



International
Labour
Organization

► Lessons learned:

Building migrant women's groups
and networks



Supported by

Australian
Aid 

Canada 

Lessons Learned:

Building migrant women's groups and networks

This publication was written by Jacqueline Pollock, with edits and reviews by Rebecca Napier-Moore, Marja Paavilainen, Anna Engblom, Andreas Schmidt, Wai Hnin Po, Chonticha Tangworamongkon, Veth Vorn, Chanitda Wiwatchanon and Nilim Baruah from the ILO. Inputs or reviews were given by the migrant women's groups and CSOs detailed in the paper. The publication was copyedited by Ian Barnes and designed by Sarin Tugsinavisuitti.

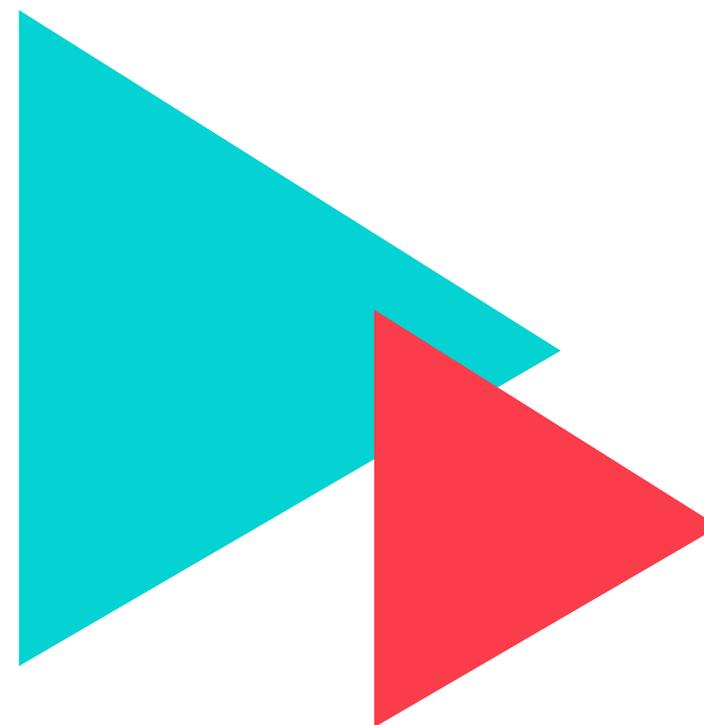
This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Canadian Government through Global Affairs Canada. The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of either the Australian or Canadian Government.

Photos: © ILO unless indicated

Cover photo: © Three Good Spoons

▶ Contents

Introduction	1	Lesson learned 9: Monitoring the impacts of migrant women's groups is complex.	21
Lesson learned 1: The journey of women becoming empowered requires an ongoing multifaceted approach.	5	Lesson learned 10: Investing in deep impacts is worthwhile in the long-term.	22
Lesson learned 2: Joining a women's group must be relevant and beneficial for migrants.	6	Conclusion	24
Lesson learned 3: Migrant women need to be trained and supported to organize and run the groups.	8	Annex I: Migrant women's groups contact information	25
Lesson learned 4: Membership of migrant women's groups is fluid, and activities need to be adjusted to this reality.	10	Annex II: ILO Migration Tips	26
Lesson learned 5: Irregular migration is a sensitive topic but needs to be addressed.	12		
Lesson learned 6: Encouraging critical thinking can expand the impact of women migrant groups.	14		
Lesson learned 7: Women are not a homogeneous group; ways need to be found to address the differences and ensure everyone has a voice.	16		
Lesson learned 8: Networking requires a different set of skills to group building.	19		



► Introduction

The ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme (2015–27) recognizes that gender inequalities and discrimination limit the opportunities for women to benefit from migration, restricts women from reaching their full potential and increases the risk of exploitation. TRIANGLE embraces a twin track approach to promoting gender equality; the first track aims to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all activities, research, budgets and policy recommendations and the second supports projects and activities dedicated to increasing women's empowerment.

In 2020, TRIANGLE published *For women, by women: Guidance and activities for building women migrant workers' networks* to be used by local organizations supporting the formation of migrant women's groups and networks which are women-led, women-owned and women-driven in their structure, goals and delivery. Coming together as women, each member gains access to new ideas, support, role models and friendships and as a group build resilience and social solidarity among themselves and their communities. Coming together as migrants, the groups and networks can develop common understanding of the underlying causes of the exploitation and discrimination women face during migration, and can collectively develop strategies to tackle the causes and their effects to maximize the benefits of migration.¹

In 2022, TRIANGLE partnered with civil society organizations (CSOs) through grants to build migrant women's groups and networks in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Each of the CSOs has extensive experience of working with national or migrant women, and being local to their communities, they were able to create a safe environment for women migrant workers to share their experiences. The International Labour Organization (ILO) partnered with Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) and the Phnom Srey Organization for Development (PSOD) in Cambodia, the Mawk Kon Local Development Organization and Three Good Spoons in Myanmar and the MAP Foundation and HomeNet in Thailand.

The objectives of the project were to build or expand migrant women's groups to discuss, learn, share and analyze their experiences as migrant women; and to contribute their viewpoint into local and national conversations on decent work, migration policies and equality. Through building or strengthening cross-border networks, women migrant workers can develop stronger support systems and join regional advocacy for migrant women's rights. Box 1 illustrates how the project differentiates between groups and networks.



1 For more information on formation of women's groups, see: Eva Majurin, *Business Groups Formation: Empowering Women and Men in Developing Communities* (ILO, 2008); Susanne Bauer, Gerry Finnegan and Nelen Haspels, *Get Ahead for Women in Enterprise Training Package and Resource Kit* (ILO, 2004); ILO and UN Women, *Organizing Women Migrant Workers: Manual for Trade Unionists in ASEAN*, 2021; Annemijn E.C. Sondaal et al., "Sustainability of Community-based Women's Groups: Reflections from a Participatory Intervention for Newborn and Maternal Health in Nepal", *Community Development Journal* 54, No. 4 (2019), 731–749. Paul Anand et al., "Can Women's Self-help Groups Contribute to Sustainable Development? Evidence of Capability Changes from Northern India", *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 21, No. 2 (2020), 137–160.

► Box 1: Defining groups and networks.

A migrant women's group is a group of women who meet or are in contact regularly to share, learn and discuss a variety of issues relevant to their lives. The group may also provide counselling, support each other and organize advocacy campaigns. In countries of origin, the group members may include returned migrant women, women planning to migrate or female relatives of women migrants. In countries of destination, the members are primarily migrant women, regardless of their work sector or immigration status.

A migrant women's network refers to the linking of migrant women's groups within the country and across borders. By linking migrant women's groups, a network provides women with greater support systems, current information on migration and a stronger collective voice with which to advocate for women's rights, specifically migrant women's rights. Networking can be loose, where groups can contact each other when needed, or it can be more formalized, with the groups organizing joint meetings to strategize and carry out joint advocacy campaigns. Networking may also go beyond the groups or countries involved in this project. Patterns of migration often change in different seasons or over several years, so women migrating to new countries need support group contacts to get up to date relevant information.

During 2022, ILO's CSO partners were active in building a number of migrant women's groups. The project also organized two online regional meetings, including specific sessions for migrant women group members to share and discuss their different experiences. The MAP Foundation self-organized a study tour in November 2022 to Thailand for the Myanmar partners.

By documenting lessons learned, migrant women's groups and networks can reflect on their progress and adapt future activities. These lessons learned will also be of use to other organizations and donors looking to support migrant women in the future.

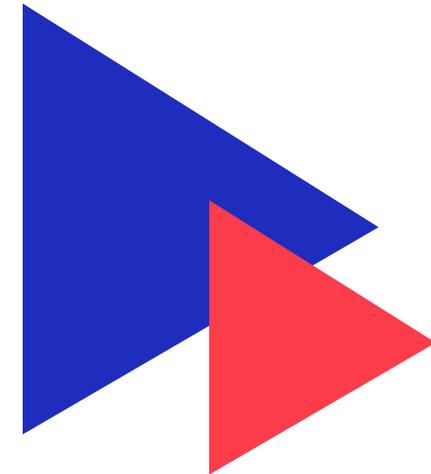
Context and partners

To contextualize the lessons learned, a brief situational analysis of women's migration from Cambodia and Myanmar to Thailand is presented below, as well as an introduction to the participating CSOs. See Figure 1 for a map of locations, and Annex I for the CSOs' contact information.

The main migration corridors in the Greater Mekong sub-region are from Myanmar to Thailand and from Cambodia to Thailand. According to the Thai Department of Employment, in August 2022 there were 755,986 Myanmar women and 188,986 Cambodian women registered to work in Thailand. Women migrants made up about 44 per cent of all migrants in Thailand. Migrant women work in all manual and service sectors open to migrant workers, but are predominantly found in the manufacturing, domestic work, agriculture and service sectors. It must be noted that these figures only represent migrant women who have entered the country through the available formal channels or who have formalized their irregular status by registering for a work permit within Thailand.¹ With international borders closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic between 2019 and 2021, some migrants faced difficulties returning home when their visa documents had expired. During the pandemic, the

Thai Cabinet issued a series of resolutions allowing for the extension of migrants' visas and work permits. There are also an unknown but significant number of migrant women who have dropped out of the registration processes or have never registered and work without any documents. Despite the borders being heavily patrolled, migrants continue to attempt to cross into Thailand in search of employment and livelihoods; and more recently migrants from Myanmar are also hoping for refuge and safety.

