

► Policy Brief

August 2025

Climate change, environmental degradation and labour mobility in the ASEAN region

Key points

- ▶ ASEAN countries are facing a variety of climate change and related environmental challenges. The climate crisis is already having profoundly disruptive impacts on people in some areas of the region and on their livelihoods.
- ▶ Most climate-related movement occurs within a person's country of origin or residence, through internal migration or displacement. However, the porous borders between some ASEAN countries mean that there is also cross-border movement related to climate change.
- ▶ Labour migration can be a valuable component of adaptation strategies and strengthening resilience by offering livelihood diversification, possible income enhancement and skills development, and remittances, but only if labour migration is rights-based and optional for each migrant.
- ▶ The State needs to provide alternative options for adaptation in situ for individuals who do not wish to migrate. The first step of adaptation measures should try to ensure conditions that enable people to remain at home and not compel them to migrate.
- ▶ Decent work is imperative if labour migration is going to enhance livelihoods, protect the rights of workers and foster resilience in context of climate change. This starts with fair recruitment.
- ▶ Most ASEAN countries are still at the early stages of adaptation planning and the development of policies to reshape economies to be environmentally sustainable. The Philippines National Adaptation Plan gives substantial consideration to the links with migration and displacement as part of the country's approach to build resilience, minimize climate-related loss and damage.
- ▶ Heat stress is an adverse effect of climate change and is more prevalent in countries with decent work deficits. It can drive migration and is also a risk to migrant workers in countries of destination.
- ▶ Where there are shortages, the benefits of migration can be harnessed to meet the skill and labour needs for a just transition in the ASEAN region. Such plans need to include gender-specific policies to ensure equitable opportunities for women migrant workers.
- ▶ Key recommendations include the need to enhance policy coherence at both the national and regional levels. Governments should work to ensure policy cohesion and develop connected and coordinated policy agendas for both climate change and migration.

► Introduction

The countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region are the origin for approximately 24 million migrants and the destination for an estimated 11 million international migrants – about 40 per cent of whom are women and 60 per cent men¹ – the majority of whom have migrated within the region.² The ASEAN region comprises origin, transit and destination countries: six States that are net countries of origin (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam) and four that are net countries of destination (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand).³

The region is the world's third-most populous (671.7 million people in 2022), following India and China. The region has an increasing working-age population (20-59) (55.8 per cent of the population in 2022), but the population overall is ageing.⁴ The ASEAN States constitute the seventh largest economy in the world.⁵ There are high levels of wealth and income inequality within and between countries and overall gender-based inequality remains a major issue for many countries in the region.⁶

The region is geographically and environmentally diverse. From the world's largest archipelagic country, Indonesia, to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the region's only landlocked country, the physical landscapes encompass high mountain ranges, tropical rainforests, fertile valleys, extensive coastlines, peninsulas, islands, river systems and deltas. All are and will be subject to different stresses due to the adverse effects of climate change.

A snapshot of climate change risks in the region

ASEAN countries are facing a variety of climate change and related environmental challenges and the climate crisis is already having profoundly disruptive impacts on people in some areas of the region and on their livelihoods

About 50 per cent of the ASEAN population is **rural**, largely reliant on climate vulnerable (as well as greenhouse gas emitting) sectors including agriculture and fisheries.⁷ ASEAN countries produce nearly 28 per cent of the global rice crop and 31 per cent of Asia's rice: any variability in **rainfall patterns** will affect agricultural production and seasonality. Recurrent **flooding**, particularly during monsoon seasons, is damaging crops and rural infrastructure. **Sea level rise** has led to increased soil salinity in countries like Viet Nam and reduced productivity of rice and other crops. These climate-related factors are increasingly affecting agricultural systems in the region, placing significant pressure on livelihoods and on **food security** in the region and beyond.⁸

The region is also regularly hit by **droughts** and these are becoming more frequent and severe: between 15 and 25 per cent of the region's population live in drought hotspots. Those in Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines correspond with areas where a high proportion of people rely on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods and are associated with high levels of poverty and malnutrition. Drought events in the region have become increasingly warm and the area affected by drought severity (frequency and duration) is expected to shift and expand.⁹

1 The gender balance varies considerably between ASEAN States.

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). *International Migrant Stock 2024*. Noting that this is likely an underestimate owing to the lack of data on migrants in irregular status as well as the 2024 estimates excluding several smaller populations of migrants.

