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Two day training on life skills, GBV, human trafficking for young women in Province Champassak Laos

## Migration and Development

# SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGIONAL PAPER: FOCUS ON GREATER MEKONG REGION

This publication is part of a series of regional documents<sup>1</sup> designed to provide a rapid overview of the main migration-related dynamics. This information is intended for Helvetas staff and partners, and any organisation interested in the subject, to foster reflection and action with a view to promoting coherent policies and developing relevant, evidence-based strategies and interventions focused on migrant populations, to increase the social-economic benefits of this phenomenon and decrease its risks for those on the move, their families, the communities and societies they come from and come to.

## AN EVOLVING AND COMPLEX REALITY

Migration within and towards Southeast Asia is a longstanding and dynamic feature shaped by historical, socio-cultural, economic, and geopolitical factors. Key events such as the large-scale displacement during the Vietnam and Secret War in Laos (1960s–70s), the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya, and recently arising conflicts in Myanmar have intensified migration complexities. Economic disparities across the region further drive mobility, as workers from lower-income nations seek opportu-

nities in stronger economies. Additionally, climate change and environmental disasters are playing an increasing role in shaping migration trends. These factors collectively contribute to both regular and irregular migration, with porous borders and limited legal pathways exacerbating the prevalence of undocumented migration.

As highlighted by ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers<sup>2</sup>, migrants contribute to the society and economy of both receiving and sending countries of

ASEAN. Migration plays a fundamental role in reducing poverty and as a livelihood strategy for populations of Southeast Asia. While migration represents a crucial driver of development, it also presents significant challenges related to irregular migration, human trafficking, and the protection of migrants.

