

# CAMBODIA COUNTER TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (CTIP)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This **mapping study** seeks to assess the situation faced by Cambodian migrant workers (CMWs) in Thailand. Specifically, the study covers the following topics: (i) mapping the presence of Cambodian migrant workers geographically and by industry; (ii) identifying the challenges CMWs face in their work and migration journey; (iii) mapping the services available to CMWs; (iv) assessing how CMWs access such services and any outstanding service gaps; and (v) assessing the operations and needs of Cambodian migrant worker networks, with specific reference to the case study of the Cambodian Migrant Worker Network (CMWN). This study is designed to assist Winrock International's Cambodia CTIP program to design program activities to support Cambodian migrant workers and improve their access to services.

The study is based on **data collected** in March and April 2024 from the following sources: 20 key informant interviews with migrant-facing CSOs; 6 key informant interviews with migration experts and community leaders; 6 in-depth interviews with migrant worker organizers and network members; and focus group discussions with over 40 Cambodian migrants working across various sectors in Thailand.

## A New Landscape Assessment Highlights the Unique Challenges and Gaps in Services Facing Cambodian Migrants Journeying to Thailand

### KEY FINDINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

**Mapping CMWs:** According to official statistics there were 459,863 registered Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand as at January 2024. Of these, 32.0% were registered under the MOU, 63.8% were registered under verification drives, and 4.2% work in Thailand according to the s64 border pass. In reality, the number of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand is much higher due to the large number of undocumented workers. The real figure is variously estimated to be between one million and two million workers. An estimate of 1.5 million would be a good working figure to use, and would be consistent with field observations. By geography, 46.6% of registered Cambodians are located in and around Bangkok, while 49.3% are located in the Eastern provinces of Chonburi, Rayong, Chacheongsao, Chanthaburi, Prachin Buri, Samut Prakan, Trat and Sa Kaew. By industry, official statistics record that 36.5% of Cambodian workers are employed in the construction sector, 23.7% in manufacturing, 13.2% in retail, 10.8% in agriculture, 7.9% in service, and 1.7% as fishers. These figures seem subject to fluctuation, as in the past numbers for fishing and manufacturing (including seafood and agricultural processing) were proportionally higher.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY CMWs:

Once in Thailand, challenges faced by Cambodian migrant workers are widespread and pervasive. Labor violations are commonplace and usually go unreported. Common issues include: unpaid wages,

withholding of ID documents, refusal to change jobs, threat of deportation/arrest, lack of access to justice, debt to employers, and exploitation by brokers and employers. Taken together, it is clear that Cambodian migrant workers' life in Thailand is characterized by excessive vulnerability and risk, constant exploitation, social and political exclusion, and limited access to rights and redress.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO CMWs:

This report provides a comprehensive mapping of service providers that interact with Cambodian Migrant workers. Services are discussed by geographic area, and include social protections, labor complaints, legal support, safe migration and CTIP training, labor organizing, policy advocacy, and outreach to facilitate access to rights and services.

## SERVICE GAPS:

A major purpose of this is to identify service gaps with respect to CMWs, which are summarized as follows:

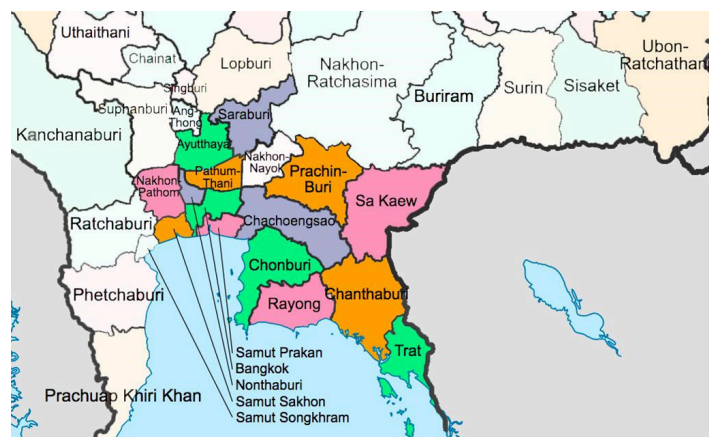
- **Services remain underutilized:** Overall, the proportion of workers receiving services is a small fraction. There is no risk of providing unneeded services, even in Bangkok. However, access remains an ongoing issue and must be facilitated through effective outreach.
- **Particular services of need:** Legal services, access to justice, worker organizing and leadership, and sustained community-embedded outreach are all particular services of need. There are no legal clinics for migrant workers in Eastern Thailand.
- **Access and outreach are key to filling service gaps:** Even in places where services for migrant workers exist, access to these services is the key challenge, due to poor information, superficial outreach, heavy reliance on gatekeepers, and limited eligibility for some services. Outreach to Cambodian communities is proving a key challenge among existing Thai CSOs.
- **Sectoral gaps:** Overall, a cross-sectoral approach is needed, with the exception of the fishing industry. It is more important to target Cambodian communities, than target specific workplaces, given that worker housing made of multiple types of workers is a location for support and information sharing more than the workplace.
- **Geographic gaps:** The entire Eastern seaboard is far from saturated for services: Samut Prakan, Chonburi, Chacheongsao, Rayong, Chanthaburi, Trat, Sa Kaeo. There are already several service providers in Rayong and a couple in Chonburi, but their reach appears to only extend to specific pockets within the community.

## ADDRESSING SERVICE GAPS:

A key finding of this report is that outreach to Cambodian communities is proving a significant challenge for existing Thai CSOs. Therefore, a **key recommendation** is for civil society to support network building and worker organizing among Cambodian migrant worker communities to better facilitate outreach, information sharing and access to services. Such activity would seek to achieve improved inclusion and engagement with Cambodian migrant communities, while also providing capacity building, mentorship and technical support to community leaders, so that Cambodian migrant communities could achieve more agency and self-determination in the conditions that determine their lives.

In the final chapter, a detailed **capacity assessment of the Cambodian Migrant Worker Network (CMWN)** is provided, discussing their current operations and activities. CMWN is one model example of how a migrant community network can be mobilized to achieve better outcomes and access to services for Cambodians in Thailand. Displaying a great aptitude for outreach, the CMWN helps workers in a variety of ways: to be aware of their rights and entitlements; to advocate for workers vis-a-vis employers, migration brokers and government authorities; to improve access to services and justice; to build community capacity; and by providing channels for social inclusion. Working in conjunction with such community-led networks therefore offers a promising avenue for civil society programs and interventions seeking to improve outcomes for Cambodians in Thailand.

## Major Provinces for Cambodian Migrant Workers



**DISCLAIMER:** This study is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Winrock International and do not necessarily reflect the view of USAID or the United States Government.