3 This paper focuses on the situation in ASEAN States, recognizing that climate change is global and is influencing migrations and displacements from other regions that may affect these countries and that migrants from South-East Asia to other regions, within or beyond Asia and the Pacific, are also affected by climate change.

4 ASEAN Statistical Brief. Volume III, 15 December 2023: *Ageing ASEAN: Shifting Demographic Structure*.

5 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and ASEAN (2024). *Climate Finance Access and Mobilization Strategy for the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2024-2030)*.

6 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2022). *Reducing Inequality in the Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs and Accelerate Post-Pandemic Recovery*.

7 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Population Division (2019). *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights*.

8 ASEAN (2021). *ASEAN State of Climate Change Report*. See for example table 5 (p.40) for observed and projected rainfall across the region; Mirzabaev, A., Antonio, R.J., Connor, M., Nelson, K., Saito, K., and Sander, B.O. (2024). *Enabling policies for circular economy and climate change mitigation in rice production in Southeast Asia*. CGIAR, December 2024.

9 UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2021). *Ready for the dry years: Building resilience to drought in South-East Asia*. Second edition. Sales No.: E.20.II.F.18.

The ASEAN region is noted for its rapid, though uneven, **urbanization**. Cities throughout the region often provide harbour to people displaced from disasters and conflicts. The region is projected to be home to an urban population of over 500 million people, or two-thirds of the region's population, by 2050.¹⁰ The associated urban heat island phenomenon¹¹ compounds the increased heat from climate change. This renders millions of people in the region – and in major labour sectors for migrant workers including manufacturing and construction – particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as **heat stress**. In addition, 18 out of 50 cities with a population of more than one million (as well as numerous smaller urban areas) are located in the region's coastal area.¹² This renders them particularly vulnerable to **flooding** from rising sea levels and storm surges, which is a threat to people, infrastructure, and the economy. The effects may be compounded by flooding from polluted bodies of water.¹³

The ASEAN region records a high number of **disaster displacements** (internal movements, including pre-emptive movements such as evacuations) due to high exposure to various hazards, particularly weather-related hazards such as **floods**, **storms**, and **cyclones** – and climate change is intensifying and creating new hotspots of exposure and vulnerability in the region, including cascading multi-hazard scenarios and repeated impacts which undermine communities' coping capacities. The Philippines is significantly more affected, in terms of numbers of people impacted, due to the number and frequency of typhoons; Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam are also particularly affected.¹⁴ The number of people affected by natural hazards has continuously increased during the past three decades, while the number of fatalities has remained low over the last decade. The consequences of disasters can be long-lasting

and cause further movements such as in response to the consequences of economic or environmental damage. For example, **sea-level rise** is projected to inundate 40 per cent of the Mekong Delta and the resulting **saltwater-intrusion** into freshwater sources and soil has major consequences for habitability of rural areas and labour sectors such as agriculture and fisheries.¹⁵

The ASEAN region is not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on climate action (SDG 13) by 2030, with the number of people's lives impacted by disasters increasing and inadequate progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as some critical data gaps.¹⁶ Significant acceleration is needed to achieve the target by 2030, including through devising and implementing new climate action measures to mitigate climate change and strengthen adaptive capacity, and by better integrating action on climate change into migration, labour, and other policies and programming at the national and local level. The region's climate change impacts and inequalities are exacerbated by the considerable amount of labour and polluting industries externalized in the region by the Global North.

The link with human mobility

Climate change affects human mobility, and the situation with regard to different forms of human mobility also influences vulnerability to climate risks.¹⁷ The understanding of the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on migration and displacement have developed over time and continue to evolve with some research gaps still to be addressed.¹⁸

Most climate-related movement occurs within the country of origin or residence, through internal migration or displacement – though the porous borders between some ASEAN countries mean that there is also cross-border

10 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Population Division (2019). *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights*.

