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UN House, 3rd Floor, Lane Xang Avenue

P.O. Box 345 Vientiane

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Tel.: +856 (21) 26 7734; +856 (20) 020 222 0565

Fax: +856 (21) 267799 Email: IOMVientiane2@iom.int

Website: www.iom.int/countries/lao-peoples-democratic-republic

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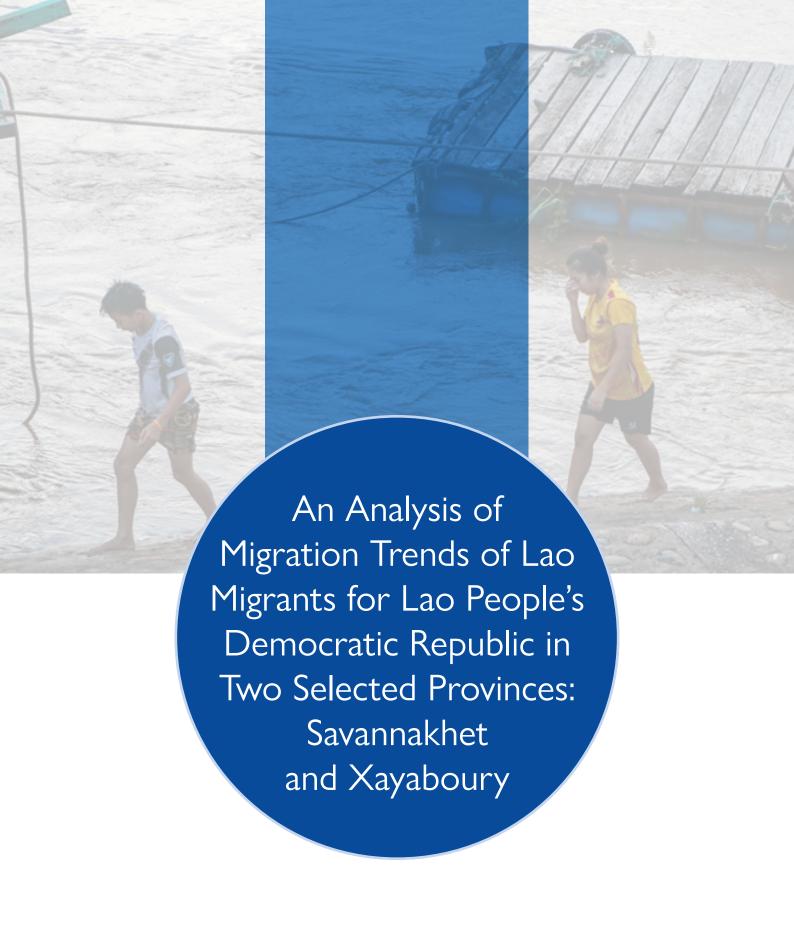
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FOREWORD

In 2020, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) – under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW) – and IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic conducted the research study on migration trends in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in two targeted selected provinces: Savannakhet and Xayaboury. The study focused on the inbound and outbound flow of migrants, demographic and economic determinants, migrant profiles, estimates of numbers and gaps in both immigration and social service and social protection provisions, including the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's migration patterns, as well as any increased drivers of vulnerability that may change the trafficking landscape in the Lao People's Democratic Republic or increase Laotians' susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking. This study was made possible thanks to the ongoing collaboration between MOLSW and IOM, as well as between the Labour and Social Welfare sector at central and local levels, along with technical and financial support by IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The research report presents some statistical findings related to the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, helping readers have a better understanding of the migration situation. The research provides evidence for policymakers and service providers in identifying solutions on prevention and support, including the urgent response strategies to address these migration issues.

On behalf of SWD and IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic, we would like to express our gratitude to the research team and all participating actors for the successful collaboration in completing this research. The research is made possible through the generous support of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) within the United States Department of State under the Asia Regional Migration Programme, implemented by IOM in collaboration with MOLSW.

We sincerely hope this research report will be useful as a guiding document in national development plans to counter human trafficking. We look forward to receiving comments and feedbacks from readers to further improve upcoming studies, with the goal to develop a comprehensive understanding on migration trends, as well as further inform researchers, programme officers and data users. Ultimately, we hope to support all actors in safe migration governance and protection of migrants' rights efforts.

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Vongkham PHANTHANOUVONG
Director General
Social Welfare Department
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

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Shareen TULADHAR
Chief of Mission
IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CSO	civil society organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFTU	Lao Federation Trade Union
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
MOLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
TiP	trafficking in person
VFI	Village Focus International
VoT	victim of trafficking
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions of migration-related terminology are derived from IOM's 2019 Glossary on Migration (IOM, 2019a).

Bilateral labour arrangements: All forms of bilateral arrangements between States, regions and public institutions that provide for the recruitment and employment of foreign short- or long-term labour.

Note: Bilateral labour arrangements is a broader term, compared to bilateral labour agreements, encompassing non-legal arrangements such as memorandums of understanding, as well as "non-governmental" arrangements, for example arrangements between national employment agencies in different countries.

Certificate of identity: A document (other than a passport) issued by a government to an individual, usually a non-national, proving his or her identity in order to facilitate his or her entry into or exit from the State.

Country of destination: In the migration context, a country that is the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they have migrated regularly or irregularly.

Country of origin: In the migration context, a country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they have migrated regularly or irregularly.

Documented migrant worker: A migrant worker or members of his or her family authorized to enter, to stay and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.

Exploitation: The act of taking advantage of something or someone, in particular the act of taking unjust advantage of another for one's own benefit.

Low-skilled migrant worker: A migrant worker whose level of education, occupational experience or qualifications make them eligible to practice a typically low-skilled occupation only.

Migration: The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

Migrant worker: A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

Passport: A document issued by the competent authority of a State, valid for international travels, which identifies the holder as a national of the issuing State and constitutes evidence of the holder's right to return to that State.

Returnee migrant worker: A person returning to the country of citizenship after having been an international migrant (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who intends to stay in the country for at least one year.

Reintegration: A process that enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life.

Social protection: The set of public and private policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation.

Travel document: A document issued by a government or by an international organization which is accepted as a proof of identity for the purpose of crossing international borders.

Note: Passports are the most widely used forms of travel documents. Some States also accept identity cards or other documents, such as residence permits or border passes.

Tourist: A person who does not reside in the country of arrival and is admitted to that country temporarily (under tourist visas if required) for purposes of leisure, recreation, holiday, visits to friends or relatives, health or medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage. A tourist must spend at least a night in a collective or private accommodation in the receiving country and the duration of his or her stay must not surpass 12 months.

Undocumented migrant worker: A migrant who is not authorized to enter, to stay and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.

Victim of trafficking: A victim shall mean any natural person who has directly suffered in his or her physical or mental health, dignity, freedoms or his/her property resulting from all forms of trafficking in persons.

Work permit: A legal document issued by a competent authority of a State authorizing a migrant worker to be employed in the country of destination during the period of validity of the permit.



1.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights key findings from an analysis of the impacts on migration patterns, social impacts, as well as any increased drivers of vulnerability that may change the trafficking landscape in Lao People's Democratic Republic or increase Laotians' susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking. The report also highlights the impact of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) on migration and human trafficking.

Migration trends in Lao People's Democratic Republic: Migration is a coping strategy for survival for many young Laotians to improve their economic status and support the family. Lack of employment and choices, particularly lack of job security and low wages, are key contributing factors pushing numbers of Lao people to leave their hometown to seek better opportunities abroad. The number of Lao people migrating to neighbouring countries, mainly Thailand, is increasing every year; from 122,437 people in 2014, it increased to 277,845 people in 2018 due to a high demand for low-skilled labour in Thailand particularly for the service, infrastructure, manufacturing and agriculture sectors (Department of Skills Development and Employment, 2020a).

Impact of COVID-19 on the migration and human trafficking landscape: Typically, migration and anti-human trafficking are seen as sensitive work requiring multi-stakeholder collaboration and approaches. Government response to COVID-19 at both destination and origin countries have made the efforts on safe migration and anti-human trafficking works retrograde. Due to lockdown policies at destination countries, more than a hundred thousand Lao migrant workers lost their jobs or were forced to leave their jobs (World Food Programme (WFP), 2020). At the end of March 2020, there was a large influx of returning Lao migrant workers who crossed the borders, both through formal and informal channels across the country due to joblessness and fear of COVID-19 infection. Approximately, 200,000 Lao migrant workers returned from Thailand since March 2020 (IOM, 2020), and many more still continue to return due to joblessness and high living cost in the destination country due to wage reduction.

The number of victims of trafficking (VoTs) have decreased during the last few years; 105 in 2015 decreased to 25 cases in 2017. Due to COVID impact, delayed legal procedures and support for VoTs at destination countries, and increased accommodation costs expose migrants to more vulnerabilities. At origin countries, necessary assistance for VoTs could not be made at the earliest stage due to COVID response regulations. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and service providers could not follow up and provide support for those pushback cases at border checkpoints since early 2020, minimizing the legal and social support available.

Government and development partners were not able to conduct outreach activities during the lockdown period, which also caused delays in programme implementation thus preventing the reach to different target beneficiaries. Government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), experienced increased workload in responding to labour migration management and unemployment issues. Numbers of national and regional workshops and seminars related to labour migration and human trafficking have been postponed due to the COVID situation.

The initial COVID response policies and regulations in both destination and origin countries are not migrant inclusive. Most of the current interventions and budget focus on COVID response and prevention, however, lack concrete actions to address the needs and priorities of migrant workers and their families, such as labour movement and socioeconomic impacts on communities of origin, host communities and migrants' and their families.

Impact on migrant workers: Returned migrant workers have received basic information about COVID-19 risks and prevention at both destination and origin countries. However, they faced the lack of social support, particularly the absence of potential VoT identification and screening amid the large influx of returning migrant workers to the origin country, at border checkpoints, quarantine centres and their communities.

Many migrant workers lack knowledge on social security benefits and rights, and some were not paid the last salary by their employer prior to departure, while very few of them have received social security funds they are entitled to in the destination country. Undocumented migrant workers are often unable to lodge complaints in the case of labour exploitation and abuse due to fear of punishment under the Immigration Law, being put in detention centres and forced to return. These migrants were those who crossed the border as tourists using travel documents, such as passport and certificate of identity.

Due to the lack of protection mechanisms, long waiting times at border checkpoints and multiple quarantine requirements at national, provincial and community levels upon returning to Lao People's Democratic Republic, many migrant workers experienced multiple challenges, such as exploitation by employers, brokers and authorities in the destination country, limited access to health services and food, insufficient information about border crossing, quarantine and regulations, as well as high living costs and accommodation when waiting at border checkpoints and during quarantined. All of which make them financially vulnerable.

Community- and household-level impact: Upon returning to their community, migrant workers faced stigma from their family members and villagers due to fear of virus infection. This restricts them from engaging in social and cultural activities and limits their access to information, employment and support.

Due to the very limited employment opportunities at the local level, particularly in Savannakhet due to business closure, relatively low-paying job offers between 500,000–1,000,000 Lao kip (LAK) per month (55–110 United States dollars (USD)¹) were created, an amount that can barely accommodate family expenditures and living cost.

Returned migrant workers and their families experienced financial difficulties caused by the absence of income and remittances. Migrants' families, particularly those who rely on remittances as the sole source of income in the past, are the most affected group as they receive decreased or no remittances at all. Many migrant workers and their families became indebted to informal lenders with high interest rates. Those living in urban and semi-urban areas without agriculture activities appear to be more impacted due to financial and food security vulnerability. Undocumented migrant workers, especially women, are among the

most vulnerable as they usually work in the informal sectors and are not protected by social security policies at both destination and origin countries.

In Xayaboury province, returned migrant workers and their families who are able to access land use appear to be less impacted in terms of financial and food security, as they have access to water and rely on agricultural production activities all year round. Nevertheless, most of the migrant workers in both provinces reported that they can afford to cover family expenditures and living costs only for the next few months (end of November 2020). Most of them have no financial recovery plan and no knowledge of financial literacy and small business set-up, information and available services. Those who rely on agricultural productions are faced with climate change problems and expect that their harvested products are likely to be shortfall; many families are at risk of debt cycle, particularly migrants' families in Savannakhet.

