



MIGRATION, BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME IN ASIA

Promoting Corporate Responsibility
and Migrant Workers' Rights in Global Supply Chains

PROGRAMME BRIEF

Duration	5 years (2024-2028)
Donors	European Union, Sweden, contributions from the private sector
Implementing partner	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Geographical coverage	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam
Beneficiaries	Migrant workers, families and communities
Collaboration	Business, governments, civil society, academia, and regional organizations

Labour migration is a defining feature of global economy and is a [powerful driver](#) for development. However, its full potential can only be realized if migrant workers have access to their human and labour rights, as articulated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration. This includes access to safe and regular labour migration pathways that ensure ethical recruitment, facilitate labour mobility and decent work.

MIGRANT WORKERS IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Asia is home to approximately [86 million international migrants](#), accounting for one-third of the global migrant population. As a global manufacturing hub, Asia remains a critical region for multinational enterprises.

Demographic shifts and economic transformations underpin the need for migration in the region and beyond. By 2050, countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea are projected to have [nearly 40 per cent of their populations over the age of 65](#). Meanwhile, 90 per cent of the 1.8 billion young people aged 10-24 – the largest youth generation in the world's history – live in developing countries.



Workers work at construction site in Thailand © IOM

Labour migration helps address the labour and skills shortages in countries with an ageing population and opens new opportunities for young people from countries with a population boom.

According to [business executives](#), labour migration is a key strategy to fill labour gaps, drive entrepreneurship and innovation and strengthen cultural diversity. In countries of origin, migrant workers contribute to improving the lives of families and communities through the transfer of skills and financial resources, while alleviating pressure on domestic labour markets. In 2022, Asia-Pacific region received [remittance inflows](#) of USD 310 billion, comprising 39 per cent of the world total.



Migrant workers employed in seafood processing sector in Rayong, Thailand © IOM 2022/Anat Duangchang

However, migrant workers remain at disproportionate risk of human and labour rights violations during recruitment, employment, and life abroad. This includes deception, discrimination, debt bondage, coercion, unequal or unpaid wages, lack of access to remedy and restrictions of freedom of movement. Women migrant workers are often exposed to triple discrimination - as women, as unprotected workers and as migrants. **As a result, migrant workers are three times more likely to experience instances of forced labour than local workers.** In 2021, 15 million people were in situations of [forced labour in Asia-Pacific](#) – highest prevalence globally – with private sector being responsible for 86 per cent of forced labour.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES

Governments and businesses have a shared responsibility towards migrant workers' rights to achieve safe, orderly and regular migration that contributes to sustainable development.

According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), as the primary duty bearers, governments are obliged to protect everyone within their territory and jurisdiction from human rights abuses committed by businesses. All businesses have the responsibility to respect the human and labour rights of all people impacted by their business operations. Where harm has occurred, providing effective and quality remedy is a responsibility shared by governments and businesses.



PROTECT

Increased business accountability through strengthened labour migration governance to protect the rights of migrant workers.



RESPECT

Strengthened corporate respect of migrant workers' rights at all stages of labour migration.



REMEDY

Migrant workers have access to effective and quality state justice and corporate remediation mechanisms.

Governments have been increasingly adopting mandatory human rights due diligence and reporting regulations, which require businesses to demonstrate how they identify, prevent and mitigate the human and labour rights risks in operations and supply chains. Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom have enacted laws and acts to combat forced labour in global supply chains. Notably, three States in Asia have adopted a stand-alone National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, while several others are in development.

Businesses have demonstrated leadership and commitment to corporate respect of migrant workers' rights by adopting industry commitments, such as Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment, AAFA/FLA Apparel & Footwear Industry Commitment to Responsible Recruitment and Consumer Goods Forum's Social Resolution on Forced Labour and the Priority Industry Principles.

Due to gaps in labour migration governance, the complexity of labour migration processes and the unique risks faced by migrant workers at various stages of labour migration process, many businesses continue to encounter difficulties in meeting their commitments and obligations in demonstrating corporate respect for rights and remedying human rights abuses of migrant workers.

IOM'S MIGRATION, BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME IN ASIA

Leveraging our role as a UN agency with global expertise and local presence, IOM is a strategic advisor as well as a trusted partner to governments and businesses to accelerate implementation of obligations under UNGPs, human rights due diligence legislation and industry commitments to respect the rights migrant workers.

Aligned with the Protect, Respect, Remedy framework of the UNGPs, IOM's approach is effective in creating a positive impact for migrant workers, while being responsive to the needs of all involved stakeholders.

IOM's MBHR approach is rights-based, promotes meaningful engagement of migrant workers, multi-stakeholder partnerships and seeks to achieve a gender-transformative agenda.