11 This is where urban or metropolitan areas are significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas as result of the absorption of solar heat by buildings and roads, and also as a result of human activities: International Labour Organization (2019). *Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work*. International Labour Office – Geneva, ILO.

12 Simarmata, H.A. (2020). Building Transformative Adaptation to Sea Level Rise. *ASEAN Focus, Issue 1/2020, ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, March 2020*, pp.16-17.

13 Sahmakum Teang Tnaut study cited in Parsons, L., Lawreniuk, S., Sok, S., Buckley, J. (2022). *Hot trends: How the global garment industry shapes climate change vulnerability in Cambodia*. Royal Holloway, University of London and University of Nottingham.

14 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2024). *The ASEAN Migration Outlook*. 2nd edition; United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2022). *Pathways to Adaptation and Resilience in South-East Asia*. Subregional report; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). (2022). *Disaster Displacement in Asia and the Pacific*.

15 Ha, H.T. and Seth, F.N. (2021). The Mekong River Ecosystem in Crisis: ASEAN Cannot be a Bystander. *Perspective*, No. 69, 19 May 2021, ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore; IDMC and Asian Development Bank (ADB). (2022). *Disaster Displacement in Asia and the Pacific*.

16 UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), SDG Gateway Asia-Pacific. *Regional analysis: South-East Asia (ASEAN)*.

17 Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (2024). *Technical guide on integrating human mobility and climate change linkages into relevant national climate change planning processes*. UNFCCC.

18 McLeman, R., Hevesi, C., and Cadham, E. (2025). *Evolution of climate-related migration and displacement in IPCC reporting*. Working paper. Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University. Accessed via Environmental Science Research Network

movement related to climate change.¹⁹ People typically want to stay in the locality of their home areas for as long as possible and undertake short-range migrations that are often intended to be a temporary measure until conditions improve and they can return. However, repetition of hazards or increases in their frequency and severity, including the compound effects of multiple smaller and slow-onset events, erode resilience and may give rise to further, including cross-border, migrations.

Climate change-related migration and displacement derives from deficits in and also undermines sustainable development, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and migration governance efforts. The adverse effects of climate change affect and give rise to a range of forms of human mobility (see box).

This brief focuses on situations where migration is a viable option and specifically, on labour migration in ASEAN in the context of climate change - recognizing that climate-related movement is complex and often multicausal and the need to secure a livelihood may combine with or mask other drivers. Although this mobility is an expression of agency, there is undeniably a degree of compulsion in situations that make staying increasingly untenable for a dignified life, including where the adverse effects of climate change erode resilience. These effects combine with the socio-economic, demographic, political and other contexts to determine how people are able to respond to stressors and – for those who are able – when and where they move, internally or across borders. They also affect migrants in transit and at destination and may determine when or whether, return is viable and reintegration sustainable.²⁰

► **Box 1: Disasters affecting migrants in origin and destination countries**

Typhoon Yagi hit several countries across the region on 7 to 8 September 2024. It resulted in severe flooding and landslides, seriously affected infrastructure, especially transportation and communications, and caused significant economic losses.

In the affected northern provinces of Thailand, a high number of migrant workers struggled to get access to government emergency relief or compensation for losses, which was mostly available for property owners in badly affected areas.

In the multiple affected states and regions in Myanmar, it led to an increase in migration as families were forced to seek alternative livelihoods:

“My house was spared, but my farm was completely destroyed. The roads are also damaged, making rebuilding difficult. I have no choice but to migrate abroad to earn money and support my family.” Khun Maung Lay, 35 years old, youth leader from Van Sout Village.

ILO partners in Thailand and Myanmar coordinated with local people and organizations to support emergency relief to affected migrant workers and their families including shelter, food and essential household items such as beds, blankets, and cooking utensils, reaching 1,842 migrant households. Despite these efforts, long-term recovery remains uncertain due to the extensive damage to homes and agricultural land.²¹

19 Vigil, S. and Kim, D. (2023). *International Labour Migration in a Changing Climate: Insights from Malaysia and Thailand*. International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Bangkok, Thailand.

20 Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (2018). *The slow onset effects of Climate Change and Human Rights Protection for cross-border migrants*.