In addition to Thailand, there are migration corridors from Cambodia and Myanmar to Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. Cambodian women also migrate to the Republic of Korea, and Myanmar women often migrate to China and increasingly to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



¹ Memorandums of Understanding between Thailand and Myanmar (2003, updated 2016), and Thailand and Cambodia (2003, updated 2015) provide a legal framework for regular migration. Section 59 of the Thai Royal Ordinance Concerning the Management of Employment of Foreign Workers B.E. 2560 (2017) regulates work permits for migrants entering through the MOU process, while Section 64 provides for temporary work permits for border and seasonal migrant workers.



Cambodia

The Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) organization has a wealth of experience in tackling gender inequality and using community outreach, capacity development, advocacy and networking to increase women's participation to support greater empowerment. The focus on working with migrant women was new to GADC. During the project, GADC worked in Prey Veng to establish two migrant women's groups with a total of 66 members, one group of returned migrants (33) and one of aspiring migrants (33) and during 2022, they held seven meetings with each group. GADC works closely with local authorities to gain their trust and endorsement, while also raising their awareness to women's concerns during migration.

The Phnom Srey Organization for Development (PSOD) is based in Kampong Cham and works with local communities and authorities to increase awareness and representation in development issues. PSOD has established three groups with a total of 43 members and provides information on regular migration, while also discussing gender equality with the groups. TRIANGLE in ASEAN also supports the PSOD Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) in Phnom Srey, where workers can find current information on migration procedures, recruitment agencies and countries of destination. Returned migrants and families of migrants can also access the MRC for advice.

Myanmar

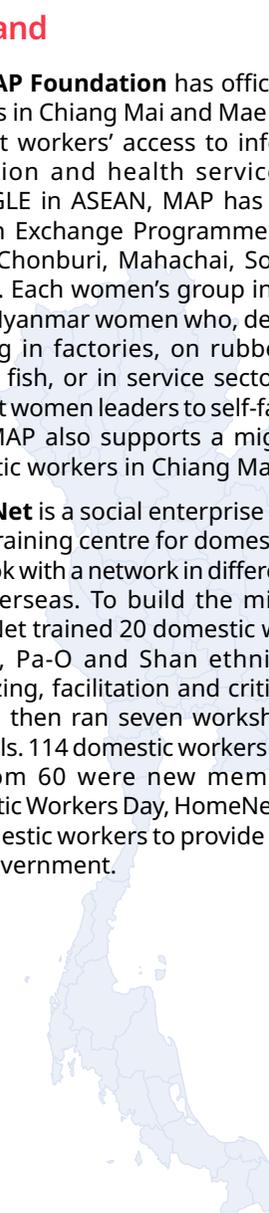
Mawk Kon Local Development Organization established an MRC in Keng Tun, Eastern Shan State, Myanmar in 2015 and has organized six migrant women's groups with 15 members per group in Akka, Lahu, Wa and Shan villages around Keng Tung. Approximately 40 per cent of the women's group members are returned migrant workers from the Mong La border area in China and Mae Sai in Thailand, where they worked in paddy fields, sugar cane plantations, or as fruit and tea leaf pickers. Ten per cent of the women in the groups are currently preparing to migrate, and 50 per cent are relatives of migrant women. Mawk Kon has helped the groups facilitate sessions on a range of issues, including gender equality, safe migration, financial literacy as well as livelihood skills trainings such as business marketing and production of food and cosmetic goods.

Three Good Spoons (TGS) is a training social enterprise for domestic workers based in Yangon. 146 domestic workers have joined the migrant women's group activities facilitated by TGS. These have included five sharing sessions focusing on migration experiences and seven online skills and information trainings. Women discussed the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No.189), digital literacy, Myanmar's draft Domestic Workers Bill (2020), occupational safety and health (OSH), labour rights, financial literacy, personal and kitchen hygiene, effective communication and self-management. TGS has also developed online groups for domestic workers and employers to share information and to problem solve together. Many of the women attending the meetings have moved to Yangon from conflict areas to find work. Trainers and facilitators include graduates of previous TGS trainings as well as invited experts on technical issues.

Thailand

The MAP Foundation has offices and community radio stations in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot to support Myanmar migrant workers' access to information, labour rights, education and health services. With support from TRIANGLE in ASEAN, MAP has expanded their existing Women Exchange Programme (see Box 2) to five new areas: Chonburi, Mahachai, Songkla, Kuraburi and Tai Muang. Each women's group in these areas is attended by 15 Myanmar women who, depending on the area, are working in factories, on rubber plantations, on piers sorting fish, or in service sector jobs. MAP has trained migrant women leaders to self-facilitate the group in their area. MAP also supports a migrant women's group of domestic workers in Chiang Mai.

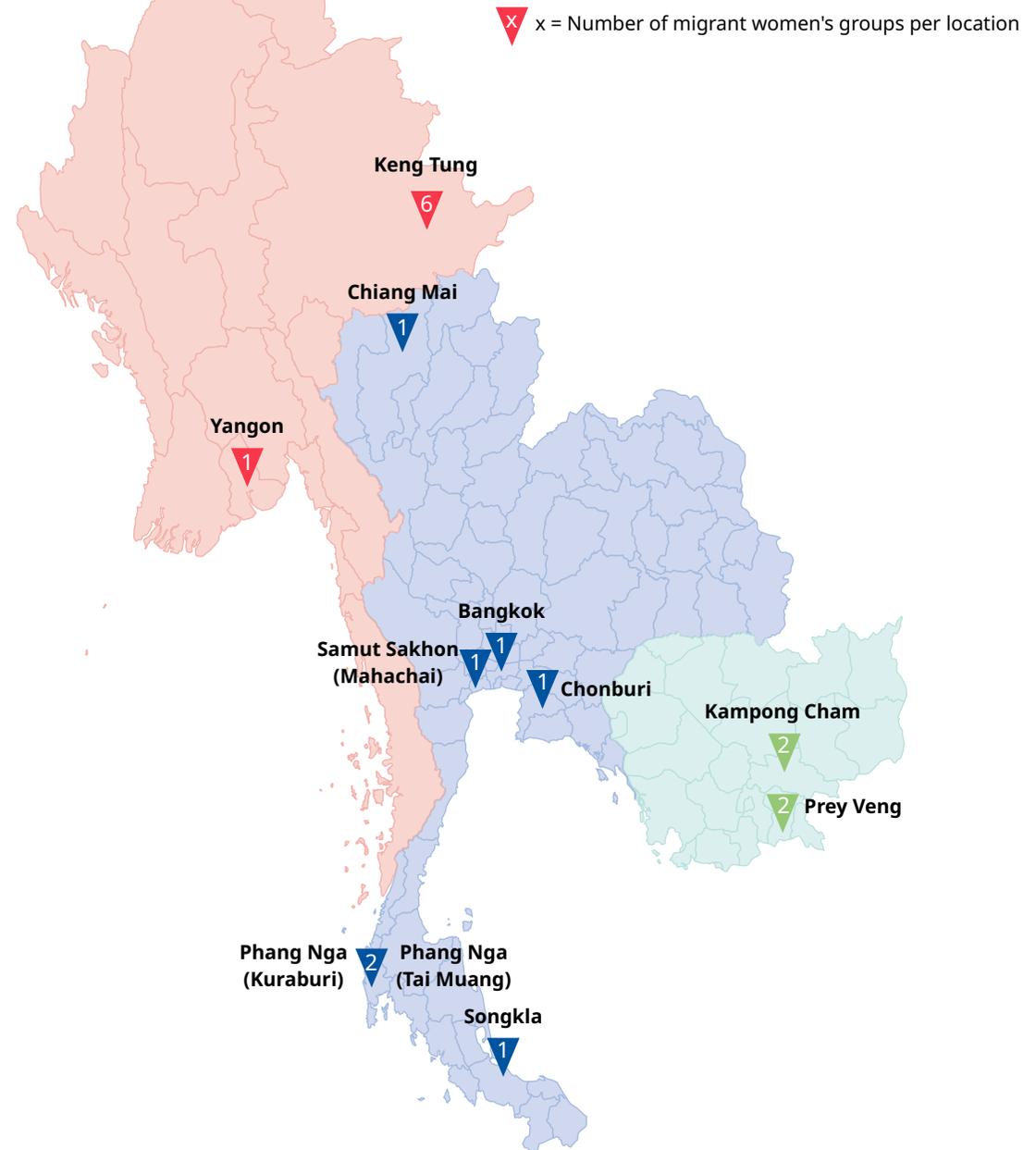
HomeNet is a social enterprise for home-based workers and a training centre for domestic workers. It is based in Bangkok with a network in different regions of the country and overseas. To build the migrant women's groups, HomeNet trained 20 domestic workers of Karen, Nepali, Kachin, Pa-O and Shan ethnicity from Myanmar on organizing, facilitation and critical thinking skills. These leaders then ran seven workshops on gender equality and skills. 114 domestic workers have joined the activities, of whom 60 were new members. On International Domestic Workers Day, HomeNet organized an event with 16 domestic workers to provide recommendations to the Thai government.



Lessons learned: Building migrant women's groups and networks

These lessons learned provide valuable reflection and knowledge for the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme as well as for CSOs working with migrant women in the region and beyond. Each lesson learned covers how the issue was identified and suggests activities and recommendations for future work. The ten lessons cover practical issues including the training of facilitators, the formation and maintenance of groups and the building of networks, nationally and across borders. Other lessons learned address more complex issues that the migrant women's groups have encountered.

Figure 1 : Map of migrant women's groups in the project.



▶ Lesson learned 1: The journey of women becoming empowered requires an ongoing multifaceted approach.



▶ Since joining the group, I have attended the village meetings to learn how women lead there and to stand up for migrant women. I would never have dared before.

