

Migration: annual review 2016

Bangkok Country Cluster Support Team / December 2016

Background

Thailand is a major ASEAN destination for low-skilled migrant workers. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately three million migrants currently live in Thailand, with the majority from Myanmar (around 2.3 million), followed by Cambodia and Laos¹. Migrants are predominantly occupied in the so called 3D jobs, referring to jobs that are dangerous, dirty and degrading.

Although Thailand's Labour Protection Act does not distinguish between national and migrant workers, in reality migrants are not always treated equally. Many migrants, especially those from ethnic minorities and stateless, often find it difficult to obtain the national minimum wage, to access decent jobs, health care and social services. Migrant workers are not allowed to form labor unions and their travel is restricted to the province of their temporary residence or employment.

These restrictions of the basic human and civil rights of migrants, together with xenophobia and discrimination lead to exploitation, exclusion and marginalization of millions of Burmese workers and their families living in Thailand.



Nong Harn, 19 and her 4-year old sister Mwe Pong live on the outskirts of Chiang Mai in a village for migrants from the Shan state of Myanmar. Like many of her compatriots, often times Nong Harn faces discrimination that limits her access to labour market. "Employers should judge you by your skills and not the nationality on your ID card", says Nong Harn whose aspiration is to study social science at the University. Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC

Red Cross Red Crescent response

In 2016 IFRC Country cluster Support Team Bangkok (CCST) and Thai Red Cross Society have made some commendable achievements in promoting human rights, enhancing protection and addressing vulnerabilities of the low-skilled migrant workers from Myanmar. Increased cooperation among Thai Red Cross and civil society is another noteworthy advancement that will be nurtured in 2017 through joint activities aimed at addressing health vulnerabilities of migrants.

During the first nine months of 2016, migration initiative directly reached 2,797 Burmese migrants, including 1,971 females and 826 males. In addition, more than 29,000 migrants were reached indirectly through public campaigns, radio broadcasts and online media platforms.

This has been achieved through a twin-track approach which includes collaboration with the civil society within the [DEVCO-supported Rights of Migrants in Action](#) (ROMIA) project and continuous

¹ <http://th.iom.int/index.php/latest-news?start=2>

advocacy with the Thai Red Cross Society with a view to increase their footprint in the migration file by expanding the scope and reach of traditional Red Cross interventions.

Thai Red Cross attends to migrant's main asset - health

In 2016 Thai Red Cross successfully completed the first series of [First Aid education](#) for migrant and Thai domestic workers, covering about 70 Burmese and 30 Thai workers.



The traditional First Aid training module has been specially adapted to the specific needs of migrant workers who are mainly employed as domestic helpers, nannies and caregivers. The migrant-sensitive module has been translated into Burmese language and includes life-saving techniques for handling minor medical emergencies and performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for children and adults.

The inaugural First Aid training in September formed part of the IOM Thailand project on [building the skills and capacities](#) of low skilled migrant workers from Myanmar. Two more subsequent trainings in October and November came as an add-on activity to the ROMIA project following the request of migrant workers.

“Before the training I only knew how to apply a band-aid, but thanks to the Red Cross I have learned how to help the family I work for as well as my friends and myself”, says Zarni, one of the 120 000 army of migrant domestic workers in Thailand. Photo: Elena Nyanenkova/IFRC

In addition to the obvious benefits the First Aid training brings to the Burmese migrants while in Thailand, these skills and knowledge will travel with them back home to rural remote areas that have limited access to emergency health services and where today's migrants might be the only community members trained to provide first aid.