21 ILO (2025). TRIANGLE in ASEAN 2024 Annual report, internal.

► **Box 2: Broad categories of movements related to the adverse effects of climate change**

There is no internationally agreed terminology that describes the relationship between the climate crisis and human mobility. The adverse effects of climate change interact with a range of other drivers to drive and disrupt different categories of mobility:

- People may **migrate**, that is, move from their usual place of residence. Though it may be internal or cross-border, it is used here specifically to mean an international migrant, that is, any person who is outside a State of which they are a citizen or national. This may be short- or long-term and can be driven by a wide range of factors.

Labour migration has long been a critical factor behind the economic and social dynamism of the ASEAN region and its people: people migrate to secure or diversify their livelihoods and to develop skills and networks. Together with remittances, this strategy may help support family and community members at home.

Migrations encompass regular and irregular situations and exist across spectrums of in/voluntariness, the degree of planning afforded, and the intended and actual period of migration.

- People may be **displaced** where they are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of a disaster or to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard that they would not be able or lack the resilience to withstand. This may be the result of direct impact of sudden onset events or indirect, such as through the loss of income from slow-onset events. Most instances of disaster

displacement are within national borders. They may include pre-emptive, government-led evacuations in response to imminent risk. In the ASEAN region, the Philippines is particularly impacted by sudden onset weather-related hazards.

- **Planned relocations** are typically an option of last resort for affected communities, usually to address permanent loss of habitability. They are a form of assisted movement away from the place of habitual residence and permanent resettlement in a new location with provision of conditions for rebuilding their lives. They are initiated, supervised and implemented from national to local level. They are associated a range of human rights and other risks including challenges to livelihoods, cultural rights and psychosocial impacts. Relocations should ensure meaningful participation of affected communities in the planning and implementation. In ASEAN, planned relocations have, to date, been concentrated in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam.
- The most at risk from climate impacts may be the least able to move: not everyone has the necessary financial, human and social capital to migrate, and pathways for human mobility may be limited or exclude certain groups. This **immobility** can arise where people have inadequate resources and support to move – including where these have been reduced due to the adverse effects of a changing climate or a sudden onset event and the systemic crises, such as poverty and food insecurity, that are compounded by climate change.



► 1. Labour migration to support climate resilience and adaptation

Climate change affects migrants and their families through all stages of migration but in contemporary migration governance it is mostly framed as an adverse driver of migration, which compels people to seek a livelihood through migration.²² Certainly, climate change intensifies the various economic, environmental, social and political drivers of migration and informs the analysis and decision-making of migrants and their families. For instance, climate change and its related economic pressures have been found to be significant drivers of migration to Malaysia and Thailand, particularly among those who rely on natural resources-based livelihoods, such as agriculture.²³

However, the adverse effects of climate change impact all stages of migration. Adaptation or resilience measures seek to avert, minimize and address these adverse impacts. These can reduce the vulnerability of workers, enterprises and governments and enhance capacity at individual and society level to adapt, respond to and prepare for climate change if carried out in a just and fair manner. Such measures can include forms of human mobility such as displacement in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. Such mobility when it takes place should be rights based resilience and enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacities is important for all countries to reduce vulnerability to and moderate the harms of the adverse effects of climate change, as well as to exploit beneficial opportunities.²⁴ Labour migration can be a valuable component of adaptation strategies and strengthening resilience by offering livelihood diversification, possible income enhancement and skills development, and remittances – but only if it is rights-based and optional for each migrant. This means that it needs, inter alia, accessible and affordable regular migration pathways, to ensure decent work, adequate housing and social protection for migrant workers and their families, and actively address

existing inequalities, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples. It also means that the State needs to provide alternative options for adaptation in situ for individuals who do not wish to migrate: the first step of adaptation measures should be to try to ensure conditions that enable people to remain at home and not compel them to migrate.

Decent work as a necessary condition for climate resilience or adaptive migration

Labour migration can be a means for people to strengthen their resilience in the face of climate change. It can promote livelihood diversification, skill transfer and remittances which can help individuals, households and communities build their adaptive capacity.