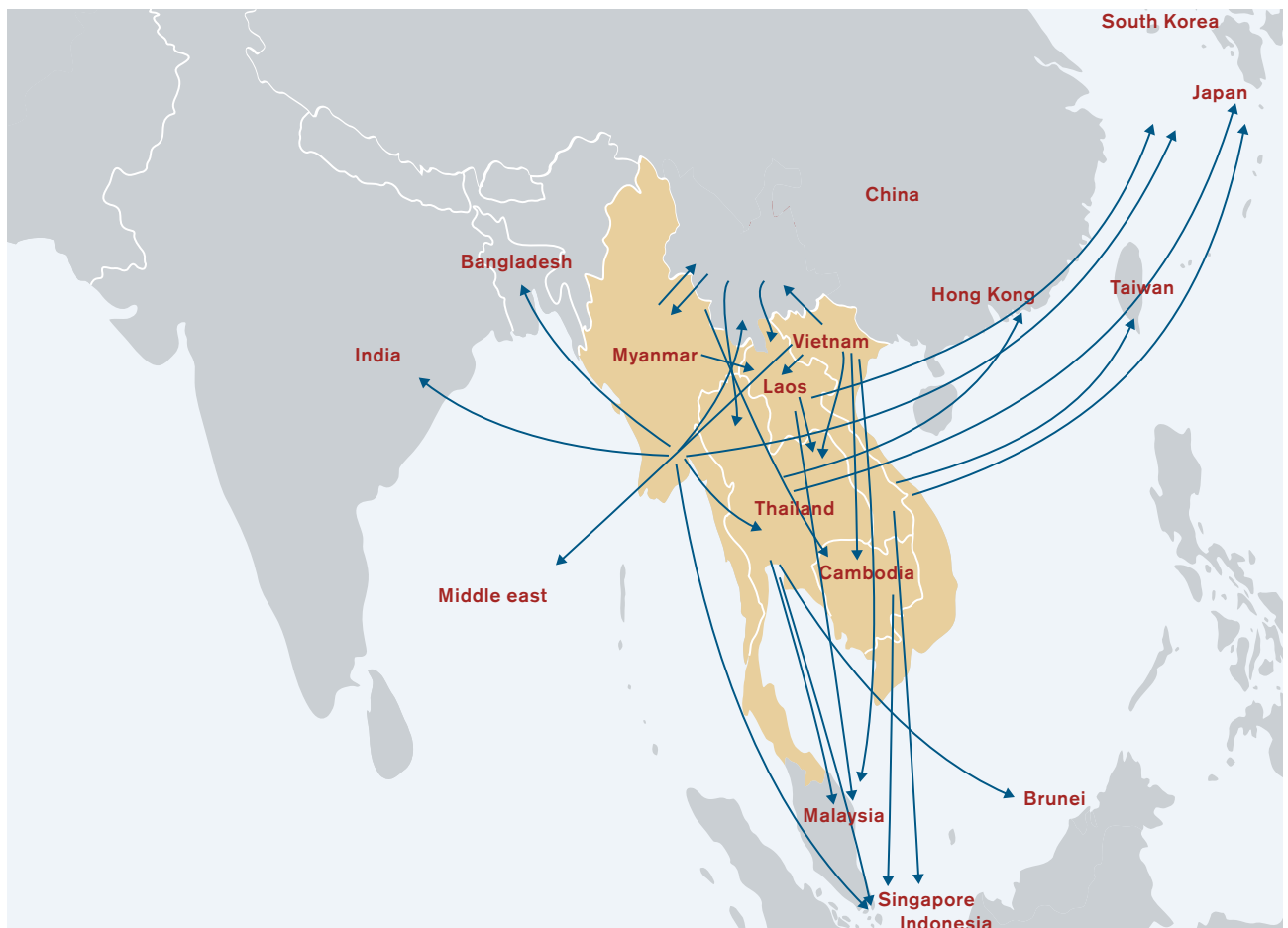
## GENERAL OVERVIEW

Southeast Asia is a highly dynamic migration hub, characterized by large-scale labor migration, forced displacement, climate-related migration, and irregular movements. These flows have been growing since the region rebounded from the financial crisis in the late 1990s, spurred by improved infrastructure and transportation as well as age and wage differentials<sup>3</sup>. The region serves as both a source and destination of migrants, especially youth, with millions moving within the region and beyond. Approximately 24.2 million Southeast Asians live abroad. Most Southeast Asian migrants (15 million) remain in Asia, with 7.1 million moving within Southeast Asia itself<sup>4</sup>. This trend is characterized by a dominant circuit in which migrants from less developed economies move within the region to neighbouring higher-income countries.

Major corridors connect countries of origin and destination and can be categorised as follows:

- Mainland or Mekong River route: Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia and to a lesser extent Vietnam towards Thailand (2,350,000 registered migrant workers in Thailand)
- Maritime route: from respective countries towards Malaysia
- Forcibly displaced people route: from Myanmar towards neighbouring countries, and Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia
- Extra-regional routes: from respective countries towards Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and East Asia (e.g. China, South Korea, Singapore)

In Southeast Asia, migrant workers are concentrated in the following key sectors that rely heavily on foreign labour: domestic work, construction, agriculture and fisheries, services and hospitality, sex work, manufacturing, informal sector.



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By mid-2024, the region according to available reported data, hosted about 290,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily Rohingya from Myanmar. Malaysia (189,500), Thailand (86,800), and Indonesia (12,600) collectively housed more than 99% of these displaced populations in the region<sup>5</sup>.

Lastly, Southeast Asia is highly susceptible to natural disasters, including earthquakes, tropical storms, and flooding. In 2023 alone, climate-related events displaced 2.6 million people in the Philippines, 2.8 million people in Malaysia, and 995,000 in Myanmar<sup>6</sup>, while Typhoon Yagi displaced 130,000 people in Vietnam in 2024<sup>7</sup>. The region is also ranked high on climate vulnerability.

## MAJOR ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

People move for various reasons, including political instability, environmental threats, family reunification, education and economy. However, labour is the dominant driver of internal and international migration, serving as a poverty reduction strategy across generations. But most often people migrate for multiple, often intertwined reasons, and economic motives are rarely the only driver, making the neat categorization of migrants particularly difficult in South-East Asia<sup>12</sup>.