▶ Cambodian returnee

Description:

Empowerment is difficult to define and even harder to quantify. It describes a process, which includes an individual increasing her self-esteem, abilities and freedom to make her own choices, and to exercise her right to influence social change. There are however no specific routes to empowerment which work for all women. It is not a static state, and the discrimination and violence women face can result in disempowering even the most empowered women. Without empowerment as an integral goal, it can be lost in the concentration of activities which are more easily defined, monitored and reported on.

How the lesson was identified:

Each CSO partner and each group of migrant women has their own approach and understanding of empowerment. For some CSOs and groups, knowledge is seen as power and therefore giving and sharing knowledge was the main focus of their activities. For some, having the confidence and self-esteem to express challenges, needs and opinions by providing a safe space where women could openly share and experiment is the chosen route. For others, financial independence is a crucial element of empowerment, and activities included income generating skills.

All the approaches pursued by the groups contribute to empowerment; they are probably most effective when combined. Having knowledge is the first step to using knowledge, but women also need the skills to navigate the discrimination and repercussions that they may face when using this knowledge, as well as needing a level of financial independence to successfully assert their rights.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ Mawk Kon and HomeNet have combined the women's group discussions and sharing sessions with practical, marketable skills such as soap making as well as trainings on small business management. Thus, not only do the women have a safe space to discuss, but they also have the space and opportunity to learn some practical skills that they could use to generate income.
- ▶ Three Good Spoons combines online trainings on practical knowledge needed by domestic workers (nutrition, hygiene, childcare, etc.) with trainings on legal rights (relevant national labour laws, and the Domestic Worker Convention, 2011 (No. 189)), together with sharing sessions which provide space for domestic workers to learn from others' experiences. The organization has also provided cooking lessons and self-defense classes in person.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Carefully designed intervention strategies can help incorporate and combine all the approaches above.
- ▶ Information sessions can be developed which do not place one person as the holder of information, and as "giving" that information to others; rather they can be interactive and develop critical thinking.
- ▶ Every woman has talents and interests, but many have never had the opportunity to explore them. Providing a range of activities, including art, music, theatre, dance, sport etc. allows women to discover and develop their talents and be proud of themselves. Asking women which activities they are interested in is a good place to start.

▶ Lesson learned 2: Joining a women's group must be relevant and beneficial for migrants.

▶▶ Setting up and running the women's groups makes it easier to organize women in the community as well as increasing the acceptance by communities of the role women can play. Women who participate can identify their needs and also the resources that are available in the community to support women.

▶ Shan migrant group leader

Description:

Migrant women, for a variety of reasons, may be reluctant to join an organized group, however informal. In practical terms, women have multiple demands on their time, with paid and unpaid work. Using their precious free time to attend regular meetings can be seen as another demand on them. Any previous experiences of being tricked or cheated in the migration process may have taught them to be wary of offers from people or groups they do not know. At the same time, some women may worry about negative reactions from their husbands or employers or the community. Women need to know who is organizing the group and why, and they want to know how joining the group will actually benefit them.

How the lesson was identified:

MAP, Three Good Spoons, Mawk Kon and HomeNet had previous experience building migrant women's groups and the project enabled them to support new groups. In some areas, migrant women already involved in a group, reached out to new members to share their experience and to describe the benefits of being a member.

Where building migrant women's groups was a new activity for the organizations (GADC, PSOD) or where the organization was expanding to new geographical areas (MAP, Mawk Kon) or expanding through digital means

(TGS), the CSOs reported that when they invited migrant women to join the group, most women asked why they should join and what they would get out of it. They wanted to make sure it was worth their time.

The organizations faced firsthand some of the issues that make migrant women wary of joining groups. In Thailand, groups meeting for the first time have faced interference from employers and local authorities. In countries of origin, returning migrants have been questioned about their affiliations and activities while abroad. Some of this may be a backlash against women and workers trying to change pre-existing power dynamics.

Migrant women have reported facing stigma in a range of situations. Migrant women who return home without money or earlier than expected, can often be stigmatized as having failed or causing further hardships to their families, especially if they return before the debts are paid. Migrant women who return home with money and belongings can be the subject of rumours speculating

how they made the money. Migrant women who return home with greater confidence and independence can become alienated, and seen as women who have lost their culture and taken on foreign ways. For these reasons, migrant women may not want to join a group which publicly identifies them as returned migrants.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ Three Good Spoons and HomeNet – both domestic workers' organizations – have used the snowball technique where domestic workers already involved in the organization make contact via message or phone with domestic workers they or their friends already know. They spend time introducing the organization, their activities and what they have gained from being part of the domestic workers groups and how it has benefited them.
- ▶ In Cambodia, the CSOs requested assistance from local authorities to identify returned migrants. The presence of the local authorities or the knowledge that they have endorsed the organization has helped to allay women's concerns. This technique can only be used in countries where there is trust and respect for local authorities.
- ▶ MAP reaches migrant women in different geographical areas and different work sectors through the network of migrant women's groups they already support. Women who have attended the regular meetings in

▶▶ My neighbours told me to not join the group. They said those activities were all right for single women, but not for married women who have duties at home.

▶ Domestic worker from Myanmar working in Thailand

other places share their experience with the women being contacted; in particular the stories of the annual five-day Women Exchange Get-together to generate interest (Box 2).

- ▶ Each group emphasizes the practical benefits of joining (knowledge of laws, policies, greater access to social services, practical skills, income generating activities) while also letting women know that the group is a safe space, a support group, somewhere to have fun and make friends.
- ▶ All groups have adjusted their meeting times to suit the participants, often holding meetings on a Sunday or in the evenings when women are not working.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Preparation for setting up migrant women’s groups can start with outreach to understand what migrant women consider beneficial to them. Activities can then be developed to respond accordingly. There will most probably be some requests which are outside of the scope of the project and these need to be acknowledged, noted and where possible acted upon. This may mean connecting with other organizations who can offer these services or advocating for such services.
- ▶ Women’s concerns should always be acknowledged and where possible addressed. Potential risks should not be ignored but should be assessed and steps put into place to mitigate those risks for the women attending and for the CSO.
- ▶ In practical terms, CSOs need to arrange meetings according to the women's schedules and needs. This requires being flexible with days and times and the length of sessions. It might require arranging childcare facilities. If there is no funding or support for arranging childcare, alternatives may include asking women from the group or organization to rotate in looking after the children during the session and in the longer-term advocating to the households to take care of the children while the women have their meeting.

▶ Box 2: Women Exchange: Concept and model

In 1999, migrant women from Myanmar asked the MAP Foundation to organize a space where women of different ethnicities, working in different sectors, could meet each other in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The aim was to break down barriers and create solidarity and support systems. The women met once a month on Sundays, shared their various circumstances and problems, collectively analyzed and strategized, as well as shared meals and had fun together. They called it Women Exchange. When some of the women in the group moved to different geographical regions of Thailand, they set up Women Exchanges in their new location. A few principles were agreed upon for all Women Exchanges to follow, for example, they were to be women-only groups; they would ensure everyone could participate and share; and where possible, each meeting would be facilitated by different members of the group. In total, Women Exchanges have been held in over 30 locations in Thailand and are currently active in 17. Since 2000, MAP has invited women representatives from each of the Women Exchanges to an annual five-day Women Exchange Get-together in Chiang Mai. The Get-together includes a plenary session with expert speakers, break out workshops on topical issues and fun activities at the end of the day, which have included aerobics, yoga, belly dancing, fruit carving, art, self-defense and theatre. On International Women’s Day, the migrant women at the Get-together celebrate with their Thai sisters at a public street event, which includes a march for women’s rights, music, dance and Thai and migrant feminist speakers. For many of the migrant women, the Get-together is the highlight of their year, if not the highlight of their migration experience.

Women Exchange is not a project and is not a product owned by MAP. It is a concept and a model. Other organizations have reproduced Women Exchange in other areas, most notably the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) in Shan State and on the border, individual women who moved to third countries for asylum have also reported setting up similar exchanges there.

▶ **Women exchange is a space specifically for women. Making trainings for only women gives us solidarity with other women, and we feel more empowered.**

▶ Migrant worker from Myanmar working in Thailand



▶ Lesson learned 3: Migrant women need to be trained and supported to organize and run the groups.



▶ With the knowledge I got from the course and further training on facilitation skills from Three Good Spoons, I can now lead the trainings with the new members. I am proud to be able to do this and to help women prepare to migrate safely for domestic work.

▶ Domestic worker group leader in Myanmar

Description:

While the role of the facilitator of women's groups is to create an environment where women can breathe, speak, share, exchange, experiment, develop self-esteem and self-confidence; each group may develop its own style of leadership. This is particularly important where women have not had the chance to lead before and given such space the group may re-define leadership; it is also particularly relevant at a time when the youth are increasingly choosing leaderless styles of mobilization.

It must be noted, that for newly formed groups or due to security concerns, the presence of organizational staff may still be required. However, a plan should be made to hand-over to members of the group in the future.

