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# Overview of Cambodian Female Workers in International Labor Migration

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## Acronyms

ACRA	: Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies
ADHOC	: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
ASEAN	: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CARAM	: Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility
CCWC	: Cambodia Women's Crisis Center
CEDAW	: Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLEC	: Community Legal Education Center
CRUMP	: Cambodia Rural Urban Migration Project
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IOM	: International Organization for Migration
JITCO	: Japan International Training Cooperation Organization
LSCW	: Legal Support for Children and Women
MoFA	: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoJ	: Ministry of Justice
MoLVT	: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MOU	: Memorandum of Understanding
MoSVY	: Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWA	: Ministry of Women's Affairs
NCCT	: National Committee for Counter Trafficking
NEP	: National Employment Policy
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	: National Plan of Action
RGC	: Royal Government of Cambodia
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
UNIAP	: United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking
UNIFEM	: United Nations Development Fund for Women

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## 1. Introduction

International labor migration has become common in Cambodia over the last ten years which was mainly driven by economic reasons to cope with economic shocks and raise the socio-economic status of families [1]. Many Cambodian migrant workers have now shifted their destination from developing countries, such as Thailand and Malaysia, to developed countries, such as the Republic of Korea, Japan and Singapore [2].

International labor migration is not only relevant to men. Globally, it was estimated that women accounted for 44.3 percent (66.6 million) of total migrant workers in 2013 [3]. In Cambodia, women have also made up a large proportion of international labor migration at 60 percent in 2005 and 36 percent in 2014 of the total official deployed workers in foreign employment [4]. International labor migration plays important roles in creating opportunities for female migrant workers to generate their own income, and thus, contributing to their economic empowerment [5]. According to the Goal 8 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), labor migration helps empower female migrant workers to become agents of development when their workers' rights are protected and promoted during migration and when women worked in safe and secure working environment [6].

Studies show that international labor migration results in both positive and negative impacts on migrant workers [7, 8]. While women have now become the key agents of international labor migration, it is unclear to what extent these female migrant workers have been affected by their migration. The aim of this paper therefore is to review the impacts of international labor migration on Cambodian female migrant workers. The findings of this research paper will contribute to providing evidence to support the government to promote safe migration for women in Cambodia. This research paper addresses three specific research questions as below:

### ***1.1 Research questions***

- What is the current situation regarding international labor migration of Cambodian female migrant workers?
- What are the impacts of the international labor migration on Cambodian female migrant workers?
- What are the existing legal framework, policies and institutions to support safe migration for women in Cambodia?

## ***1.2 Research methodology***

This research reviewed secondary data in order to respond to the research questions. The researcher reviewed existing data, reports and policies of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training of Cambodia related to international labor migration, research reports of the International Organization for Migration, the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Development Program and other existing reports.

## ***1.3 Limitation***

This research paper relied on existing reports to assess the impacts of international migration on female migrant workers. Three major issues constrained the researcher. First, the researcher could not access up-to-date data or statistics regarding the number of Cambodian migrant workers in other countries. Second, there was a lack of up-to-date assessment reports on international labor migration. Most reports focus on migration between 2009 to 2015. Third, due to data availability, this paper reviewed assessment reports of migrant workers in Thailand more than other countries, such as Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Singapore.

## **2. Overview of international labor migration of women**

### ***2.1. Number, countries and types of international labor migration workers***

According to statistics of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT) in Cambodia, by the end of the 2016, Cambodia had over one million migrant workers (both documented and undocumented) in other countries, with Thailand alone having up to 1,056,358 Cambodian workers[9]. However, there is no specific data on female migrant workers. Nevertheless, based on deployed worker data on foreign employment provided by the MoLVT, in 2014 (by November), Cambodian female migrant workers deployed to work abroad were at 7,464 representing 36 percent of total deployed workers in the same year. This number had increased almost six fold from 1,345 in 2005. Also, between 2005-2014, Cambodia had a total of 77,755 female migrant workers (45 percent) being officially deployed to work abroad (See Table 1) [4].