Decent work is imperative if labour migration is going to enhance livelihoods, protect the rights of workers and foster resilience in context of climate change. This starts with fair recruitment, which is vital to enable decent work and ensure that people can migrate in dignity and are not exploited. The ILO's *General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment* are universally applicable but Operational Guideline 12 explicitly recognizes the importance of fair recruitment in conflict and crisis situations. Given that recruitment agencies have targeted communities after disasters and engaged in exploitative recruitment practices, including charging workers recruitment fees or related costs, it is important that Governments ensure that employers and recruitment agencies operating in these contexts adhere to international labour standards.²⁵

22 Notably in the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, where climate change is primarily addressed under Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin. It is also recognized under Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration, calling for cooperation “to identify, develop and strengthen solutions for migrants compelled to leave their countries of origin due to slow-onset natural disasters, the adverse effects of climate change, and environmental degradation” and as part of the work needed to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (under Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration). Climate change as a driver for unsafe migration was also highlighted in the Progress Declaration, the outcome of the first International Migration Review Forum in May 2022 (UN resolution A/RES/76/266).

23 Vigil, Sara and Kim, Dayoon (2023). *International Labour Migration in a Changing Climate: Insights from Malaysia and Thailand*. International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Bangkok, Thailand.

24 Drawing on the definition in IPCC (2022). Annex II: Glossary [Möller, V., R. van Diemen, J.B.R. Matthews, C. Méndez, S. Semenov, J.S. Fuglestedt, A. Reisinger (eds.)]. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 2897–2930. DOI: 10.1017/9781009325844.029.

25 ILO (2019). *General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs*.

A lack of rights protection at any stage of migration limits the extent to which labour migration can be a positive adaptation strategy and risks it being maladaptive – worsening the situation for the migrant and their family. For example, the lack of sufficient or well-functioning legal labour migration avenues in the ASEAN region or rights deficits may render them inadequate to meet the needs of individuals and families facing the sustained adverse effects of the climate crisis. Decent work deficits such as poor living and working conditions, worker paid recruitment fees and related costs, and/or inadequate social protection limit the extent to which remittances can contribute to resilience or adaptation.²⁶ Research and information gaps – a lack of adequate research on and communication about the actual or expected adverse effects of climate change on migrant situations – can see people move across climate-affected migration corridors that have heightened risks for exploitation or to locations or labour sectors that are also at high risk from climate change.

Moreover, migrant workers cannot be expected to entirely or mostly carry the responsibility for adaption, for example where States rely on labour migration and remittances, often without adequate protections, in place of adequate investment or sustainable development. This can amount to a commodification of migrants' labour,²⁷ at the expense of their rights and aspirations and undermines the principle that migration should be a choice.²⁸ Such migrations may prove maladaptive for migrants and their families and heighten the risk of adverse effects of climate change for everyone. Migration offers the most potential benefit to countries of origin and destination, as well as to migrants, when migrants can exercise their agency throughout their migration.²⁹

Inclusive adaptation planning for climate resilience

Governments, workers' organizations and employers' organizations (including recruitment agencies) in countries of origin and destination need to collaborate at national and local level to shape climate resilience and adaptation

responses as well as any adaptive quality of labour migration in line with international standards.³⁰

Adaptation planning, financing and programming should guarantee the meaningful participation of affected communities, including migrants and other people on the move.³¹ This is necessary to ensure that these measures adequately address the different forms of human mobility implicated by climate change and to promote equitable processes and outcomes. As migration and other forms of mobility are cross-cutting issues, adaptation/resilience planning requires a whole-of-government approach and should engage at least, the climate change, migration, sustainable development, labour and gender policy areas. It should also cover all stages of migration – for example, social partners in countries of destination can take adaptation measures at the workplace level, such as risk assessments, preventative actions and occupational safety and health training and resources.³²

To be an effective response, adaptation planning also requires international cooperation at the bilateral and regional level. Adaptation measures need to support potential migrants, those who have already migrated and people who do not move. In countries of origin they can reduce pressures to migrate, support the exercise of agency in migration decision-making, and maintain conditions for sustainable reintegration on return. They also help minimize the impacts of climate-related migration or displacement for communities of origin and destination.

Climate resilience and adaptation in ASEAN

ASEAN countries are committed to developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation measures appropriate to the needs and vulnerabilities of the region,³³ and estimate that it will cost USD \$422 billion until 2030 for the region.³⁴ However, most ASEAN countries are still at the early stages of adaptation planning and the development of policies to reshape economies to be environmentally

26 Sakdapolrak, P., Sterly, H., Borderon, M., Bunchuay-Peth, S., Naruchaikusol, S., Ober, K., Porst, L., Rockenbach, T. (2024). Translocal social resilience dimensions of migration as adaptation to environmental change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences U.S.A.* 121(3), e2206185120. DOI: [10.1073/pnas.2206185120](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2206185120).

27 Against a fundamental principle of the ILO, see Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organisation (1944) (Declaration of Philadelphia), Part I(a).

28 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016), A/RES/71/1, para.43.

29 Shaw, et al., (2022).

30 Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (2024). *Technical guide on integrating human mobility and climate change linkages into relevant national climate change planning processes*. UNFCCC.

31 It is also necessary to note that mitigation and adaptation measures may impact livelihoods or living conditions in ways that may give rise to migration and it is vital that these are addressed.

32 International Labour Organization (2024). *Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

33 ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to the 29th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-29), 9 October 2024, para.5.

34 Ibid., para.2.

sustainable. Only three of the ten countries in the region – Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand – have submitted national adaptation plans (NAPs) to the United Nations registry and of those, the NAPs of Cambodia and Thailand do not attend to the relationship between adaptation and migration.³⁵ The Philippines' NAP gives substantial consideration to the links with migration and displacement as part of their approach to build resilience, minimize climate-related loss and damage and enhance adaptive capacity towards achieving resilient and sustainable socioeconomic development.³⁶

All ASEAN States have registered their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to reducing greenhouse gas emission, but only two engage with the connection between climate action and migration.³⁷ Post-coup the Myanmar State Administrative Council (SAC) NDC attends to the displacements caused by extreme weather events such as Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and Cyclone Komen in 2015 and recognizes that “climate-associated extreme events have exacerbated rural-urban and international migration trends” and identifies the need to prioritize adaptation through livelihood diversification and economic growth, in part to “discourage migration”.³⁸ Viet Nam's NDC acknowledges that climate change is one of the reasons for increasing migration (including internal migration and relocations) and notes some consequences of migration such as older family members assuming childcare responsibilities and the risk of losing cultural identity and local knowledge associated with permanent relocation. On the country's adaptive capacity, it notes “solutions to improve adaptive and disaster prevention capacity at community level are still limited”.³⁹

There remain challenges in policy coherence at the national and regional level and the dominance of an approach that addresses migration separate from climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. The labour dimensions of these policies are generally not considered and social partners often not engaged in these processes. Similarly, adaptation strategies and actions in the ASEAN region are not yet fully integrated into sustainable development and climate policy frameworks in a way that can address socio-economic development issues, such as poverty and food security, alongside climate adaptation needs.⁴⁰ The 2023 *ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations* makes just one specific reference to climate change, in its preamble, naming it with other development megatrends and human mobility as part of a wider risk landscape.⁴¹

Operationalizing the 2013 *Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection*, which affirms migrant workers' right to equitable access to social protection and the need for social protection to be adaptive to the different risks, including from climate change and disasters, and the 2022 *ASEAN Declaration on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers in ASEAN*, in line with commitments under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, would ease financial pressures on migrant workers and potential migrants, including in the situation of any just transition-related job losses, reducing the risk of maladaptive migration and support adaptation.

35 Available at UNFCCC, [Submitted NAPs from developing country Parties](#).

36 Ibid.

37 UNFCCC, [NDC registry](#).

38 Myanmar State Administration Council (2021). Nationally Determined Contributions, *ibid.*, in sections 4.2.3.1 and 4.2.1.2, respectively.

39 Vietnam (2022). Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (updated in 2022), *ibid.*, in section 3.3.2.

40 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2024). *The ASEAN Migration Outlook*. 2nd edition.