PROTECT

Increased business accountability through strengthened labour migration governance to protect the rights of migrant workers

IOM supports governments to expand and improve regular labour migration pathways, including policies, laws, regulatory frameworks and implementation mechanisms to ensure they are grounded in human and labour rights, aligned with fair and ethical recruitment and labour standards and promote access to social protection. We take a "whole-of-government" approach, working across relevant ministries and departments as well as at the national, subnational, and local levels. We cooperate closely with United Nations agencies, including the ILO, UNDP and OHCHR. We partner with civil society and labour movement to empower migrant workers and strengthen migrant services.

ACTION AREAS INCLUDE:

- 01 Research and advocacy towards greater policy coherence and stronger protections
- 02 Capacity building at all levels of government to promote implementation of laws and programmes
- 03 Migrant-worker empowerment and strengthened voice through community-based programming and leveraging the power of technology and social media



RESPECT

Strengthened corporate respect of migrant workers' rights at all stages of labour migration

IOM develops strategic partnerships and projects with industry associations, multinational enterprises, employers, labour recruiters to strengthen corporate respect of migrant's rights. We provide effective solutions to strengthen human rights due diligence and implement ethical recruitment and responsible employment.

Together with private sector partners, IOM advocates for more robust legal safeguards across regular labour migration pathways to reduce forced labour risks and increase development outcomes of labour migration. We also promote shared responsibility and multi-stakeholder solutions with leading initiatives that bring together business, civil society, academia, media and other stakeholders to tackle pressing supply chain challenges. IOM also supports businesses with diversity management in the workplace.



REMEDY

Migrant workers have access to effective and quality state justice and corporate remediation mechanisms

Migrant workers are often excluded from state-based services and justice mechanisms due to structural and language barriers, xenophobia and discrimination against migrant workers. Ensuring effective and quality remedy is a shared responsibility of governments and business. IOM supports them to improve grievance mechanisms that are designed with affected rights holders, and accessible by them. We also enable civil society to strengthen their migrant support services.

ACTION AREAS INCLUDE:

01

Development of strategies, policies and procedures related to corporate respect for the rights of migrant workers, including bespoke capacity building programmes and tools

02

Establishing and carrying out human rights due diligence that is responsive to the risks migrant workers face at all stages of labour migration

03

Fostering collaboration at the industry level, including across supply chain business relationships

ACTION AREAS INCLUDE:

01

Support to governments in strengthening state-based remediation mechanisms

02

Guiding companies with the establishment of grievance and remediation systems; or support with remediation

03

Empowering civil society to support migrant workers in accessing grievance mechanisms and remediation

FEATURED RESULTS OF IOM'S PARTNERSHIPS IN ASIA TO DATE



40+ private sector partnerships

and projects engaging 1,500+ global multinationals, suppliers, small and medium enterprises and business associations and 500+ labour recruiters across industries and migration corridors



3.2 million people sensitized

on migration, business and human rights



240,000+ migrant workers employed

by our partners benefitting from ethical recruitment, decent work and access to remedy



USD 5.6 million

repaid by our partners to migrant workers for recruitment fees and related costs



Open-source tools

for businesses of all sizes to manage migrant worker recruitment and employment in line with international standards



Strengthened

labour migration governance and multi-stakeholder dialogue informed by data for foresight

KEY TOOLS AND RESOURCES

FOR GOVERNMENTS

To realize the government responsibility to protect migrant workers and with the aim of improving the inter-jurisdictional regulation of international labour recruitment, IOM produced:

- Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation
- IRIS Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection

Global Policy Network on Recruitment creates a space for governments to discuss and solve the challenges in regulating cross border recruitment and protecting migrant workers.

FOR BUSINESSES

IOM's tools for business are designed to support business identify, prevent and address risks to migrant workers' human and labour rights and provide effective remedies when harm has occurred. Collectively, these tools help businesses strengthen their practices and fulfill responsibility to respect the human and labour rights of migrant workers in global supply chains. Access the tools here:

- Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers / ▶
- E-course: An Introduction to the Management of Fair and Ethical Recruitment and Employment of Migrant Workers / ▶
- Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide / ▶
- Fair and Ethical Recruitment Due Diligence Toolkit / ▶
- Operational Guidelines for Businesses on Remediation of Migrant Worker Grievances

FEATURED PARTNERSHIPS

Aligned with IOM principles, institutional policies and commitments, we partner with a wide range of private sector actors to advance corporate respect for migrant workers' rights and leverage individual and collective power of business for positive sustainable change. These include Responsible Business Alliance, Consumer Good Forum and Fair Labour Association, Panasonic and IKEA.

ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization and a member of the United Nations System. For over 70 years, IOM has been working with governments, civil society, the international community and private sector to promote safe, orderly and regular migration. In 2023, IOM had 18,934 staff operating in 557 locations, covered by 171 country offices.

For more information about IOM's Migration, Business and Human Rights Programme in Asia and partnership opportunities, please contact us at:



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