The following section analyses the main migration dynamics along its opportunities and challenges and offers insights for engagement.

### LABOUR MIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Migration is central to Southeast Asian countries' socio-economic development. It stimulates growth and development and brings significant economic and social advantages to host countries, countries of origin, and migrants themselves. For host countries, migrant workers help fill labour shortages, boost economic productivity, contribute to tax revenues and foster cultural diversity and innovation. For countries of origin, remittances sent by migrant workers enhance household incomes, reduce poverty, and drive local economic growth. Migration also leads to skills development and knowledge transfer, benefiting local industries and entrepreneurship upon workers' return. Lastly, for migrants, working abroad can provide better wages, improved living conditions, and access to education and healthcare for their families.

## DATA ON RESPECTIVE SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES\*

### Cambodia

Population: 17.5 Mio  
GDP (US\$): 2,430  
Net migration<sup>9</sup>: -31,837  
Remittances % GDP<sup>10</sup>: 6.6  
Total # refugees: Less than 100  
Total # IDPs: n.a.  
Total # statelessness: 75,000  
Trafficking: Tier 3<sup>11</sup>

### Lao PDR

Population: 7.7 Mio  
GDP (US\$): 2,067  
Net migration<sup>9</sup>: -10,003  
Remittances % GDP<sup>10</sup>: 1.8  
Total # refugees: Less than 100  
Total # IDPs: n.a.  
Total # statelessness: n.a.  
Trafficking: Tier 2 watch list

### Myanmar

Population: 54.1 Mio  
GDP (US\$): 1,233  
Net migration<sup>9</sup>: -34,989  
Remittances % GDP<sup>10</sup>: 1.6  
Total # refugees: -  
Total # IDPs: 3,539,400  
Total # statelessness: 634,000  
Trafficking: -

### Thailand

Population: 71.7 Mio  
GDP (US\$): 7,182  
Net migration<sup>9</sup>: 19,648  
Remittances % GDP<sup>10</sup>: 1.9  
Total # refugees: 87,314  
Total # IDPs: n.a.  
Total # statelessness: 587,100  
Trafficking: Tier 2

### Vietnam

Population: 100.4 Mio  
GDP (US\$): 4,282  
Net migration<sup>9</sup>: -81,789  
Remittances % GDP<sup>10</sup>: 3.3  
Total # refugees: Less than 100  
Total # IDPs: n.a.  
Total # statelessness: 26,800  
Trafficking: Tier 2



On the other hand, women and men migrants face a myriad of risks and challenges at both area of origin and destination. These problems faced by migrant workers include fraud, discrimination, exorbitant migration costs including high fees charged by recruiters, low wages, exploitation and abuses at work, and insufficient services to protect their rights as people, workers and migrants. These challenges are particularly pronounced in areas with weak regulation framework (e.g. special economic zones), and compounded by gender, age, social, ethnic, and other factors.

At the recruitment stage, the limited access to information, lack of awareness on safe migration and risks, high recruitment fees, complex visa requirements, and bureaucratic hurdles put both women and men migrant workers at a further vulnerable situation. These unsafe migration practices push many workers into irregular migration channels. It often leaves migrants susceptible to human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery. These phenomena generally find their origins in weak law enforcement capacity, limited legal framework and cooperation, low prosecution rate for traffickers, insufficient victim identification and protection, among other things<sup>13</sup>.

Around one-third of migrant workers in the Asia-Pacific region lack legal status in their destination countries<sup>14</sup>. In 2018, Thailand hosted approximately

811,437 migrant workers in irregular situations from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam<sup>15</sup>. This trend increased with the situation in Myanmar and at least 1,18 million Myanmar migrants were in an irregular situation as of the end of 2023<sup>16</sup>.

Southeast Asia is known as a hotspot for human trafficking, with nearly half of all trafficking victims in Asia exploited within the region<sup>17</sup>.

## Perspectives

Labour migration in Southeast Asia is a double-edged sword. It provides economic opportunities and remittance-driven growth but also poses challenges like irregular migration, brain drain, low enrolment in education system, exploitation, and lack of legal protections. Below a series of possible actions to maximize the benefits of migration while reducing its associated risks.

