Thailand National Recommendations for the 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour

3-4 November 2020

Supporting migrant workers during the pandemic for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community

Sub-theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers and responses in ASEAN

Coordination

1. MOL is a main focal agency to coordinate with other related agencies in preparing quarantine facilities and accommodation for migrant workers.
2. Improve coordination between Immigration Bureau (Department), MOL, MOH, Royal Thai Police, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassies of the countries of origin in Thailand to ensure a validity of extension of migrant workers' employment, changing employers, work permits, health insurance, etc.
3. Electronic platforms in migrant workers' languages are provided with mobile applications to get access to government services and complaint mechanisms.

Social security and services

4. Ensure migrant workers' access to social protection and health care. This should include social protection and gender responsive services such as maternity protection.
5. Provide income support to retrenched migrant workers and those whose income has been affected by reduction in working hours.
6. Ensure access to information on services available on gender based violence.
7. Ensure availability of support services to migrant workers who suffer mental health issues as a result of COVID-19 and country lockdown measures.

Working conditions/PPEs

8. Distribute PPE to groups who are most at risk, including those working in closed quarters and staying in crowded accommodation.

Recruitment and costs

9. Once recruitment of migrant workers starts again, issue guidance on recruitment costs and related costs, especially additional costs related to COVID-19 tests and quarantine. These costs should not be borne by migrant workers.

10. Issue guidance about changing employer to recruitment agencies and employers to ensure that none of these costs are charged to migrant workers.

Reintegration

11. Ensure that returning migrant workers have access to skills development, employment services and other reintegration services.

Sub-theme 2: Inclusive and responsive labour migration policy for future preparedness in ASEAN

National Plan and Implementation Plan

1. Foster tripartite-plus social dialogues for a cohesive and responsive whole-of-society approach. This is to encourage bilateral and multilateral cooperation and agreements, including about responsibilities during crises. Prepare an ASEAN emergency and pandemic response plan for migrant workers, guarantee an access to health care for all migrant workers especially during crises.

   Consultations and social dialogues should take place regularly among all stakeholders. This will create a sustainable and tangible response plan which will overcome implementation issues that the current MOUs are facing now. Additional emergency or pandemic response clauses should be added to the existing MOUs in order to cover unforeseen events such as disasters and pandemics. Open ended conditions should be included as well in this special section/special clauses as annexes so that rapid emergency responses can be implemented easier and promptly.

2. ASEAN emergency and pandemic preparedness plans should take into account of migrant workers' protection. Social protection coverage should be extended to all migrant workers. Develop bilateral or regional agreements/arrangements, or MOUs on portability of social protection for migrant workers. This includes ensuring that workplaces and employer-provided housing follow labor standards, OSH and WHO safety guidance.

   There should be a clear agreement between countries of origin and destination, may be not only countries of origin but done under the ASEAN framework. Special measures for a specific unit/body/command center that has authority in making decisions to implement special measures to counter emergency situations.

3. Collect/compile comprehensive confidential and secure sex-age-disaggregated data and use this data to strengthen job matching, skills recognition, reskilling, upskilling and training.

   These data sets should be comprehensive and contain necessary information, including information that can help to identify various needs of workers and employers. This data should also be able to address employment conditions and concerns. It should also include socio-economic, cultural (and religious) and health data. Having such comprehensive data sets would help in reducing conflict, designing appropriate as well as comprehensive and inclusive policies and programs that will response to the real needs.

The meeting was held online on 3 and 4 November 2020.