How the lesson was identified:

Women's groups that depend on the CSOs to facilitate sessions saw limitations on the number of groups formed and the location in which the groups convene, especially when groups are located in remote areas. However, when members of each group were trained and supported to self-run the sessions, groups could multiply and meet in diverse locations. This model also provides more women with skills in organizing, facilitating, note-taking, reporting, and budgeting. With these skills, women who move away may organically start up informal groups in the areas where they migrate.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ MAP brought the group leaders from five different areas together to attend a Training of Trainers (ToT) seminar. The training included both practical (budgeting, collecting necessary documents for reporting purposes, narrative and financial reporting) as well as theoretical (understanding different types of groups and leadership, gender equality, women's empowerment) components, and examples of interactive sessions (mapping of communities, warm up activities etc.).
- ▶ HomeNet has provided Training of Trainers seminars both to their existing networks and to new members without previous experience of being facilitators. To accommodate the needs of both groups, the ToT focusses on facilitation and critical thinking skills. An experienced trainer is then matched with a new trainer to jointly organize the next workshops with domestic workers.
- ▶ Mawk Kon's diverse activities include sessions led by Mawk Kon staff and practical income generating skills led by former migrant workers or members of the newly formed groups after being trained by Mawk Kon.
- ▶ GADC has embedded a facilitator in the community of the migrant women's groups to work closely with the women and the local authorities, to build the capacity of the groups to lead themselves in the future.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Give everyone the opportunity to learn facilitation skills; at the end of each session, two women can volunteer to help organize and facilitate the following session. CSO staff or the trained facilitators can work with the volunteers prior to the meeting to encourage and where necessary provide practical advice on how to run the session. Where members are not yet ready to take on the facilitation of the whole session, they can be encouraged to lead a short sharing session at the beginning of the meeting.

▶ Box 3: Activity 1: The role of the facilitator**Prior to the activity:**

The facilitator prepares a ball and cards. Each card has a role of a facilitator (i.e. encourage, motivate, listen, participate, organize, discuss, share, exchange). Note: These cards will be used only at the end of the activity.

Activity:

Everyone stands in a circle and are told that they must name one role of a facilitator. A ball is thrown, and the person who catches it, says one role. Then she throws the ball to someone else who names another role and so on. Try to avoid repetition as much as possible. Listen carefully to the roles named. Discuss the roles that have been proposed. Are there roles that create the desired environment and build self-esteem and self-confidence? (i.e. encourage, motivate, listen, participate, organize, discuss, share, exchange) or are there roles that reflect a power differential? (i.e. help, teach, inform, lecture, give).

If most of the roles mentioned were those that reflect a power differential, pass around the pre-prepared cards (as above), with each person getting one card. Then ask the participants to pass the ball from one person to another and say: My role as a facilitator is to.... (say the word on their card). After this is finished, ask them how they feel about those roles? Are they comfortable? Is it a useful role? Let women answer voluntarily. Anyone who would like to speak can take a step forward in the circle. Then ask what the difference is between these roles and the initial roles. Make it clear that the other roles are not wrong, but they are a secondary role.



▶ Lesson learned 4: Membership of migrant women's groups is fluid, and activities need to be adjusted to this reality.

Description:

By definition migrant women are mobile. When migrant women return to their country of origin, most are returning to the same community they left. Unless the community has had some major changes, the likelihood is that there is still little work available and that they need to move again to find employment and support their livelihoods.

In countries of destination, migrant women may move jobs and/or locations according to the availability of work. In Thailand, many workers in border areas aspire to find jobs further into the country away from the border where the wages are generally higher. Seasonal workers, agricultural workers and construction workers, among others, move frequently, while shift workers may not be available at the same time for every meeting.

How the lesson was identified:

All partners in countries of origin reported that women had to leave the groups to find work in other places, which affected the continuity of the group. Some women admitted they wanted to move because they had felt alienated from their communities on their return. In a few cases, women decided - or the family made the decision - that they would stay to look after elderly parents and their children. These women were able to be consistent members of the group.

By contrast in Thailand, a destination country, working hours, shift work and family responsibilities were the main reasons why migrant women could not attend women's group meetings regularly.



▶ Some members of the group have gone abroad to work as domestic workers. But they have stayed connected with us through our group chat messaging and they follow the activities on our Facebook page.

▶ Domestic worker group leader in Myanmar

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ After discussions with GADC, PSOD, and Mawk Kon, it was decided that migrant women's groups could also include aspiring migrants and female relatives of migrant women. Aspiring migrants benefit from learning about the migration experiences of returned migrants and also from gaining more self-confidence. By joining the group, relatives of migrants abroad gain more understanding of the issues facing their loved ones, are better able to advise them on their journeys and may be able to influence the local community's attitude to returning migrants to reduce stigmatization. The family members can introduce their returnee relatives to the group.
- ▶ Three Good Spoons maintains contact via online messenger services with domestic workers who had been part of the group and then moved away for employment within the country or overseas.
- ▶ All groups recognized the difficulties of women joining regularly. To address this, they identified a core group who were able to attend most regularly to maintain the continuity of the group, while also being open to new membership at any time.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Initial discussions on developing migrant women's groups need to consider fluidity of the membership. Outlining core topics for trainings and activities also allows for greater flexibility in implementation.
- ▶ The design of trainings, sharing sessions and activities must recognize that some sessions may not be able to build upon each other and need to be stand-alone, while providing time for the women who attended previous sessions to share learnings from those.
- ▶ Where possible, women who are moving elsewhere for work can be encouraged to inform the group and be provided with contacts in the place of destination, including contacts for a migrant women's group in the destination place if they exist. Women can also be encouraged to start their own groups at their new destination. Similarly, migrant women returning home can be provided contacts of migrant women's groups in their areas by the groups operating in Thailand.



© Gender and Development for Cambodia

▶ Lesson learned 5: Irregular migration is a sensitive topic but needs to be addressed.

Before we only talked about the positive aspects of regular migration, but when we talked together, we found out that some women had migrated irregularly and had faced many problems, so now we discuss all the realities of migration.

▶ Cambodian migrant



Description:

Providing information and services for women who may migrate or have migrated irregularly can be sensitive and challenging. However, not providing information and services in these situations violates the rights of irregular migrants, ignores the reality of many migrant women and misses an important opportunity to reduce risks. Per the ILO Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the Global Contract for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, ILO supports efforts to increase the effectiveness of legal pathways, through which migrants have increased access to labour law and social protection coverage as well as access to justice. Yet, only around a quarter of Cambodia and Myanmar women migrants in the region are migrating or have migrated regularly.²

How the lesson was identified:

In countries of origin, providing information or talking about irregular migration is considered by some organizations to be promoting irregular migration, and hence many organizations would choose to only talk about regular migration. This resulted in women feeling uncomfortable to openly talk about irregular migration in the sessions, thereby missing an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences. In Thailand, organizations include all migrants in activities and services, where possible, regardless of immigration status. However, there are certain external restrictions the organizations face; for example, irregular migrants cannot travel and while irregular migrants have the right to report abuses and the right to redress, they may also be more vulnerable to retaliatory actions by the perpetrator and may be subject to deportation by immigration authorities.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ The sharing sessions about women's migration experiences, whether in countries of origin or destination, provide a safe space for migrants to talk about all types of migration in a non-judgmental environment. Being able to be open and truthful is critical for women's self-esteem and trust building in the group. The experiences shared also provide all participants with greater knowledge and awareness, which will help them to make informed decisions regarding migration and employment.



© HomeNet

² According to the Thai Department of Employment Ministry of Labour August, 2022 figures of currently documented migrants, 28 per cent of Cambodian women migrants and only 18 per cent of Myanmar women had entered Thailand through regular channels (MOU and seasonal workers). All other workers had regularized their status from within Thailand.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Workshops can be held with CSOs discussing the labour³ and human rights⁴ of irregular migrants as well as exploring the outcomes of regular and irregular migration.⁵
- ▶ Taking a “risk reduction” approach to discussions on irregular migration as is done in discussions on drug use, safe sex, abortions etc., will ensure that the women’s space is truly an open and safe space to discuss the reality of their situations, which can lead to a discussion on effective strategies to mitigate the risks.
- ▶ For countries of origin, the ILO’s Migration Tips (see Annex II) - a flyer which provides all prospective migrants with tips on how to prepare and be safe during migration - can be shared and used as a tool in workshops. While one of the tips specifically recommends legal migration, the other tips are relevant regardless of the way migrants move. The aim is to have open and honest conversations which can address and reduce the biggest risks.
- ▶ The responsibility of informing migrants of the migration policies, labour laws and social security lies firstly with the governments who develop the policies. Recruitment agencies and employers are responsible for ensuring migrants have decent work and access to social security. Where governments need CSO assistance to share information about migration policies, CSOs can ask for funding from governments.



© HomeNet

3 ILO, *International Labour Standards on Migrant Workers’ Rights*, 2007.

4 OHCHR, *Protecting the Rights of Migrants in Irregular Situations*, 2017.

5 ILO, *Risks and Rewards: Outcomes of Labour Migration in Southeast Asia*, 2017; MAP Foundation, *Regular Rights: Do Documents Improve Migrants Lives?*, 2012; MAP Foundation, *Regular Rights: Do Documents Improve Migrants Lives? Regular Rights Second Edition: A Study on the Impact of Regularization of Migrant Workers from Myanmar (Burma) in Thailand*, 2015.

▶ Lesson learned 6: Encouraging critical thinking can expand the impact of women migrant groups.



We have provided shelter to many migrants who had accidents in Thailand and needed rehabilitation. We hold workshops on the prevention of accidents. But we have never thought about how to advocate for the right of migrants with disabilities to migrate. We are going to look into this in more detail and talk to our friends from the Thai disability network for advice.

▶ Group leader from Myanmar working in Thailand

Description:

There are many pressing needs for migrant women, and it is easy to spend all the time available addressing these needs. Without analyzing the root causes and questioning of why migrant women consistently face the same exploitation and problems and why some women, such as women with disabilities, are excluded from migration opportunities, addressing the needs will be never-ending and will only alleviate the problems temporarily without providing a long-term solution. Allocating some time for thinking outside the box, to critically analyze the context, situation and policies, can lead to longer-term solutions which address root causes.