Table 1: Development of Cambodian workers in foreign employment 2005-2014

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 (18 Nov)	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,244</b>	<b>3,636</b>	<b>9,476</b>	<b>7,340</b>	<b>14,928</b>	<b>29,783</b>	<b>26,219</b>	<b>34,804</b>	<b>22,600</b>	<b>20,749</b>	<b>171,779</b>
Male	899	1,798	4,611	3,616	4,292	10,501	15,563	23,568	15,891	13,285	94,024
Female	1,345	1,838	4,865	3,724	10,636	19,282	10,656	11,236	6,709	7,464	77,755
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>5,670</b>	<b>2,116</b>	<b>3,543</b>	<b>11,224</b>	<b>16,837</b>	<b>26,390</b>	<b>13,468</b>	<b>13,802</b>	<b>93,495</b>
Male	n/a	226	3,935	1,425	1,968	6,304	10,624	16,551	8,840	8,274	58,147
Female	n/a	219	1,735	691	1,575	4,920	6,123	9,839	4,628	5,528	35,258
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>3,219</b>	<b>2,654</b>	<b>9,682</b>	<b>16,394</b>	<b>4,351</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>40,252</b>
Male	467	231	174	53	876	2,522	457	110	62	105	5,057
Female	1,309	3,045	3,045	2,601	8,806	13,872	3,894	70	28	111	36,781
<b>Korea</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>1,501</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>2,531</b>	<b>1,687</b>	<b>2,116</b>	<b>4,957</b>	<b>8,132</b>	<b>8,820</b>	<b>6,360</b>	<b>37,156</b>
Male	432	1,341	499	2,125	1,438	1,635	4,429	6,828	6,931	4,851	30,509
Female	36	160	85	406	249	481	528	1,304	1,889	1,509	6,647
<b>Japan</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>577</b>
Male	n/a	n/a	3	13	10	40	52	79	58	55	310
Female	n/a	n/a	0	26	6	9	22	23	53	128	267
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>299</b>
Male	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
Female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	111	188	299

Source: Cambodian Department of Employment and Manpower, MoLVT, figure from 2005-2014

According to Table 1, the majority of Cambodian migrant workers, including female migrant workers migrated to work in Thailand. Malaysia ranked as the second country in receiving that had the most female Cambodian migrant workers, followed by the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan.

Like male workers, Cambodian female migrant workers were involved in several types of works, which varied by countries. In Thailand, female migrant workers were mainly engaged in five types of work: manual labor, construction, agriculture, services and domestic work (See Table 2) [10].

Table 2: Cambodian workers in registered migrant Thailand by sector, December 2011

Sector	Cambodia		
	Total	Male	Female
Manual Labor (excluding domestic work)	228,094	143,400	<b>84,694</b>
Fishing	15,073	13,068	2,005
Fishery related	9,149	4,450	4,699
Agriculture	35,882	21,470	<b>14,412</b>
Construction	84,368	54,883	<b>29,485</b>
Agriculture related	10,335	6,067	4,268
Abattoirs/Animal Processing	3,544	2,278	1,266
Recycling	4,955	3,016	1,939
Food and drink	9,340	4,740	4,600
Garments	4,423	2,078	2,345
Plastics	3,214	1,839	1,375
Import/Export/Vending	10,089	6,011	4,078
Other services	22,417	13,459	<b>8,958</b>
Domestic work	7,427	1,984	<b>5,443</b>

Source: Thai Ministry of Labor, Department of Employment, Office of Foreign Workers Administration, December 2011

In Malaysia and Singapore, Cambodian female migrant workers often worked as domestic workers [11]. In the Republic of Korea and Japan, both female and male workers were engaged similar types of work. For example, female workers were involved in manufacturing, construction, agriculture, livestock, fishing, services, and machinery and metal work[1, 4]. Besides these countries, Cambodian migrant workers have also been sent to other destination, such as China, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Taiwan[1]. However, no data is available on the types of work that female migrant workers did in those countries.

## 2.2. Demographic characteristics of female migrant workers

According to the survey report by Cambodia Rural Urban Migration Project (CRUMP) of the Ministry of Planning (MoP) in 2014, female workers tended to migrate to other countries for working at a younger age (under 18 years old), compared to male workers. More than half (55.9 percent) of female respondents were unmarried before their migration. Female migrant workers also tended to

hold lower education than male migrant workers, which was the reason why they often received lower payment than men, and were exposed to exploitation(See Table 3)[12]. The findings of CRUMP on the education of female migrant workers was consistent with the survey report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2016 who found that most of female migrant workers only completed education up to the primary level [7].

*Table 3: Demographic characteristics (in percentage) of migrant workers*

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Age (mean)</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>25.4</b>
- Under 18	9.5	6.3	7.7
- 18 to 24	48.2	47.8	47.9
- 25 to 34	30.4	33	31.7
- 35+	11.9	13	12.4
<b>Marital Status</b>			
- Never married	55.9	62.6	59.5
- Currently married	32.5	35.1	33.9
- Formerly married	11.5	2.3	6.6
<b>Education</b>			
- None	11.3	7.3	9.15
- Primary	56.9	50.2	53.3
- Secondary	30.1	39.7	35.3

*Source: Hing and Ly (30 July 2014) based on CRUMP database*

### **2.3. Causes of international labor migration**

In Cambodia, the causes of migration consist of both push and pull factors. The push factors refer to the conditions that drive people to leave their homes and move to other places in order to explore better employment opportunities. These factors included unemployment, poor social services and poverty. Pull factors are defined as conditions which attracted people to migrate to a certain area. They include availability of better employment opportunities, higher standards of living and peace and stability[13].

An assessment report from the IOM in 2016 of migrant workers in Thailand found that the majority of Cambodian workers, both women and men had similar reasons for migrating to work in there.

For example, in search of better living conditions and higher income. However, having no job and income in Cambodia were the main reasons stated by female workers for migration. This was because female workers often had low education and skills, and as such, they had to leave the country to work in Thailand to seek better employment opportunities[7].

### **3. Impacts of international labor migration**

International labor migration has both positive and negative impacts on female migrant workers. The section below describes the impacts in detail.

#### ***3.1. Positive impacts on women migrant workers***

##### *3.1.1. Wage/Revenue*

One of the key impacts of international labor migration is on the wages of female migrant workers. Both Cambodian female and male migrant workers received higher wages from their migration. In Cambodia, according to the report by CARE in 2017, the average wages for female workers in the garments and footwear sector including bonuses and other benefits was at USD209 per month, and for males at USD228 per month [14]. However, in Thailand, female workers received up to USD7.59 per day, and male workers received USD8.95 per day on average daily income, equivalent to USD228 and USD269 per month respectively (See Table 4) [7].

The IOM also found that wages of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand also varied by skills, location and whether they were formal or informal migrant workers. In Thailand, migrant workers could obtain a higher salary amounting to USD9.10 if working in animal farming, while in other sectors, workers received only USD8.16 per day. Construction is the second sector that Cambodian migrant workers could get a higher wage of around USD8.42 a day, while in the agriculture sector they could receive only USD7.47 a day. At the same time, migrant workers who were regulated could earn higher wages than unlicensed ones at USD8.8 a day while unregulated workers received only USD8.00 to USD8.20 a day in 2016 [7]. There was no available data related to wages of female migrant workers by skills and location in Thailand.

For other countries, although no specific data about wages of female workers besides domestic workers was available, generally, Cambodian migrant workers often received a higher wage/salary than migrant workers received salary in Thailand (See Table 4). For example, according to the report of Community Legal Education Center (CLEC) in 2013, Cambodian women who worked as domestic

workers in Singapore received a salary of USD420 per month[11]. On the other hand, Cambodian migrant workers in Malaysia could earn approximately USD295 a month. In the Republic of Korea, workers could earn about USD790 a month based on working hours [15] since the country required migrant workers who had higher levels of languages and job skills[1].

*Table 4: Wages by countries of Cambodia migrant workers received*

Countries	Wages (USD)
Thailand	Female = 7.59 per day (Average)/228 per month <sup>1</sup> Male = 8.95 per day (Average)/269 per month <sup>2</sup>
Malaysia (Domestic work where women mainly work)	295 per month
Singapore (Domestic work where women mainly work)	420 per month
Republic of Korea	790 per month

*Sources: Andrea (IOM 2016), Brandais (CLEC 2013), and Sry (CDRI 2016)*

### 3.1.2. Remittances

According to the World Bank, in 2014, remittances from Cambodian migrant workers sent home had increased from USD188 million, or 2.3 percent of the GDP in 2008 to USD256 million, or 2.6 percent of GDP in 2012. In this regard, Cambodian migrants sent home different amounts of the remittances according to the countries where they worked and the types of work they were engaged in. For instance, women who worked as domestic workers in the Republic of Korea sent back remittances USD623 per year, compared to workers in Malaysia who sent USD306 and those in Thailand who sent USD334 per year[12].

Interestingly, women migrant workers remitted more money than men by about 20 percent[4]. The report of the IOM showed that because female workers were often concerned and responsible for families at home, they often remitted more money than their male counterparts even though they received lower wages[7].

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<sup>1</sup> Author's calculation to multiply the daily rate with 30 days per month

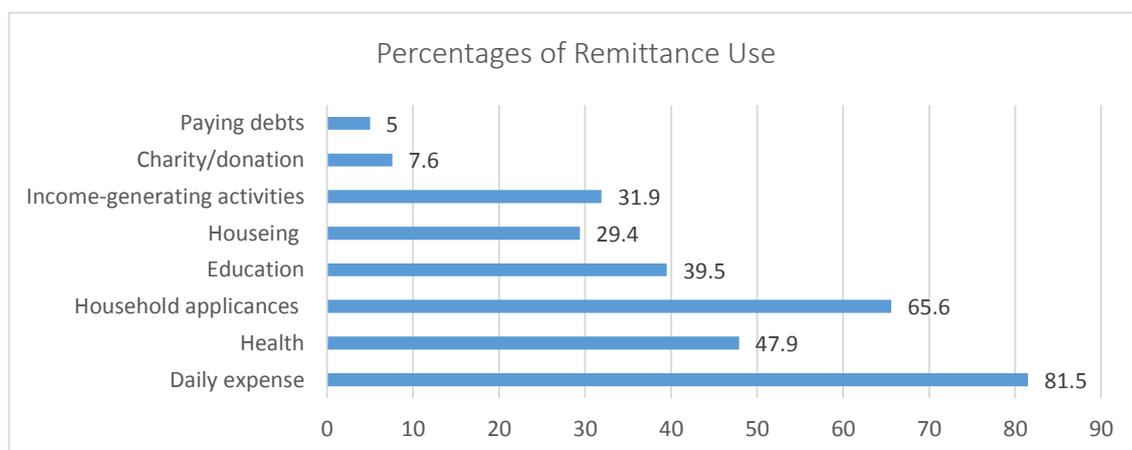
<sup>2</sup> Author's calculation to multiply the daily rate with 30 days per month

Formal and Informal migrant workers remitted money through different processes. According to the ILO (2010), most irregular migrant workers in Thailand sent money home by private agents, relatives, or transportation providers. This was due to the fact that those informal workers did not know any other methods[16] or they lacked the ability to access formal method because they did not have the right or any documents to open a bank account or they were not allowed by their employer[17]. For formal migrant workers, they often transferred money by banks, cash transfer operators or microfinance institutions[16]. Transferring money through private agents costs less than through a bank. For example, workers paid only 210 to 300 Thai baht when using agents, but 690 baht if through a bank. However, transferring through an agent can result problems, such as the family not receiving money, or delays in receiving money[17].

### 3.1.3. The impacts of the remittances for families at home

There is no study that provides gender-disaggregated analysis on the impact of remittances for families at home. However, according to the ILO’s report by Aree and Sirinan in 2009, remittances were the main sources of income to improve living conditions of people at home. The common use of the received remittances was for daily expenses, household appliances or emergency needs such as healthcare while paying debts account for only 5 percent (See Figure 1)[18]. However, another study by the IOM, showed that the remittances from migrant workers in Thailand were the main source of debt repayment by Cambodian families at home [7].

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand, by their intention for how remitted money was to be used



Source: Aree and Sirinan (ILO2009)

Despite the benefits for day-to-day living of people at home, remittances had less impact on long-term investment. As found by the ILO in 2009, only 39.5 percent of respondents claimed that they had spent their remittances for education, 31.9 percent for income generating activities and only 29.4 percent for housing (See Figure 1)[18].