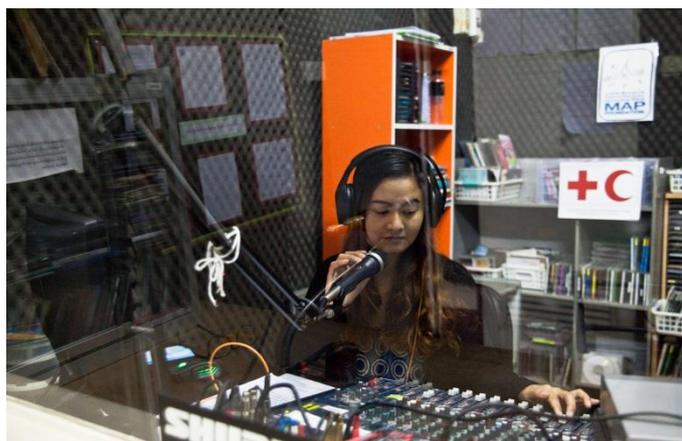
Psychosocial health of migrants is another stream of work that has been initiated this year by Thai Red Cross and IFRC. Pre-departure traumatic experiences compounded by harsh working and living conditions in Thailand can put serious risks on migrants' mental and emotional well-being. At the same time, however, this vulnerability is often overlooked by service providers and migrants alike due to the low awareness and understanding of the issue as well as its linkages with successful integration into host society or reintegration back home.

In an effort to address this gap, the Thai Red Cross psychosocial (PSS) training in November included, for the first time ever, representatives of three civil society organizations that provide frontline services to migrants in Thailand. The training, organized by Thai Red Cross in collaboration with IFRC, aimed to build knowledge and skills of practitioners and extend the service of the National Society in providing psychosocial support. To read more please click [here](#).

Addressing health vulnerabilities of migrant populations will remain an important vector of work for IFRC and National Societies in the Mekong cluster in 2017. Planned activities will include, but not limited to, continuation of PSS and First Aid education for migrants, roll out of WatSan and hygiene promotion as well as cross-border cooperation around health emergencies.

Advancing migrants' rights through cooperation with civil society

Through partnership with DEVCO, IFRC Bangkok in cooperation with four civil society organizations implements a number of interventions aimed at equipping migrant communities with the tools and knowledge to promote their empowerment, equal participation and integration into host society. Furthermore, engagement of Thai Red Cross in the project, especially with regard to addressing health vulnerabilities of migrants, has added a great value to the DEVCO-supported initiative.



With support from IFRC, MAP Foundation and TLSDF run call-in radio shows for Shan migrants. Since March 2016, more than 230 people called in for advice and assistance related to rights to rest days and leave, unpaid wages and employment contracts, health checks as well as travel restrictions and road accidents. Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC.

Bangkok-based [Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion](#) (FLEP) works with female migrant domestic workers (MDW) to equip them with knowledge on reproductive and occupational health and safety, enhance access to public healthcare services and redress mechanisms. A team of peer educators or “Hello Volunteers” has been trained to provide counselling, First Aid as well as facilitate referrals of serious cases to the Crisis Response Team run by FLEP. Bilingual mobile application is now under development and once launched will serve as a tool for information dissemination and direct response mechanism to MDW’s grievances and complaints.

“Outreach aims to provide migrants with information on migrants’ rights, labor rights and updates on migration policies through interactive activities in their own language. The time of outreach sessions coincided with the Thai government adopting a new Pink Card policy. Workers were very keen to learn about it because it will have a direct impact on their working and living conditions. Based on feedback, it was found that workers were able to use this information and to save money by using this knowledge, because they knew how to proceed with extending the new work permits and did not need to rely on expensive brokers who charge inflated cost”. Brahm Press, MAP Foundation

In northern Thailand, Shan migrant workers benefit from regular outreach activities that aim to discuss and share information on labour rights. The [MAP Foundation](#) project also organizes capacity building trainings for migrant workers in the form of “workers’ exchange” that aim to encourage workers to collaborate with each other, exchange ideas and experiences about workers’ mobilization and negotiations. To utilize numerous channels of communication and to break the isolation of domestic workers MAP Foundation broadcasts weekly radio shows for Shan migrants. The topics cover a wide

array of issues, ranging from domestic workers’ rights and safety in the workplace to prevention of mosquito borne diseases and techniques for first aid psychosocial support. The latter became possible thanks to the Thai Red Cross training and IEC materials developed by the National

Society.

