reported a need of 1,962 migrant workers in 6 districts in Trat Province following a needs assessment conducted among employers from 164 companies. Seasonal migrants will be allowed in Trat as soon as Battambang Governor approved of this proposal.

THAILAND - MYANMAR BORDER

On 1 March 2022, the Thai-Myanmar Township Border Committee (TBC) Mae Sai – Tachileik pushed back 141 Myanmar migrants who were intercepted at the Thailand-Myanmar Friendship Bridge in Chiang Rai. TBC also facilitated voluntary return of 45 Myanmar migrants.

In Ranong, 129 Myanmar migrants were deported via the PoE opposite of Koh Song.

THAILAND - LAO BORDER

Mukdahan Province proposed to reopen its border crossing to Lao migrants under the MoU starting from 1 April 2022. Migrants have to present their work permit, and an RT-PCR result issued no

more than 72 hours prior to their travel. Migrants also have to be vaccinated. MoU migrants are permitted to stay in the country for 2 years. Mukdahan Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) unit have an SOP to accommodate and manage the flow of migrants. Once arrived at the PoE, health screening will be conducted by public health officials and documents checked by immigration. Migrants will then be transported to a quarantine facility. Migrants who are fully vaccinated have to undergo a 7-day quarantine whereas migrants who have only received one dose of vaccine will have to stay in quarantine for 14 days. As reported on 10 March, there is an application of 17 migrants who will arrive via PoE in Mukdahan.

On 28 March 2022, 236 Lao migrants under the MoU arrived in Nongkhai Province. They had to undergo a 7-day quarantine in an Organizational Quarantine centre (OQ) in Nongkhai. 158 migrants quarantined at Grand Paradise Nongkhai Hotel. The other 78 quarantined at an OQ of a private company. Costs per person was said to be around THB 6,900-7,500. Currently, Nongkhai can accommodate up to 1,847 persons in 12 OQs.

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

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



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

As of 30 March 2022, Border Patrol Police reported that there are in total 222 Myanmar migrants in 4 OQs (M=106, F= 116), 5 Lao migrants (M=3, F=2), and 18 Thais (M=11, F=7).

- Suan Pueng, Ratchaburi: 41 (M=25, F=16)
- Mae Chan, Chiang rai: 25 (M=10, F=15)
- Mae Sot, Tak: 95 (M=42, F=53)
- Sadao, Songkhla: 61 (M=29, F=32)
- Mueang, Nongkhai: 5 (M=3, F=2) *Lao migrants
- Wang Nam Yen, Sa Keao: 14 (M=11, F=3) *Thai migrants
- Mae Chan, Chiang rai: 4 (F) *Thai migrants

All 245 in OQs tested negative for COVID-19.

CAMBODIA

POLICY UPDATE

Updates on border control measures

On 17 March, the Royal Government of Cambodia announced the cancellation of requirements for a negative PCR test within 72 hours prior to arrival, and a COVID-19 antigen rapid test on arrival for incoming travelers. Visas on arrival were also resumed for all foreign travelers. All travelers are, however, encouraged to self-test and fully vaccinated travelers are required to present COVID-19 vaccination certificates on arrival, while those who are not fully vaccinated are required to undertake 14-day quarantine.

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

Between the end of February and the beginning of March, Cambodia experienced an increase in positive COVID-19 cases due to the circulation of the Omicron variant in the community with clusters detected in schools, workplaces and entertainment venues. The number of hospitalizations increased though healthcare capacity was not reported to be strained. The WHO reported that the approach of the Cambodian Ministry of Health to sustain COVID-19 management was one of prioritising calibrated public health and social measures to limit transmission, strengthened patient pathways and accelerated vaccination.

At the end of March the number of new COVID 19 cases reported had declined steadily over the course of the previous four weeks, indicating a decline in community transmission in Phnom Penh. Healthcare capacity remained stable with the majority of cases under home based care and recovery (WHO).

The Ministry of Health continues to implement a social media plan for Khmer New Year and urged all health partners, institutions, and local authorities to remain vigilant and promote safe and preventive practices among families and to protect vulnerable populations such as the elderly and pregnant women by getting them vaccinated before Khmer New Year. In this light, the MOH launched a national COVID-19 awareness campaign on March 22 to educate, disseminate and raise awareness under the theme "Omicron spreads faster than previous variants and causes a great risk to you and your family". The campaign aimed to raise awareness and increase the participation of individuals, families, and communities, as well as relevant institutions, ministries, other public organizations, local authorities at all levels, national and international organizations, NGOs, and private services to continue to implement the necessary COVID 19 measures.