### ***3.2. Negative impacts on women migrant workers***

The negative side of international labor migration for female workers can be seen in terms of vulnerability, abuse and exploitation, along with poor living conditions. These negative impacts could be categorized into two phases: during migration and post migration.

#### *3.2.1. During migration*

Cambodian female migrant workers face multiple obstacles while working outside the country, in particular those who are informal or irregular migrant workers. For example, according to UNIAP, in 2010, several Cambodian female migrant workers in Thailand were trafficked to the entertainment industry and for prostitution while men were trafficked to work on fishing boats or in construction[19]. Besides trafficking, other studies found that most Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand both male and female often experienced abuse at their workplace, overwork without pay, or discrimination by local people[20].

In Malaysia, ADHOC (2012) found that workers were forced to continue to work even if they did not want to[12]. In the same vein, a report by CLEC (2013) found that between 2010 and 2011, almost all Cambodian domestic workers in Malaysia worked under pressure from their employers, or experienced abuse, forced labor, slavery or exploitation[11]. Informal migrant workers in Malaysia were required to work 10 hours a day without receiving any bonus or insurance and they often lacked protection from legal institutions[8]. Similarly, a study by UNIFEM in 2006 found that the main obstacles faced by Cambodian migrant workers in Malaysia were related to confiscation of documents, lack of salary, sexual harassment, lack of freedom, lack of access to bank accounts or saving for emergencies, and limited access to healthcare services[16]. Similarly, some migrant workers in Singapore also faced the same issues reported by returnees[11]. For other countries such as the Republic of Korea and Japan, there is no available data related to challenges during migration. It is worth noting that workers who faced these challenges were mainly female migrant workers.

### 3.2.2. Post migration

Impacts during post migration were found among migrant workers from Thailand and Malaysia. In 2016, the IOM found that Cambodian migrant from Thailand had various issues after returning to their own country (See Table 5). The survey showed that half of female migrant respondents expressed their first concerns over the lack of basic needs, such as food, after their migration, which confirms that Cambodian female migrant workers did not save enough to support themselves after migration. The Second most concern issue among female migrant workers was related to their health. Other issues include returning travel costs, concerns over children’s education and loan repayment[7].

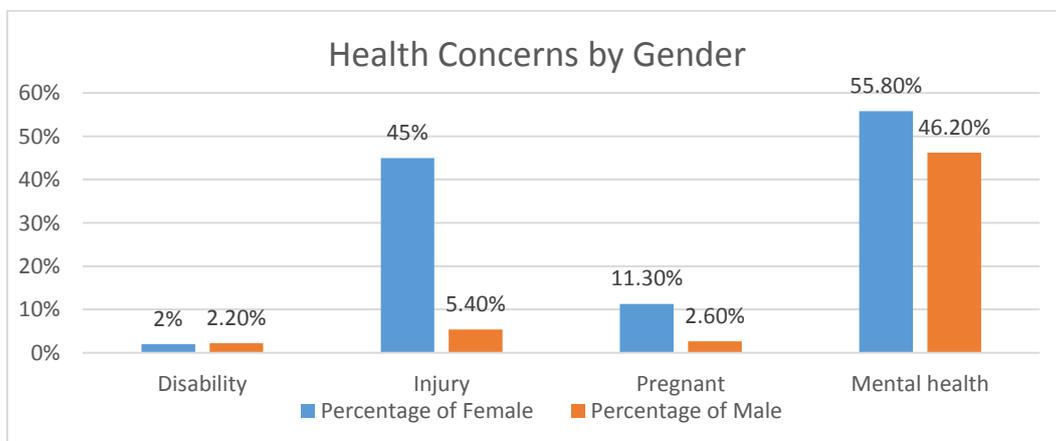
Table 5: Post return situation of Cambodian migration workers in Thailand

Categories	Percentage of Female	Percentage of Male
Healthcare	26.9%	17.4%
Children’s education	11.1%	6.8%
Return travel	19.7%	18.6%
Pay off loans	10.6%	11.2%
Basic needs (food)	51%	42.9%

Source: Assessment reported by International Organization for Migration in 2016

Related to health issues, female workers reported they had suffered from more mental health issues and injuries than male migrant workers (See Figure 2)[7].