How the lesson was identified:

During the monthly country meetings with all the partner organizations, the issue of migrants with disabilities was raised and discussed. The immediate discussion focused on migrants who had become disabled at work or through other accidents, often traffic accidents and the services provided in the country of destination and on their return home. Through a process of critical thinking, the participants started to question why migrants with disabilities were not allowed to migrate.

At the 2nd regional meeting a discussion was held regarding the reasons why migration is usually a necessity, not a choice for women and why women still face exploitation in destination countries. By asking why, the women identified a series of root causes.

Both discussions engaged participants to imagine new possibilities and to think beyond their current activities.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ Through the discussion on disability and migration, the participants moved from an unquestioning acceptance of current migration policies and being satisfied with the services they currently provide, to questioning the discriminatory policy of excluding people with disabilities from migration opportunities.⁶ The groups wanted further information on international standards and national laws in relation to migration and persons with disabilities and on discrimination in the workplace. Women proposed seeking input from local networks of people with disabilities.

⁶ Services currently provided by the CSOs in Thailand for migrant victims of accidents which result in disabilities are: Facilitating access to medical care, rehabilitation and social security benefits, access to legal redress where appropriate, and assistance in safe passage home. CSOs also work on prevention by addressing occupational health and safety in the workplace. In countries of origin, CSOs assist in safe passage home, access to rehabilitation and any cross border legal or social security claims, and welcome returning migrant women with disabilities to join the migrant women's groups.

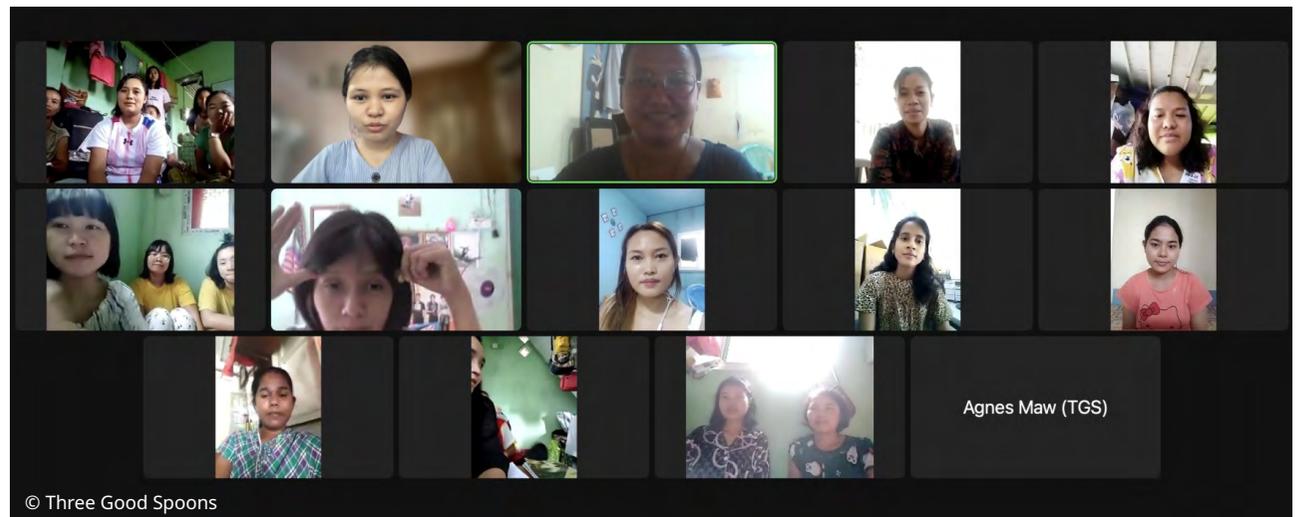


© Three Good Spoons

- ▶ At the 2nd regional meeting of the CSOs and migrant women's groups, the process of critically examining why migrant women cannot choose, but have to migrate for survival, led to a deeper analysis, resulting in identifying some of the root causes. For example, women raised poverty as a reason for migration and then discussed why women are poor. Some women said their families had sold their land to agri-businesses; some said they have been relocated by large development projects; others mentioned that changes in weather patterns had affected the growing of crops. Further discussion identified globalization, prioritization of big business over small landholders and climate change as the root causes.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ CSOs can identify the problems, which despite their interventions, are persistently recurring, and conduct critical thinking exercises, first among the CSO team and then with the migrant women's groups.
- ▶ In relation to migrants with disabilities, there are national networks on disability rights in all countries. The groups can reach out to these networks and invite them to present to the groups, as well as inviting UN agencies, including the ILO, the International Organization of Migration (IOM), and UN Women, to share their position on the migration of persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Having identified root causes through the critical thinking exercise, the CSOs can identify movements and alliances that address these issues, whether women's rights, climate change, globalization, fair trade, education for all. While most small CSOs may not have time to actively participate in the larger global movements, they may find that among their staff and among the migrant women, there are individuals who are passionate about one issue and are willing to follow the developments and report back to the group (a "champion" for a certain issue).



© Three Good Spoons

▶ Lesson learned 7: Women are not a homogeneous group; ways need to be found to address the differences and ensure everyone has a voice.

Description:

Migrant women are not a homogeneous group. While they come together under the commonalities of being women and having experiences of migration; the groups can include women of different ages, ethnicities, beliefs, languages, work experience, gender identities and sexual orientation, women with disabilities, or women living with HIV, etc. (see Figure 2). There may be hierarchal structures that give dominance to some sub-groups over others and result in some women feeling silenced or less enabled to share openly.

How the lesson was identified:

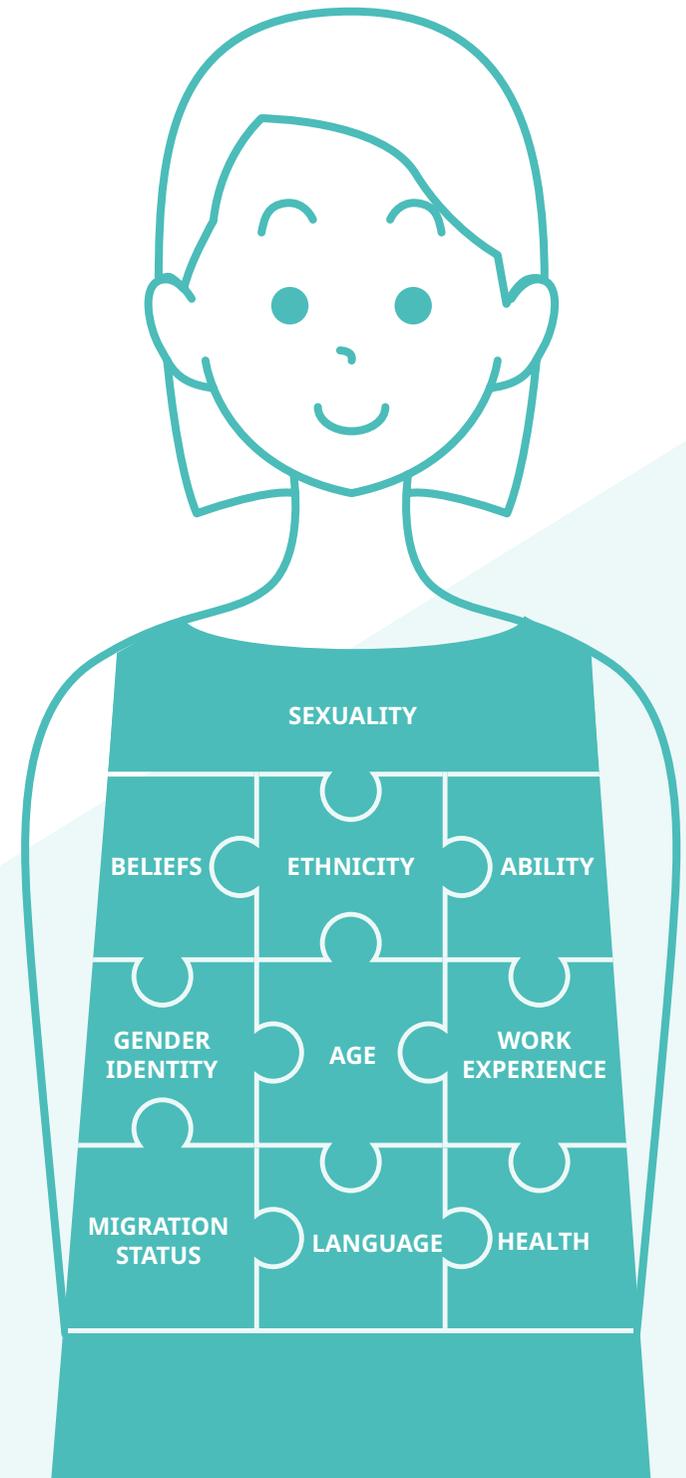
In Thailand, some women living with HIV shared that they faced issues, particularly in their health status and needed time to share amongst themselves. In Myanmar, women of different ethnicities, have different cultures, languages and experiences in relation to conflict, citizenship and land rights, and access to education. Thus, some women's groups have been formed according to ethnicity. Younger women shared that sometimes they do not feel comfortable sharing some experiences or discussing some issues with older women present.



▶ We think there should be more space for young women like ourselves because we have some specific issues, which sometimes we feel we cannot share openly with older women.

▶ Migrant from Myanmar working in Thailand

Figure 2: The intersecting identities of migrant women.