Most respondents, both migrant workers and their parents, experienced mental health challenges caused by unemployment, lack of income and financial struggles. Young returnees, especially men, reported higher alcohol consumption for stress relief. Male returning migrant workers seemed to have more choices in access to employment opportunities at urban and local levels and have more independence in term of decision-making in job seeking compared to women migrant workers. Women migrant workers, after returning to their communities, are back to their traditional roles and enter unpaid work, leaving them more vulnerable to access to employment, services and information.

1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study draws on two main sources of data: (a) literature review on migration trends; and (b) survey data collected in August 2020 from 22 organizations, including relevant government and private agencies, 62 returned migrants and 47 parents of returned migrants in Vientiane Capital, Savannakhet and Xayaboury. The analysis of this study covers the period 2019–2020.

The literature review explores the various ways that low employment and income are linked to migration trends, with a particular focus on studies within Lao's People Democratic Republic. Specifically, the literature review describes the ways that these facts shape migration decision-making; moreover, it explores the role of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on migrants' experiences and journey in destination/host countries. The primary aim of this study is to give an understanding of social impacts and key vulnerabilities associated with recent unemployment, lack of social protection benefits, potential health risks and challenges on return to local communities, including inclusion and social cohesion and changes in gender dynamics.

The survey was conducted by a national consultant with support from IOM, as well as central, provincial and district government staff of the Department of Labour and Social Welfare to selected areas of study. The methodology includes the following:

- (a) Key informant interviews (KII) at the central and provincial levels in Vientiane Capital, Savannakhet and Xayaboury.
 - 22 KIIs were conducted with 22 key stakeholders working on labour migration and anti-human trafficking including government agencies, United Nations, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), local service providers and private sectors.
- (b) Focus group discussions (FGDs) in 10 villages of 2 selected provinces in Savannakhet and Xayaboury. The recruitment is coordinated with district and village authorities to identify and gather target individuals for interview.
 - 10 FGDs were conducted among 62 recently returned migrant workers from Thailand, of those 49 are women (13 men), aged between 18 and 40 years old. Of them, 42 per cent are undocumented migrant (passport, certificate of identity) workers and 83.8 per cent dropped out of schools at primary or secondary education before migrating; 2 of them never entered schools, and 3 graduated higher education;
 - 10 FGDs were also carried out among 47 parents and migrants' family members, of those 26 are women (21 men).

The research applied qualitative assessment methodology; the methodology and data collection tools and sampling are designed by a national consultant with consultations and approvals from IOM and the department of social welfare, MOLSW. The survey tools developed for three target groups are as follows:

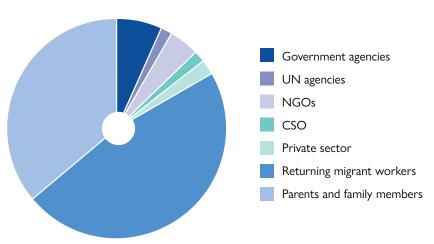
- KII asked questions on a range of topics relating to their role in response to migration
 and anti-human trafficking works in their target provinces, key issues on migration
 patterns in implementing activities, challenges and strategies for addressing labour
 migration and anti-human trafficking works during the emergency response, and
 recommendations for the future plan.
- Returned migrant FGD discussed on a range of topics pertaining to migrants'
 experiences, including migration trends, social impacts and key vulnerabilities
 associated with recent employment, social protection benefits, potential health
 risks and challenges on return to local communities, including inclusion and social
 cohesion and changes in gender dynamics and recommendations to enhance
 provision services and emergency response.
- Migrants' parents or family members FGD discussed on the current household financial situation, their concern for the well-being of their family members or relatives who are still working or struck abroad due to lockdown regulations, available support from the community, government and projects during COVID-19, household impact, needs and recommendation.

Table 1. Background of respondents by type and gender

Respondent type	Total	Men	Women
Government agencies	9	5	4
UN agencies	2	1	1
NGOs	6	6	-
CSOs	2	2	-
Private sector (recruitment agencies)	3	1	2
Returning migrant workers	62	49	13
Parent and family members	47	26	21
Total	131	90	41

Source: Author's elaboration based on primary data of the study.

Figure 1. Respondents by agencies



Source: Author's elaboration based on primary data of the study.

Savannakhet is one of the provinces with the highest number of Lao migrant workers working in and returning from Thailand since the beginning of 2020. Xayaboury province is the only province in the north that shares a land border with Thailand. In order to cover the different geographical areas, as well as understand the different aspects of migration patterns, Savannakhet and Xayaboury were selected for this study.

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Figure 2. Map of study areas

Source: Map created by Arc GIS programme.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.



IOM staff sharing safe migration information with villagers. © IOM 2020/Karen HO

1.3. LIMITATIONS

Due to limitations in resources and time, and that travelling to remote provinces during the rainy season is often difficult, only two provinces were covered under this study. As most of the study areas are located in urban and semi-urban areas, there was limited access to the most vulnerable population, who often reside in rural setting. Rural populations' challenges, experiences and needs may differ from the selected groups, particularly ethnic migrants who may require specific recommendations and approaches to address their challenges.

The small sample size of migrant workers and their families may not be adequately representative, to an extent that limits the accuracy of the findings. Since FGDs were carried out at the village offices, the venue and the presence of officials might have discouraged open discussion and sharing of ideas on sensitive issues. Moreover, the study did not include interviews with employers in Lao People's Democratic Republic or destination countries. To better understand the current employment landscape, it is suggested that future studies incorporate opinions from employers and the private sector.

Data on the number of official returnee VoTs from Thailand by sex and year is available only between 2015 and 2017. Efforts were made by the research team to obtain latest statistics but could not be provided, although it provides a good indication of what the potential numbers were in 2015–2017 and can be compared once recent data becomes available.

1.4. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are developed based on the priorities and needs of returning migrant workers as a result of the consultation with multiple stakeholders, migrant workers and their families.



The research consultant is conducting the focus group discussion with Lao migrants' parents in Savannakhet province. © IOM 2020/Khanithalath KOUMMARASY

Short term

- (a) Organize dialogue and consultation between government and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic working on labour migration to discuss and identify concrete actions in responding to the current impact on migration and antihuman trafficking with particular focus on socioeconomic impacts.
- (b) Strengthen and put in place the identification and screening mechanism in both destination and origin countries, working closely with NGOs and service providers at local level to strengthen capacity of local government officials.
- (c) Allocate more budget for outreach activities at community level; strengthen and promote more effective information and communication activities.
- (d) Strengthen and expand financial services and implement financial literacy training at community level; ensure that target people, particularly the most vulnerable groups, are able to access a small credit scheme with low interest with particular focus on women migrant workers and their families.
- (e) Ensure that the available mental health services include migrant workers and their families; promote increased access to information at community level.
- (f) Ensure the national COVID-19 response policies and regulation are inclusive of migrants.

Medium term

(g) Provide technical support and assistance in subnational level to develop employment and income generation security plan and mechanism with focus on gender-sensitive migration approach.

- (h) Strengthen efforts and implement reintegration and outreach programme with focus on unemployed population, poor families, families that solely rely on remittances, women migrant-headed households, women migrants with many children and vulnerable groups with limited access to land use and agricultural production activities.
- (i) Strengthen consular services and the role of labour attachés in destination countries such as establishing necessary helplines, websites, focal points in line ministries and information exchange that target the specific needs of Lao migrant workers, including information services, legal assistance and humanitarian support to Lao migrant workers in destination countries.

Long term

- (j) Strengthen government effort to ensure the implementation and enforcement of Law on Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons, Labour Law and Minimum Wage Regulation and Social Security Plan of Action; ensure women and men have equal pay and benefits with particular focus on rural areas and informal sectors.
- (k) Implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee's Concluding Observations for Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2018, with particular focus on recommendations no. 28 on trafficking and exploitation; no. 38 on employment; no. 44 on economic and social benefits; no. 46 on rural women; and no. 48 on migrant women (United Nations, 2018).
- (I) For future programme design and interventions, donors and development partners should focus on both internal and cross-border migration for skills development, employment promotion and income generation programmes.



2.1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

IOM in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in collaboration with the department of social welfare, MOLSW, commissioned this analysis.

The aim of this research is to look at the migration trends for Lao People's Democratic Republic, focusing on the inbound and outbound flow of migrants, demographic and economic determinants, migrant profiles, estimates of numbers and gaps in both immigration and social service and social protection provisions, including the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's migration patterns, as well as impacts on human trafficking and irregular migration.

This analysis is expected to inform future policymaking of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and early recovery plans to be implemented by UN agencies, as well as recommendations for future service provision and support for vulnerable groups.

2.1.1. Objective of the research

This study aims to access and generate data on the migration trends for inbound and outbound flow of migrants, including migrant profiles, demographic and economic determinants, estimates of numbers and gaps in both immigration and social services and social protection provisions pre COVID-19, including potential health risks and challenges on return to their communities and change in gender dynamics.

This study is designed to explore if there are any increased drivers of vulnerability that may change the migration and human trafficking landscape or increase Laotians' susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking at national level, as well as in two provinces with high migrant returns, anticipating different possible scenarios. The findings from this study will be shared and discussed with development partners and government counterparts to provide evidence for government policymaking and budget allocation priorities, anticipate future challenges and inform programmatic responses of social nature to mitigate and minimize risks to the population across the region, particularly the most vulnerable sectors and groups.

2.2. MIGRATION IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

2.2.1. Overview and data

Lao People's Democratic Republic is mostly considered as a sending country, to a lesser extent a transit country for Vietnamese migrant workers to migrate and work in Thailand. An estimated 7 per cent of the Lao population of approximately 300,000–400,000 is migratory, and more than 50 per cent of them are women (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2019a). Lao migrant workers in Thailand mainly work in domestic work, construction, industrial, agriculture and entertainment work in bordering provinces and urban cities across Thailand. Financial remittances from migrant workers are a substantial source of revenue for Lao People's Democratic Republic. An estimated remittance value of USD 254 million is sent by migrant workers in 2019 (World Bank, 2020a).

Migration is a specific type of population movement from a place of origin to a place of destination across some kind of administrative boundary, with absence from the place of origin for a period of time. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, internal migration is defined as a change in a person's usual place of residence across a district boundary. The minimum period of residence in another district is usually defined as 12 months. International migration is normally defined as a change in a person's usual place of residence across an international border with a minimum period of 12 months (ILO, 2019a). In the case of migration data from the population census 2015, migration is defined in terms of a change in the usual place (district) of residence since the previous census, giving a measure of intercensal migration. Lifetime migration data is also available from the censuses and is defined as a change in the usual place (district) of residence from the place (district) of birth.

Policymakers and donor discussions in the past have primarily focused on international migration and the outflow of Lao migrant workers seeking work in Thailand. More recently, the inflow of foreign workers from neighbouring countries, especially China and Viet Nam, have played a significant role in national economic development.

With the recent trend, the Government has become more interested in internal migration, as development has created an increasing number of new investments that attracts increasing numbers of people from rural areas to work in the city. The growth of industry around the capital and along the Thai border have also attracted more Laotians to migrate and seek work. Concerns arise as high levels of outmigration from rural and more isolated areas and in-migration into cities such as Vientiane Capital tends to exacerbate existing differences in development and access to services, causing social problems (ibid.). This has also increased the level of interest in internal migration among policymakers.

One major challenge for labour migration and Anti-human trafficking efforts from the Government and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic is the lack of data. Migration is an ongoing human movement, and tracking migration data is always difficult for the labour management sector and other sectors working in migration. Obtaining key data requires vast investment in new technologies (capacity-building, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining a data system) (ibid.). The need for a labour database and labour market information system was identified in the 2009 National Human Development Report. However, while labour migration is an issue of concern to policymakers, collecting usable data on migration comes with technical challenges. The need for a labour database and development is still the main discussion issue of labour migration management in Lao People's Democratic Republic at the moment; development partners need to discuss and come up with a concrete action plan on how to move this forward based on the Government's plan. Much of the available data on migration has been collected in an ad-hoc manner to address administrative needs of the individual agencies that collect it, with little reference to its potential use for policymaking or programming (ibid.).

