

Self-sufficient Livelihood – an ICC Strategic Focus



Cambodia is known for exporting migrants, and since 2017 over one million Cambodians are living abroad as migrant workers (UNDESA)¹. Most Cambodian migrant workers choose to work outside of the country due to limited available formal jobs and expected higher wages in other countries. To date, less than a third of Cambodian migrants use formal channels for their migration. Instead, the majority of migrants seek illegal channels, because of high administration costs, the lengthy process and other obstacles. These illegal channels consist of online recruitment services, referral contacts, and unlicensed brokers².

Efforts from the Cambodian government have been made in combating human trafficking and promoting safe migration. However, the problem is still remaining at large. Before starting the implementation of the ICC Trafficking Response project in Prey Veng province in 2017, many people in ICC's target communities were tricked into fake promises of higher income and better working conditions. Sadly, some villagers decided to work illegally in neighbouring countries without proper documentation and work permits, which put them at risk. Those people were not well informed about the legal procedure, and had little or no information at all about jobs and working conditions in neighbouring countries.

Since the ICC Trafficking Response project began intervening, an increase in safe migration has been seen within target communities. The Trafficking Response project's contribution to this increase is due to various activities such as: awareness raising and training on labour trafficking, illegal migration risks, critical thinking, and safe migration. The sharing of experiences by former victims of human trafficking and illegal migration has also been useful

to increase people's understanding. A synergy effect occurs when villagers share their new knowledge to others. However, this increase in safe migration is also due to Thailand's strict new Law on Foreign Workers Management adopted in 2018, which saw an immediate reduction in illegal migration.

One example of safe migration from the ICC Trafficking Response project is about the young man in the picture above, who has done safe migration and found a decent job as a construction worker in Thailand. He knows that, in order to become a legal migrant worker in Thailand, he needs to have a passport, work permit, work visa, and work contract. Currently, he is earning around 17,000 baht per month (equal to more than USD 500). With his salary, he supports his elderly parents and his own family, as well as paying off his family's debt. He is also saving some of his salary in a savings account, with the aim to expand his small family farm and to open a salon for his wife, in order to improve their family livelihood, once he decides to return to Cambodia. As a role model, he is giving advice to others who wish to legally migrate for work in Thailand. So far, he has helped seven people to find similar jobs as him in Thailand via formal channels.

This is one example of the impact from the ICC Trafficking Response project. The project team continues to build close relationships with the local village chiefs, Commune Councils, Provincial Department of Social Affairs, and others in authority, because it is important that the people legally responsible continue to fight human trafficking and illegal migration. It is ICC's wish to see that more least-served and poor Cambodians would be able to find decent jobs in-country and in other countries through legal and safe channels, and have a satisfactory sustainable livelihood and hopes and dreams for their future.

¹ [United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\) \(2017\). International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision.](#)

² [TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note: Cambodia \(2019\)](#)