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## TRIANGLE in ASEAN: Safe and Fair Labour Migration – Independent Final Evaluation (Summary)

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** ASEAN Region, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, & Viet Nam

**Evaluation date:** [Click here to enter a date.](#)

**Evaluation type:** Project

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** TRIANGLE in ASEAN: Safe and Fair Labour Migration

**Technical Office:** MIGRANT

**Evaluation manager:** Phumphet Chetianonth

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**DC Symbol:** RAS/15/05/AUS, RAS/22/54/AUS & RAS/16/01/CAN

**Donor(s) & budget:** DFAT, AUD 24,000,000 and GAC, CAD 9,500,000

*Key Words: Migration, Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, Forced Labour*

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme is an amalgamation of two projects supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Canada's Global Affairs Canada (GAC) aimed at advancing migration governance in the ASEAN region that were merged in 2018.

The overall goal of the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme is to maximise the contribution of labour migration to stable and inclusive growth and development in the ASEAN region through more equitable distribution of benefits.

Intermediate Outcome 1 (Protection): All migrant workers are better protected by labour migration governance frameworks.

Intermediate Outcome 2 (Development): Policies and programmes enable all migrant workers to contribute to and benefit from economic and social development.

Intermediate Outcome 3 (Mobility): Labour mobility systems are gender-transformative and increase the efficiency of labour markets.

The programme is implemented regionally with the ASEAN Secretariat and has national activities in six countries, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, & Viet Nam. It is managed by a regional programme team of 4 programme and 2 finance and administration staff, and at the national level in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand by National Programme Coordinators (NPCs) and Finance and Administration Officers.

### Present situation of the project

The programme is funded by GAC until September 2024 and DFAT until September 2025 (the programme was originally funded until September 2027, but due to funding shortfalls the ILO and DFAT agreed to a truncated timeline for this phase of the programme.)

In the 2023 annual progress report, the programme was reported as being substantially on-course to achieve the outcomes of the programme, including most of the output and outcome indicators.

### Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This was a final evaluation. Given both the pending completion of this phase and the potential for a further phase, the evaluation focused both on assessing the progress towards achieving programme objectives and identifying lessons learned and potential investments into labour migration programmes after the current phase of TRIANGLE in ASEAN ends.

The evaluation covered the entire phase of the programme from inception in 2015 until the time of data collection in March 2023 including programming in all countries of implementation and at the regional level.

The main clients of the evaluation are the management of TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme, MIGRANT, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and ILO country offices, as well as the development partners of DFAT and GAC. Secondary users include the ASEAN Secretariat, regional employers' workers' and civil society representatives, and tripartite constituents plus at the national level.

### Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation utilised a mixed methods approach, relying mainly on qualitative data collection, that was triangulated with quantitative data the programme had collected through its monitoring processes. Methods included a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and the collection of stories of change. The evaluation consisted of a team leader and three national consultants for Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. The team leader conducted a data collection mission to Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand, and conducted remote interviews with stakeholders from Malaysia, regional partners, and individuals who could not be interviewed in-person on the data collection mission. The national consultants conducted in-person and remote KIIs and FGDs in their respective countries.

A total of 305 individuals (179 women, 126 men) participated in the evaluation in 103 individual and group interviews and 28 FGDs. This included 184 (88 women, 96 men) participants in KIIs and 121 (91 women, 30 men) participants in FGDs. 126 migrant workers (93 women, 33 men), 17 workers' representatives (3 women, 14 men), 6 employers' representatives (1 women, 5 men), 53 government officials (19 women, 34 men), 3 ASEAN Secretariat officials (1 woman, 2 men), 57 CSO and other partners officers (34 women, 23 men), 5 UN officials (2 women, 3 men), 10 development partner officials (9 women, 1 man) representatives, and 28 ILO Officials (17 women, 11 men) participated in KIIs and FGDs. The evaluators did not ask the participants if they identified as having a disability, but at least 6 persons with disabilities participated in the evaluation.

## MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the programme has registered considerable achievements in strengthening migration governance in the ASEAN region and empowering migrant workers to identify and demand their rights and access decent work. The strong partnerships and development of trust over the lengthy implementation period have been significant drivers of this. The needs related to migration governance in ASEAN are large and continuation of the programme beyond the current phase is important and offers the potential for sustained achievements in the future, tackling existing and emerging challenges in the region.

### Relevance

The relevance of the programme towards the needs of migrant workers, governments, employers, trade unions, and CSOs in the ASEAN region was found to be high. The programme has been

relevant at several levels, including supporting the Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) to implement its annual work plan, building technical capacity for national governments to draft and implement gender-responsive migration policies, and supporting provincial level actors to provide timely information and legal support for migrant workers. The programme also has significant alignment with ILO conventions, the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). The lack of NPCs in Malaysia and Viet Nam since 2019, and no national level programming Indonesia and the Philippines does mean certain gaps are not addressed by the programme.