41 ASEAN (2023). *ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations and Its Guidelines*.

► 2. The adverse effects of climate change on migrant workers in countries of destination

Climate change is already affecting migration patterns, integration challenges and the overall viability of safe migration, with adverse effects on the living and working conditions for migrant workers in the region. Sudden and slow onset processes, separately and in combination, will continue to have short- and longer-term impacts in every labour sector. The impacts are complex and diverse – varying with location, sector, and intersecting with social inequalities, including gender and other aspects of migrant situations at home and in destination countries.

- Almost 90 per cent of employed migrants in ASEAN net destination countries are working in services – including domestic work, retail, hospitality – and industry – such as construction, and manufacturing.⁴² Though all workers are at risk from the adverse effects of climate change, migrant workers, in particular those in low-paid and/or informal work, are often in a more vulnerable situation as they:
 - are concentrated in sectors at particular risk of climate impacts in the workplace;
 - are largely found in sectors characterized by a high level of informality;
 - are particularly vulnerable to poor working conditions;
 - have limited resources to prevent or cope with the adverse effects of climate change;
 - often have to prioritize earning over protecting themselves against health risks at work;
 - are frequently prevented from and may face retribution for organizing for their rights, including for better working conditions;
 - generally face mandatory family separation, the stress of which is heightened, for example, during disasters and other sudden-onset climate events;
 - are often in low quality employer-provided accommodation or other poor standard housing that may not be resilient and durable in the context of climate change,
 - are also less likely than nationals to have access to social protection, health care and occupational safety and health services, and

- may not be included in disaster risk reduction planning or responses, excluded from emergency measures, stranded (as many were during the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic), and may have little option but to live in more disaster-prone areas.

Migrant workers in ASEAN countries are largely found in sectors that are high-risk for exploitation. This risk is heightened in the context of climate change, as it exacerbates poverty, livelihood loss, food insecurity, and other factors that undermine safe migration and heighten vulnerability to forced labour and other forms of exploitation. Displacement in the aftermath of sudden-onset disasters can disrupt migrants' social networks, an important coping mechanism, undermining their ability to respond to the situation and increasing their stress and security risks, especially for women and girls.



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A safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental right, but the adverse effects of climate change, where migrant workers are living and working in the ASEAN region, together with workplace-specific climate change risks, are putting their health and lives at risk. This section highlights some of the main concerns for migrant workers in the region.

Heat stress is an adverse effect of climate change where the body receives more heat than it can tolerate without physiological harm. Pregnant workers are particularly

vulnerable to heat-related illnesses.⁴³ Heat stress is more prevalent in countries with decent work deficits: it can drive migration and is also a risk to migrant workers in countries of destination, where it is a risk to outdoor workers, for example street food vendors, fishers, construction and agricultural workers,⁴⁴ as well as to indoor workers, such as those in manufacturing, with poor ventilation and cooling, and inadequate occupational safety and health measures, such as insufficient rest breaks, lack of shaded rest areas, and limited access to hydration stations. Mainland ASEAN countries, in particular, are expected to see heat levels in the hottest month that are likely to affect labour productivity, which could also impact migrant wages, and also constitute a health risk. Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam experience the most severe heat stress across the region, and rising temperatures in the ASEAN region are projected to result in the loss of 3.7 per cent of working hours across the region by 2030, equivalent to 13 million full-time jobs.⁴⁵

The **agriculture** sector, which is highly sensitive to climate variability, remains one of the top five contributing sectors to overall GDP in ASEAN countries. It is a major labour sector for Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar.⁴⁶ In Thailand, approximately 30 per cent of the total national labour force is employed in agriculture (down from 51 per cent in 2005) and the country is increasingly reliant on migrant workers from neighbouring countries to sustain the sector.⁴⁷ The adverse effects of climate change in the region, including heat stress and flooding, will have deleterious effects on health, well-being and productivity, rendering some agricultural areas unproductive, destroying homes and livelihoods and displacing a large number of people.