The distinct feature of [the Life Skills Development Foundation](#) (TLSDF) project is that it creates space for full migrants' ownership of project activities. With support from IFRC, the Life Skills Development Foundation established five resource centers. Every day these centers open their doors to empower migrants through training in Thai, English and Shan languages, workshops to build self-esteem and motivation, leadership, organizational, computer and planning skills. Similarly to MAP Foundation, and in keeping with new best practices of community engagement, the TLSDF runs a call-in radio program in Shan language. To read more about our work in Chiang Mai please click [here](#).

"Migrant leaders with proper skills and knowledge can help Shan communities understand their rights, entitlements and support them in difficult situations. They are the best resources for developing services for migrants because being part of the community gives them the best knowledge about real needs and concerns of migrants. Originally this project was developed for migrants. But today it has evolved into the project owned and run by the migrants"
Kreangkrai Chaimuangdee, executive director of the Life Skills Development Foundation.

The project of the [Foundation for Education and Development's project](#) promotes and protect the rights of Burmese migrant domestic workers and victims of human trafficking in Phuket. A special focus is placed on promoting access to services for Burmese workers and raising awareness about migrant's vulnerabilities and rights by organizing regular public forums, information sessions for recruitment agencies, local governments and mass media.

In June all partner civil society organizations were supported to organize advocacy events marking International Domestic Workers Day. These events were an opportunity to emphasize the importance of addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants based on their need and in accordance with the principles of impartiality and neutrality as well as to continue advocating for better protection of migrants and promoting their inclusion in mainstream society. To read more about events in Thailand click [here](#).

In July IFRC Bangkok convened the first national roundtable for partner implementing civils society organizations. The objectives of this roundtable meeting were to evaluate progress, discuss challenges, agree on capacity building plan and promote cooperation between the civil society, the Red Cross and other stakeholders. To access the meeting report, presentations and photos please visit [online library](#) of IFRC CCST Bangkok.

As a follow up action to the findings of the CSOs' capacity assessment, in October IFRC Bangkok organized a two-day capacity building training for partner implementing CSOs. The training aimed to enhance quality of financial planning, monitoring and reporting of IFRC-supported projects as well as to enhance compliance with IFRC rules and procedures. Delivered by the CCST personnel, the training module included theoretical sessions and practical exercises covering a range of issues such as human resources, project visibility, financial management, procurement and logistics. Presentations and background materials are available at the [online library](#) of IFRC Bangkok.

Preparations are now underway for the regional consultation of the Rights of Migrants in Action project. Planned for February 2017, the two-day event will gather partner implementing CSOs and National Societies from Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand to share experiences and lessons learned.

Knowledge Management and Communication

CCST Bangkok supported content generation for the global collection of [Smart practices](#) on enhancing the resilience of migrants. IFRC global depository of best practices features Thai Red Cross mobile dental clinics that have been providing a decade-long services for Burmese migrants.

To raise the visibility of ROMIA project achievements and to celebrate Red Cross work with vulnerable and marginalized groups, CCST Bangkok produced a series of publications, including the following:

- [Thai Red Cross equips Burmese migrant workers with life-saving techniques](#)
- [Red Cross Red Crescent and civil society empower migrants to become leaders in their communities](#)
- [Healing minds: Thai Red Cross conducts psychosocial support training for staff, volunteers and community practitioners](#)
- [Thai Red Cross Society extends support to domestic migrant workers](#)
- [International Domestic Workers Day throws a spotlight on an invisible force behind closed doors](#)
- [Partners call for greater collaboration to tackle vulnerabilities of migrant workers at the National Roundtable for implementing partners](#)
- Contributions to the Rights of Migrants in Action newsletter: [Issue 3](#), [Issue 4](#) and [Issue 5](#)

In addition, a dedicated web page has been created on IFRC [regional resilience library](#) to boost knowledge sharing and dissemination of migration related updates and best practices.

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How we work

Strategy 2020 voices the collective determination of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to move forward in tackling the major challenges that confront humanity in the next decade. Informed by the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse communities with whom we work, as well as the basic rights and freedoms to which all are entitled, this strategy seeks to benefit all who look to Red Cross Red Crescent to help to build a more humane, dignified, and peaceful world.

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Saving lives, changing minds.



Over the next ten years, the collective focus of the IFRC will be on achieving the following strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises
2. Enable healthy and safe living
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace