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# SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR ALL IN THAILAND



A United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Project

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An estimated 3.9 million migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) live in Thailand. Migrant workers are an essential part of the Thai economy, driving growth and productivity in Thailand's key sectors – including, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, domestic work, fishing, seafood processing, and the services sector. However, many CLMV migrant workers are excluded from or have limited access to the social protection system, depending on their sector of employment and/or their migration status. Regular migrant workers employed in the formal sector are entitled to enrol in the Social Security Fund (SSF) which provides seven types of benefits (non-occupational illness or injury; maternity; disability; death; child allowance; old age; and unemployment compensation). However, regular migrant workers in the informal sector - including domestic work, agriculture, forestry and livestock farming - are only entitled to the Migrant Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS).

The MHIS is limited to non-occupational health care only and the costs involved, which are paid by the migrant workers, can act as a deterrent for them to enroll. All regular migrant workers are also entitled to the Workmen's Compensation Fund (WCF) which provides access to protection against occupational injuries or sickness, disability or death; however, the WCF does not cover domestic workers, many of whom are migrants.

In reality, migrant workers who are entitled to the social protection coverage by law face significant obstacles to accessing it in practice such as language barriers, lack of information on available schemes, poor enforcement and compliance including among employers, and lack of portability of social protection across borders.

This disparity to access of social protection for migrant workers has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, making migrant workers more vulnerable to the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Protecting migrant workers will be critical to Thailand's resilience and recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

## KEY PROGRAMME INSIGHTS

- **Sizeable workforce:** Ten per cent of the Thai labor force are migrants.
- **Coverage is lacking:** Less than two-thirds of regular migrants are enrolled in the Social Security Fund and the Migrant Health Insurance Scheme.
- **Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** Migrant workers in Thailand contribute an estimated 4 to 6 per cent of Thailand's annual GDP or 25 billion United States dollars (USD).
- **Remittance outflows:** CLMV migrant workers in Thailand send nearly USD 3 billion back home annually.
- **COVID-19 impacts:** Since March 2020, an estimated 700,000 migrant workers in Thailand have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

## IOM TAKES ACTION

IOM in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is implementing the United Nations Joint Programme "**Accelerating Progress Towards an Integrated and Modernized Social Protection System for all in Thailand**" funded by the Joint SDG Fund.

**The overall objective of the Joint Programme is to support the Royal Thai Government to increase social protection coverage towards universality by scaling coverage for children and extending coverage to specific vulnerable groups including domestic and migrant workers, through sustainable social protection intervention.**

Through this Joint Programme, IOM aims to advocate for inclusion of migrant workers in existing social protection schemes, namely the SSF, MHIS and WCF, and to strengthen the capacity of these schemes to reach migrant workers for the benefit of all.

## KEY PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

### INTEGRATED POLICY SOLUTIONS DEVELOPED FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

- **EVIDENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED POLICY SOLUTIONS**

IOM is conducting an assessment of the current situation of social protection for migrant workers and their families in Thailand as part of the Joint Programme's comprehensive review of the social protection system. This landmark study, "Access to social protection for migrant workers and their families in Thailand", will identify levels of access to existing social protection schemes and benefits as well as key challenges and barriers to access at the policy and implementation levels. The research will be the first to define the critical "coverage gap" in migrant access to social protection system in Thailand and, with this insight, will provide recommendations for advocating for a more inclusive, integrated, coherent and sustainable social protection system for all, including migrant workers.

- **PUBLIC DIALOGUE AND POLICY ADVOCACY**

IOM will promote multi-stakeholder engagement and organize technical and high-level consultative meetings and workshops with key stakeholders to raise awareness on the importance of social protection and to inform the strategic direction of social protection for all in Thailand. IOM will also provide evidence-based targeted messaging to key stakeholders to support advocacy and advance the inclusion of migrant workers in Thailand's social protection system.

### POLICY OPTIONS TO ENSURE MORE EFFECTIVE COVERAGE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS, INCLUDING MIGRANTS, WITHIN THE EXISTING SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES, ARE DESIGNED AND TESTED

- **POLICY ASSESSMENT AND DESIGN OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME SOLUTIONS**

IOM, in partnership with UN Women and in collaboration with ILO, will promote the integration of domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers, into the existing social protection schemes by generating evidence-based policy recommendations and innovative solutions to address the coverage gaps and challenges.

- **COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH CAMPAIGN**

IOM will conduct communications with targeted populations, and will design and execute an outreach campaign to promote key findings and recommendations from the policy assessment to overcome challenges faced by domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers, in accessing social protection schemes. Such a campaign will include production of Information, Education and Communication materials and outreach to key stakeholders including frontline workers implementing social protection schemes as well as representatives of employers and domestic workers, and migrant workers.

## PROGRAMME BACKGROUND FACTS

<b>Donor:</b>	Joint SDG Fund
<b>Funding:</b>	USD 2,661,815
<b>Programme duration:</b>	January 2020 – December 2021
<b>UN agencies:</b>	IOM, ILO, UNICEF, and UN Women
<b>National partners:</b>	The Royal Thai Government, research institutes, employers and workers organizations, academia, non-governmental and civil society organizations
<b>Target beneficiaries:</b>	CLMV migrant workers, informal workers and children