At present, different agencies are collecting different data on labour migration and trafficking in persons (TiP). Data coordination among intergovernmental agencies is one of the main challenges for both technical specialists and policymakers. At the moment, most available data can only be accessed through offline modalities. Table 2 shows different data on labour migration and TiP collected by different agencies in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Table 2. Labour migration and trafficking in persons data by agencies

Type of data	Organizations
Data on foreign workers in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Lao migrant workers in Thailand	Department of Skills Development and Employment, MOLSW
Data on regular/registered migrant workers and pre-departure training	Department of Skills Development and Employment, MOLSW
	Recruitment agencies
Data on rural-urban migration	Social Welfare Department (SWD), MOLSW
Data on border crossing	Immigration Department, Ministry of Public Security (MOPS)
Data on registered foreign workers working in Lao People's Democratic	Department of Skills Development and Employment, MOLSW
Republic	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Data on migration and remittances	Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment
Case data on trafficking, exploitation reported to embassies	Department of Consular, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Data on domestic workers and intending migrants and internal migrants	Labour Protection Department, Lao Federation Trade Union (LFTU)
Data on demand for skilled labour	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
Data on VoT	Anti-human trafficking Department, MOPS
	Counselling Centre, Lao Women's Union (LWU)
	SWD, MOLSW

Source: Author's elaboration based on primary data of the study.

2.2.2. Migrant profiles

About 379,000 (7.4%) of total enumerated population (5.1 million) were considered an internal migrant population. Of these migrants, 206,000 (4%) moved from one province to another (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2015).

According to the Labour Force Survey 2017, there were 539,000 people (7.8%) in the total population (6.9 million) who lived in a place that was in a different province or a country of birthplace (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2018). Women were much more likely to live in a place other than their birthplace for the family- or marriage-related reasons than men. Less than 10 per cent of these women reported job-related reasons. In contrast, almost 25 per cent of men stated that they lived in a place other than their birthplace for job-related reasons (ibid.).

Patterns of migration in Lao People's Democratic Republic are complex, including both inbound and outbound flows of migrant workers. Lao migrant workers in Thailand are predominantly employed in domestic work, construction, manufacturing, agriculture and entertainment work, mainly in neighbouring border provinces and larger cities. Table 3 shows that the proportion of labour in agriculture migrating to regular channels have decreased during the last 10 years, from 9,896 in 2011 to 5,065 in 2019; meanwhile, there was an increase in the service sector from 8,432 in 2011 to 38,750 in 2019.

Table 3. Migrant workers data migrated through regular channels by sector

Sector	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2018	2019
Agriculture	9 896	682	1 919	529	5 763	15 211	5 065
Industry	15 260	4 114	9 748	4 271	17 067	20 929	9 949
Service	8 432	2 618	8 828	3 504	27 882	84 220	38 750
Total	33 588	7 414	20 495	8 304	50 712	120 360	53 764

Source: Department of Skills Development and Employment, MOLSW, 2020a.

Two key processes to facilitate labour migration to Thailand have been developed. The first is through the memorandum of understanding (MoU), which provides full legal status to access employment opportunities in Thailand. The second process is through nationality verification, which allows undocumented migrants to regularize their status without having to return to their countries of origin.

The Nationality Verification process has been more effective in providing documentation to migrant workers in Thailand. At the beginning of 2019, 207,561 Lao regular migrants were working in Thailand, with about 30,000 irregular workers also present in the country. During the registration process in May 2019, 277,845 Lao migrants completed the process and received work permits (ILO, 2019b).

2017 **Process** 2014 2015 2016 2018 2019 59 010 Nationality Verification 33 054 39 261 60 926 76 141 48 320 MoU 20 786 28 561 44 677 78 197 163 460 57 044 One-stop service 68 597 135 150 222 839 69 489 59 746 172 481 Total 122 437 202 972 328 442 223 827 282 216 277 845

Table 4. Process for obtaining documentation (2014–2019)

Source: ILO, 2019b.

The number of Lao migrant workers entering Thailand under MoU has been increasing in the last three years. While the numbers have increased, admission through the MoU process still represents a relatively small portion of Lao migrant workers due to costly, time-consuming and complex procedures. Therefore, most migrants enter the country through irregular channels. For many migrant workers, the benefits of the MoU process do not outweigh the considerations (ibid.).

2.2.3. Push and pull factors for migration in Lao People's Democratic Republic

Lao migrant workers are migrating independently as a survival strategy to support themselves and their families. Poverty, lack of employment and choices, lack of income-generating activities at rural areas, as well as comparatively low wages in Lao People's Democratic Republic are the main push factors for migration. Furthermore, school dropouts at primary and secondary school due to poverty and domestic violence against women make them socially vulnerable and limit full participation in the society and development (Lao Women's Union, 2015). Labour shortage, particularly low-skilled labour in the services, agriculture and manufacturing sectors, as well as higher wage level and job demand in Thailand are pull factors for Laotians to migrate to Thailand. All these reasons have driven low-skilled young people to continue to migrate to urban cities and neighbouring countries, mostly Thailand.

Throughout the decades, an overwhelming majority of Lao migrant workers migrate to Thailand for both seasonal and temporary work. In fact, Lao people habitually travel to Thailand for work, trade and to visit relatives and friends who lived on the other side of the border. This is common due to the geographic proximity, ease in travelling, cultural and language similarities, and modern technology, such as smartphones, Internet and social media, have played significant roles in human mobility. These new technologies help to provide rapid access to information, such as job options and choices for many migrants through their networks in the destination country as well as make remittance transactions and communication between migrant workers and their families easier.

Young Laotians migrate to Thailand for different reasons, but one common goal is to support themselves and improve their family's economic status in order to fulfil their dreams. In many cases, migration is a coping strategy in response to family debt due to failed harvests as the consequence of climate change and environment destruction (IOM, 2019b).



I decided to migrate because my family is poor, and we experienced rice/food shortage during the last few years due to climate change, and there is higher cost for agricultural production investment, at the same time living cost in Lao is getting more and more expensive.

- FGD 1, Woman migrant worker 1 from Xayaboury, 12 August 2020



Many children drop out of school because of low accessibility to education. For example, the secondary school is far away from our village, poor families have no budget to buy vehicle for their children to travel to school, some families have no income to support their children's education, and so many children drop out of primary education. Before migrating, the children support their family in agricultural production works, and they start to migrate when they become teenagers (15–18 years old).



- FGD 1, Woman migrant worker 2 from Xayaboury, 12 August 2020



Before migrating to Thailand, I was working in Lao People's Democratic Republic for almost nine years. Yet my financial status did not improve, and I had no savings. My salary never increased during the nine years (about LAK 1,300,000/month (USD 43)); it was not sufficient for living in an urban area where my workplace is located, as I also had to send money home for dormitory rent, water, electricity costs and others. Sometimes, my factory employer would cut down my salary because I couldn't follow their production standards, so I decided to migrate when my relative offered two times higher wage in Thailand.

- FGD 1, Woman migrant worker 3 from Xayaboury, 12 August 2020





I dropped out during secondary education grade 5, because my parents could not support my education. I decided to migrate to Thailand with my aunt who works in Thailand.

I want to have income and support my family. I saw many people in my village who graduated higher education and ended up jobless, because they were not able find secure jobs in our hometown. Many parents and young people in our village believe that education is not the best option. In fact, my parents got broke, because they spent all they have to invest in my brother's education, but there was no profit at all, because he could not find a job or have income after graduation.



In Thailand, even Lao ethnic people who could not read or write can get THB 10,000-12,000/month. I have a young daughter, and I would encourage her to work in Thailand, because there are more options there.

- FGD 6, Migrant worker 1 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020





I saw my neighbours and people in my village sent money back home, and they were able to improve their economic status and family well-being, such as building a new house and supporting children's education.

I decided to work in Thailand because there are more options and opportunities; I could earn up to 16,000 Thai baht (THB) there. I had savings when working in Thailand and can send money home to support my poor family. But when working in Lao People's Democratic Republic, my income was just enough for one person's living costs; everything is expensive here.

We have low education and skills and very limited job options; most are for educated and skilled people.

- FGD 2, Woman migrant worker 4 from Xayaboury, 12 August 2020

Between 2010 and 2019, the economic growth rate was at 7 to 7.5 per cent; poverty fell by half. Strong economic growth enabled the country to move from a low-income to lower-middle-income country in 2011.2 Such economic development was part of the Government's efforts to boost regional economic development as the strategy to generate income and increase employment across the country. However, there is a gap for benefit distribution between urban and rural populations. The challenge for the young population living in the rural setting to access employment and benefit from the growth remains. In fact, most of the formal business and investment projects, such as mining and hydropower sectors, require certain educational levels and skills, which dropouts and low-skilled young people from remote areas do not possess.

Most job vacancies are in urban areas, such as factories, domestic work and service sectors. These occupations mostly prefer women labour and are usually not secured jobs with very low pay, ranging from LAK 700,000-1,000,000 (USD 77-110). The latest increase in Lao People's Democratic Republic minimum wage was in 2018, which set the minimum wage at around LAK 37,000/day (USD 4). Meanwhile, the Thai minimum wage is THB 338/day (USD 12),3 three times higher than the Lao wage. The implementation and enforcement of minimum wage regulations remains a challenge in Lao People's Democratic Republic, especially in informal sector due to lack of monitoring mechanism, particularly at local level, leaving numbers of workers not entitled to their rights and benefits from minimum wage; this challenge is also one of the push factors for Lao workers to leave their low-paying jobs and seek better wages and employment in Thailand.

UNICEF in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Available at www.unicef.org/laos/about-us.

United Nations exchange rate as of September 2020: USD 1 = LAK 9.093

2.2.4. Irregular migration and trafficking in persons

Irregular migration

Table 5. Undocumented migrant workers data by sectors

Sector	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Agriculture	9 608	448	5 006	7 214	6 173
Industry	8 752	4 422	13 917	20 853	6 237
Service	6 706	4 886	23 269	43 551	17 899
Total	25 066	9 756	42 192	71 618	30 309

Source: Department of Skills Development and Employment, MOLSW, 2020a.

The number of Lao migrant workers registered through regular migration process to work in Thailand remains relatively small. Respondents during the FGDs described that the current services under recruitment agents are typically long processes that take two to six months with high costs and administratively complex procedures. Many migrant workers also revealed that as part of their coping strategy, they would try the new job to ensure the employment is reasonable before applying for a labour card in Thailand. For those who work in vulnerable sectors such as entertainment venues, especially women workers, they believe it is not worth it to go through MoU process, as there are many regulations that restrict their movement, which would in turn prevent them from changing jobs when needed.

Case studies



I don't want to go through MoU process or apply for a labour card in Thailand, because I could not travel to areas other than the one stated in the contract, and it's usually difficult to change employer and workplace.

FGD 1, Woman migrant worker 1 from Savannakhet, 4 August 2020

For undocumented migrants, if you don't like the job or your employer, you can shift to another work by contacting your friends, relatives or Thai people, and after you think your new job is secured and you have good employer, you can ask your new employer to apply for labour card in Thailand. It's easy.

FGD 3, Woman migrant worker 2 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020

It's difficult to come back to Lao People's Democratic Republic to visit my family when go through MoU, because the employer does not allow me to go back home to visit my family. I heard that many employers don't want to give guarantor letter when you want to change your job.

FGD 3, Woman migrant worker 3 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020



New Decree 245 on sending Lao labour abroad does not define the costs of migration, which is important information to support migrant workers in estimating precise costs of regular migration, in turn helping them make informed decisions (ILO, 2019c). However, the costs of labour migration in recent years are often borne by workers; this has left many migrants fall into debts to cover high recruitment and other associated costs, such as medical checks, documentation and transportation. Such debt bondage exposes them to more risks including labour exploitation and human trafficking.

At the destination country, documented migrant workers may not fully accelerate their rights either. Migrant workers had their passports seized by employers, and migrant workers had no access to their travel documents (ILO, 2018). Both documented and undocumented migrant workers experienced negative working conditions (ibid.). During the FGDs in this study, many migrant workers revealed that they were not paid their last salary/wage before returning. Although some of them know the available services and support to report their cases, they decided not to do so due to fear of risks such as fines and pushback by authorities.

Based on a 2018 International Labour Organization/United Nations Development Programme (ILO/UNDP) study, 89 per cent of documented migrant workers reported that they signed a contract with a recruitment agency. However, two thirds of them did not entirely or at all understand the conditions in the contract. Only 40 per cent of those with contracts received a copy, and none of them signed contract with their employer upon arrival. The current formal labour migration procedures are typically supposed to be more beneficial to workers than undocumented channels (ibid.).



