

CAMBODIA

PROMISE - POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH SAFE MIGRATION, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCED JOB PLACEMENT IN CAMBODIA, LAO PDR, MYANMAR AND THAILAND



A trainee practices housekeeping at a hotel in Siem Reap. Photo by PROMISE

BACKGROUND

ASEAN member states have experienced a tremendous increase in migration over the past few decades. Migrants in Thailand from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar (CLM) combined account for 58 % of all migrants in ASEAN, followed by the Indonesia-Malaysia and Malaysia-Singapore corridors. The number of migrants from CLM is estimated at 4 million, with women accounting for nearly 50% of all migrant workers.

Migration to Thailand has become a poverty reduction strategy for marginalized households in CLM. It has positive impacts on the socio-economic conditions of societies and economic growth in both countries of origin and destination. Thailand's aging population will lead to a labour shortage and create a shortfall of 4.7 million workers by 2020; the demand for migrant workers is projected to increase. The low educational and skill levels of CLM migrants have a negative effect on their wages, saving rates and remittances. Although only recording remittances sent through official channels, official remittance data can illustrate the potential gains of deploying higher skilled labour to higher wage jobs abroad.

While many migrant workers are not able to access effective protection and support services, skills development is a direct intervention with proven positive impacts on migrant worker households. Skills development is not only a way to enhance employability through vocational training, but also provides an opportunity to integrate specific skills related to migration cyclical planning and protection. As most low-skilled migrant workers typically start their employment without any prior skills training, there is ample room to improve the process.

APPROACH

Labour migration is a circular process and therefore needs interventions along the whole migration cycle. PROMISE will actively address the different stages through four components:

1. The first component on private sector engagement will establish dialogue and partnerships between employers in Thailand and skills providers from CLM, addressing market demand and skills gaps related to migrant workers by establishing sector working groups.
2. The second component aims to integrate migrant workers, particularly women, in existing skills programmes. Direct cross-border collaboration between skills providers in CLM and employers in Thailand will be operationalized. At the same time PROMISE will capitalize on recent progress in Thailand that permits CLM migrant workers to participate in existing skills development schemes.
3. The third component, return and reintegration, addresses the strong need to broaden opportunities for returning migrants to use their skills and invest their social and financial capital productively upon return. PROMISE will address this with improved access to information, counselling, skills certification, job placement and entrepreneurial support upon return, and through capacity building of existing migrant support services in CLM.
4. Component 4 seeks to develop a migration-cycle approach to migrant protection measures.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

Project Duration

September 2017 to August 2021

Budget

CHF 8,300,000

Implementing agencies:

International Organization for Migration and UN Women

Other partners

Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Tourism, Ministries of Education ILO, NGOs and the private sector in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand

Imprint

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At the policy level, PROMISE will partner with UN WOMEN and the International Labour Organization to support available protection frameworks at regional and national levels. At the institutional level, the project will enhance the capacity of recruitment agencies to comply with ethical recruitment models, and of civil society organizations to provide better assistance to migrants. At the individual level, PROMISE will support migrants and their communities to prepare themselves better in terms of financial planning and self-protection. PROMISE will take advantage of the strong position SDC has in the TVET sector in all three sending countries. On the operational level, the existing projects will partner to deliver training sessions with specific migration-related issues in the curricula, and will join forces in a policy dialogue with the responsible ministries.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

The project aims to enhance existing support and services provided by the Thai and the CLM governments and other stakeholders, rather than developing new structures. Through the application of a balanced approach between micro, meso and macro-level interventions, PROMISE will improve coordination and collaboration between project stakeholders at provincial, national and international levels. Gender inequality and discrimination exist at all stages of the migration cycle. This needs to be addressed by a gender-responsive approach that is mainstreamed through all project outputs, activities and stakeholder engagement. The project is strongly committed to poverty reduction and general equality, and will therefore focus on vulnerable migrants, from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The project's main target beneficiaries will be migrant workers, particularly women, from CLM at all stages of the migration process, whether regular or irregular.

Many of the project interventions will be implemented in Thailand, while skills development will also be implemented in selected target provinces in CLM with high migration and poverty rates. These areas will be reached through existing partners. An important focus will be on the reintegration of returning migrants through job matching services and post-return counselling. It is anticipated that nearly 300,000 prospective and returned migrants will be reached over four years through the different components. The project will focus on four selected target sectors: hospitality, domestic work, manufacturing and construction.

OVERALL GOAL AND EXPECTATIONS

The goal of the project is that migrants, especially women from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar have improved employment opportunities and conditions, particularly in Thailand, through enhanced skills and protection, and that this will lead to poverty reduction in communities of origin. PROMISE seeks to achieve this impact through the following three outcomes:

Outcome 1 – Responsive: Migrant workers, especially women, are able to use decent employment and safe migration schemes through enhanced collaboration between potential employers, relevant sector associations and skills development partners.

- Private sector support to market-driven skills training and matching of migrant workers
- Enhanced private sector dialogue on ethical recruitment and decent employment of migrant workers
- Skill providers in CLM and in Thailand have enhanced capacities to deliver migrant-centred, gender-sensitive and market-responsive training courses.

Outcome 2 – Inclusive: Migrant workers, especially women, enjoy greater access to skills development in target sectors through affirmative action, leading to improved employability abroad and at home.

- Closer bilateral collaboration on skills development for migrant workers
- Enhanced access of migrant workers, particularly female, to tailored skills development programmes and job placement
- Enhanced certification and referral mechanisms are available to support reintegration of returning migrant workers
- Project stakeholders have a better understanding of the impact of skills development on migration outcomes and poverty reduction.

Outcome 3 – Protective: Migrant workers, especially women, receive greater protection through strengthened policy frameworks, enhanced assistance services and safe migration information at all stages of the migration cycle.

- Evidence-based and gender-responsive policies on labour migration and protection of migrants are developed and promoted
- Migrant workers have enhanced access to effective and gender-responsive safe migration services
- Greater participation of migrant workers and their families in safe migration communication and self-support mechanisms.



Transport of migrant workers.

Photo by PROMISE