

IOM THAILAND COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN 2022



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SITUATION OVERVIEW

CONTEXT – IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In January 2020, Thailand became the second country to confirm a COVID-19 case. The country has since experienced four waves of outbreaks, the most significant of which took place between June and October 2021 with the emergence of the Delta variant, and later between January and April 2022 with Omicron. By mid-July, the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) reported that Thailand had a cumulative total of 4,545,043 cases and 30,835 deaths. On 5 July 2022, Thailand passed the milestone of 140 million doses being administered, with a second dose coverage of 76.5 per cent, and third dose coverage of 43 per cent.¹ The country's overall response and ability to mitigate risks of infection have led the World Health Organization (WHO) to consider Thailand as a success story in pandemic response. This success remains deeply contingent on Thailand's ability to remain vigilant in its whole-of-society approach to maintain effective public health response and mitigation, manage cross-border movements and resume economic activities.

This year, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and its partners continue their efforts to reduce community transmission of COVID-19 in Thailand mindful that while substantial achievements have been made, the need to remain vigilant persists as new variants and sub-variants continue to emerge. In July 2022, globally, the number of weekly cases increased for the fifth consecutive week, after a declining trend since the last peak in March 2022. At the regional level, a similar trend is also observed with weekly cases increasing in Asia.² In Thailand cases also continue to rise, including the number of severe cases identified in country.

The impact of the pandemic on the country's economy has been severe, with an estimated 6.1 per cent decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020. However, the Thai economy appears to be on a path of recovery from this contraction and grew by 1.6 per cent in 2021. The Royal Thai Government's Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) expects the economy to expand in the range of 3.5 – 4.5 per cent in 2022.

Migration remains a key feature of Thailand society, representing approximately seven per cent of Thailand's total population, the number of international migrants residing and working in Thailand is estimated at 4.9 million (pre COVID-19). Thailand hosts nearly half of all migrant workers who migrate within the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. As of May 2022, according to the Ministry of Labour, there were 2,161,578 registered foreign workers in Thailand. 1,935,055 were migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam with the largest representation coming from Myanmar. Their presence is a testament to the economic success of Thailand, which provides higher wages and better job opportunities than many of its neighbours. It is also a result of a rapid demographic transition in the country, where the steadily declining fertility rate has resulted in a high dependency ratio, effectively shrinking the proportion of working-age people relative to older people and increasing the need for migrant workers.

¹ The Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). (2022, July 10). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://ddc.moph.go.th/viralpneumonia/eng/index.php>

² WHO Thailand Weekly Situation Update No. 242



Relief package distribution with IOM Deputy Director General (DDG) Amy Pope, IOM Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Dr Nenetete Motus and Chief of Mission in IOM Thailand Géraldine Ansart in Pathumthani, Thailand. © WHO Thailand 2022

Migrant and mobile populations in many contexts have a high risk of infection and are disproportionately impacted by the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 due to several factors and barriers such as lack or inadequate access to proper information on prevention, limitations in or exclusions from accessing diagnostic and treatment services, cramped and crowded living and working conditions, stigma and discrimination, and other factors. There is ample evidence that the pandemic has exacerbated many of the existing vulnerabilities faced by migrants and other people on the move. Thailand, with its significant population of migrants from the region, was no exception. In July 2021, as Thailand approached its first major peak of the pandemic and its fourth wave, Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar migrants accounted for 14 per cent of the national caseload and experienced an infection rate three times higher than their Thai counterparts, according to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH).

Access to treatment, testing and vaccination was limited, and through the funding raised through its [2021 Appeal](#), IOM launched a number of interventions to support migrants that faced significant hardship as a result of the different restrictions and prevailing economic situation. While the situation has since improved with an overall easing of restrictions and implementation of mitigation measures, the recovery phase will require continued support. A key element in this recovery is the national COVID-19 vaccination effort and the need to scale up coverage among non-Thai communities in the country, alongside continued efforts to advocate for and ensure that universal access to health services and financial protection measures progressively include migrants, especially those marginalized or in situations of vulnerability.