I have labour card and social security member in Thailand. But I was not paid my last salary before I returned. I asked for my social security member card, but my employer refused to give me. I don't know about my social security rights, and I don't want to report to the Thai authorities because I don't want to have problems with my employer and supervisor in the factory.

- FGD 3, Woman migrant worker 4 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020



The role of immigration officials at border checkpoints is to monitor and facilitate cross-border movement, as well as identify potential VoTs. However, there are no specific screening activities at the border checkpoints during the large influx of Lao migrant workers since March 2020.

Because of the nationwide lockdown and movement restrictions, NGOs' service providers at local level were not able to conduct outreach campaign at the border checkpoints and support the pushback cases at the border areas since March. This undermined many pushback cases, as migrant workers were unable to access necessary services and support such as child case support, food, temporary accommodation, support to travel to their hometown, as well as access to vocational training, legal and health services as necessary. According to the US Department of State's 2018 TIP report, there were more than 10,000 migrants who were deported from Thailand without official notification annually.

Follow-up cases for former VoTs and vulnerable people who have completed vocational training also stopped during the lockdown and were pending until July 2020. This created barriers for those VoTs and vulnerable people who may need support and advice regarding their income generation and impacts from lockdown policies.

The lockdown, movement restrictions and decrease of clients due to economic reasons limited both former and new VoTs' access to markets through which they can earn income with their skills. Although victims may have received vocational training, many returned back to their old work (such as agriculture) upon arriving home, and may therefore feel a desire to remigrate, putting themselves up to further possible exploitation and trafficking.

For VoTs with mental health problems, they may not be able to access specific health services needed, leaving them vulnerable to additional health risks.

Coordination between sending and receiving countries regarding the legal support for VoTs at destination countries was also challenging during the lockdown; this has delayed legal processes and support in destination countries. The delay of legal procedure was also caused by the fact that VoTs could not travel to or be present at court during the lockdown. VoTs had to stay in Thai shelters/vocational training centres for a longer period of time. This can cause extra mental stress for VoTs, along with increased accommodations and other support costs in the shelters in Thailand.

Based on KIIs with the Immigration Department, MOPS and LWU's Counselling Centre, at the end of September 2020, there were 40 official VoT cases returned from Thailand to Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic has made a good step in adopting the new Operation Guideline to Protect, Support and Refer the VoTs in April 2020. However, the response and support for VoTs during the emergency was not included in the guideline. This is very new area for the Government and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic, particularly for the Government at local level.

LWU reported that there was a challenge in coordinating with the destination countries due to travel restrictions. Decision-making took more time as it required multi-government agencies coordination, as well as the need to involve health sectors, who are in charge of the COVID-19 National Task Force. Before the pandemic, VoTs were transferred directly to LWU's shelter; with quarantine policies in place, they now have to be quarantined in the centre for 14 days before receiving legal and social services at LWU's centre. During the 14-day quarantine, some necessary support and steps under the Operation Guideline such as specific health check and services particular for women VoTs upon arrival to Lao People's Democratic Republic could not be made due to quarantine requirements and lack of resources.

VoTs usually experienced serious forms of exploitation, such as rape, forced labour, physical and psychological violence, torture, starvation, psychological abuse and the lack of medical treatment. All these deteriorate the health of VoTs, leaving them more vulnerable to severe infections such as COVID-19.⁴ It is also challenging to ensure the principle of

confidentiality, safety and security are abided because there is no private room or space to provide necessary counselling services at State quarantine centres.

Government agencies working on TiP at national and subnational levels raised the concern on the increasing number of women VoTs returning from China each year. They were lured into marrying Chinese men and ended up being exploited and trafficked. Although the Government stepped up the efforts to strengthen the screening at international border checkpoints and allocated more budget on TiP works at the local level, the challenges remain as brokers and traffickers changed their approaches and tactics, for instance by arranging migrants to travel through irregular channels and unofficial border checkpoints that are difficult to track and monitor. The number of VoTs returned from China and other countries is unknown due to limitations in accessing data.

Table 6 shows the number of official VoT returnees from Thailand. There were 2,470 cases in total during 2001 to May 2017; 2,340 of those are women VoTs, accounting for 94.7 per cent of the total and 2,074 (84%) are children VoTs aged below 18 years.

Table 6. Number of official returnee victims of trafficking from Thailand by sex and year

Year	Number	Men	%	Women	%
2001	65	0	0.0	65	100.0
2002	76	3	3.9	73	96.1
2003	81	2	2.5	79	97.5
2004	66	1	1.5	65	98.5
2005	246	21	8.5	225	91.5
2006	258	9	3.5	249	96.5
2007	264	9	3.4	255	96.6
2008	235	1	0.4	234	99.6
2009	155	7	4.5	148	95.5
2010	145	7	4.8	138	95.2
2011	195	10	5.1	185	94.9
2012	195	26	13.3	169	86.7
2013	103	9	8.7	94	91.3
2014	157	2	1.3	155	98.7
2015	105	4	3.8	101	96.2
2016	99	13	13.1	86	86.9
May 2017	25	6	24.0	19	76.0
Total	2 470	130	5.3	2 340	94.7

Source: Data obtained from SWD, MOLSW, 2018.

The data also shows a decrease in official returnees, starting with 105 in 2015 (101 women,

4 men); dropping slightly to 99 in 2016 (86 women, 13 men); and further decreasing significantly to 25 cases in 2017 (19 women, 6 men). The reason for this decrease over time is unclear, although government and development partners reported that a decrease in cases recently indicates positive efforts in Thailand to combat human trafficking, as well as successful safe migration education in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2019).

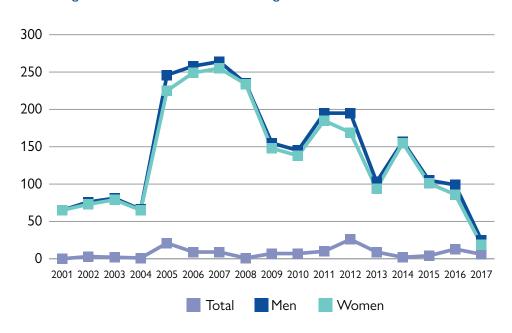


Figure 3. Official victims of trafficking data between 2001 and 2017

Source: Data obtained from Department of Social Welfare, MOLSW, 2018.

NGOs' service providers have not received any official VoT returned from Thailand and placed in vocational services since 2017;6 repatriation work was shifted to LWU based on TiP Law. Service providers at the provincial level, such as Village Focus International (VFI) and Sengsavang, are now focusing on providing potential migrant workers and vulnerable young women with access to vocational training and other social support in their centres.

Migrant workers are faced with more risks and can easily get exploited and abused by traffickers, and eventually become VoTs as they fight to maintain their jobs and hunt for new jobs, given that they may not prioritize their safety and protection over employment. Identification of potential VoTs at the destination country is also challenging, as there is a large outflow of migrant workers heading to border areas, making it difficult to monitor with limited resources. As a result, there could be potential VoTs who are forced to leave their job and workplace, relocate to the area or transfer to new traffickers due to lockdown and business closing. This can undermine potential VoTs in benefiting from legal services and exercising their rights, leaving perpetrators or traffickers unaccounted.⁷

⁶ KII with Sengsavang and VFI.

⁷ KII with Winrock International in Lao People's Democratic Republic.



Internal migrants preparing for their journey in Northern Bus Station. © IOM 2020/Karen HO

2.2.5. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration landscape

National-level impacts

COVID-19 has caused great impacts on both inbound and outbound labour migration. It also affects many other dimensions, such as law, politics, socioeconomic issues, technology and culture. Travel restrictions and international border closure have pushed labour migration and anti-human trafficking works retrograde and more complicated.

Lao People's Democratic Republic was in full lockdown from 29 March to 3 May 2020. International borders were closed as of 30 March 2020 and remained closed during this study. These prevention measures have had great socioeconomic impacts. Restriction of labour movements and business closures created enormous unemployment and placed at least 350,000 people out of jobs (10% of the national labour force of 3.8 million in 2019) (WFP, 2020). The tourism sector fell, with a loss of over 10 per cent of country's GDP, and pushed 62,999 workers to unemployment (Department of Skills Development and Employment, 2020b); most informal labour in the tourism sector are backed by internal

migrants from rural areas, and most of them have to return to their hometowns, adding to rural poverty levels. National unemployment rate may increase from 9 per cent in 2019 to 20 per cent in 2020; meanwhile, the Government's capacity to address unemployment rate is at 2 per cent.⁸

According to the World Bank's *Lao PDR Economic Monitor*, the return of more than 100,000 migrant workers will result in a decrease of up to USD 125 million in remittances in 2020, equivalent to 0.7 per cent of the national GDP. This has impacts on migrants' families and their communities, with remittances covering almost two thirds of household income in Lao People's Democratic Republic. This is likely to significantly limit the budget available for community recovery and development, including food, education, housing, livelihood enhancements and disaster risk reduction. Losses of cash revenue in rural households limit their ability to buy food. This is expected to impact food security and may increase malnutrition, creating new obstacles for government and development partners (WFP, 2020).

Closure of factories and reduced orders in production may lead to an increase of another 100,000 unemployed workers, of which 30,000 are workers in the garment industry, and mostly women workers from rural areas. There are no detailed estimates for the job losses in the industry, but their number could easily grow to 100,000 (World Bank, 2020a).

Over 10,000 students graduated from vocational training and high education across the country; more than 350,000 were jobless across the country, and over 200,000 Lao migrant workers returning from Thailand will fall into unemployment and below the poverty line. LNCCI recently reported that only 16,000 jobs are available across all sectors, including special economic zones. There is approximately one vacancy for every 12 jobless migrants.

Travel restrictions and border closing prevented many migrant workers from taking up employment in the destination country where they have contracts, and also for those who have paid high recruitment fees and costs. This can encourage undocumented migration and exposure to risks in debt bondage and human trafficking (ILO, 2020a).

Based on international experiences, the country COVID-19 responses are dynamic and vary depending on the country and region. As economic prospects decrease, overall labour demand for migrant workers is shrinking in some sectors while increasing in others, such as health care and seasonal agriculture (ibid.). The current national COVID-19 response lacks inclusion for migrant workers and their families, as well as concrete response to the socioeconomic impact of migrant workers upon their return and at the destination country.

Implementation of the national action plan related to labour migration and anti-human trafficking was delayed due to the nationwide lockdown. Social distancing regulation has minimized the number of target people through outreach activities and other training programmes. Government budget shifted to COVID-19 response; both human and financial resources are limited.

Coordination between development partners and government during the lockdown period was challenging. Working from home is not a usual modality for many government staff, particularly at the local level with very limited access to hardware technologies, such as personal computers and Internet connection, in addition to limited capacity and experience in new technologies such as Zoom. Many government staff, particularly at local level, have no official email address, and the Government's communication protocol often require official letters in hard copies, which was extra challenging during the lockdown period.

The Immigration Department of MOPS reported that the ASEAN Workshop on Immigration that was scheduled to take place in Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2020 has been postponed to next year due to the lack of capacity in organizing the workshop via video conference. This delay, therefore, poses a challenge on immigration services for many migrant workers who faced different difficulties at the border checkpoints, therefore requiring an urgent consultation at both national and regional levels to address the issues in a timely manner.

Government and international organizations also faced challenges in implementing projects, as some activities require participation of internationals experts outside the country, which becomes difficult with international border closure and travel regulations.

Subnational-level impacts

In Savannakhet, there were more than 30,000 Lao migrant workers returned from Thailand through provincial border checkpoints by the end of July 2020. About 59 per cent of returned migrant workers said that they wish to go back to Thailand to take up and seek new jobs. Most of the migrant workers returned to rural areas and rely heavily on agricultural production activities. At present, the Provincial Department of Labour and Social Welfare in Savannakhet is working closely with the Provincial Department of Industry and Commerce and LFTU to support returned migrant workers for job placement at the local level. However, there is still a challenge to ensure job placement for a large number of returned migrant workers. Meanwhile, there is limited job availability at the local level (about 8,500 positions).9 In Xayaboury, there were more than 5,000 Lao migrant workers returned from Thailand since March 2020, of which 54 per cent are migrant workers who worked in the service sector and 24 per cent in the agriculture sector. Collecting data on migration at the border checkpoints is beyond the mandate of the Immigration Department, and it requires multi-stakeholder approaches and coordination, as well as data collection at quarantine centres, which is a challenge due to health protection regulations. Therefore, most of the current data on migration, skills and employment collected by MOLSW for registration purposes were carried out at community level with limited resources, creating a new challenge to access accurate data on migration and employment to inform policymakers.