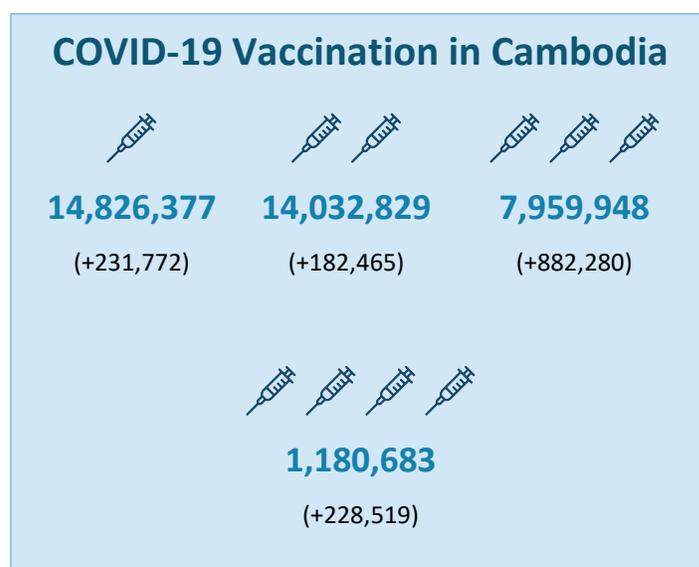
COVID-19 CASES IN CAMBODIA

In March, 5,349 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported and 22 deaths, bring the cumulative total to 135,625 and 3,054 respectively. The number of imported cases was reported at 472, bringing the cumulative total to 21,208.

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 reported the following vaccination coverage on 31 March:



The MOH further announced on 18 March 2022 that all provinces were:

- Using Pfizer vaccines for the fourth dose for people aged ≥ 18 years, and for the third dose for people aged ≥ 12 years
- Suspending the use of the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines for the third and fourth doses to people aged 18 years until vaccines with shorter expiry dates are used up.
- The third dose (booster dose) for children aged 5 years started on 30 March 2022 using Sinovac vaccines.

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

In the province of Oddor Meanchey, total migrants were vaccinated in QC: 121 (F: 48). Banteay Meanchey Province vaccinated 195 (87) migrants and Battambang Province 1,617 (670) during March.

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



POLICY UPDATE

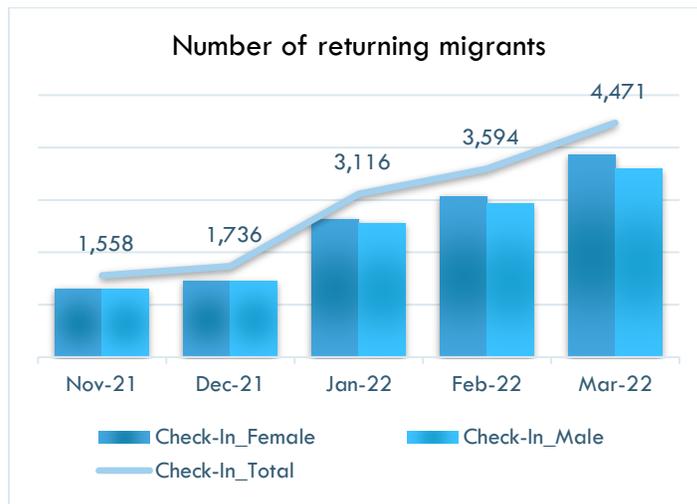
On 1 March 2022 the Prime Minister's Office of the Lao People's Democratic Republic issued the Notice on Guidance to adjust some measures for entering and exiting the country as follows:

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can issue visas for target groups who had their QR-Code (Vaccine ID) registered at www.laogreenpass.gov.la without having to go through the National Taskforce Committee.
2. It assigned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to collaborate with relevant sectors to improve an instruction on how to request for permission to enter/exit the country, serving as a reference for the actual implementation.
3. It agreed to cancel the medical tracking device requirement for all target groups entering the country, replacing it with a QR Code and the use of the Lao KYC application.
4. It agreed to relax the quarantine period for those who intend to enter the Lao PDR. Any individual residing in the Lao PDR, including those who are entering the country must install and register themselves with the new LaoKYC application, so that they can use the "Lao Su Su" service to create a vaccine ID which will serve as a digital proof for their vaccination status when engaging in activities, traveling, and entering public offices, factories, shops, restaurants and other places.
5. It requests public offices, companies, factories, shops, restaurants and other public places, including transportation service providers (namely airports, ports, railway and bus stations) to install a QR-Code machine in order for passengers to scan their Vaccine ID through the Lao Su Su function.
6. It enables the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to consider approving flights entering-exiting the Lao PDR without having to go through the National Taskforce Committee.
7. It assigns the National Taskforce Committee to follow up on the implementation of this Notice and periodically report to the Government.



THAILAND - LAO BORDER

The number of returning migrants continued to increase in March, presumably ahead of the long holiday in April to mark the new year celebrations.



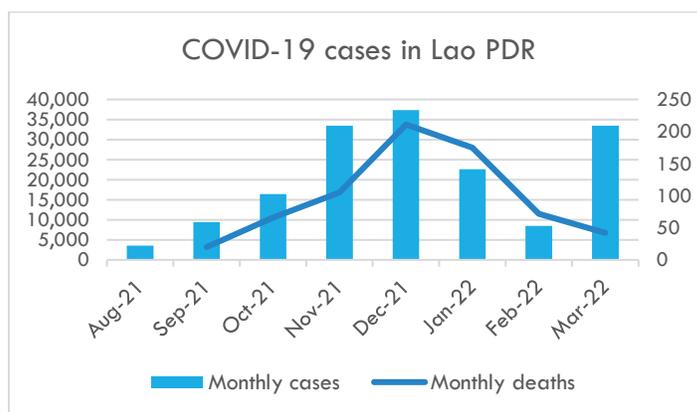
Updates on border control measures

Despite the recent notice from the Prime Minister's Office described above, all borders remain closed except the two international points of entry for tourists who travel to and within the Green Zones.

By 24 March 2022, the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Public Security, together with the Department of Consulate Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participated in an online meeting with ASEAN countries to discuss the possibility of reopening the border, and how to connect to each other in terms of measurement and regulation of the travel.

COVID-19 CASES IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Lao Ministry of Health reported 33,442 new COVID-19 cases in March, with 42 deaths. The cumulative number of cases reached 176,898 at the end of March, with 665.



The Omicron variant saw a significant increase in transmission and case numbers by the middle of March, where the number of cases increased by 365 per cent compared to February. The first infections were identified in Vientiane Capital and quickly spread to other provinces. There was an average of 2,213 positive cases per day during the last seven days of March, and this figure was

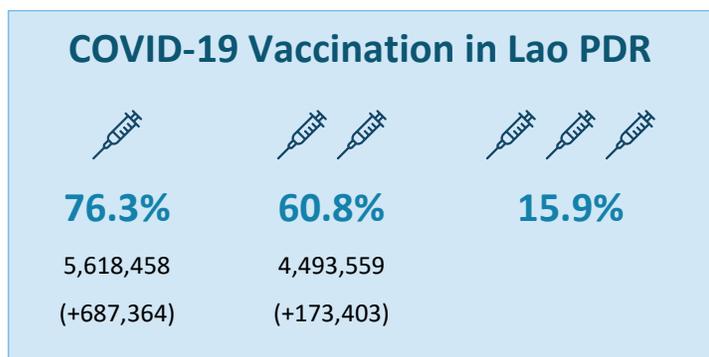
set to continue increasing. The Ministry of Health reported that it was likely the caseload would triple during April due to the end of year celebrations and the relaxation of control measures. While the infection rate soared, the number of deaths had decreased by 58% compared to the previous month.

Given the increasing number of returning migrants since November 2021, the number of imported COVID-19 cases has also increased. In February the percentage of imported cases stood at 4.64, though decreased in March to 2.13 per cent.

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

By the end of March 5,618,458 persons in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic had received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (687,364 in March), and 4,493,559 had received a second dose (173,403 in March). All provinces have reached the 50 per cent milestone for fully vaccinating their population, except for Xaisamboun, Savannakhet, and Xiangkhouang.