IOM DDG Amy Pope distributing relief packages to migrant beneficiaries in Pathumthani, Thailand. © WHO Thailand 2022



MHVs supporting the COVID-19 vaccination rollout programme in Tak, Thailand. © WVFT 2021

CONTEXT – REOPENING OF BORDERS IN 2022

Nearly two years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered the RTG to suspend its labour migration agreements with neighboring countries, authorities have now taken steps toward reopening of borders in 2022 - an acknowledgment of the contribution of migrant workers to the Thai economy. Employers have been allowed to submit demand letters to initiate the recruitment requests since December 2021 and quarantine capacities are being set up. The RTG expects to recruit approximately 500,000 migrant workers in 2022 to respond to existing labour shortages.³ While the borders have slowly started to reopen in the first quarter of 2022, Thailand is already experiencing an increase in mobility⁴ and reports of an increasing number of undocumented migrants arriving in Thailand from neighbouring countries.⁵

In 2022, IOM Thailand is appealing for **USD 6,920,879** to implement its COVID-19 Strategic Response and Recovery Plan which aims to contribute to the country's whole-of-society approach to the pandemic by ensuring that the migrant population in Thailand is included in the overall efforts to respond to and recover from COVID-19.



COVID-19 vaccine rollout programme for migrants in Samutprakarn, Thailand. © IOM 2022

³ IOM supports Thailand's plan to reopen borders to migrant workers through trainings in coordination with the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour. IOM Thailand. (2022, February 8). Retrieved May 27, 2022, from <https://thailand.iom.int/news/iom-supports-thailands-plan-reopen-borders-migrant-workers-through-trainings-coordination-department-employment-ministry-labour>

⁴ More border checkpoints set to open. Bangkok Post. (2022, May 26). Retrieved June 9, 2022, from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2315970/more-border-checkpoints-set-to-open>

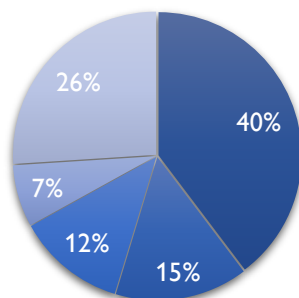
⁵ Ngamkham, W. (2022, May 19). Three truckloads of illegal migrants caught in Narathiwat. Bangkok Post. Retrieved June 9, 2022, from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2312650/three-truckloads-of-illegal-migrants-caught-in-narathiwat>

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021



74 per cent of the IOM Thailand COVID-19 Appeal 2021 was funded receiving USD 2,959,201 in total.

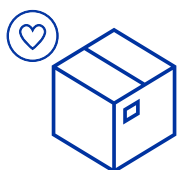
Funding Received



■ USA ■ UN ■ Sweden ■ Australia ■ Unfunded



100,000 were reached by IOM and partners through COVID-19 case finding, testing, treatment, training of health volunteers, care packages, health education and awareness raising. The provinces of Tak, Chiang Mai, Ranong and Songkhla were targeted for these interventions.



10,000 migrant workers affected by the lockdown measures in Thailand were provided with relief packages with food and non-food items and right-based information.

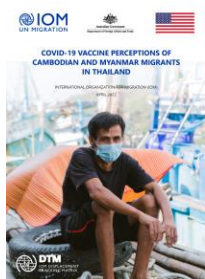


13,723 migrants were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs).



United Nations
Network on Migration
Working Better Together

The **UN MIGRATION NETWORK's** sub-working group on the COVID-19 response was established and led by IOM facilitating strong coordination between network members, civil society organizations and government partners. Regular meetings were organized to facilitate information sharing and coordination and to better respond to the gaps in the support provided to migrants affected by the pandemic. By the end of 2021, the group published five monthly situation reports documenting the impact of COVID-19 on migrants in Thailand and neighbouring countries. The group also helped to finalize the COVID-19 Vaccine Perception Survey questionnaire which was later implemented by IOM.



IOM completed the data collection of its [COVID-19 Vaccination Perception Survey](#) between November 2021 and February 2022, which aimed to better understand perceptions and hesitancy among migrant communities towards the vaccine and develop evidence-informed, targeted messaging to be used during information and awareness activities.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021



4,429 surveys were collected in total among Cambodian and Myanmar migrants in the provinces of Chanthaburi, Chonburi, Ranong, Rayong, Tak, Trat and the Greater Bangkok Area. IOM will use the survey findings to forecast future trends about vaccine uptake among these migrant communities and, consequently, develop strategies to improve acceptability and inform policy and possible responses to flatten the COVID-19 infection curve.



IOM STUDY on "[Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand](#)" was published.⁶ This study was implemented under IOM's Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement (PROMISE) programme with the support of the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The study provides evidence and recommendations to assist in shaping migrant-inclusive policies and plans for socioeconomic resilience and recovery in the four countries.



POLICY PAPER "[Solutions to Achieve Fair and Ethical Recruitment and Decent Work of Migrant Workers in Thailand during COVID-19 Recovery](#)" was developed by IOM through multi-stakeholder consultations and submitted it to the RTG in January 2022, which led to a bilateral government dialogue between Thailand and Cambodia to discuss protection measures for migrant workers.