**Key Finding 1:** The multi-faceted design has ensured relevance at the regional, national, and provincial level.

**Key Finding 2:** The programme aligns with the priorities of national governments and supports the dissemination of national policy to the provincial levels.

**Key Finding 3:** The programme addresses needs at the grassroots level, specifically linked to access to information and access to justice.

**Key Finding 4:** The Covid-19 response was not only effective but helped increase awareness among government stakeholders of the important role that CSOs and Trade Unions play in supporting migrant workers.

**Key Finding 5:** The programme has some gaps that have a minor impact on relevance including the geographical scope, the lack of provision of security training and mental health support for frontline MRC workers, and some bureaucratic challenges concerning outreach activities.

### Coherence and Validity of Design

The programme has utilised the ILO's comparative advantages effectively. The convening power of the ILO was identified as contributing to improved dialogue and the inclusion of workers' employers' and civil society organisations (CSOs) in key fora on migration governance at the national and regional level. This was supported by the ILO's technical expertise on international labour standards and its normative framework. The programme has also built comparative advantages during the period of implementation, notably the trust it has developed with the ACMW and other regional and national stakeholders, and the reputation for quality support the migrant worker resource centres (MRCs) have built.

**Key Finding 6:** The convening power of the ILO is seen as a significant strength of the programme by the tripartite constituents and CSOs.

**Key Finding 7:** The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has been able to collaborate effectively with other ILO programmes. Not all stakeholders are able to distinguish between TRIANGLE in ASEAN and other ILO's programmes on migration.

**Key Finding 8:** Some of the partners have built on synergies with other projects and thematic areas they work in.

**Key Finding 9:** There is room to expand collaboration with other programmes, particularly those working on trafficking in persons.

### **Intervention Progress and Effectiveness**

The programme is on-track to achieve its planned outcomes. It has achieved several successes at all levels of the programme that has been backed by key strengths. The ability of the programme to ensure data from the grassroots level influences policy discussions and decisions at the regional and national level, and that these policies are then implemented at the local level, supports these achievements.

**Key Finding 10:** The programme is on-track on almost all of its planned outcomes at the current stage of the programme.

**Key Finding 11:** Although substantially valid, the classification of some indicators should be reviewed, and the enabling factor of improved migrant worker empowerment is missing from both the results framework and theory of change.

**Key Finding 12:** Key achievements include, the development of women's groups, several changes in national policies, the adoption of ASEAN declarations, guidelines and tools, the development and refinement of the MRC model, contributing to the expansion of the body of evidence on migration, and improvements in social dialogue and tripartite plus relationships. These achievements have been facilitated by the strengths of the programme, including strong attention to gender and non-discrimination, the convening power of the ILO, the involvement and capacity building of CSOs, the multi-faceted nature of the programme, and the programme's length and flexibility that have contributed to strong and trustful partnerships.

**Key Finding 13:** Key challenges the programme has faced include budgetary limitations, persistent limited awareness among some key duty bearers about gendered differences faced by migrants, coordination between key ministries, national follow-up of the AFML process, and the military coup in Myanmar and the subsequent challenges in programming there.

### **Efficiency of Resource Use**

The programme has been implemented efficiently, utilising a tight budget to achieve substantial results, although some partners identified the constraints in implementing agreements as impacting quality to a certain degree. The amalgamation of the Australian and Canadian projects into one programme has been a success, strengthening the flexibility and coherence of approach, and supporting cost savings.

**Key Finding 14:** The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has utilised a tight budget effectively, following value for money principles. The distribution of resources appears reasonable.

**Key Finding 15:** The amalgamation of the two projects has strengthened the programme, allowing more flexibility to respond to programming needs, more resources for project activities, and savings on administrative costs. Aligning the two funding periods would strengthen efficiency by providing greater certainty to the ILO and the programme partners. The budgetary shortfall that led to the removal of NPCs and Admin and Finance Assistants in Malaysia and Viet Nam, has reduced efficiency.

**Key Finding 16:** Allowing greater flexibility in the budgets for implementing partners and increasing budget areas in lines might support increased quality of performance and thus improve efficiency.

### Effectiveness of Management Arrangements

The ILO has set up an effective management system, backed by strong planning documents and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. The programme team was praised by most stakeholders for the quality and timeliness of the support it provides, and while the programme is quite staff-heavy, this is justified both by the level of technical support provided for policy making, and the fact the programme team develops many of the knowledge tools itself, rather than relying on outside consultants.

**Key Finding 17:** The programme is effectively managed with clear roles and responsibilities and a high satisfaction among partners about the level of support given to them by NPCs and the regional team.

**Key Finding 18:** The monitoring and evaluation system is comprehensive and supports the adaptive management in the programme. It can manage the collection of data for a diverse range of sources. Continuing to strengthen the capacities of MRC partners to collect data, particularly focused on the changes the programme is contributed is needed.

### Impact Orientation and Sustainability

The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has contributed to several important impacts including at the national and regional policy making level, and directly for migrant workers at the grassroots level. However, the challenges remain in the region and migration levels are expected to continue to increase. As such, continued programming from the ILO that supports the ASEAN Secretariat, national governments, and other tripartite plus constituents is needed.