Evidence shows that malpractices at the recruitment stage of migration can lead to enhanced exposure to vulnerabilities and abuses, including human trafficking and modern-day slavery, at the destination<sup>18</sup>. Within this framework, it is instrumental to pursue strategic and programming efforts aiming to address challenges at the pre-decision and pre-departure stage through interventions aiming to ensure that migrant workers and their family members make an informed choice, know what their rights are, and how to safeguard them.

One action is related to the lack of information about regular and safe migration pathways as a significant driver of irregular migration<sup>19</sup>. Addressing this information gap is needed in the region as highlighted by a recent study. The latter reveal significant gaps in meeting the information needs of prospective refugees and migrants, despite the existence of various information programmes. Many individuals originating from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar remain inadequately informed about the risks and processes associated with irregular migration. This persistent information deficit points to the inefficiency of current programming, which often fails to reach the most vulnerable populations or to deliver content that is contextually relevant and resonant. To address these gaps, it is imperative to redesign and tailor programs to the specific needs of different communities<sup>20</sup>.



© Helvetas Vietnam

Community gathering and exchange, Vietnam



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Governance workshop in Vietnam

This action should be complemented by interventions aiming to self-empower and protect migrant workers and their families, such as the following: access to livelihoods and basic services (e.g. shelter), protection services, legal support, life and vocational skills trainings, business support or linkages with potential and more responsible employers, at all stages of the migration cycle. Families left behind should also be supported by helping them to better manage remittances or by offering psychosocial or legal support among others. More specifically on human trafficking, a comprehensive response through the 5Ps approach is required to tackle this complex phenomenon: Prevention (e.g. raising awareness on regulations and practice, ensuring fair and ethical business, decent and dignified employment); Protection (e.g. identification, providing services such as counselling and legal advice); Prosecution (e.g. capacity building of law enforcement, increased <sup>21</sup> enhanced framework); Policy and Partnership (e.g. improved coordination and international collaboration).

Lastly, migration-related laws and policies in the region tend to overlook the reintegration needs of returnee migrants and efforts to support reintegration are low. Within this framework, there is a pressing need for improved investments in economic reintegration of returnee migrants. As highlighted by a recent research led by Helvetas, “this includes facilitating productive investments of remittances and utilizing social remittance such as skills, experiences, and work ethics—gained during foreign employment<sup>22</sup>.

## MIGRATION: A HIGHLY GENDERED AND UNEQUAL PROCESS

The situation for women migrants and other underserved groups (e.g. LGBTQI+, children, ethnic communities) in Southeast Asia is complex and shaped by economic opportunities, legal protections, and socio-cultural factors. Women make up a significant portion of migrant workers, particularly in domestic work, hospitality, sex industry, manufacturing, and entertainment industries. The share of women migrants originating from Southeast Asia is above the global average and the rising demand for domestic and care work in Asia and beyond has led to more women migrants than male migrants from some countries in the region – Lao PDR 56%, Cambodia 54%<sup>23</sup>. Of the 3 million regular migrants registered by the Thai Department of Employment (DoE) as of March 2024, 125,016 were migrant domestic workers, primarily from Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, the majority of whom are women (86%)<sup>24</sup>

Gender influences migration experiences throughout the migration cycle from pre-departure stage to return. The framework conditions of rights, obligations and opportunities of countries of destination and origin are differing greatly for men and women, which influences decision-making and how men and women see their options as well as the migration experience<sup>25</sup>. Firstly, women are more likely to face gender discrimination and exclusion, at the pre-departure stage. Globally and in the Southeast Asia





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Two day training on life skills, gender based violence and human trafficking for young women in the province Champassak in Laos.

region, women represent over 70% of care workers and informal workers. In addition, resulting from their area of work and often asymmetrical power relationship with the employer<sup>26</sup>, they may face numerous hardships during migration, including irregular payment of salaries and unequal pay, long working hours, labour, physical and sexual abuse. All these challenges are accentuated, when women migrate through irregular channels without any protection.