FROM RESPONSE TO RECOVERY – IOM THAILAND'S PLAN

IOM Thailand's strategic interventions are categorized into four broad areas and are in line with IOM's global COVID-19 Strategic Response and Recovery Plan as well as the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) COVID-19 Response Plan in Thailand. IOM Thailand's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Strategy also focuses on longer-term interventions to promote socio-economic recovery and conserve development gains towards the 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, IOM's approach to preparing and responding to disease outbreaks and future health threats is anchored on IOM's Health, Border and Mobility Management (HBMM) Framework. The framework brings together core principles in population mobility and disease surveillance, providing a platform to develop country-specific and multi-country interventions emphasizing health system strengthening along mobility corridors in line with the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR).

⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2022, January 20). Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://publications.iom.int/books/socioeconomic-impact-covid-19-migrant-workers-cambodia-lao-peoples-democratic-republic>.

IOM THAILAND'S RESPONSE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Ensure continuation of essential services, mitigate risks and protect displaced persons, mobile populations and host communities.

IOM's interventions in this area will focus on reducing protection-related risks and vulnerabilities of migrant populations and combatting xenophobia.

Towards this end, IOM will:

- Assist migrants and other vulnerable mobile populations by addressing the challenges of maintaining a healthy and safe environment for groups in Immigration Detention Centers (IDC), as well as reducing the potential for the spread of COVID-19 due to close living conditions and challenges related to maintaining adequate hygiene and medical support.
- Assist RTG in exploring the possibility of non-custodial, community-based alternatives to immigration detention for the benefit of the wider IDC population, particularly those considered to be at heightened risk in the context of COVID-19.
- Continue providing direct humanitarian assistance to migrants and other vulnerable groups, including the provision of physical and mental health services, food and nutrition and hygiene and COVID-19 test kits and awareness raising on COVID-19 vaccines to this vulnerable group in IDCs, Welfare Protection Centers for Victims of Trafficking (WPCVOTs) and Shelters for Children and Families.
- Conduct a widescale communications campaign to combat xenophobia and promote social cohesion. Beginning with research on the target audience and establishing a baseline to assess behavioural change, a communications strategy will be developed to guide the effective implementation of digital campaigns, print materials, videos and events that aim to promote tolerance and encourage constructive public discourse about migrants.
- Increase access to counselling and assisted voluntary return options for stranded migrants affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including migrants in immigration detention settings.
- Conduct a needs assessment of stranded migrants vulnerable and use the findings of the assessment to further strengthen the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Targets:

1,000 migrants and other vulnerable groups in Immigration Detention Centers (IDCs), Welfare Protection Centers for Victims of Trafficking (WPCVOTs) and Shelters for Children and Families (Shelters).

Total Funding Requirement: USD 1,624,988

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Scale-up essential public health measures and promote mobility sensitive health systems

With the eventual reopening of Thailand's land borders and anticipated return to increasing mobility within the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), IOM proposes to continue its programming that aims to:

- i) Prevent, detect, and respond to COVID-19 and other public health threats in communities and at borders;
- ii) Promote equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for vulnerable populations.

Vaccination offers Thailand a mechanism to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and embark on its socio-economic recovery. At the time of writing, second dose vaccination coverage among Cambodia, Laotian People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar migrants in Thailand stands at 45 per cent, compared to 73 per cent at the national level. IOM continues to advocate scaling up efforts to increase coverage among migrants. To achieve greater equity in access to health services and ensure that no one is left behind, IOM proposes to work with Provincial Health Offices and Migrant Health Volunteers to support outreach activities that engage with migrant communities with clear and accurate communication around the benefits and safety of the vaccine. Building capacity at this level will further contribute to improved preparedness for future outbreaks, pandemics and other public health risks. IOM is ready to support the RTG learn from the pandemic experience and integrate lessons learned and best practices into policies and frameworks that will respond to future public health emergencies. IOM will continue working in close collaboration with its partners, and is enthusiastic to work alongside WHO in the implementation of its new guidance 'Strengthening COVID-19 vaccine demand and uptake in refugees and migrants'.⁷ Specifically, interventions under this area will:

- Strengthen the RTG's health response to COVID-19-related risks at Points of Entries (PoEs), as well as facilitate the Ministry of Public Health's active case finding measures in high migration areas including Chiang Mai, Mae Sot, Ranong, Songkhla, Bangkok and its vicinity.
- Support the RTG in ensuring the inclusion of migrants and other vulnerable mobile populations in COVID-19 vaccine delivery programmes and increase vaccination coverage among migrant communities.
- Generate and build on existing knowledge and evidence base regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and other vulnerable mobile populations in Thailand. IOM proposes to document and apply lessons learned in terms of:
 - i. Migrant access to health services to the wider health sector in Thailand.
 - ii. Impact on coping mechanisms among migrants and their health seeking behaviours.
- Identify several high-volume PoEs and conduct surveys to analyze the existing system and identify which infrastructures need to go 100 per cent paperless. Once identified, support the adoption and technology upgrade for these infrastructures at PoEs to build a 100 per cent online and paperless system.
- Strengthen networking among 'International Communicable Disease Control Port' (ICDCP) through the facilitation of four ICDCP capacity building meetings to train on current COVID-19 health response practices as well as share and learn best practices among each other.

⁷ WHO's Health and Migration Programme released these new guidelines in March 2022

Targets:

- 4,000 migrants receive COVID-19 vaccination in 8 provinces.
- 45,000 migrants attend health education sessions on COVID-19 and vaccine safety.
- 20,000 migrants reached with vaccine education sessions and provided IEC materials on vaccination in migrant-specific languages.
- 12,000 refugees in established camps vaccinated.
- Comprehensive reports are produced detailing lessons learned and best practices regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants in Thailand and their inclusion in the national response.
- Purchase identified technology and infrastructure equipment to support a goal of 100 per cent online and paperless entry system.
- Four ICDCP meetings and capacity building trainings for 100 ICDCP Thai health officials

Total Funding Requirement: USD 2,376,983

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Mitigate the longer-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, to contribute to restarting human mobility and empower societies for self-reliance.

For this area, IOM will focus on strengthening international cooperation, public and private response capacities to COVID-19 and other potential public health emergencies, immigration systems and border crossing mechanisms to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on human mobility while also empowering migrants to support socio-economic recovery.

Programmes in this area will:

- Support RTG authorities in strengthening response capacities to COVID-19 and other public health risks at PoEs. This intervention will expand existing on-the-job awareness sessions and risk assessments to additional PoEs' engaging immigration and other authorities involved at PoEs. This intervention will focus on the capacity building of border management officials to effectively operate border controls during and after COVID-19.
- Facilitate socio-economic inclusion of migrant workers in the ongoing COVID-19 response, and empower them to contribute to the overall COVID-19 socio-economic recovery efforts by
 - i. Ensuring migrant workers' access to reliable and verified information and advice regarding COVID-19 measures;
 - ii. Ensuring social protection of most vulnerable migrant workers to reduce their susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking; and
 - iii. Ensuring access to decent work and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers who suffered job loss, both those residing in Thailand and those who returned to their countries of origin.

- c. Strengthen public and private sector response to COVID-19 pandemic by
- i) capacitating government, private sector and civil society stakeholders on fair and ethical recruitment and employment of migrant workers post-COVID-19;
 - ii) generating data and analysis to inform evidence-based pro-migration policies facilitating recruitment and employment of migrant workers during and post COVID-19.

Targets:

- 200 border officials at POEs capacitated to prevent and respond to COVID-19.
- Continue operation of one hotline for migrant workers to access reliable information on COVID-19.
- 10,000 migrant workers in agriculture, fishing and construction sectors provided with unconditional cash assistance.
- 50 government, 180 private sector and 200 civil society representatives capacitated on implementing fair and ethical recruitment and decent work, including access to social protection, for migrant workers during the reopening of the borders.
- 100,000 migrant workers, especially in the agriculture, fishing and construction sectors, and 10 million viewers in Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand provided with information on safe migration, human and labour rights, and essential services available to them during COVID-19 through community and online outreach.
- Provision of continued technical support to the RTG through generating data and analysis for evidence-based pro-migration policies during and post COVID-19, enhanced civil society-private sector-government coordination, among others.

Total Funding Requirement: USD 2,718,908

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Inform response and recovery efforts by tracking the impact of COVID-19 on human mobility and strengthen evidence-based decision making through data.

Within this area of intervention, IOM will inform short, medium, and long-term efforts to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 through data provision and analysis. Understanding the regional impact of COVID-19 and future health emergencies will help contribute to IOM's understanding at global level.