COVID-19 vaccination in children aged 6-11 years has started in all provinces, using Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccine. 63 per cent of the population within this age group have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine



MYANMAR

POLICY UPDATE

On 18 March, the Central Committee on COVID-19 Prevention, Control Measures, and Treatment announced an extension of COVID-19 related public request, orders, notifications, and directives from 31 March to 30 April 2022. The Ministry of Immigration and Population also announced the resumption of business e-visa services from 1 April.

COVID-19 CASES IN MYANMAR

In March the Ministry of Health reported 23,696 confirmed COVID-19 cases alongside 62 deaths. Positivity rates have

increased as a result of the spread of the Omicron variant, however the death rate is low.

	Monthly total	Cumulative total
Confirmed cases	23,696	611,587
Deaths	62	19,430

COVID-19 VACCINATION

By the end of March 2022, a total of 26,473,700 people in Myanmar had received a COVID-19 vaccination including a booster dose. The Ministry of Health began its booster dose campaign this month, and received further support and vaccine consignment from the COVAX Facility.

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.

IOM

IOM Lao PDR

IOM Lao PDR has been working with IOM Thailand and the Government of Lao People’s Democratic Republic, namely the Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, to prepare for Cross-Border Coordination Meetings at four main points of entry bordering with Thailand.

IOM Thailand

IOM’s IBM team completed two Risk Assessments at Points of Entry in Chiang Rai and Mae Sot to determine their readiness for the eventual reopening of borders.

IOM and its Implementing Partner World Vision Foundation of Thailand facilitated the first dose vaccination of 1,186 migrants in Bangkok, Samut Prakarn and Pathum Thani. More than 300 migrants were on the waiting list.

On 24 March IOM Deputy Director General Amy Pope visited activities in Pathum Thani together with the IOM Regional Director and Chief of Mission, the WHO Country Representative and WVFT’s Director. They observed an awareness raising session about vaccine safety among urban migrants, and later handed over relief items to support vulnerable migrants. This programme has facilitated first dose vaccination to 1.186 migrants in Bangkok, Samut Prakarn and Pathum Thani, with more than 300 migrants currently on the waiting list to receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine.



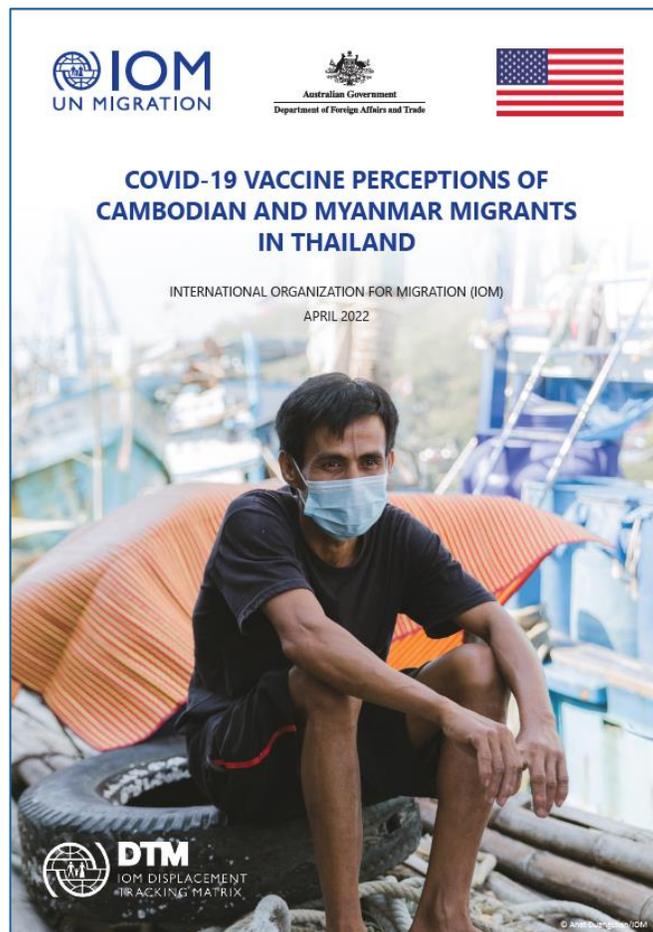
Figure 2: IOM DDG Pope and WHO Country Representative Dr. Jos Vandelaer handing over relief packages in Pathum Thani

As part of the same project, 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.



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

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 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.