Figure 2: Health concerns by gender



Source: Assessment reported by International Organization for Migration in 2016

For female workers from Malaysia, they also faced problems during their post migration. For example, some workers reported they had to buy a return ticket home without support from the recruitment agency. Furthermore, most female migrant workers also expressed concerns over mental health issues, including loneliness or depression upon their return. This was because they work in isolation performing their job functions and lacked support networks in Malaysia. Because of this issue, some of them were unable to work after returning, leaving the families in worse condition than before they migrated. In addition, it was found that not many female migrant domestic workers could access health support services upon their return[21].

#### **4. Legal framework, policies and institutions to support safe migration**

Cambodia seeks to improve the situation of migrant workers by ratifying international conventions and developing bilateral cooperation, and legal and policy frameworks.

##### ***4.1. International legal instruments***

Cambodia has ratified all eight core treaties of ILO Conventions: (1) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organise Convention in 1948 (No. 87), (2) Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention in 1949 (No. 98), (3) Forced Labour Convention in 1930 (No.29), (4) Abolition of Forced Labour Convention in 1957 (No. 105), (5) Equal Remuneration Convention in 1951 (No.100), (6) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention in 1958 (No.111), (7) Minimum Age Convention in 1973 (No.138), and (8) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 1999 (No.182)[16]. Cambodia has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (which deals with the rights of women), on 15 October 1992[22].

At the regional level, Cambodia signed the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in 2007 in Cebu City, Philippines[4]. This declaration calls on both sending and receiving countries to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, including irregular migrant workers[23].

Cambodia has also signed bilateral cooperation memorandums with other countries that receive migrant workers from Cambodia. In 2003, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and the Government of Thailand. The aim of the MOU was to promote the process of recruiting migrant workers, protecting workers' rights, and

combating illegal cross-border and human trafficking. In December 2015, both the government of Thailand and Cambodia signed another MOU to expand the cooperation on labor issues, skills development and re-employment among migrant workers[1].

In May 2016, the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA) signed an MOU with the Malaysia National Association Employment Agencies (PIKAP) regarding Cambodian workers sent to Malaysia. The MOU seeks to make sure that the workers receive services such as protection, health and safety at workplaces, including training[1].

In July 2006, Sub-Decree No. 70 was issued by the RGC to regulate migrant workers who were sent to the Republic of Korea. Under this Sub-Decree, migrant workers were required to have an acceptable level of language and job skills in order to be qualified for employment[1].

In 2007, the RGC signed an MOU with the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO). Through this MOU, the Government of Japan offers jobs to Cambodian workers related to agriculture, fisheries, construction, food manufacturing, textiles, machinery and metal work. In order to get such jobs both female and male migrant workers must be 20 to 29 years old and pass the abilities test, a physical test and the interview[1].

#### ***4.2. Legal framework and national policies***

Cambodia has adopted several laws to protect migrant workers. These include the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims enacted in 2005; the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation enacted in 2008; and the Juvenile Justice Law enacted in 2016.

In addition to laws, in July 1995, Cambodia issued Sub-Decree No. 57 on Sending Khmer Workers to Work Abroad[19]. The aim of this Sub-Decree was to regulate the deployment of Cambodian workers who were sent to work in other countries by acknowledging the lack of employment opportunities and the need to improving standard of living of workers in the country[24]. Later, in August 2011, the Government of Cambodia issued another Sub-Decree No. 190, which renewed Sub-Decree 57 on the Management of Sending of Cambodian Workers Abroad through Private Recruitment Agencies. The purpose of this new Sub-Decree was to regulate framework for govern

labor migration, protect migrant workers, reduce poverty and improve human resource development[15].

In terms of policy documents, the Strategic Plan of the MoLVT 2014-2018, points out several strategies to manage and protect Cambodian workers abroad before and during migration. They include (1) improving working conditions through skills training, (2) capability building on technical and vocational skills, (3) creating jobs, (4) promoting and implementing laws on social security, and (5) strengthening healthcare services [25]. In addition, the Labor Migration Policy 2015-2018 (Phase 2) developed by the MoLVT had three objectives: (i) governance of Labor migration, (ii) protection and empowerment of women and men migrant workers, and (iii) harnessing labor migration for development[4].