Programmes in this area will:

- Undertake regional adaptation and development of population mobility mapping methodologies in line with the Health, Border and Mobility Management frameworks and in consideration of mobility dynamics and migration health policy development across GMS countries: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Viet Nam.
- Continue the implementation of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to gather, analyze and disseminate data on the COVID-19 related challenges and needs of migrant populations in Thailand. This data will be shared with key stakeholders to inform overall response and to advocate for the inclusion of migrants in various recovery plans.

Targets:

- Population Mobility Mapping mechanism will be established in priority locations to prevent, detect and respond to public health events to facilitate identification of Spaces of Vulnerability (SOV) where public health measures need to be strengthened.
- Information on the needs and challenges faced by migrant populations is regularly gathered, analyzed and shared to inform policy and delivery services of government, private sector, civil society and UN actors.
- At least four government departments involved in border management provided migration related data to improve conditions for the secure and safe movement of people and goods across the Mekong Region.

Total Funding Requirement: USD 200,000

IOM THAILAND'S CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

The IOM Mission in Thailand operates with over 300 personnel working on more than 50 active projects in eleven locations across the country. IOM Thailand has a main office in central Bangkok, four sub-offices and six project offices in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang and Mae Sot. This presence, along with its vast network of partners, has enabled the Mission to support vulnerable migrants across the country.

IOM's Migration Health Division (MHD) consists of 45 staff based in Bangkok, Mae Sot, Mae Sariang and Mae Hong Son. MHD's portfolio includes 10 active migrant health related projects, two clinics and two laboratories in Bangkok and Mae Sot accredited by MoPH to perform various tests including but not limited to Tuberculosis (TB) and COVID-19.

IOM established and led the UN Migration Network's sub-working group on the COVID-19 response, facilitating strong coordination between network members, civil society and government partners. The group published five monthly situation reports by the end of 2021 about the impact of COVID-19 on migrants in Thailand and neighboring countries.



Refugee immunization by IOM nurse in Mae Sot, Tak
© IOM 2021



Swab specimen collection of migrants in Mae Sot, Tak for COVID-19 testing. © IOM 2021

Since 1999, IOM has been working closely in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) of the Kingdom of Thailand in responding to the challenges of public health and migration. IOM's longstanding relationship with government authorities in Thailand, and with bordering countries, ensures that IOM's strategies and operations are in line with broader national, regional, and sub-regional frameworks and that interventions take into consideration all stakeholders in the migration process, including the origin and destination countries. IOM's current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the MoPH began in 2019. IOM aims to contribute to the Healthy Thailand agenda of MoPH of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The overall objective of the MoU is to

“Assist the MoPH in improving priority health knowledge, awareness, capacity, policies and practices as well as providing health services and supporting the access to basic health services and humanitarian assistance among migrants, regular and irregular, and marginalized populations in priority areas in Thailand.”

In addition, IOM's engagement with private sector employers and migrant workers along with its continued presence in migrant communities gives IOM a comparative advantage, as the Mission is uniquely placed to identify needs and challenges related to migration and provide targeted advice and assistance.

Drawing on its institutional capacity and extensive expertise and presence in Thailand, IOM has developed this 2022 Strategic Response and Recovery Plan (SRRP) to respond to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 with a continued focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable migrant populations and with a longer-term view for socio-economic recovery.



MHVs conducting health education session for migrants in Pathumthani, Thailand. © IOM 2022



IOM and WVFT during the COVID-19 vaccine rollout programme at Samutprakarn, Thailand. © IOM 2022

IOM THAILAND'S FUNDING REQUIREMENT

IOM Thailand is appealing for **USD 6,920,879** to contribute to the country's whole-of-society approach in response to COVID-19. IOM's interventions will ensure that the migrant population is included in overall efforts to respond to and recover from COVID-19. Mindful of the evolving nature of the pandemic, the funding requirements may change throughout the course of the year.

BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING REQUIREMENT

AREAS OF INTERVENTION	TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED (USD)
Strategic Objective 1: Ensure continuation of essential services, mitigate risks and protect displaced persons, mobile populations and host communities.	1,624,988
Strategic Objective 2: Scale-Up Essential Public Health Measures and Promote Mobility Sensitive Health Systems.	2,376,983
Strategic Objective 3: Mitigate the longer-term socio-economic impacts of COVID 19, contribute to restarting human mobility and empowering societies for self-reliance.	2,718,908
Strategic Objective 4: Inform response and recovery efforts by tracking the impact of COVID-19 on mobility and people on the move and strengthen evidence-based decision making through data.	200,000
TOTAL	6,920,879

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Locations of IOM Thailand Country Office and Sub Offices

IOM THAILAND HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITY GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE



COVID-19 vaccination support

Health promotion and assistance for migrants