Similarly to women, other underserved groups such as LGBTQI+ and ethnic communities tend to experience multiple forms of discrimination. They are also more proportionally excluded from migration laws and support services and more likely to use irregular channels leading to higher vulnerability,

## Perspectives

Migration tends to reinforce traditional gender roles and can deepen pre-existing gender divides and expose women to new vulnerabilities. On the other hand, women, as migrants, may also challenge the typical social roles and create scope for women to become “visible contributor” by earning money. Understanding and challenging traditional gender roles is essential for fostering more equitable and sustainable migration patterns. In navigating the complex linkages of gender and migration, it is important to adopt an inclusive and intersectional approach and recognizing the diverse experiences of women and men.

With the view to addressing vulnerabilities faced by women migrants and other underserved groups as well as better leveraging migration-related opportunities, it is essential to address the specific needs and aspirations of these groups, stipulating clear Gender and Social Equity (GSE) targets through interventions. To do so, strong GSE focus in context analysis

is needed as well as the design of different protection and safe migration responses which integrate a GSE responsive approach (e.g. through gendered safe migration information, manuals, trainings, specific needs in health services and legal mechanisms). At policy level, gender and social equity must be promoted and relevant policies and regulations must be leveraged and/or formulated with a gender/ GSE lens.

## DISPLACED PERSONS AT RISK

The situation of forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) in Southeast Asia is marked by underlying geo-political dynamics, and the ebbs and flows of conflict, exacerbated by climate-induced displacement. The protracted multi-dimensional crisis in Myanmar remains the most severe, with over 1 million refugees in Bangladesh and others in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, facing precarious conditions and a lack of legal status, while the armed conflict, has displaced more than 3.5 million people internally and more than 1.3 million across borders, many seeking refuge in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Statelessness remains a significant issue in the region, affecting hundreds of thousands of people who lack legal recognition and citizenship rights. Many stateless individuals face severe restrictions on their fundamental human rights and freedoms, such as movement, access to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation.

A particularity of the region is that most countries, except Cambodia and the Philippines, have not signed the relevant U.N. conventions on refugees and asylum seekers (i.e. 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol). No other country in the region has an appropriate legal and institutional framework allowing authorities to identify refugees and setting standards for their protection.

Hence, FDPs are considered as “undocumented” or “irregular” migrants under national immigration laws, restricting their access to rights and services. As such they are at risk of being arrested, detained and deported<sup>27</sup>. Without legal recognition, they are likely to undertake informal and exploitative jobs and at risk of human trafficking and forced labour. While ASEAN does not have instruments pertaining to the protection of refugees, it does however have a regional convention and strategy to combat human trafficking, and most countries do include a reference to asylum seekers in their constitution, and have ratified several relevant international conventions, and integrated related rights as part of their legal frameworks which can be leveraged.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Various practical experiences in the region show encouraging examples which do respect some core tenets of international refugee law (e.g. certain provision of facilitated access to basic services)<sup>28</sup>.

### Perspectives

The situation of the many forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) in the region originates from contexts of so-called protracted crisis. While short-term emergency aid is crucial, these crises highlight the need for long-term solutions aimed at resilience, socio-economic integration and social cohesion. Indeed, few FDPs are benefitting today from a so-called durable solution<sup>29</sup> and most FDPs are therefore living in “protracted displacement” and lack long-term perspectives.

There is increasing recognition of FDPs as potential contributors to development rather than passive recipients of assistance. Adopting appropriate legal framework and investing in long-term solutions for FDPs not only enables them to improve their self-reliance but can also reduce the economic impacts and costs of displacement, while contributing to economic recovery<sup>30</sup>.

Southeast Asia is highly vulnerable to climate change<sup>32</sup>. Climate change is increasingly driving migration in Southeast Asia, with millions affected by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation. Coastal communities (e.g. in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand) face the risk of permanent displacement as land disappears beneath rising waters. At the same time, frequent typhoons, floods, and droughts are forcing temporary and long-term migration, particularly in the Philippines, Myanmar, and Vietnam, where disasters have become more intense and unpredictable<sup>33</sup>.