Good practices from the field:

- ▶ In Shan State, different ethnicities meet in separate migrant women's groups, which can address different cultural practices and languages and is a practical response at this time due to the different geographical locations and difficulties travelling. At the same time, the different groups have formed a committee and a fund to support their income generating activities and have exchanged products; thus, connecting groups and members across locations, languages and ethnicities.
- ▶ In addition to Women Exchange, MAP also organizes Youth Exchange, bringing young female and male migrants together to discuss issues of particular importance to the youth, as well as also organizing HI-Exchanges where migrants living with HIV can share views and discuss issues. Women members of these groups also join the Women Exchange Get-together.
- ▶ The regional online meetings have brought together current, former and potential migrant women from different countries of origin and with a variety of migration and work experiences to discuss their issues and experiences.
- ▶ Organizations have shared staff contact numbers with members of their groups, so individual members can contact them to raise any concerns or specific issues that they felt uncomfortable raising in the main group.
- ▶ Women's Exchange Get-together brings over one hundred migrant women together and includes women of different ethnicities, ages, gender identities, with different work experiences. Over five days the women gain a deeper understanding of how their identities impact their life, work and migration experience.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ In some sessions of the women's groups, smaller groups can be organized according to the differences (i.e. by age, marital status, ethnicity) to explore a common theme, for example sexual violence against women. When the groups report back, the experiences of different groups can raise awareness and create greater mutual understanding for everyone.
- ▶ All women can be encouraged to share the issues, if not the details, that they feel uncomfortable to share with the main group. If they are not comfortable to share, a suggestion box can be left in the room for women to write down the issues anonymously and share confidentially. The organization can use the feedback to devise strategies to address issues without revealing the author.
- ▶ Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is so prevalent that a majority migrant women have either experienced it personally⁷ or had close friends who have, and therefore the issue cuts across many sub-groups. Nevertheless, women who have experienced SGBV may need private, confidential spaces to share or be counselled. Any session on SGBV should allow for debriefing sessions, and private rooms with a counsellor available.
- ▶ All of the migrant women's groups have held discussions on gender equality. Later sessions can build on these workshops to address inequalities that may exist between the women themselves, particularly generational, race, religion and class.
- ▶ Role-playing or "speed dating" exercises can provide participants with the opportunity to feel and express how other women feel, by putting women in the shoes of women from different circumstances.

⁷ UN Women, *Research on Experiences of Violence Among Women Migrant Workers Migrating from Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia to Thailand* (forthcoming).

► Box 4: Activity 2: Bridging the differences between older and younger women

Speed dating has become a popular event in many countries to find a partner. The activity begins with a few minutes to chat with another participant before moving on to the next person. Through this process, they may find someone they like and would like to meet again.

Using this same technique in a workshop environment provides a lively activity for participants to find the person who has the information, service or advice they are looking for. The process also allows the group to experience first-hand how it feels to be asking for and receiving advice, according to their age, gender, ethnicity, etc.

For example, younger migrant women have expressed that there are some issues they cannot share with the older women or that they feel constrained in the presence of older women. This speed dating exercise gives older and younger women an opportunity to explore this further in a fun and non-confrontational way.

Steps for the speed dating exercise at a migrant women's group:

Divide into two groups by age. The younger women sit in one line (call it line A) and the older women sit in a line opposite them in line B. The facilitator tells line A, they are all 55 years old. Line B is told they are all 18 years old.

The facilitator tells the women: "Line B, you have a problem and you are looking for advice. You are going to ask all these 55-year-old women for advice. Line A, you are going to give advice as if you were a 55-year-old woman.

The group will have three minutes for each person in Line B to explain the problem to the person in Line A sitting opposite her and for the women in Line A to give advice.

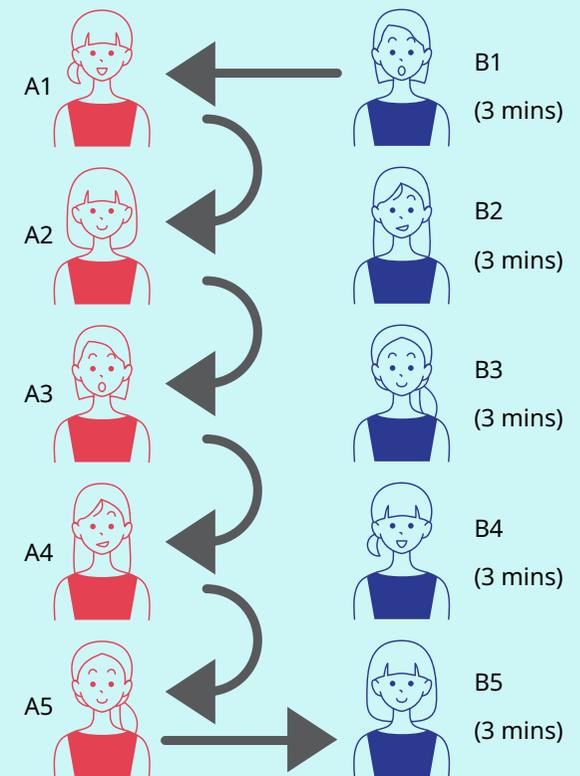
After three minutes there will be a bell and women in Line B stand up and move one seat to the right. Women in Line A do not move. Then Line B will explain the same problem again to the new women sitting opposite them and will receive advice. At the bell, Line B will move one more seat to the right; Line A will not move, and so on.

Do this for at least five rounds (i.e. five bells, 15 minutes) or if women are still enjoying it, you can carry on until the end of the line.

Then you can ask Line B how did they feel? Were they embarrassed to ask? Were they afraid to give details? Did they get any useful advice? If so, what was it? Depending on the group, you can choose a problem from the list below to give to Line B or you can use a problem which has been identified in the women's group as a barrier between young and older women.

- One of the foremen in the factory keeps standing too close and touching me.
- I get so mad when my dad does nothing in the house and my mum does everything. I just want to tell her to stop!
- The older generation doesn't understand us at all. They want everything to stay the same, we want it to change.
- My boyfriend wants to have sex with me.
- I don't like boys. I have more feelings for women, I think I might be gay.

Figure 3 : Speed dating activity example



▶ Lesson learned 8: Networking requires a different set of skills to group building.

Description:

Building and maintaining networks of women's groups is work which requires skill, commitment and lots of patience. While groups, once started can often grow organically, linking groups to work together is more complex, needing good relationships and trust, a strong sense of a leader who has the skills to accommodate the different needs and issues of multiple groups. The leader needs to be able to identify key common causes, facilitate strategy workshops and jointly develop a plan of action as well as monitoring the participation and progress.

To build strong networks, each group must believe that: a) their cause will benefit from networking; b) they have something to offer to the network; and c) that there is a common purpose and joint work to be done. For example, domestic workers' organizations around the world built networks to ensure domestic workers had some input into the development of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189); and subsequently to campaign for ratification of the Convention.

How the lesson was identified:

The partner organizations have all successfully built strong migrant women's groups, but the building of networks has been slower. This is partly due to the short time that the groups have been formed and the amount of time needed to build the groups themselves. Initial steps which may lead to stronger networking have however been taken and are mentioned in the good practices below.

▶ I was very inspired by the Empower Foundation's presentation on networking at the regional meeting. It made me realize how much sex workers and domestic workers have in common. We are both proud of our work and we are both stigmatized and not recognized by labour laws. I am going to visit Empower soon!

▶ Domestic worker from Myanmar working in Thailand



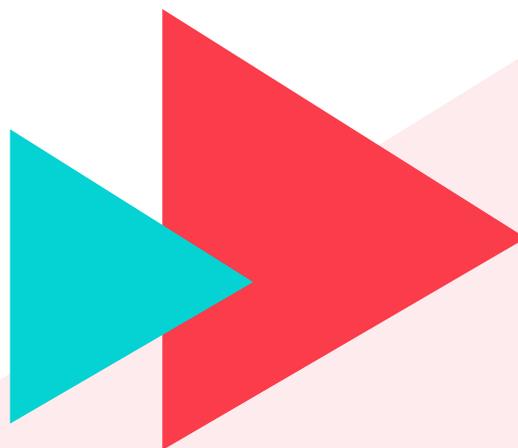
Good practices from the field:

- ▶ Within Myanmar, Mawk Kon and Three Good Spoons have linked up to better respond to the needs of domestic workers. Three Good Spoons has the expertise of working with domestic workers, and Mawk Kon has contact with returned domestic workers. Mawk Kon have participated in Three Good Spoons workshops to gain more understanding, and Three Good Spoons have welcomed returning domestic workers in Shan State to their online messaging group.
- ▶ Across borders, MAP and Mawk Kon share updates on the current situation of migration and share materials and information on recently changed migration policies in both Myanmar and Thailand.
- ▶ HomeNet is part of an international network of domestic workers' organizations (International Domestic Workers Federation, IDWF) and has the potential to link all domestic workers and their groups to the larger international network.
- ▶ Since starting the migrant women's group, in Cambodia, GADC, a women's rights CSO, has reached out to migration CSOs in Cambodia to get involved in migration advocacy and to be better informed on migration policies and debates.
- ▶ All partner groups developed joint advocacy messages for International Domestic Workers Day. These were tweeted in different languages with the same hashtags and shared on Facebook by all groups.
- ▶ At the regional meeting, participants shared multiple contacts relevant to the groups attending, including migrant CSOs in Thailand that work with Cambodian migrants and contacts of relevant organizations working in other countries of destination.