Furthermore, in 2015, the RGC established the National Employment Policy (NEP) 2015-2025. This policy identifies three goals to be achieved: (i) to increase decent and productive employment opportunities, (ii) to enhance skills and human resource development, and (iii) to enhance labor market governance. Related to migration, this policy specifically seeks to oversee and protect migrant workers before and during their migration in obtaining decent employment and skills recognition through promoting governance, protecting and empowering migrant workers, strengthening service provision, improving information management systems and enforcing and promoting the implementation of the existing legal framework[26].

#### **4.3. Government institutions**

Key ministries responsible for addressing issues of migrant workers are the MoLVT, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoAF). The MoLVT, and specifically the Department of Employment and Manpower is the primary body responsible for governing labor migration and promoting the empowerment of Cambodian migrant workers by providing pre-departure orientation and training courses to workers. The MoLVT played an important role in providing knowledge to migrant workers on how to deal with working and living conditions abroad. It also played a role in promoting safe migration, decreasing vulnerability, lessening abuse, human trafficking and exploitation, and encouraging migrant workers' fulfill their obligation in workplaces[16].

In addition, the MoI, is accountable for arranging and preventing illegal recruitment and human trafficking[19]. Cambodia created a government body to be responsible for human trafficking issues called the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT), a national institution responsible for law implementation against human trafficking. The NCCT is chaired by the MoI at the national level. The NCCT had also established the National Plan of Action (NPA) 2014-2018 to prevent all forms of human trafficking and labor and sexual exploitation, to protect victims, and to enforce the law and punish perpetrators of human trafficking and labor and sexual exploitation[27]. Moreover, the MoFA is playing an important role in sharing all relevant documents and regulations related to migrant workers, helping legal labor migration and managing and resolving conflict between workers and their employers in receiving countries via Cambodian embassies[19].

#### ***4.4. Non-Government Organization Programs***

Several international and local NGOs have engaged in supporting migrant workers through implementing migration programs. For example, the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN program seeks to improve labor migration for equitable, inclusive and stable growth in ASEAN. It has established three main activities to promote fair migration: (1) protection of migrant workers by a labor migration governance framework, (2) development of policies and programs harnessing the potential of women and men migrant workers, and (3) gender-responsive labor mobility systems and the increase of efficiency of labor markets in the ASEAN region. TRIANGLE in ASEAN has been implemented in six countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) from 2015-2025[28].

The IOM had also implemented several projects through partnerships with the NCCT, MoFA, MoSA and MoSVY to protect migrant workers. For example, the project on “Addressing Migrant Vulnerabilities to Prevent Human Trafficking and Project Victims, Particular Children, in Target Special Economic Zones and Economic Corridors in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam” seeks to prevent trafficking and enhance the protection of vulnerable migrants within the Social Economic Zones and Economic Corridors in the three countries. The project on “Addressing the Rise and Needs of Vulnerable Migrant capacity of governments in GMS and Malaysia” seeks to raise awareness among migrant workers, to provide direct assistance to migrants including victims of trafficking and to reinforce action at the bilateral and regional levels[29].

Local NGOs, for example, the Cambodia Women's Crisis Center (CCWC) has created programs to provide safe and secure reintegration and repatriation for migrant workers who faced sex-trafficking and violence during their work migration[23] by facilitating access to legal services and guidance for economic and social reintegration; preventing violence against women; and advocating for legislative and policy reform to support the human rights of women[30]. Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW) and Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM) offer hotlines for counseling migrant workers who face problems or to families of victims who needed help[23].

## **5. Conclusion**

Cambodia has had an increase in female migrant workers migrating to work in other countries during the last ten years. With this trend, the impacts of international labor migration on female workers are numerous, ranging from increasing their wages and remittances to improving everyday living conditions of family members at home. There are also certain vulnerabilities female migrant workers face during and after their migration, which include trafficking, abuse, overwork and lack of payment and health issues. With the existing international and national frameworks and policies put in place, collaboration among stakeholders across countries to address the vulnerabilities and implementation and enforcement laws and policies are seen as key elements towards achieving safe migration for women in Cambodia. These initiatives will have to be continually assessed and evaluated to ensure their intended goals are achieved.

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