NGOs and CSOs were unable to carry out community interventions during the lockdown, especially at rural areas. Risk communications can only be made through telephone and social media. This has delayed programme and project implementation and limited access to different target beneficiary groups, particularly the most vulnerable group who have

⁹ KII with the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, Savannakhet Province.

returned to their hometowns in rural setting with poor access to technology, and those who engaged in agricultural production activities.

COVID-19 not only impacted individual countries, but also the global economy and financial stability. The KII from one Lao NGO reported that their funding for the project to support and empower women migrant workers in the urban city was cut down by 50 per cent based on donor's policy. The duration of the project was also shortened from one year to six months. As a result, the project needed to reduce the target beneficiary number by half, hindering the collaboration and capacity-building for project stakeholders and partners at local level.

Sengsavang Centre in Savannakhet had to shift their budget intervention from vocational training and income generation to humanitarian support, as many vulnerable households experienced rice and food shortage as a result of decreased or no remittances for supporting family living costs. Many vulnerable women in Sengsavang Centre are also reluctant or have refused to return to their village after completing vocational training due to the fear of not having income and adding more burden to their family. As a result, the centre experienced financial difficulties in continuing to support women staying in the centre. The profits from income generation activities run by the centre have decreased during the last six months as well. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Luang Prabang province, about 80 per cent of the 756 villages have run out of rice by April 2020 because of the two-year drought that occurred in all northern provinces (WFP, 2020).

The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Savannakhet reported that their clients have decreased from about 1,700–1,800 people to 200–300 people during the last six months, as the lockdown and movement restrictions prevented staff from visiting migrants and conducting outreach at community level.

Lao recruitment agencies also faced newfound difficulties in sending migrant workers who had completed MoU process and had been granted visa to enter the destination country since the beginning of 2020. The lengthy waiting time and border closure worried recruitment agencies, as they fear MoU migrant workers may go for irregular channels to speed up the process. Migrants who already paid high costs for their MoU status and other travel documents now found themselves in financial struggles, as they have no income and may enter into debt after paying the recruitment fees.

Household-level impacts

Family members and parents who solely rely on remittances from migrant workers are the most affected group, particularly those families with returning migrant workers as they now have no income, therefore increasing the family's economic and financial burdens. The value of remittances sent back home by migrant workers varies from THB 2,000–10,000/month or on quarterly basis. Most parent respondents reported that their remittances were cut down 50–70 per cent or have not received any remittances since March 2020. Their remittances are deducted as migrant workers who still work in Thailand faced financial problems, as their wage got deducted and had to pay for extra accommodation and living costs at the destination country.

According to the World Bank in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 9 per cent of all households rely on remittances from destination countries, which account for 60 per cent of their household income. Therefore, the decreased remittances sent to their families at home will create new poverty up to 3.1 per cent or 200,000 people (World Bank, 2020a).

Parents who have young migrant workers returning home since March said that they have more financial burden, since there is increased expenditure in the household. The number of migrant workers back at home in each family differs from one to four people. For rural households, selling and relying on livestock is the best strategy they can employ to address financial difficulties. However, market price for livestock trading is lower than usual because of reduced market competition, as there are very few agents coming to the village during the last few months. According to FAO, livestock is the only source of income for better-off families; it is not a panacea for poor populations (WFP, 2020).

Lack of income and decreased remittances also induce negative impacts on children's education for migrant workers who left their young children with family members in their hometown. One parent respondent said their children had to shift from private school to public school as they could not effort the high education costs.

One of the significant findings under this study is that both returned migrant workers and their parents, particularly those who are in urban and semi-rural areas, now entered to debt with high interest rates (20–25% interest rate/month), as they borrow from informal money lenders. In the past, when a family of migrant workers experience financial problems, they could borrow or advance from their employers in Thailand, for example for health-care expenditure or agricultural investment.

There are also positive impacts from migrant workers returning home, such as family reunions and supporting family livelihoods. Parents have more time with their children, and they can contribute to agricultural activities during the raining season. However, prolonged drought in Savannakhet and flooding in Xayaboury hindered the profits from agricultural activities. This added onto their financial hardships, as more monetary investments are required for labour costs and purchasing seeds, water, gas and fertilizers. Climate change appears to have impacted more on migrant workers in Savannakhet, where many interviewed parents revealed that they had entered into green rice commercial¹⁰ because of the low remittances received, under which they could only get half the price for their products compared to the market price. Most of the parent respondents said that they expected low crop production and shortfall in 2020 due to the climate; the crop harvests could decrease to 50 per cent in Savannakhet.

For migrant workers in Thailand with children in Lao People's Democratic Republic, they still prefer to stay despite deductions in wages and remittances. They worried that there wouldn't be jobs for them if they return.

The study lacks findings on the immediate impact on health and nutrition among family members. However, most parents said that although they have received sufficient information on COVID-19 prevention, they still worried about the epidemic, particularly

Farmers advanced money from informal money lenders at the village, after crop harvesting, farmers supply the rice to money lender with farmers get the half price compared to market price or based on their agreement.

for those who have returned migrant workers with no income or those who have their remittances deducted, as well as their mental health. Health and nutrition impact would be visible in the medium-term (WFP, 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised its concerns over health risks to the community, not only the COVID-19 infection but also other transmitted diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV.¹¹

Case studies



Before COVID-19, my daughter sent THB 2,000 back home every month. Since COVID-19, she hasn't been able to send any. In Thailand, my daughter had to change jobs from restaurants to domestic work due to wage reduction. I was sick during the last few weeks; it was very difficult, and I had to borrow from my sibling to buy medicine.

- FGD 5, parent 1 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

I have four children; they have not returned home, and they are still working in Thailand. Since March, their wage got deducted from THB 350/day to THB 150/day.

- One father shared during FGD 4 in Xayaboury, 13 August 2020

I need to look after my two nephews. Their mother is still in Thailand without a job and experiencing financial difficulties. One of my nephews is not able to enter preschool. Our family experienced financial shortage, and I haven't paid the electricity bill for several months. I don't know if they will cut out electricity supply or not. Meanwhile, we have the duty to pay for some fees in the village, such as LWU membership fee and other social and cultural activities fee. I had to borrow money from people in the village to cover that expenditure.

- FGD 4, Woman migrant worker 5 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020



Impact on migrant workers

At the end of March, there was an unpredicted outflow of hundreds of thousands of Lao migrant workers returning along Thai's border checkpoints, aiming to travel back to their communities. Various factors motivated the outflow, including lockdown regulations and Government's order to close border in both Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic at the end of March, fear of the COVID-19 pandemic worsening and others. Many migrants have lost their jobs or expected to lose employment due to economic downturn; as a result, their employers experienced less profit and increased financial burden, and the work permits of migrants under the Nationality Verification system were due to expire (ILO, 2020b). There are many more Lao migrant workers still returning, because in Thailand, they could not afford extra expenditures to cover accommodation and other living costs with reduced wages.

Between March and July 2020, 147,000 Lao migrant workers returned from Thailand through official border checkpoints across the country. However, the actual number of returnees could be around 200,000 or more, as many of them entered through traditional border checkpoints, particularly undocumented migrant workers and those who carry expired travel documents, including documented migrant workers who couldn't wait for long periods at the border checkpoint due to financial shortage and inability to afford high accommodations and living costs near border checkpoints in Thailand.¹²

The most impacted group who lost their jobs are those working in the service, agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Based on MOLSW's rapid assessment in March 2020, among the returnee migrant workers in Champasack, Savannakhet, Khammoun, Attapue, Bokeo and Vientiane Capital, 90 per cent of the respondents said that they prefer to return to the destination country.¹³

Immigration regulations of Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand differ.¹⁴ During their travel back home, most returning migrant workers have very limited or no information about immigration and cross-border and quarantine regulations, exposing them to risks and exploitations or irregular border crossing. Many migrant workers experienced financial shortage due to the lengthy waiting time at the border in Thailand, in particular those who travel with family members, such as children and pregnant women, and require more budget to cover for accommodation and food.

Migrant workers who returned to Lao after the end of March 2020 faced more financial difficulties and risks, as they have to wait for longer periods at border checkpoints in the destination country; some migrants have to wait up to 14 days in Thailand border to enter Lao People's Democratic Republic. There is a report that many migrant workers had no money left when they arrived at the border checkpoint. They had to stay at poor accommodations near border checkpoints, lacking access to health care and sanitation facilities; women migrant workers faced more challenges as they have more specific needs. Lao authorities explained that the reason behind the long waiting time was the limited capacity at temporary quarantine centres on the Lao People's Democratic Republic side. They can only take in newcomers after discharging previous residents.

Many migrant workers travelled with their spouse and children, including pregnant women, with limited cash. Most of them had spent all their cash during their travel and at the quarantine centre in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Many of them realized they got broke when they went back to their communities.

The usual travel cost back home is around about THB 1,000–2,000; because of COVID-19, migrant workers have to spend between THB 3,000 and THB 10,000/person, including broker fees to enter Lao People's Democratic Republic through irregular channels. Laid-off migrant workers not only lead to income losses but also the expiration of visa or work permits, putting migrants into undocumented or irregular status, and therefore, posing the risk for exploitations (ILO, 2020a).

¹² KII with the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, Savannakhet Province.

¹³ KII with MOLSW, Department of Skills Development and Employment.

Department of Immigration, MOPS, Validation Workshop (September 2020).

Case studies



Everything stopped, and our employers said no wage until COVID-19 ends. Our employers also faced financial difficulties, as they have less profit after lockdown. My employer said that my salary will be deducted, so I decided to return home.

- FGD 2, Woman migrant worker 6 from Savannakhet, 4 August 2020

We are afraid that some immigration officials in Thailand will exploit and arrest us because of undocumented status, and we heard that the border will close soon, and we're afraid we won't be able to renew our travel document at the border. If you carry an invalid travel document, you will be fined THB 500/day.

- FGD 3, Woman migrant worker 7 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020

Because of limited public transportation services in Thailand, I had to pay for a private truck to travel to the border area. My travel document and labour card expired. I was asked for THB 10,000 for the fine from Thai immigration. I didn't have enough money to pay the fine, so I decided to throw away my passport and labour card at the border checkpoint in Thailand and cross the border irregularly. If I go back to Thailand, I have to request for a new passport and reapply for labour card in Thailand, and it will cost almost THB 20,000.

- FGD 3, Woman migrant worker 8 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020

At Thai border checkpoint-Moukdaharn, those with labour card have to pay for the fee from THB 1,200–1,500/person, but in the receipt, it says only THB 1,000 in total. In Lao side at Savannakhet border checkpoint, we were charged about THB 200–250/person without any receipt. We do not dare to ask the immigration officials what the fee was for, because we don't want to have any problems. We just want to go back home.

- FGD 1-6 in Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

My employer gave me THB 2,000 to support me to travel back home. I have no information about immigration and quarantine. When I arrived at Moukdaharn border, I had to wait there for 7 days, and 14 days more in the quarantine centre in Lao People's Democratic Republic. I didn't know about this before travelling. I travelled with my wife who is 7 months pregnant. Both at the Thai border and while at the quarantine centre in Lao People's Democratic Republic, there is no specific health service for my wife; I was worried. I had no money left when we arrived in the village because I used all the money I had (THB 8,000) during the travel and at the quarantine centre.

- FGD 6, Man migrant worker 9 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

While waiting in the Thai border for 14 days, we had to pay for the high-cost hotel, about THB 800/night. To save the cost, we shared hotel room. There were about six to eight people in one room, mixed men and women; they were all strangers. I could not sleep at all because of fear of strangers.

- FGD 4, Woman migrant worker 10 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

I was so scared of COVID-19 during travel from my workplace to the border area. I was afraid to use public toilet. I had fever, but the health officer didn't detect it at border checkpoint. There is no specific health service at the border checkpoint. I was also afraid that if there is a need for health treatment, I have no money to pay for, so I didn't report to the health officer because I was afraid that they would not allow me to cross the border.