Agricultural and water crises further accelerate displacement. The Mekong Delta in Vietnam, a key rice-producing region, is suffering from saltwater intrusion, making farming unsustainable. Similarly, prolonged droughts and shifting rainfall patterns in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand are depleting water resources, forcing rural populations to migrate to cities in search of alternative livelihoods. As a result, urban areas are experiencing an influx of internal migrants, leading to overcrowding, job shortages, and increased pressure on housing and public services<sup>34</sup>.



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Markets in the Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.



Despite the growing scale of climate-induced displacement, Southeast Asia lacks a unified policy or legal framework to protect those affected. ASEAN countries largely treat migration as an economic issue rather than a climate-driven phenomenon, focusing more on disaster response than long-term adaptation strategies. Meanwhile, climate-related migrants do not fall under existing refugee protections, leaving them without legal status or support in host communities. The impact of climate change is intensifying, altering migration patterns, exacerbating social inequalities, and causing socio-economic strain across the region.

## Perspectives

In the context of climate change, migration tends to be politically sensitive, and the misconceptions are manifold. Migration is also often viewed as an adaptation failure. However, migration can also be an important adaptive response for people facing slow onset environmental changes or disasters. In some cases, migration may offer more safety and climate resilience than staying put (e.g. when there are limits to adaptation) or allowing people to escape harm or danger. On the other hand, as highlighted in this document, migration also comes with risks.

Within this framework, this is instrumental to enhance the understanding of the interlinkages between climate change and migration and unpack the myths surrounding this topic with the view to adopt an objective vision of the phenomenon and shift the focus to practical support and recognition of its potential and risks. Maximising the development potential of mobility in the context of climate change requires solutions that enable safe, planned and free movement, support integration in new locations, offer safe returns and reintegration for those who seek it, and support efforts to improve circumstances and maximise development benefits.

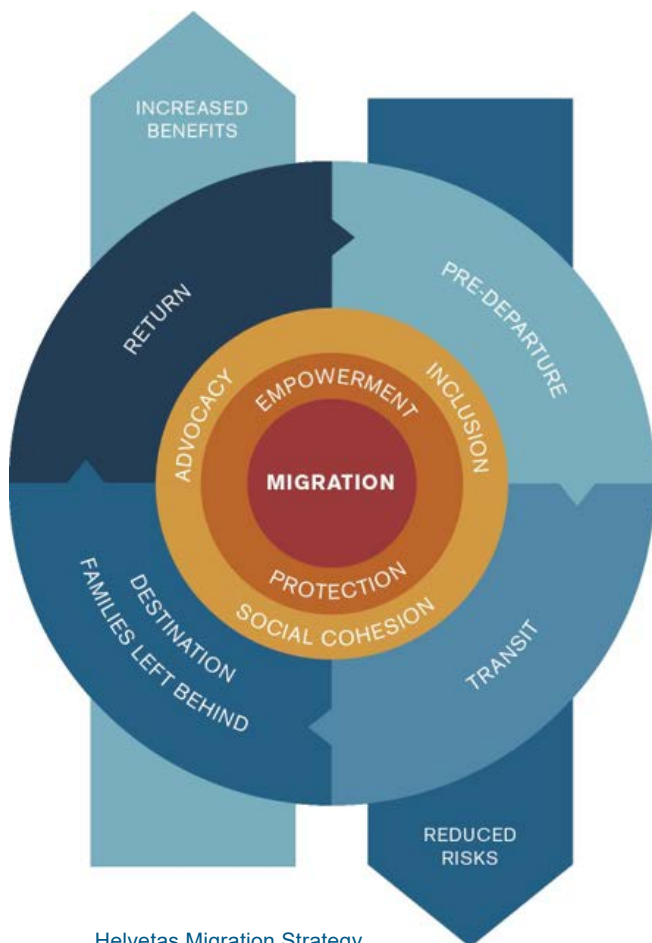
Furthermore, effective climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, robust legal and policy frameworks, and inclusive planning and financing mechanisms are needed to support the needs of women and underserved communities.