**Key Finding 19:** Changes in national and regional policies have been supported by the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme and should contribute to durable changes.

**Key Finding 20:** The MRCs have contributed to the empowerment of many migrant workers, particularly women's groups. Considering empowerment more broadly in all activities could be considered.

**Key Finding 21:** Ownership of the programme was strong by stakeholders at all levels of the programme.



**Key Finding 22:** While there is some evidence of stakeholders making financial or other commitments to continuing the work if support from the ILO were ended, responses on this were mixed, and there would be some reduction in the level of activities in many areas.

**Key Finding 23:** Although there has been significant progress, considerable efforts are still needed to address existing and emerging needs for migration governance. A future programme phase would help address these. Priorities identified during the evaluation included continued work on the portability of social security and skill recognition, continued support to Myanmar and Lao PDR, the inclusion of Indonesia and the Philippines, full teams in Viet Nam and Malaysia, addressing emerging issues of forced labour such as scam centres, and climate change.

### Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion

The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has applied a twin-track approach to gender equality and women's empowerment since the start of programming, including a target of devoting 20% of its programme budget to gender specific activities. It has over-achieved this target, with 25.7% of budget being utilised in this manner since 2015, and more recently over 30% in the last two years. While gender blind attitudes do continue to exist among some stakeholders, attitude change and significant results in gender sensitive policy making have been achieved. More recently the programme has focused on improving its attention to disability inclusion, and although it is too early to see significant results, the planned approaches and willingness of key stakeholders to engage on this, along with the consultation with organisations of persons with disabilities shows a strong potential to provide innovative programming that showcase good practices to other ILO programmes.

**Key Finding 23:** Attention to women migrants is a significant strength of the programme

**Key Finding 24:** There is some evidence of changes in attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation

**Key Finding 25:** The disability inclusion work is new to the programme. However, there is already evidence in some locations of awareness of the need to strengthen capacities and improve programming on disability inclusion. This provides a solid platform for innovative approaches from the programme in the future.

**Key Finding 26:** In addition to ensuring programming is disability inclusive, TRIANGLE in ASEAN has the opportunity to be a model for the ILO internally on how a programme can holistically address different indicators in the ILO's Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

**Key Finding 27:** Gender budgeting has been a useful tool for the programme to monitor its work on gender equality. Highlighting the different percentages of the budgeting is for gender equality, SOGIECS issues, and disability inclusion would strengthen this further. The programme should share

experiences of gender budgeting to TRIANGLE in ASEAN's implementing partners and other offices in the ILO.

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Main findings & Conclusions

1. Fund a further phase of the programme.
2. Align funding periods if possible.
3. Review the classification of results framework indicators and adjust during the design of any future phase.
4. Revisit the theory of change when developing the next phase of the programme and build in descriptions of how the outcomes interact and include areas that are currently missing from the programme.
5. Support campaigns focused on the ratification of C189 and C190.
6. Identify if there are funding opportunities that would allow the joint funding of NPC positions in Malaysia and Viet Nam.
7. If funding can be identified, expand the programme to include national activities in Indonesia and the Philippines.
8. Continue to ensure a strong focus on sectors and topics that support gender transformative policies.
9. Continue to roll out disability equality training and build the capacity of partners on disability inclusion as well as identifying other areas in the operational side of the programme where disability inclusion can be improved such as procurement, recruitment, and the accessibility of publications.
10. Develop short key message briefings to accompany select knowledge products.
11. Clarify with partners that migrants without IDs are still eligible to attend programme events. Ensure that this is understood by the finance team.
12. Continue to identify ways to partner with ASEAN ACT.
13. Continue to share the successes of the programme with other regional and country offices, and globally through HQ and among programme partners.
14. Provide security training and PSS support for front-line CSO and trade union workers.
15. Where feasible provide funds for implementing partners to train their partners.
16. Work with national governments to provide more opportunities for non-government partners to participate in AFML related activities throughout the year.

### Main lessons learned and Good Practices

#### Lessons Learned

- While ensuring there is not wastage in implementation agreements is positive, if the budget is too tight it can harm quality and end up reducing efficiency as a result.



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- Where budgetary restrictions in a regional programme limits national staffing, identifying programmes to share staffing positions with, at least mitigates some of the gaps caused by the shortfall.

**Good Practices**

- The development of women's migrant groups is an important support function for women's empowerment.
- Ensuring a regional programme has strong connections to grassroots implementation strengthens the credibility of the intervention as it supports the collection of evidence at the grass-root level that supports evidence-based programming and advocacy at the national and regional level.
- A long programme with flexibility from its donors strengthens trust and helps build relationships, and ultimately improves the quality of the end product.
- The exposure of CSO officers and government officials to OPD representatives at an early stage in disability inclusion programming strengthens awareness of common challenges and solutions, and helps ensure programmes follow the 'nothing about us, without us' principles.