- FGD 6, Man migrant worker 2/Woman migrant worker 11 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020



Due to lack of information, fake news and being lured by brokers, many migrant workers have to travel to more than one border checkpoint in different provinces in Thailand to enter Lao People's Democratic Republic. This has increased their expenditures, as well as risks and exploitations due to long travel. The Department of Labour and Social Welfare in Savannakhet Province reported that there is one rural woman stuck in the quarantine centre in Savannakhet for two months, as she had no money left and could not trace her hometown information in Luang Prabang. This could increase the risk on health issues, including other forms of violence against women.

Most of the migrant worker respondents said that they have received information about COVID-19 and its prevention from social media, TV and at the border checkpoints, including access to protection materials such as masks. However, many of them reported that they were sick during travelling and while waiting at the border checkpoint, but they did not report to authorities due to fear of not being able to cross the border and insufficient budget for health treatment.

Most of the respondents said that they experienced stigma from their family and community members due to fear of COVID-19. This has negative impact on migrant workers regarding the movement and their participation in sociocultural activities. Many returnees reported that they experienced difficulties in adjusting to their family and community members due to lack of trust, even though they provided COVID-free certificate after being quarantined for 14 days.



After coming back to the village, I went to the local market. I was shouted at by a market vendor that I should not walk pass her store as she knew that I just returned from Thailand. I felt shy and angry. I don't want to go out at the beginning after returning home, because villagers don't trust people who returned from Thailand.

- FGD 4, Woman migrant worker 12 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020



In Xayaboury, most of the migrant workers respondents said that they were not provided COVID-free certificate after the 14-day quarantine. Many respondents reported that there were several quarantine requirements at different levels, such as provincial, village and home quarantine.

All returned migrant workers respondents lost their job, either temporarily or permanently. Only one woman who participated in this study (out of 62 returnee migrant workers) from an urban village in Savannakhet was able to seek a job at a local market.

Upon returning to their communities, many returnees, particularly women migrant workers, have started their income generation at the village level by using skills they gained from the destination country, such as food delivery, opening a small coffee shop, bakery or small retail shop at the village and online selling, where they can make some profit to support their daily living costs and families. Many of them in urban areas took up domestic work within the family, such as helping parents, siblings or relatives in restaurants.



I used my own budget to open a small coffee shop in my village when I returned home. It's a good start, and some days, I could earn up to LAK 100,000/day. I learned this skill while working in Thailand.

- FGD 6, Woman migrant worker 13 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

The main problem most returned migrant workers are facing is poor financial status and lack of income; many of them have no money left when they returned to their hometown due to unanticipated expenditures during their journey back home. Many of them, especially those in the urban areas, revealed that they had to sell their properties, such as motorbikes and jewelleries, to support their daily expenditures. High inflation rate since the end of 2019 also increased household expenditure and living costs. The immediate strategy for surviving is to reduce their expenditure, such as reducing the variety of food and changing lifestyles. This not only impacted migrant workers but also their family members and young children in terms of food consumption and nutrition. Low income also limits their engagement in social and cultural activities.

Most of the respondents reported that the remittances they sent back home were mainly used to cover daily household expenditures, children's education, health care, supporting family farms, building houses and other sociocultural activities costs. Very few of them mentioned that they have invested in long-term profit, such as land, animal husbandry and agriculture.

Migrant workers who returned to semi-rural and rural areas seem to have fewer problems regarding their financial situation, as they can somehow rely on agricultural activities, such as collecting forest crops and fishing. In Xayaboury, financial shortage is relatively milder among returned migrant workers compared to those in Savannakhet. This is because migrant workers and their families in Xayaboury can rely on various agricultural activities, as well as rice planting during both rainy and dry seasons. However, this is not the case for studied villages that are not able to access land use and experienced water shortage.

Foreign investment projects at the local level also help to address unemployment issues, such as Chinese agriculture projects in Xayaboury province, which could absorb some unemployed returnees through daily hiring in the agriculture season. However, low pay, lack of social security coverage and insecure jobs make this option not as attractive for many returned migrant workers.

The unemployment rate across the country continues to increase. However, there is high labour demand in some sectors, such as special economic zone and agriculture projects. 15 Lack of skills recognition and skills mismatch is the main obstacle preventing low-skilled labour from engaging in the labour market, particularly for those returned migrant workers who dropped out of school before migrating. Based on FGDs with migrant workers, there are jobs available mostly in urban cities with low wage offer - around one third of the amount they got in Thailand. All above-mentioned reasons are the push factors for many young people to migrate.

Case studies



If I could not go back to Thailand, I would plan to do something and use the skills I have for income generation, but it's not so easy, because I saw a lot of my friends opened small restaurants, but they failed because of very few clients in our village. I have no information on where to get support if I want to do small business.

- FGD 6, Woman migrant worker 14 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

I waited at the border area in Thailand for 14 days. Upon returning to Lao People's Democratic Republic, I had to quarantine for 14 days at provincial level and after I arrived in my village, I was required to quarantine in the village office for 5 days more. It took a month to reach home, and I spent about THB 13,000.

- FGD 4, Woman migrant worker 15 from Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

No job, no income. Meanwhile, I still have daily expenditures, such as food, electricity and water supply costs. Although I stay in Lao People's Democratic Republic, I still need to pay for my dormitory rent in Thailand (THB 2,000/month) since March. I also have to pay for down payment for my car every month (about THB 15,000/month), including my children's education fee. I am now worried and not sure if I could handle everything or not. I have to borrow from somewhere.

- FGD 4, Woman migrant worker 16 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020

Due to lack of income, I have to reduce my daily expenditures, such as reducing the variety of food that I used to eat and eating more vegetables and instant noodles. I have to limit my expenditure and not exceed LAK 10,000/day; if I spend over that ceiling, I would not be able to survive. I observed that my young daughter lost weight during the few months because we could not access a variety of food.

- FGD 1, Woman migrant worker 17 from Savannakhet, 4 August 2020

There are jobs offered in the cities but very low pay, about LAK 700,000–800,000/month. It's not even enough to cover for the travel cost to the workplace.

- FGD 2, Woman migrant worker 18 from Xayaboury, 12 August 2020

I applied for work in the factory in the city. They said there are no jobs available. In fact, they will lay off more employees in the near future due to lack of order and less profit. There is not much choice for us because we can only do low-skilled work. In the service sector, such as restaurants and hotels, they prefer to select young labour between 18 and 25 years old, so adult labour have fewer choices.

- Women migrant workers shared during FGD 4 from Savannakhet, 5 August 2020



As a short-term strategy for surviving, many migrant workers entered to daily hire work and accepted the available job with low pay. However, this seems to be an ad hoc coping strategy for many people and not sustainable. Therefore, the current employment promotion scheme particularly for low-skilled labour may not serve as a long-term solution and address the needs of the target population.

Normally, Lao migrant workers travel back in large numbers each year for short family visits during Lao New Year or to support family during cultivation season. Staying in the

village for a long time is unusual for many migrant workers who chose migration as part of their lives. Most of the migrant workers respondents said that they would not have returned home if they had known that they will be trapped in the communities for a long time because of border closure.

Most or nearly all of the respondents who are returnee migrant workers said the money they have now can only cover the living costs for the next few months. When asked about their future plans on income generation and how they would address their financial difficulties, most respondents said that they have no plan nor knowledge on financial literacy and available services where they can get advice. For those with small business plans, particularly women migrant workers, they listed the lack of start-up funds, little knowledge on marketing and access to low interest credit at the local level as their biggest challenges.

Many migrant workers said that they have already been contacted by their employers in Thailand particularly for those who work in the service, construction and agriculture sectors. It was observed that migrant workers working in the service and tourism sectors and areas that solely rely on foreign tourists have not been contacted by their employers yet.

Due to lack of information and sustained border closure during the course of this study, international travelling became more complicated not only for migrant workers but also foreign workers who wish to exit Lao People's Democratic Republic and those who want to enter the country.

There is discussion in Thailand to allow the entry of foreign workers with valid work permit or who have been granted permission to work in Thailand, including their spouse and children. However, many migrant workers during FGDs lack relevant knowledge and information. They were concerned about travel regulations, such as the fit-to-travel health certificate, employer's guarantor paper, as well as the cost for the 14-day quarantine when they enter Thailand.



I will not go back to Thailand if I have to pay for quarantine cost in Thailand, which is too expensive for me (from THB 14,000 to THB 20,000). I don't think the employer will pay for that. Normally, we can advance from them and then they will charge from our salary. I think it's better to wait until everything becomes normal, and I will go back to Thailand.

- Women migrant worker shared during FGD 5 in Savannakhet, 6 August 2020

Undocumented migrant workers are among the most vulnerable group, and they account for a majority of Lao migrant workers migrated to Thailand. Up to this point, they are not included in the current discussion. There are monthly reports from Thai media since June 2020 that hundreds of Lao migrant workers have been arrested by Thai authorities for attempting to cross border irregularly in Champasack and Savannakhet provinces. According to Thai media, migrant workers were contacted by brokers in Thailand and had to pay around THB 5,000-7,000/person to cover transportation cost. They were lured and deceived by brokers into believing that migrant workers could now travel and work in Thailand.

At the beginning of August 2020, the Prime Minister's Office has issued the new notice to strengthen the monitoring of cross-border movement and enforcement of the Immigration Law and those who enter Lao People's Democratic Republic irregularly will be prosecuted.

Most of the migrant workers respondents said that they experienced mental health problems because of joblessness, lack of income, debt and no signs that the border will reopen soon that will allow them to go back to take up their job in the destination country. Many young migrants, particularly men migrant workers, revealed that they now consume more alcohol to reduce stress.



Sometimes I don't want to eat because I felt stressed and got headache more often. I refused my friends when they invited me for socialize activities, I don't want to go out and meet people and just want to stay in bed. I drank alcohol more often.

- Men migrant worker shared during FGD 2 in Savannakhet, 4 August 2020



Based on KII with LWU's Counselling Centre in Vientiane Capital, more clients have accessed counselling services over the last six months. To respond to the increasing demand, the centre has extended their hotline services to 24 hours a day. Most of the counselling cases were related to mental health and domestic violence due to family economic and financial distress as a result of unemployment and lack of income. Many parents also sought help from the centre, as they were worried about their children working in Thailand.

Impacts on gender roles, community attitudes, practices and norms

Gender norms play a significant role in determining what livelihoods and occupations women can participate in in their home communities. Upon returning to their community, women migrant workers often fall back into traditional gender roles, enter into unpaid works and take up domestic household and care work. This prevents them from accessing other employment opportunities and income generation activities. Since most of the returnee women migrant workers in this study dropped out of school at either primary or secondary level, the employment options for them were limited.

Traditionally known as the breadwinner, men are expected to be responsible for the family's economic stability. Men migrant workers in rural areas seem to adapt to the local environment easier than women, as they have more choices for livelihood activities and occupation. A common option is to work as daily hire labour and other agricultural activities. The skills and experiences they gained from the destination country, such as construction, manufacturing and electronics allow them to seek jobs more easily, as there is high demand for labour in these sectors after many Vietnamese labour working in construction projects returned to Viet Nam in the beginning of the pandemic and have not been able to return due to border closure.

Men migrant workers also have more independence in terms of choosing their livelihood activities or occupations in urban cities. Meanwhile, women migrant workers would need to consult or get permission from their parents or spouse before going for employment.

Migrants' remitting performance is also influenced by gender. At the global level, women migrants send approximately the similar amount of remittances as men migrants. However, women tend to send a higher amount of their income, even though they generally earn less than men. They also send money more regularly and for longer periods of time. Women often send a higher proportion of their salary as remittances, and they mostly spend these on basic household needs. As a result, women are often left with less money for longer-term investments such as small businesses. In general, men mostly send money to their wives, while women migrants often send remittances to the family members, mostly a parent, who take care of the children to cover food and education, as well as household expenditures (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2006).

Furthermore, where women invest in small business, they may have limited access to credit or land ownership, low financial literacy due to low educational attainment and lack of experience in running a business and investments. Many women who worked in low-paying sectors may not be in a position to save money to invest upon their return (ibid.).

Due to traditional gender roles, women migrants who are still working in the destination country (especially single women) may be subject to pressure from their families to send remittance back home. Feeling a strong sense of obligation towards their families, women migrants may accept very difficult living and working conditions at the destination country to earn money.

Decline in remittances due to economic and financial crises threaten families' financial situations and negatively impact not only the household welfare, but also girls' enrolment in schools, as parents usually prefer to invest more in boys' education.