The Helvetas Guidance Paper “Understanding and responding to migration in the context of climate change”<sup>35</sup> provides a set of recommendations and entry-points for programming, including about the increasingly important role played by cities in managing issues on climate-linked mobility.

## MAIN STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

- **Relevant regional organizations:** The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- **Relevant regional processes:** the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT Process), Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Colombo Process, Regional UN Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific, Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking.
- **Relevant national organizations:** local NGOs (e.g. LSCW, MWRN and trade unions supporting migrants, women and underserved or vulnerable communities), legal associations, law enforcement associations, social and health care associations, protection actors
- **Relevant international organizations:** ILO, IOM, UNHCR, Migrant Forum Asia, UNDOC, IDWF
- **Relevant private sector and informal actors:** private and public recruitment agencies, intermediaries and informal recruitment agents, financial service providers, private training centres
- **Migration governance and relevant policies:** ASEAN migration-related Plans of Action, ILO fundamental conventions, different bilateral agreements (BLA) and memorandums of understanding (MoU) on migration, employment and cooperation to combat trafficking between country of origin (Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar) and destination (Thailand). Thailand: Immigration Act, B.E. 2522 (1979); Foreign Employment Act, B.E. 2521 (1978); Royal Ordinance Concerning Management of Foreign Workers in Thailand, B.E. 2560 (2017) and its 2018 Amendment; Section 64 Border Pass scheme; Immigration Act Section 17<sup>36</sup>.





## CONCLUSIONS

Southeast Asia is characterised by heterogeneous and evolving migration dynamics. This paper shows many challenges, but also opportunities that exist. Migrants, including forcibly displaced people, are vulnerable and highly exposed to various risks and abuses, such as the violation of their human rights and human trafficking. Consequently, the transformative potential of migration, as a mechanism to boost poverty reduction and socio-economic empowerment efforts is under-exploited and not optimally leveraged.

This situation calls for an objective vision on migration to enhance its positive effects as well as reduce its risks and negative prejudices along the whole migration cycle. This holistic approach is aligned with the strategy of Helvetas which aim to both protect and self-empower migrants and communities.

## HELVETAS EXPERIENCE ON FACILITATING INCLUSIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Since migration has become a priority topic for Southeast Asian countries, adopting an inclusive systemic approach is key to achieve meaningful and sustainable results, leading to profound and lasting changes which are more equitable and sustainable, thus contributing to more social cohesion and stability in the region. It aims not to duplicate or substitute, but rather strengthen the capacity of public and private actors to foster improved and long-term services for migrants. And this is complemented by interventions which are gender responsive and socially inclusive, alongside strengthening the legal and policy framework.

Helvetas has a long track record in implementing an inclusive systemic approach in the field of migration. Governments are gradually institutionalizing project interventions, allocating more and more budget to migration-related services, providing integrated services to migrants, developing and reinforcing more inclusive policies.

*(Blog article on [Nepal](#), on [Bangladesh](#))*

## HELVETAS THEMATIC AND PROJECT EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH ASIA

- **Labour migration (pre-departure stage):** Bangladesh (Strengthened and Informative Migration Systems), Nepal (Safer Migration), Sri Lanka (Safe and Successful Labor Migration)
- **Labour migration (internal):** Myanmar (ACTE)
- **Labour migration (human trafficking):** Sri Lanka (Equipping Sri Lanka to Counter Trafficking in Persons)
- **Labour migration (reintegration):** Bangladesh (Skills and Migration/ ILO Skills21), Nepal (Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers; ELAM)
- **Gender:** Lao PDR (Women's Voices and Justice Now), Bangladesh (Aparajita: Women Political Empowerment)
- **Forced Displacement:** Bangladesh (SHINE – Supporting Harmony, Improving Nutrition and the Environment for the Rohingya and Host Communities; Improving Livelihoods and Boosting the Local Economy in Cox's Bazar; IC4N - Inclusive Cities for Nutrition), Myanmar (S4RR Skills for Reconstruction of Rakhine; Gulf of Mottama; SCORE-Skills for Community Resilience and Empowerment, etc.)
- **Climate change and migration:** Bangladesh (Pani Jibon)

