SAFE and REWARDING LABOUR MIGRATION

LIFT PROGRAMMING 2016-2019

Photo credit: Pyoe Pin

OBJECTIVES

Myanmar is the largest labour migration source country in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Up to 10 per cent of Myanmar's population is migrating internationally (IOM, 2015) and almost 20 per cent of the population is migrating internally (Myanmar Census, 2014). Labour migration is clearly an important livelihood strategy for rural households in Myanmar, and remittances can have a significant impact on reducing poverty. Results from macro-economic studies suggest that, on average, a 10 per cent increase in per capita official international remittances leads to a 3.5 per cent decline in the proportion of people living in poverty (Adams and Page 2005). In order to maximize the benefits of migration LIFT's migration programme aims to support safe and rewarding migration by:

1. Supporting the Government of Myanmar to improve policies and governance on safe labour migration
2. Collaborating with industries for a responsible and profitable rural to urban labour migration approach
3. Empowering civil society and media to support safe and rewarding migration for their constituencies and audiences
4. Highlighting gender aspects of migration including addressing abuse and trafficking
5. Establishing a Migration Knowledge Partnership for Myanmar as a joint effort to drive the migration agenda

Total budget allocation
(2016 - 2019)

US$ 16 Million

Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund

LIFT

UKaid
from the British people

European Union

Australian Aid

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

DENMARK

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Government of the Netherlands

SWEDEN

afd
AGENCE FRANÇAISE
DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRAND DUCHY OF
LUXEMBOURG

DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

NEW ZEALAND
Aid Programme

Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

1. Supporting the Government of Myanmar to improve policies and governance on safe migration

It is a priority of the Government of Myanmar to protect Myanmar migrant workers against exploitation and trafficking. LIFT funds projects that work with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population (MOLIP) to develop a comprehensive and effective labour migration legal framework including review of the Law Relating to Overseas Employment and supplementary regulations. There will be a particular focus on improving recruitment processes, complaints mechanisms, and social protection systems. LIFT also supports the institutionalisation of a migration governance framework for a whole-of-government migration management approach for stronger inter-ministerial coordination. Domestic work has been identified as an area of particular concern, and the project will provide technical support to develop the necessary legal framework to protect domestic workers and pave the way for the ratification of Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

Improved legislation is a first step to supporting the Government's effort to combat abuse through prosecution, protection and prevention.

2. Collaborating with industries for a responsible and profitable rural to urban labour migration approach

Myanmar is undergoing a structural transformation, moving away from a rural, agricultural economy and towards a more urban, industrial, and service-based economy. Projections point to a sharp increase in rural to urban labour migration, a prerequisite for Myanmar's industrialisation, which needs abundant labour and skills. Migrants, however, often lack necessary skills and supportive services to benefit from and contribute to the industrialisation. Often, migrants have unrealistic expectations of working in urban areas, experience disorientation and social marginalisation, and can become vulnerable to exploitation. Factory owners are often reluctant to employ unskilled new migrants since it is a costly investment to build skills, particularly in light of high turnover rates.

LIFT projects work with the garment industry in Yangon where the largest factory workforce, mostly women, in Myanmar is employed. This industry is projected to quadruple by 2020, with the number of workers growing from 400,000 to 1.5 million. LIFT projects will support migrant workers through safe migration messaging, industry-based skills training, job placements, financial services, and protection and supportive systems against exploitation and gender-based-violence. The project works with both garment factories and MOLIP to increase the skills level of the workforce, allowing Myanmar's garment sector to grow in size and quality.

3. Empowering civil society and media to support safe and gainful migration for their constituencies and audiences

To leverage migration for development, aspirant migrants, migrants, their households, and communities require more awareness and knowledge of the risks and opportunities of migration. Often, migration messaging fails to be effective, the intended audience is not reached, and advice is not transformed into action. LIFT aims to test migration messaging through various communication channels. A particular focus is on empowering Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to be an accurate source of knowledge for their trusted constituencies. LIFT will also enable media organisations with broad outreach capacities to produce compelling migration messages. Between 3 and 4 million people will be reached by 2019.

4. Highlighting gender aspects of migration including addressing abuse and trafficking

LIFT-supported research on migration looks at gendered differences of migration patterns and characteristics such as age, destinations, length and reason, living conditions, wages, working conditions, amount and transfer channels for remittances, security and safety. Of the more than 9 million internal migrants in Myanmar, more than half are women. Labour migration can bring significant positive changes and empowerment for migrant women and their families. Women remit high shares of their salaries and set high priorities to spend it on health and education, thus improving overall family welfare. It is therefore critical that LIFT aims to empower migrant women to increase the benefits of their migration. In collaboration with garment factories, MOLIP, and microfinance operators, migrant women will gain access to quality skills training and much needed innovative financial services. At the same time, LIFT is aware of the risks migrant women can face and supports prevention and protection efforts against abuse and trafficking. For example, LIFT projects will promote the ratification of the Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, many still under 18 years of age, who are vulnerable to exploitation as they often are confined to private residences and have limited contact with the outside world. Domestic work is undervalued and not protected by labour laws. LIFT projects will also pilot models against exploitation and gender-based violence in workplaces, such as the garment sector, and respond to trafficking of women into the sex industry with outreach and trauma therapy programmes.

5. Establishing a Migration Knowledge Partnership for Myanmar for a joint effort to drive the migration agenda

By 2016, LIFT had entered into partnerships with 15 migration stakeholders representing the Myanmar Government, UN agencies, the private sector, microfinance institutions, job-matching platforms, academia, civil society organisations, mass media, and INGOs, to make the migration experience of women and men safer and more empowering. As a group, we strive for a meaningful knowledge partnership that energises and empowers innovation and sustainable action, benefiting from each other's complementary skills, expertise, and perspectives on migration and development. Convening the growing number of migration stakeholders will benefit coordination and harmonisation. It contributes to the generation, validation, and synthesising of knowledge and the harnessing of creative approaches to drive the migration agenda of Myanmar to have fewer ris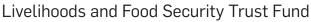ks and more benefits for migrants and their families.