2.2.6. Current programme and plan to address the impacts

MOLSW, LFTU and LNCCI have had discussions on ways to support workers under formal sectors through tripartite mechanism to ensure that they benefit from social security policies. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is making social insurance funding available to around 96,000 affected labour who are members of the social insurance scheme. However, this provision only covers 3.1 per cent of total employment and 26 per cent of total urban workers (World Bank, 2020a).

MOLSW has issued the instruction letter for recruiting agencies to provide the necessary support for migrant workers in ensuring that they will benefit from social security fund they are entitled to in the destination country, as well as assist migrant workers to return to their communities. To address unemployment issues, MOLSW is leading data collection across the country to assess the size of the unemployed population, particularly among the Lao migrant workers who recently returned to their hometown, as well as provide direct assistance packs (food and necessary items) and access to available social services. Some of them have received skills training and were allocated a job within the country. The collected data is also evidence-based information for any relevant sector to identify support provision in the short, medium and long term.

IOM, in collaboration with government partners, has developed various information, education and communication materials to promote migrant health and safety during their travel, including safe migration information and available services related to employment and other services through outreach activities at community level. Recently at the global level, IOM has joined a global call to action on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on remittances, which is led by the United Kingdom and Switzerland, and supported by a wide range of government and non-government partners.

WHO had provided recommendation on transportation management, including enhanced surveillance among returned migrant workers and community engagement. WHO also developed the checklist to access quarantine facilities. However, there is a concern on the capacity of local government in responding to the issues due to lack of knowledge and experiences regarding COVID-19 response. There will be further consultation on essential health services and coverage of national health insurance, in addition to ongoing discussion on free health services for migrant workers during quarantine period. However, the challenge remains to follow up and monitor returned migrant workers, especially those who undergo home quarantine or those who entered irregularly. Efforts on migration requires multisectoral collaboration. Some issues are beyond the health perspective; for example, most migrant workers don't have a Lao contact number, and most of them live in very remote areas which are hard to reach for follow-up work.¹⁶

At subnational level, labour management agencies are working with returnee migrant workers to promote their social security rights at the destination country. They are promoting the services under MRCs and job service centres across the country to assist returnee migrant workers to register their information for employment purposes. However, few of them have employed these services due to limited accessibility to services and information in remote areas and many offices are located in urban areas.

In the long term, the Government will work closely with the private sector and recruitment agencies to promote local employment. The plan is to enhance both domestic and foreign investments in various sectors, such as agriculture and food processing sectors, which is in line with the National Socioeconomic Development Plan. The Government will foster skills development for Lao labour who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

A number of international organizations in Lao People's Democratic Republic are now developing evidence-based data in order to identify concrete actions; for example International Labour Organization, Oxfam, Helvetas, Health Poverty Action and CARE International are collecting data related on COVID impacts on labour migration.

However, most of the current interventions and discussions focus on social security, safe migration and COVID prevention and response. There is a lack of concrete support and actions regarding economic and financial issues faced by migrant workers and their families; this has made them more vulnerable in terms of economic and financial status and access to services and advice as necessary. The current national emergency health response lacks migration inclusion. There is an urgent need for policy dialogue and consultation between government and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic to generate evidence-based policy both at country and regional level to devise plans in addressing the issue in a timely manner.



Based on the findings from this study, three sets of recommendations were developed to inform policymakers and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic to consider and take further necessary support and actions in line with international agreements and commitments.

Short term

- (a) Organize dialogue and consultation between government and development partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic working on labour migration to discuss and identify concrete action in responding to the current impact on migration and antihuman trafficking with particular focus on socioeconomic impacts.
- (b) Strengthen and put in place the identification and screening mechanism in both destination and origin countries, working closely with NGOs and service providers at local level, particularly by strengthening the capacity of local government officials.
- (c) Allocate more budget for outreach activities at community level; strengthen and promote more effective information and communication through various platforms, such as social media and radio programmes. Information should address the priority needs of migrant workers, such as travel cost and advice, risks and exploitations while working in the destination country and challenges and risks when returning to their communities, including border checkpoint, quarantine information and regulations with frequent updates.
- (d) Strengthen and expand financial services and implement financial literacy training at community level; ensure that target people, particularly the most vulnerable groups, are able to access small credit scheme with low interest, with particular focus on women migrant workers and their families.
- (e) Ensure that the available mental health services include migrant workers and their families; promote increased access to information at community level.
- (f) Ensure that the national COVID-19 response policies include labour migration. Include the health sector in national consultation related to labour migration during this crisis response.

Medium term

- (g) Provide technical support and assistance at subnational level to develop employment and income generation security plan and mechanism, with focus on the gender-sensitive migration approach. This can be drawn on and contributed to the Employment Law, which is being drafted under MOLSW.
- (h) Strengthen efforts and implement reintegration and outreach programme with focus on unemployed population, poor families, families that solely rely on remittances, women migrant-headed households, women migrants with many children and vulnerable groups with limited access to land use and agricultural production activities.

(i) Strengthen consular services and the role of labour attachés in destination countries, such as establishing necessary helplines, websites, focal points in line ministries and information exchange that target the specific needs of Lao migrant workers, including information services, legal assistance and humanitarian support to Lao migrant workers in destination countries.

Long term

- (j) Strengthen government effort to ensure the implementation and enforcement of Law on Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons, Labour Law and Minimum Wage Regulation and Social Security Plan; ensure women and men have equal pay and benefits with particular focus on rural areas and informal sectors.
- (k) Implement CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations for Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2018, with particular focus on recommendations no. 28 on trafficking and exploitation; no. 38 on employment; no. 44 on economic and social benefits; no. 46 on rural women; and no. 48 on migrant women.
- (I) For future programme design and interventions, donors and development partners should focus on both internal and cross-border migration for skills development, employment promotion and income generation programmes.



Migration remains an important livelihood option for Lao migrant workers, including increasing numbers of young migrant workers due to high demand of low-skilled labour in Thailand. Poverty and wage gap are the main push factors for Lao migrant workers to decide on migrating to Thailand. A large majority of Lao migrant workers migrate through irregular channels due to the complexity of the recruitment process associated with high costs, leaving them vulnerable to risks, exploitation and human trafficking.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes migration and human trafficking patterns more complex. The economic downturn caused by the pandemic is likely to impact not only migrant workers, but also their families and communities in the home country through a rapid decrease or halt in remittance flows. Facing likely long-term unemployment and reduced income, migrant workers and their families are experiencing significant financial challenges and impact on rural livelihoods and food, nutrition security and children's education. These conditions may also push migrants to take on further debt via high interest loans and trap them in poverty and debt. Undocumented migrant workers, women migrant workers and their families who solely rely on remittances are among the most vulnerable groups. Some respondents shared that they had to borrow money from relatives or other villagers just to pay for food, water and electricity fees. It remains of utmost importance that the COVID-19 response takes into consideration the well-being of migrants' families.

From the discussions, many migrants have shared how the limited access to information and fear for quarantine have driven them to take higher-risk options, such as crossing irregularly, to return to Lao People's Democratic Republic. Many Laotian migrant workers were left jobless or with reduced income in Thailand. The limited vacancies in quarantine centres mean a designated quota for people who can cross the border. While some respondents were able to return through safer and regular channels, the incurred costs on accommodation, daily necessities and transport placed extra burden on their livelihoods. Upon their return to their community, there were also stigma and discrimination, as people worried that the returned migrants were carrying the virus. Providing accurate and verified information about COVID-19 could support the reintegration of migrants and help the people in making informed decisions.

Some respondents' family members managed to keep their job in Thailand, but still struggled to send back money to their family, as they themselves could barely make a living under the economic downturn. They are also faced with an uncertain future and an unconfirmed return home date. Being far away from their family and home, there is more pressure in everyday life in addition to COVID-19 health concerns. Yet, many still try to continue working as they did not see earning a similar salary in Lao People's Democratic Republic a realistic option for them.

Due to cross-border labour movement restriction during the COVID epidemic, more people will be forced to migrate irregularly. Irregular migrants are exposed to higher risks of exploitation and human trafficking due to lack of information and knowledge on safe migration. More often, migrants are reluctant to seek legal assistance as they did not want to have any trouble or disputes with their employers; this is particularly common among irregular migrants. During the pandemic, most of them simply wanted to return home as soon as possible; they were vulnerable to exploitation, as ill-intended individuals could

take advantage of their urgency and ask for additional money during their journey. A few respondents encountered suspicious people who claimed to be police in the neighbouring country on their journey to the border; they had to pay certain fines before being allowed to pass through checkpoints. Strict monitoring mechanism needs to be in place to minimize the potential exploitation from ill-intended brokers and better protect migrants.

Service providers of NGOs have been intensely limited in their community outreach interventions, human trafficking response and potential victim identification and screening, including pending support for pushback cases, in-person counselling and legal and social assistance during the lockdown period. There were delays and postponements in legal support and procedure and investigations of human trafficking cases due to COVID regulations and response.

The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic prioritized skills development, employment promotion and income generation at local level in the national agenda; however, as a result of economic downturn globally and nationally, there are limited jobs available compared to the increasing unemployment across the country. The current country COVID-19 response and regulations lack migration inclusion. There is lack of concrete action and support to address the economic and financial difficulties that migrant workers and their families are facing.

There is an urgent need for multi-stakeholder dialogue and consultation to identify the correct direction and response to address the issues of migrant workers and their families in a timely manner.



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ANNEX 1. INTERVIEW PROFILE

Table A1. Key stakeholders

No.	Organizations	Position
		evel: Vientiane Capital
1	Department of Skills Development and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW)	Head of Labour Market Information Division Deputy Division of Employment Promotion
2	Department of Immigration, Ministry of Public Security	Director General of Immigration Department
3	Lao Women's Union's Counselling Centre	Deputy Director of Operation Division
4	International Labour Organization	National Project Coordinator – Safe and Fair
5	World Health Organization	Specialist, Health System Development Technical Officer Health Emergency Team
6	CARE International in Lao People's Democratic Republic	STOP Project Manager
7	Winrock International in Lao People's Democratic Republic	Chief of Party
8	ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking	Country Manager
9	The Asia Foundation	Programme Manager Programme Officer
10	Village Focus International	Shelter Manager in Champasack Province
11	Namjai Community Association	Director
12	Association for Development of Women and Legal Education	Director
13	Vientiane Employment Service	Director Deputy Director
	Sava	nnakhet Province
14	Department of Labour and Social Welfare	Deputy Director, Department of Labour and Social Welfare Deputy of Social Welfare Division Deputy of Employment Division
15	Department of Anti-Human Trafficking	Deputy of Anti-Human Trafficking Department
16	Migrant Resource Centre of Lao Trade Union	Vice President of Lao Trade Union, Savannakhet Province
17	Sengsavang Centre	Director
18	KP Service and Labour Development Co., Ltd.	Coordinator in Savannakhet
	Xay	aboury Province
19	Department of Labour and Social Welfare	Director Deputy Director
20	Department of Anti-Human Trafficking	Head of Department
21	MOLSW	Technical Officer
22	iJobs Company Limited (Recruiting company)	Provincial Coordinator

Table A2. Returnee migrant workers

Š.	Gender	Occupation in Thailand	Current occupation	Destination province in Thailand	Migration type	Travel document
				Savannakhet Province		
1	F	Beer promotion girl	Employee at market	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
2	Н	Beer promotion girl	Unemployed	Nonthaburi	Undocumented	Passport
3	F	Employee at market	Unemployed	Sakon Nakhon	Undocumented	Passport
4	Н	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
2	ш	Employee at market	Unemployed/part-time online vendor	Krabi	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
9	Δ	Employee at restaurant	Part-time job	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
7	ц	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Amnat Charoen	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
8	F	Domestic worker	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
6	Σ	Construction worker	Construction worker	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
10	F	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
11	Σ	Employee at clothes shop	Part-time online	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
12	Н	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
13	F	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
4	F	Domestic worker	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
15	Н	Employee at market	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
16	F	Domestic worker	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
17	ш	Employee at restaurant	Part time job – food industry	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
18	ш	Domestic worker	Part time job – food industry	Nonthaburi	Undocumented	Passport
19	Н	Entertainment venue staff	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport

No.	Gender	Occupation in Thailand	Current occupation	Destination province in Thailand	Migration type	Travel document
20	Ь	Entertainment venue staff	Unemployed	Nakhon Phanom	Undocumented	Passport
21	Ь	Entertainment venue staff	Unemployed	Nakhornpanom	Undocumented	Passport
22	Ь	Employee at market	Unemployed	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangement
23	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
24	Ь	Domestic worker	Farmer, mushroom plantation	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
25	Н	Employee at market	Unemployed	Kalasin	Undocumented	Passport
26	Щ	Employee at restaurant	Part-time job – food delivery	Nakon Pathom	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangement
27	Ь	Domestic worker	Animal raising	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
28	Ь	Domestic worker	Farmer	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
29	Н	Domestic worker	Farmer	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
30	Ь	Employee at market	Farmer	Bangkok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
31	J	Employee at market	Farmer	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
32	Σ	Factory worker	Farmer	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
33	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Bangkok	Undocumented	Passport
34	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
35	ш	Employee at shopping centre	Coffee shop employee/ farmer	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
36	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Lopburi	Undocumented	Passport
37	Σ	Construction worker	Farmer/construction worker	Phuket	Undocumented	Passport
38	Σ	Electrician	Farmer	Pathum Thani	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)

No.	Gender	Occupation in Thailand	Current occupation	Destination province in Thailand	Migration type	Travel document
				Xayaboury Province		
39	F	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Chonburi	Undocumented	Passport
40	ட	Food processing factory worker	Unemployed	Suphan Buri	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
41	Ь	Plastic factory worker	Unemployed	Rayong/Phu Ruea	Undocumented	Passport
42	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Rayong/Phu Ruea	Undocumented	Passport
43	Ъ	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
4	ш	Employee at restaurant	Unemployed	Bangkok	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
45	Ь	Worker at farm	Farmer	Uttaradit	Undocumented/documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
46	Σ	Furniture factory worker	Farmer	Phuket	Undocumented/documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
47	ш	Furniture factory worker	Farmer	Phathoumthany	Undocumented/documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
48	F	Furniture factory worker	Unemployed	Phitsanulok	Undocumented/ Documented	Undocumented/ Documented Work permit (issued in Thailand)
49	Ł	Worker at farm	Farmer	Korat	Undocumented	Passport
20	Σ	Food processing worker	Farmer	Outraradid	Undocumented	Passport
51	Σ	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Chonburi	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
52	Σ	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Rayong	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
53	Σ	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Rayong	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
54	Σ	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Rayong	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
55	Ł	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Chonburi	Undocumented/Documented	Work permit (issued in Thailand)
26	Σ	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Rayong	Undocumented	Passport
57	F	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Chonburi	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements
58	F	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Phitsanoulok	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements

No.	Gender	No. Gender Occupation in Thailand Current	Current occupation	Destination province in Thailand	Migration type	Travel document	
65	F	Construction Worker	Farmer	Udon Thani	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements	
09	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Samutprakarn	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements	
61	ч	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Ayutthaya	Documented	Bilateral labour arrangements	
62	Ь	Employee at restaurant	Farmer	Rayong	Undocumented/Documented	Indocumented/Documented Work permit (issued in Thailand)	

Table A3. Parents and family members of migrant workers

No.	Gender	Current occupation	Number of family members working in Thailand
		Savannak	het Province
1	F	N/A	1
2	М	N/A	1
3	F	Housewife	1
4	F	Housewife	1
5	F	Housewife	4
6	F	Housewife	2
7	F	Housewife	3
8	F	Housewife	1
9	М	Retired	1
10	F	Housewife	1
11	F	Teacher	1
12	М	Village committee	3
13	F	Farmer	4
14	F	Farmer	1
15	F	Farmer	3
16	F	Farmer	2
17	F	Farmer	2
18	F	Farmer	1
19	М	Livestock worker	1
20	F	Farmer	1
21	F	Farmer	2
22	М	Farmer	4
23	М	Farmer	5
24	М	Farmer	2
25	F	Farmer	2
		Xayabou	iry Province
26	М	Farmer	2
27	F	Farmer	2
28	М	Farmer	2
29	М	Farmer	1
30	М	Retired/farmer	1
31	М	Farmer	1
32	М	Farmer	5
33	М	Farmer	3
34	М	Farmer	2

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No.	Gender	Current occupation	Number of family members working in Thailand
35	М	Farmer	1
36	М	Farmer	1
37	М	Farmer	2
38	М	Farmer	5
39	F	Farmer	4
40	F	Farmer	2
41	F	Farmer	1
42	F	Farmer	1
43	F	Farmer	2
44	F	Farmer	2
45	F	Farmer	3
46	М	Farmer	1
47	М	Farmer	4

ANNEX 2. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

A. Guiding questions for key informant interview with key stakeholders at national and provincial levels (1 hour)

- (1) What is your organization's role in response to the COVID-19 situation related to migration and anti-human trafficking works in Lao People's Democratic Republic/your province?
- (2) Who is your main partner for the implementation of this project/activity? Who is the donor?
- (3) Are there any regulations or bilateral agreements in addressing the issue of migration and anti-human trafficking in relation to COVID-19 response? If yes, how is it implemented and are there any areas to improve?
- (4) What are the available social services for returnee migrant workers and victims of human trafficking in the (COVID-19) emergency response (networking, referral system and coordination)?
- (5) What is the key issue that arise regarding the social impact on migration patterns in implementing this project/activity (unemployment, social protection, potential health risks and challenges on return to local communities, inclusion and social cohesion and changes in gender dynamics)?
- (6) Does your organization adopt and implement reintegration programmes? Are new returnee migrant workers able to access this programme? What is the limitation?
- (7) What is the main challenge for addressing labour migration and anti-human trafficking works during the emergency response (policies, programme and coordination with the destination country)?
- (8) What are the challenges in reaching out to migrant workers and victims of human trafficking and their families?
- (9) Which occupation of migrant workers are faced with solid difficulties during this emergency response and decline of the economy? Why?
- (10) What is your organization's strategy in response to those obstacles mentioned earlier?
- (11) How does the COVID-19 epidemic change the context of migration and anti-human trafficking work under your organization's role and mandate?
- (12) Do you have any data, report or document that can be shared regarding the social impact of COVID-19 on the migration and human trafficking pattern in Lao People's Democratic Republic?
- (13) Any recommendations and ways forward?

B. Guiding questions for focus group discussions with new returnee migrant workers at village level (1 hour)

Based on the objectives of the study, the FGD will focus on the issues of unemployment, social protection benefits, potential health risks, challenges on return to local communities, reintegration and social cohesion and changes in gender dynamics.

- (1) What did you do before returning to your community?
- (2) Why did you decide to return home/to the community?
- (3) Do you acknowledge any health risks during the travel? What information did you receive and from whom/what organization? How are they (IF) useful?
- (4) What are the measures you applied to protect yourself and your family from health risks during the travel and when you returned to the community?
- (5) What kind of support did you receive from the government or project? During your journey return home or during the state quarantine time, if any?
- (6) What are the main challenges in accessing health-care services during COVID-19?
- (7) Can you share the story (of your friends or relatives or other Lao migrant workers) during the COVID-19 situation (challenges and needs)?
- (8) What is the unique strength and weakness of Lao migrant workers compared to those from Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam?
- (9) How did COVID-19 impact yourself and your family (income, livelihood and family's well-being, children's education and nutrition)?
- (10) What changed in your relationship in the household and among family members before and after the COVID-19 situation?
- (11) How did these affect women and men, girls and boys and other genders differently?
- (12) What kind of support did you get from community leaders, the government and the project when you returned home?
- (13) How did people in your community (relatives, friends and family) support you when you returned to the community? What are their perceptions towards migrant workers from abroad or victims of human trafficking?
- (14) If this COVID-19 situation continues and take longer than you expected, what is your future plan?
- (15) What obstacle did you experience in reintegrating to your community and family?
- (16) Where and how do get support when you need information and social support (health, education, employment and legal)?
- (17) What are your needs and priorities at the moment and for the long term?
- (18) What are your recommendations or questions for this study?

C. Guiding questions for focus group discussions with parents and family members of migrant workers working abroad (1 hour)

- (1) Who is the breadwinner in your family and what is the main source of the family's income?
- (2) Did any member of your family stop working for pay or work less hours because of increased family responsibilities due to the COVID-19 situation?
- (3) Is any of your family members or relatives still working or struck abroad due to lockdown regulations? If yes, could you please share their story?
- (4) What are their challenges and needs at the moment?
- (5) How has COVID-19 impacted your family (income, livelihood and family's well-being, children's education, food and nutrition)?
- (6) How do these affect women and men, girls and boys and other genders differently?
- (7) Has your household received any unpaid help from organizations, the community or people other than your family? If yes, from whom?
- (8) What kind of support did you receive from the community, government and project during COVID-19?
- (9) Where and how do you get support when you need information and social support (health, education, employment and legal)?
- (10) If this COVID-19 situation continues longer than you expected, what is your plan?
- (11) What are your family's needs and priorities at the moment and for the long term?
- (12) What are your recommendations or questions for this study?

ANNEX 3. SURVEY SCHEDULE IN SAVANNAKHET AND XAYABOURY

A. Analysis of migration trends in Savannakhet, 3-7 August 2020

Time	Activity	Remarks
	3 August 2020	
10:30 am-11:00 am	Greeting and introduction on the research and activity with the Provincial Office of Labour and Social Welfare in Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet Conduct key informant interview (KII) with Labour and Social Welfare Division	Social Welfare Department (SWD) and IOM
11:00 am-11:30 am	Conduct KII with Anti-Human Trafficking Division of Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet	SWD and IOM
1:30 pm-2:30 pm	Conduct KII with Migration Resource Centre (MRC) of Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet	SWD and IOM
3:00 pm-4:00 pm	Conduct KII with Sengsavang Shelter in Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet	SWD and IOM
	4 August 2020	
8:00 am-9:00 am	Conduct KII with KP Service and Labour Development Co., Ltd. (Recruitment agency)	SWD and IOM
9:00 am–11:30 am	Travel to Huameuang Neua Village, Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 1 with migrants FGD 1 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
1:30 pm -4 :00 pm	Travel to Huameuang Tai Village, Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 2 with migrants FGD 2 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
	5 August 2020	
9:00 am-11:30 am	Travel to Phonsavanh Village, Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 3 with migrants FGD 3 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
1:00 pm-4:00 pm	Travel to Phonsaad Village, Kaysone Phomvihane District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 4 with migrants FGD 4 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
	6 August 2020	
8:00 am-11:30 am	Travel to Sanarmxay Village, Outhoumphone District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 5 with migrants FGD 5 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
1:30 pm-4:00 pm	Travel to Nonghaedkham Village, Outhoumphone District, Savannakhet Conduct: FGD 6 with migrants FGD 6 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM

B. Analysis of migration trends in Xayaboury, 10-14 August 2020

Time	Activity	Remarks
	11 August 2020	
8:00 am–9:00 am	Greeting and introduction on the research and activity with the Provincial Office of Labour and Social Welfare in Xayaboury District, Xayaboury Conduct KII with Labour and Social Welfare Division	SWD and IOM
10:30 am-11:30 am	Conduct KII with Anti-Human Trafficking Division in Xayaboury District, Xayaboury	SWD and IOM
1:30 pm-2:30 pm	Conduct KII with MRC in Xayaboury District, Xayaboury	SWD and IOM
3:00 pm-4:00 pm	Conduct KII with iJobs in Phieng District, Xayaboury	SWD and IOM
	12 August 2020	
8:00 am-11:30 am	Travel to Phonxay Village, Xayaboury District, Xayaboury Conduct: FGD 7 with migrants FGD 7 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
1:30 pm—4:00 pm	Travel to Nonsa-ad Village, Xayaboury District, Xayaboury Conduct: FGD 8 with migrants FGD 8 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
	13 August 2020	
9:00 am–11:30 am	Travel to Nasom Village, Phieng District, Xayaboury Conduct: FGD 9 with migrants FGD 9 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM
1:00 pm-4:00 pm	Travel to Huana Village, Phieng District, Xayaboury Conduct: FGD 10 with migrants FGD 10 with parents of migrants	SWD and IOM



International Organization for Migration
UN House, 3rd Floor, Lane Xang Avenue, P.O. Box 345
Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic
Tel.: +856 (21) 26 7734; +856 (20) 020 222 0565
Fax: +856 (21) 267799

Email: IOMVientiane2@iom.int Website: www.iom.int/countries/lao-peoples-democratic-republic