For more on HELVETAS' work on migration and forced displacement, visit: [www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/what-we-do/our-topics/voice-inclusion-cohesion/migration](http://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/what-we-do/our-topics/voice-inclusion-cohesion/migration)

### Endnotes

- 1 See Publications under Helvetas migration webpage
- 2 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.
- 3 IOM (2022). World Migration Report 2022.
- 4 UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2024.
- 5 UNHCR (2024). Operational Data Portal, Forcibly displaced & stateless populations in Asia and the Pacific.
- 6 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2023). Data portal
- 7 <https://vietnamnews.vn/environment/1663304/viet-nam-stands-resilient-in-the-wake-of-typhoon-yagi.html#:~:text=After%20the%20storm%20struck%2C%20more,vehicles%20for%20the%20typhoon%20response.>
- 8 World Bank; UNHCR; U.S. Department of State
- 9 Net migration is the net total of migrants during the period,

- that is, the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens. It does not include irregular migrants.
- 10 This data does not capture transfers through informal channels
  - 11 Information about tier process: U.S. Department of State website.
  - 12 United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2024). Thailand Migration Report 2024.
  - 13 US Department of State (2024). Trafficking in Persons Report 2024.
  - 14 ILO (2011). Asian Decent Work Decade resource kit: Protecting migrant workers.
  - 15 United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2019). Thailand Migration Report 2019.
  - 16 United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2024). Ibid.
  - 17 The Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (2020). Global dataset.
  - 18 ILO Fair recruitment portal.
  - 19 UN (n.d.) Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures. Issue Brief #6.
  - 20 Bali Process RSO and MMC. (February 2025). Assessment of Community Perceptions and Information Needs of Persons at risk of Irregular Migration in Bali Process Member States: Evidence from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Bangkok: Bali Process RSO; Dhaka: MMC. [rso.baliprocess.net](http://rso.baliprocess.net)
  - 21 Helvetas (2021). Trafficking in persons: recent experiences and lessons learned about combatting Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka.
  - 22 Helvetas Nepal & RIDA International (2024). Qualitative Research in Migration, Return and Reintegration 12 MONTHS THAT MATTER Results From a Mixed Method Study in Koshi and Madhesh Provinces in Nepal
  - 23 UN DESA 2020.
  - 24 United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2024). Ibid. These figures are an underestimate and do not account for the large number of migrant domestic workers working in Thailand without regular status.
  - 25 IOM (2024). World Migration Report. Chapter 6: Gender and Migration: Trends, Gaps and Urgent Action.
  - 26 ILO (2021). Making decent work a reality for domestic workers: Progress and prospects in Asia and the Pacific, ten years after the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).
  - 27 Moretti (2023). Refugee protection in Southeast Asia.
  - 28 Chen (2021). Uneven Refugee Protections Across Southeast Asia Put Migrants at Risk, The Diplomat.
  - 29 According to the IASC Framework, durable solutions are achieved when "IDPs no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement." It can be done through sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (voluntary return), local integration in areas where displaced persons take refuge (local integration) or in another part of the country based on their choice (relocation).
  - 30 Helvetas blog post (2021). Forced Displacement: From Humanitarian Crisis to Development Opportunity; Helvetas (2025). Capacity Statement on Forcibly Displaced Persons
  - 32 <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>
  - 33 Kwan Soo-Chen and David McCoy (2003). Climate displacement & migration in Southeast Asia.
  - 34 Pravati Saha (2023). Navigating climate change: migration challenges in Southeast Asia.
  - 35 Helvetas (2024). Guidance paper: understanding and responding to migration in the context of climate change.
  - 36 United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2024). Ibid, pp. 37-38.