

## COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries

The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly. In this update, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides information for migrant workers and their employers on government decisions relevant to migrant workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.

Important Note: Please note that this is only a summary of the information provided by the above governments. Every effort is made to ensure information is up to date, however, as the situation is changing quickly you are encouraged to seek further information by contacting the Ministry of Labour or respective embassies directly.

### Updates and Information from IOM

**IOM Thailand** has updated its [Information Sheet](#) for the Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand (PROMISE) Programme.

**IOM Thailand** is monitoring border movements and providing assistance to migrants and the Royal Thai Government. For updates and to access IOM tools and guidelines related to COVID-19, please check here: <https://thailand.iom.int/iom-thailand-covid-19-response>

### Thailand

**MOU workers who complete four years of employment can renew their visa and work permit in Thailand**

Reference: [Official Royal Thai Government Website](#), 10 November 2020

The Royal Thai Government has approved a Cabinet Resolution allowing eligible migrant workers in Thailand to extend their Non-LA visa for one year and work permit for two years. **MOU workers based in Thailand who have completed four years of employment and whose work permits expire during the period from 1 November 2020 to 31 December 2021** are eligible to apply for these extensions, without having to return to their countries of origin.

Those MOU workers whose passports are valid for less than two years can also obtain a visa and work permit extension at the Immigration Bureau and Department of Employment, respectively. In these cases, the extension will not exceed the period of their passport validity. Following the expiration of the passport and the issuance of a new passport, eligible workers can submit their new passports to the relevant authorities to have their visa stamp and work permit transferred to their new passport (via the Immigration Bureau, and Department of Employment offices, respectively).

This special measure has been introduced to address the issue of border closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work permit extension process for eligible MOU workers who have completed four years of employment is summarized on page 2 of [IOM's Flash Update #17](#).

### Myanmar

**Update on safe return arrangements for Myanmar migrants in Thailand**

Reference: General Administrative Department, Myawaddy and Department of Labour, Tanintharyi region and Shan state

Between 22 March and 17 November 2020, 130,438 Myanmar nationals were safely repatriated from Thailand through safe return arrangements. For more details on

these arrangements, see page 2 in [IOM's Flash Update #10](#).

### IOM's COVID-19 response in Myanmar

IOM Myanmar continued to provide humanitarian support for vulnerable returnees from Thailand in a distressed situation, reaching a total of 327 migrants during the period from 5 to 18 November 2020. IOM supported the cost of onward transportation and meals and provided clothing and medical support, in close collaboration with Kayin State and Ayeyarwaddy Region authorities.



IOM Myanmar providing humanitarian support for returned migrant workers at Myawaddy, 13 November 2020

### Cambodia

#### Ministries of Labour in Cambodia and Thailand discuss labour migration issues

Reference: Press Release of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training on its [official Facebook page](#), 5 November 2020

On 5 November 2020, H.E Ith Samheng, Minister of Labour and Vocational Training of Cambodia, held a meeting via a tele-conference with H.E Surachai Chaitrakulthong, Deputy Minister of Labour of Thailand,

to discuss labour migration between the two countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues discussed included:

- implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on Labour Cooperation (MOU) and the Agreement on the Use of Labour;
- protection of the rights of Cambodian workers;
- regularization of Cambodian workers who are currently living and working in Thailand;
- deployment of Cambodian seasonal workers in border provinces; and,
- recruitment and sending of migrant workers through the MOU process following the re-opening of borders.

Both countries reaffirmed that they will work together to provide legal assistance to aspiring and existing Cambodian migrant workers in order to prevent irregular migration. In particular, according to a statement by the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOVLT) after the meeting, both parties agreed to:

- Allow Cambodian MOU workers in Thailand who complete four years of employment to extend their expiring work permits for another two years. It was noted that after the end of the two-year extension, migrant workers will not be able to renew their work permits unless they return to Cambodia.
- Deploy Cambodian workers for seasonal work in border provinces in Thailand. To facilitate this, both parties are requesting guidelines from their respective Governments on opening border crossings for migrant workers entering Thailand from Cambodia, and returning to Cambodia from Thailand, in accordance with the relevant health regulations of the two countries.
- The Government of Cambodia committed to establish an automated system to renew travel documents (TD) for Cambodian workers staying and working in Thailand.

Thailand confirmed its readiness to improve coordination between the two Governments in order to accelerate the validation of work and travel documents of Cambodian workers, and to improve management of workers' data to help them enroll in the Thai Social Security Fund and

receive appropriate benefits upon completion of their employment in Thailand.

To establish the automated system to facilitate TD renewals for Cambodian workers in Thailand, MOLVT will request the Royal Government of Cambodia to establish a technical working group comprised of MOLVT, the Ministry of Interior and the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand.

At the time of writing further details of this automated system for TDs renewal was not available. [IOM's Flash Update #23](#) outlines the Cambodian Prime Minister's approval to extend expired TDs for Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand; IOM is closely monitoring for further announcements.

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

### IOM's COVID-19 response in Lao People's Democratic Republic

IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic reached 245 beneficiaries through a safe migration campaign conducted in three villages of Vientiane province in collaboration with the Skills Development and Employment Department on 18-22 October 2020. Community members received Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials on employment, psychosocial support, COVID-19 prevention measures and safe migration.



IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic in collaboration with the Department of Immigration, UNODC, and WHO conducting a training on Standard Operating Procedures on Cross-Border Migration Management during COVID-19 for 32 Frontline Officials at the Point of-Entry in Pakse International Airport and Vangtao International Border Checkpoint, to strengthen the border management response during the COVID-19 pandemic, 16-17 November 2020.

*This COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries, has been produced by IOM Thailand. For more information, please contact [ThailandLHD@iom.int](mailto:ThailandLHD@iom.int)*

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