



7 August 2025

Subject: Concerns about the situation of Cambodian migrant workers and recommendations from civil society organization

Dear Minister of Labour,

Pursuant to the violent clashes at the Thailand-Cambodia border and the ensuing consequences until now, Migrant Working Group (MWG) has found the main reason that drove many Cambodian migrant workers to return to their country could be attributed to their lack of confidence in their personal safety. It stems from the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia which has since descended into personal conflicts thanks to the rise of nationalism. While most Cambodian migrant workers do not trust that their government will be able to supply them with sufficient jobs and proper remuneration if they decide to return home, while lingering in Thailand, they do not find themselves safe as well due to a lack of communication from either the government and concerned agencies to ensure their safety.

At present, more than 300,000 Cambodian migrant workers have already returned to their country unrelentingly. To address the problem of labour shortage, the Ministry of Labour issued a notification to solve this problem by recruiting more workers from Sri Lanka. While, MWG agrees that it is vitally important to acquire supplemental labour to address such labour shortage, it is perhaps more important to stop the flight of such workers to give Thailand sufficient time to manage the situation and to alleviate the risk of facing a sudden labour shortage.

As a lack of safety among Cambodian migrant workers has expanded, it has been reported that some of them have been subject to harassment of their freedom and physical assault even in remote area along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Meanwhile the existing state or police mechanisms fail to assure people about their safety and access to justice. Although the existing harassments have yet to lead to severe losses or injuries, it is an indictment of the perpetuation of hate crime which should be recognized by the state and concrete measures must be meted out to cope with them.



In light of the above situation, MWG offers the following recommendation from the perspective of a civil society organization for the management of Cambodian migrant workers;

Urgent issues

1. The Ministry of Labour should issue notifications and public release to assure that all the remaining migrant workers in Thailand shall be afforded with protection comprehensively according to the Thai law. Coordination should also be made with the Royal Thai Police to promptly investigate reported cases of physical abuse, intimidation and harassment against migrant workers transparently. Such information should then be publicized to restore confidence among investors, employers and migrant workers. A legal action must be seriously taken against those who spread hatred-induced information to incite hatred against migrant workers and to encourage the public to refrain from doing so.
2. A hotline should be set up for migrant workers to report any emergencies with interpretation services and with help from field operation staff from the Department of Employment (DoE) and civil society organizations. Such information should be spread to make the employers and migrant workers feel confident. An effort should be made to raise the awareness of employers and migrant workers about such grievance mechanisms and to facilitate the acquisition of personal documents of the migrant workers and assist them regarding labour rights issues such as when being laid off, how to reclaim unpaid wage, etc.
3. Establish a Border Taskforce Office which the outgoing workers may contact to seek help to ensure the migrant workers have access to grievance mechanisms and their legal rights, i.e. workers who were denied their wage before leaving the country. In addition, MWG has found some Cambodian migrant workers who want to return to their country, but their personal documents have been kept by either their employers or recruitment agencies, probably due to the need to process the documents. As a result, such migrant workers may not be able to make the journey home legally.
4. The Ministry of Labour should urgently develop measures to mitigate labour shortage, particularly in agricultural sector in border area of the Thai employers. An amnesty should be granted to allow migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam who have



passports and have received visa stamps to apply for work permits regardless if their visas are still valid, or if they have overstayed their visas. This can be done through a resolution issued by the cabinet with an approval from the Foreigners' Working Management Policy Commission invoking Section 17 of the Immigration Act and Section 14 and 63/2 of the Foreigners' Working Management Emergency Decree to allow them to continue to live and work in Thailand temporarily up to one year to address seasonal labour shortage in the Thailand-Cambodia border area which has immediate need.

Measures to address labour shortage

5. May the government, the Ministry of Labour and the Foreigners' Working Management Policy Commission proceed to allow migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam who have yet to acquire work permit to continue to live and work in Thailand temporarily up to two years. Such proceeding should be conducted through the One-Stop Service Center (OSS) to facilitate the prompt acquisition of labour to replace the Cambodian migrant workers who have returned to their country and to address a shortage of migrant labour.
6. Consider to extend the deadline for the renewal of work permits of Cambodian migrant workers pursuant to the cabinet resolution on 24 September 2024 and other cabinet resolutions whose deadline is within 13 August 2025 since it has been found that many Cambodian migrant workers have not been able to process their renewal in time due to delay in acquiring the certified documents from their country of origin, and their inability to apply for a new passport due to border closure and the suspension of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Cambodia. Therefore, the deadline should be moved up to another six months, to until 13 February 2026, similar to what has been granted for the Myanmar migrant workers. In addition, the requirement of visa stamps should also be waived to prevent the Cambodian migrant workers from becoming undocumented and to minimize expense incurred from the processing of such papers by the employers and the migrant workers.
7. Consider granting an amnesty to the Cambodian migrant workers who have been recruited via MoU and whose permission to work is about to expire since they have been working for



four years in Thailand. The Ministry of Labour should also promptly issue measures to renew work permits for such workers by proceeding to unilaterally register them in Thailand to prevent them from becoming undocumented due to the recruitment requirements.

Middle and long-term management

8. Develop measures to cater to the Cambodian migrant workers who want to return to work in Thailand, set up a temporary coordination point at the main border checkpoints to allow workers who want to return to get pre-registered, or to allow the employers to request to the Ministry of Labour /local Offices of Employment. This can be done by having the cabinet issue a resolution to create a Fast Track for Cambodian migrant workers who has a profile of previously working in Thailand. Such existing database should be utilized to minimize time and cost to facilitate their return to work in Thailand systematically and to waive the requirement of a re-entry visa to the Cambodian migrant workers who have left the country during the border clashes. This can help to lessen the burden and facilitate their return to work in the country and to ensure measures are meted out to keep them safe during their travel.
9. The Ministry of Labour should explore ways to collaborate and make employers feel confident and encourage them to convince the workers to stay in the country. The Ministry of Labour should consider offering assistance to the employers who have been affected by both the clashes and any violence against the migrant workers. An effort should be made to negotiate to streamline the procedure, to lower the fees, and to facilitate the recruitment of workers via MoU in order to upkeep the flexibility and fairness of the recruitment process. Initially, a subcommittee should be set up to explore and develop ways to recruit workers via MoU under the Foreigners' Working Management Policy Commission. It should be tasked to explore and develop recommendations to revise detail of the MoU made with the countries of origin and to propose measures and methods to ensure prompt, convenient and low-cost MoU-worker recruitment.
10. The Ministry of Labour should consider set up a local taskforce to address labour shortage at the Thailand-Cambodia border area involving concerned agencies, employers and farmers



who employ migrant workers, academic and civil society sector. They should function to assess the impact of labour shortage and to develop policy recommendations to the Ministry of Labour and the government. In a long run, the Ministry of Labour should consider using a semi-decentralized management approach to allow the provincial authorities to manage the issues based on local situations and local issues.

Please be informed and take action.

With respect,

Migrant Working Group (MWG)

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