- ▶ The regional meeting also included a session where representatives from the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) and the Empower Foundation shared their networking experiences. As a global alliance, GAATW has partners around the world who come together to collectively determine and advocate strategies to best address trafficking in women. To inform the campaign work, GAATW also built networks with local women's groups such as the Women Workers Forum which has 20 local partners in Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Italy, France, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Empower is a sex workers organization based in Thailand focused on eliminating the stigma sex workers face and advocating for law reforms to decriminalize sex work. Empower networks with sex workers across Thailand and is a member of the regional and global sex workers movements, while also building alliances with other workers groups. By inviting other networks to present and share the migrant women's groups can provide inspiration, motivation and lessons from practical experience of networking.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Each group can identify causes which are important to them and share with the other groups. Causes which are common to the majority of groups can be adopted as the focus of the network, who then need to select a leader or leading group responsible for communications, organizing strategy meetings and monitoring progress. As well as facilitating communication between the groups, the leaders also need to be able to communicate with other stakeholders. The leaders need to be strategic thinkers, have good facilitation skills, patience and commitment, be open to criticism and be persistent.



▶ Lesson learned 9: Monitoring the impacts of migrant women's groups is complex.



© HomeNet

Description:

As mentioned in lesson learned 1, it is hard to measure women's empowerment. Furthermore, the various political, economic and social dimensions make it complex to assess. The impacts are multi-levelled, including impacts at the individual, community, national and regional levels. Counting migrant women's group membership numbers alone, does not capture how many women are actually reached. Furthermore, quantitative indicators alone cannot capture the impacts at these various levels. A more holistic picture can be shown through giving equal importance to case stories and outcome harvesting, to learn about the impacts on migrant women's lives and to their families, communities, and national policies.⁸

How the lesson was identified:

Each participating organization provides details on the number of women attending their meetings. However, this does not reflect the actual number of people reached. At the regional meeting of migrant women participants, nearly every woman reported that after the meetings she always shares the information with her friends, work colleagues and families. It is also possible that these people then share the information again and so on.

The number of women potentially affected is large when women bring new ideas to the communities and when policy changes result from the advocacy of the network, or when existing rights-enhancing policies are well implemented. However, the CSOs have expressed concern regarding how to monitor and report on these impacts.

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ As well as keeping records of the number of members of the migrant women's groups, the partner CSOs report on the traction of their social media posts, distribution of materials and digital group membership.
- ▶ The partner CSOs are trying to monitor and report on outcomes, whether they be in terms of empowerment, safer migration outcomes, responses to violence against women, policy developments or implementation.
- ▶ The partner CSOs record case studies to demonstrate the qualitative outcomes of the groups.
- ▶ The ILO delivers workshops and provides individual support to CSOs on how to effectively monitor and report outcomes and impacts.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ Qualitative indicators can be developed jointly between funding organizations like the ILO, CSOs and the migrant women's groups, in order to capture the most important impacts and the value of the groups.
- ▶ Indicators should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are compatible with changing situations and respond to any backlashes encountered by the groups.

⁸ For more information on outcome harvesting, see section 3.3 of ILO, *Monitoring and Evaluation Training Manual for Migrant Worker Resource Centres*, 2018.

▶ Lesson learned 10: Investing in deep impacts is worthwhile in the long-term.

Description:

Investing in women's groups has been proven to be an effective approach to empowering women and bringing transformational changes, at the individual, community and policy levels. Research has shown that building movements is the number one way to ensure women's rights are realized.⁹ The history of women's movements teaches us that such a transformation is not a smooth journey. Backlashes and increased resistance have always followed each step of women's liberation. Women require consistent, long-term and dedicated support to transform societies into just, fair and equal places for all. Only by investing long-term can long-term changes be achieved.

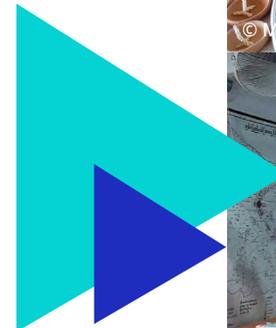
How the lesson was identified:

The migrant women's groups have already built new vibrant communities of women dedicated to improving women's migration. This is despite the short period of time that the migrant women's groups have been running, and despite having to hold more meetings online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political situation. The CSOs are concerned that the migrant women's groups are still at a stage where they need technical support from the CSOs to run regular sessions and will need more time to scale up and build wider networks. They see the development of internal leadership within each group, and across a network of the groups with broader networking as the key to long-term sustainability. Strong leaders may be able to find innovative ways to maintain and grow the groups in the future, while networking with a broader base will open the possibilities of collaborating with other women's or migrants' groups, of accessing other funding pathways and as a motivation for the migrant women's groups to increase their scope.

▶▶ We all need each other and support each other. We are tackling centuries old discrimination and exploitation of migrant women. We need to continue. We will continue and we hope you will continue with us.

▶ Group leader from Myanmar working in Thailand

9 Mala, Htun; Laurel, Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005", *American Political Science Review* 106, No. 3 (2013): 548-569.





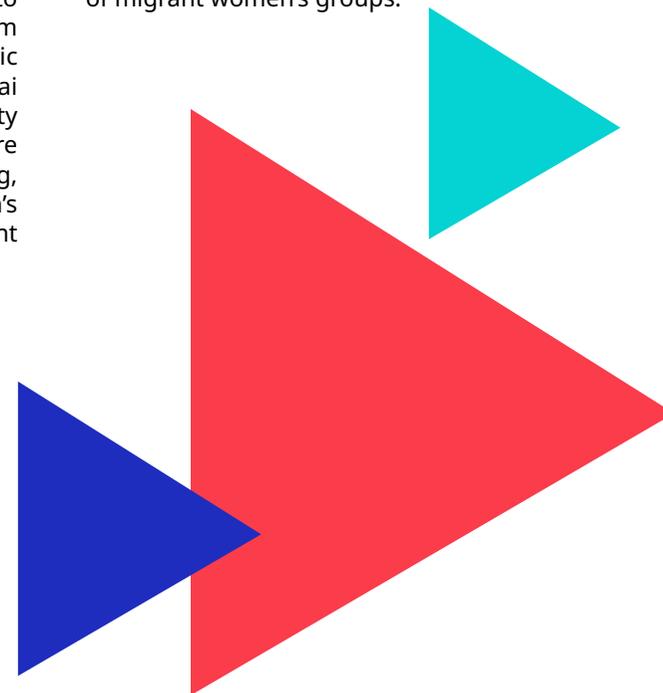
© HomeNet

Good practices from the field:

- ▶ The income-generating activities implemented by several of the groups are generating funds which are being used to continue or expand these activities.
- ▶ In some cases, such as supporting the return of a migrant with disabilities, the partner CSO in a country of destination and country of origin have coordinated and co-shared costs.
- ▶ The advocacy done by the migrant women's groups may contribute to policy change. In a few cases this year, migrant women leaders have been able to share and speak up in meetings about migration policy. For instance, women leaders in Cambodia shared their experiences and advocacy messages at a meeting to discuss the recommendations of the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, and in Thailand 45 domestic workers from a women's group met with the Thai Social Security Office to advocate for social security coverage of domestic workers.¹⁰ Migrant women are highly underrepresented in migration policy making, and empowering multiple leaders through women's groups is an impactful vehicle leading to more migrant participation in decision making.

Other possible responses:

- ▶ In areas where there is an MRC, the migrant women's groups can work closely with the centre to ensure the staff have the skills and capacity to include migrant women's groups in their core activities in the future.
- ▶ For the migrant women's groups to continue as long as there is a need, the funding organization and CSOs need to hold ongoing conversations about sustainability plans.
- ▶ Linking the groups to other ongoing, established activities and groups may provide future opportunities for funding, for inclusion in other projects and for other organizations to replicate the model and concept of migrant women's groups.



¹⁰ The event was posted on the MAP Foundation's social media pages and was broadcast via the online MAP radio station with over 3,000 listeners.

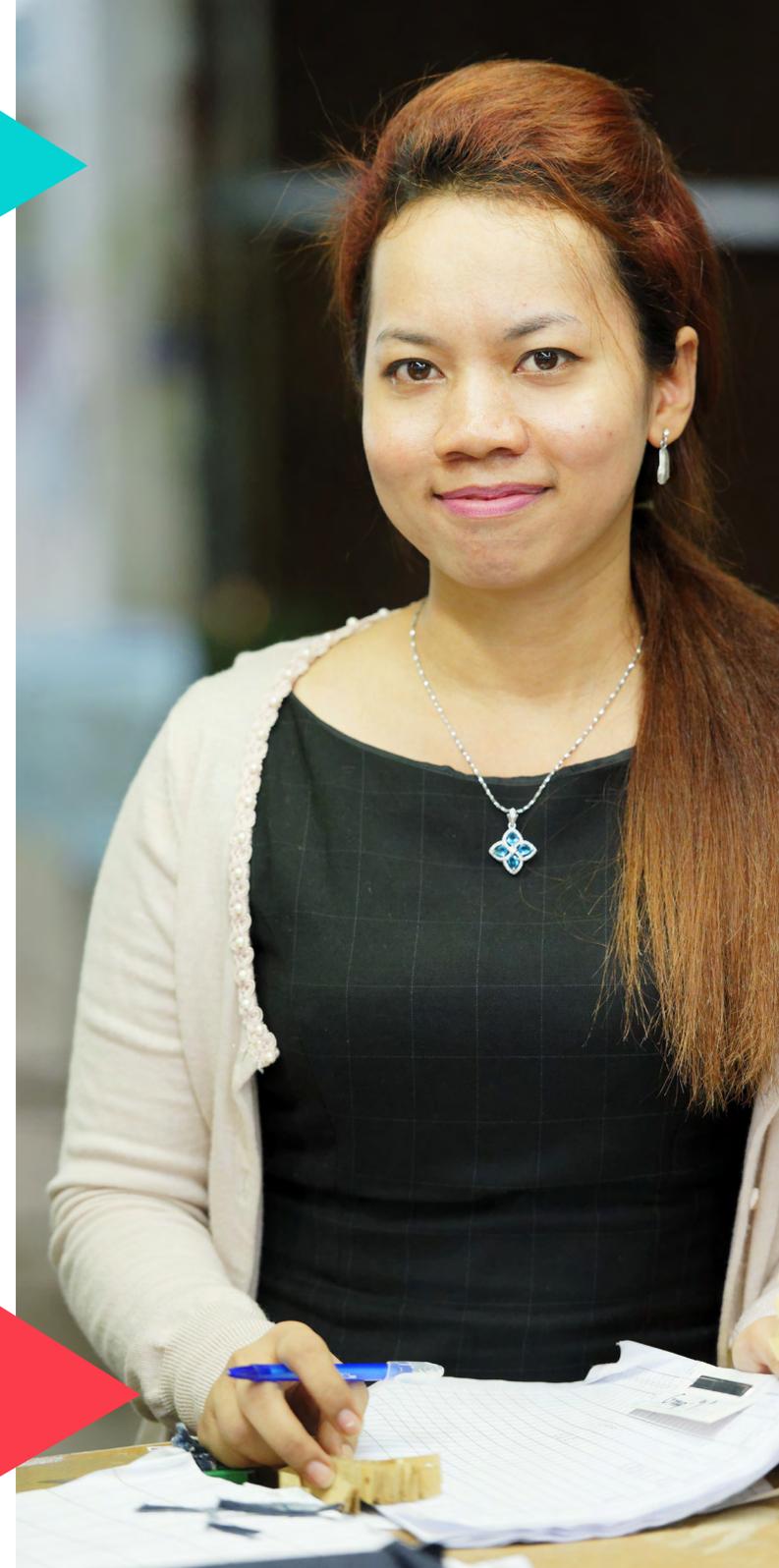
▶ Conclusion

The ten lessons learned from building migrant women's groups in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand provide an overview of the process, challenges and achievements over a period of less than one year in 2022. They are drawn from the direct experiences of CSO partners who have been building and expanding migrant women's groups and from the reflections of the migrant women members of the groups themselves.

The new groups have provided a space for individual empowerment, building solidarity and breaking down traditional, hierarchal and cultural structures which may silence women. Migrant women's groups, with varied levels of experience have been supported. Many of the members had never been part of any such group before, while others had previously been members of groups or had indirect contact with migrant women's groups. In the former case, new women members have already gained more confidence, can more openly share and are expressing their opinions more. Better informed, with more self-esteem, they are taking their own needs and knowledge into more consideration when making decisions about migration. In the latter case, the women are already working together to advocate for policy changes and are better prepared to tackle societal attitudes which discriminate against women and stigmatize migrant women.

As reflected by the good practices from the field in this booklet, some lessons have already been learned and the groups have been active in addressing them; while in other cases, the lessons are in the process of being learned and the groups are in the initial stages of adapting and experimenting with ways to address them. The lessons learned, like the groups themselves, are a work in progress. Building networks, tackling sensitive issues, advocating more broadly for the rights of migrant women and deepening the analysis of the complex social, economic and political factors involved through greater connectivity with social movements, are all on the agenda for future interventions.

Revisiting the outcomes of the migrant women's groups project a year after funding support to the groups has concluded would provide further insight into the successes or otherwise, of building migrant women's groups and networks which are sustainable, autonomous and organic.



► Annex I: Migrant women's groups contact information

Cambodia



**Gender and Development
for Cambodia
(GADC)**

#39B, Street 608, Sangkat Boeungkok II, Khan Toul Kok,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

+855(0)23881614, +855(0)963251690

info@gadc.org.kh



**Phnom Srey Organization
for Development
(PSOD)**

#126, Preh Monivong Street, Chroy Thmore Village,
Sangkat Boeung Kok, Kampong Cham City, Cambodia

+855(0)12440808

psodfiya@gmail.com

Myanmar



**Maw Kon Local Development
Organization**

Khart Tar Road, Myo Thit, Quarter (3), Keng Tung, Shan
State, Myanmar

+95(0)9458030887, +95(0)94933423, +95(0)8423943,
+95(0)95252486

mawkkon16@gmail.com



Three Good Spoons (TGS)

+95(0)9769707175, +95(0)97583814000

bridjitthu28@gmail.com

Thailand



MAP Foundation

9/34 Moo 1 Ing Doi Village Liab Klong Chonprathan Road,
Chang Phueak Subdistrict, Mueang District, Chiang Mai
50300, Thailand

+66(0)53-328134

map@mapfoundationcm.org



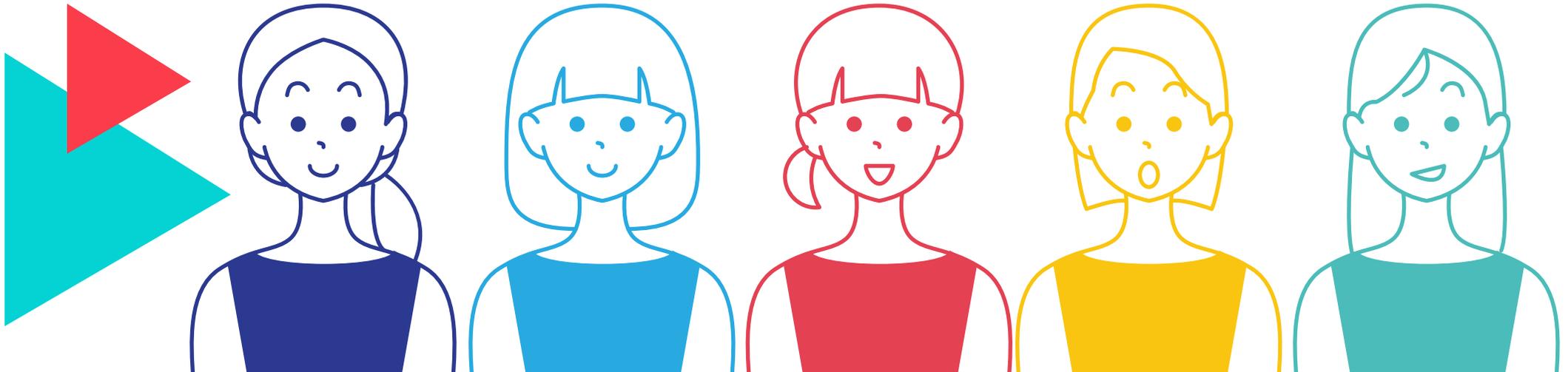
HomeNet

HomeNet Thailand

677/6 Lat Phrao 5/1 Alley, Khwaeng Chom Phon,
Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900, Thailand

+66(0)25139242

center@homenetthailand.org



► Annex II: ILO migration tips

ILO migration tips are also available in [Khmer](#), [Lao](#) and [Vietnamese](#) languages.

1. Be informed

Talk to lots of people before you make the decision to migrate, especially your family and friends. Returned migrants, NGOs, local authorities, Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs), trade unions and other community-based organizations can also help answer your questions. Educate yourself about what living and working abroad is really like, the costs involved, what job you might do, the documents you need, what challenges you may experience (like being away from family for years) and the money you can save and send home. Find out as much as you can about the culture and lifestyle in the destination country before you decide to migrate.

2. Check your recruitment agency

Check that the recruitment agency is properly licensed and has a good reputation. If your recruiter or employer is asking you to change your age, or work without a contract, it is a warning sign that your employer does not want to employ you in a legal way and may be planning to take advantage of you. Ask for and keep receipts for any payments made in the recruitment and migration process. If the recruitment agency is offering you a loan before you start work, consider how you will make repayments. If you owe money to your employer or your recruitment agency, they may make you work until you pay it all back. You are vulnerable to this kind of debt bondage if you borrow a lot of money.

3. Sign a contract with the recruitment agency and with your employer

You should sign a contract with the recruitment agency and with your employer before you leave. Ask someone you trust for help in reviewing these contracts and make sure you understand all the terms in the contract, because these state what you have agreed to do. At a minimum, the contract should include details of your pay, work hours and leave allowances, where you will work and the duties you will be expected to do.

4. Keep hold of your documents and make photocopies before you go

Make copies of your passport, visa, work permit, contracts, ID cards and other travel documents. Leave copies with family and friends before you leave. Put the original copies of these documents in a safe place when you arrive in your destination but keep spare copies with you at all times.

5. Prepare for emergencies

Make a list of important contact details prior to your departure. Leave one copy with your family and take the other with you. This includes the phone number of your embassy, NGOs, trade unions, migrant associations, your family, friends and anyone else who might assist you in your host country. Keep these contact details with you at all times.

6. Make sure you have a network of support

Regularly communicate with your family and friends to let them know you are safe. Make a plan with your family about how regularly you will contact them. Try to make friends and create your own network of support in the country of destination. Find out who you can turn to for assistance and ask for help if you need it.

7. If you experience problems at work

If you have a conflict in the workplace, talk to your supervisor or to the recruitment agency first. It is in everyone's interest to resolve disputes. Try to record incidents or problems occurring in case you need to file a formal complaint. If the problem is not resolved you should contact an NGO, a trade union, your embassy or the authorities for help.

8. Migrate legally

You are much more likely to get protection from the authorities in your home country and while abroad if you migrate through legal channels. Irregular migrants are at much greater risk of being exploited. An irregular migrant can be arrested or detained in the destination country and deported.



ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200 Thailand

T: +662 288 1766

F: +662 280 1735

E: bangkok@ilo.org

www.ilo.org

© International Labour Organization 2022