Working outside or in unfinished buildings, **construction** workers are often directly exposed to the weather and the increased heat, rainfall and other changes brought on by climate change.⁴⁸ The sector in the ASEAN region continues

to grow and it is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, for example in its demand for building frames and materials (notably concrete and steel, the manufacturing of which produces high process emissions). It is a major sector for migrant workers: the construction, marine shipyard and process sectors in Singapore account for the largest number (456,800) of migrant workers and there are an estimated 600,000 documented migrant workers in the sector in Thailand (36 per cent of whom are women), and it is likely that a significant proportion of the total migrant workforce are undocumented.⁴⁹

► Climate change may render entire regions unproductive and make workplaces too hot for work, thereby leading to climate-induced migration, the proliferation of informal work and unemployment. These impacts are only expected to become more pronounced in the coming decades. More than ever, the climate emergency is calling for action for jobs.⁵⁰

► H.E. Ms LE Thi Tuyet Mai

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations Office at Geneva

ASEAN is emerging as the second largest **manufacturing** hub outside China with connections to global supply chains. Manufacturing contributes most to overall GDP in seven of ten ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam). It is also a sector with high energy requirements, driving climate change

43 Flouris, A., Azzi, M., Graczyk, H., Nafradi, B., and Scott, N., eds. (2024). *Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice*. ILO.

44 Outdoor workers also face increased risk from ultraviolet (UV) radiation. See, International Labour Organization (2024). *Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

45 International Labour Organization (2019). *Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work*. International Labour Office – Geneva, ILO.

46 ASEAN Statistical Brief. Volume IV, January 2024: *The Structure of ASEAN Economy*.

47 Musikawong, S., Jampaklay, A., Khamkhom, N., Tadee, R., Kerdmongkol, A., Buckles, L., Khachasin, S., and Engblom, A. (2021). *Working and employment conditions in the agriculture sector in Thailand: A survey of migrants working on Thai sugarcane, rubber, oil palm and maize farms*. ILO

48 International Labour Organization (2019). *Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work*. International Labour Office – Geneva, ILO.

49 Ministry of Manpower (2025). *Foreign workforce numbers*. ILO (2023). *How service delivery for women migrant workers and their families in construction sector are strengthened in Thailand*. 16 February.

50 ASEAN Joint Statement, Delivered by H.E. Ms. LE Thi Tuyet Mai, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations Office at Geneva, *Panel discussion on the future of the right to work in connection with climate change actions, responses and impacts in the context of sustainable and inclusive economies*. UN Human Rights Council, 51st session, 27 September 2022.

through greenhouse gas emissions.⁵¹ Depending on location, the sector could be affected by various adverse effects of climate change. For example, the large industrial estates in the east and factories in the north-east of Thailand are expected to be affected by floods and droughts.⁵² Manufacturing environments will be impacted by the heat stress associated with climate change, facing the “extreme caution” category of heat exposure during hot season (see above). The limited oversight in many factories also means that low levels of investment in mitigation measures such as fans, ventilation and drainage are allowed to persist.

Fisheries, including inland aquaculture, are important contributors to the region's food supply and economy, employing an estimated 80 million people in ASEAN, with a further 10 million people working in the processing, marketing, distribution, and supply industries associated with fishing and aquaculture.⁵³ A significant number are migrant workers.⁵⁴ This economic and nutritional reliance makes the region highly vulnerable to the climate change disruptions on marine and freshwater productivity. These include changes in migratory routes of fishery resources as a result of ocean warming; changes to water chemistry (salinity or acidification) or temperature, including saltwater intrusion in estuaries from sea level rise; and changes in precipitation and the intensity of solar radiation pose risks to aquaculture. Extreme weather events, such as typhoons and storm surges, are a risk to coastal ecosystems, fishing communities, boats, and infrastructures such as ports, processing factories, markets. For example, the economic loss under different climate-change scenarios and fishing efforts have been estimated to range from 27.78 to 31.72 million USD annually in Nha rang Bay, Viet Nam.⁵⁵ The continued decrease in catch will have in significant consequences for the economic, social, and cultural rights of fishers and their families, operating as an adverse driver of migration for some as they seek alternative sources of income.⁵⁶

The **care economy** is a major sector for women migrants in and from Asia Pacific. Climate change and especially sudden-onset events, which are becoming more frequent and more severe due to climate change, intensify demand for care and health services and increase their care burdens as public services struggle or even fail. However, there appears to be little meaningful consideration to date of how this sector, and the women who make up the majority of its workers, will be affected by climate change or the role that they have in ensuring resilience and a just transition.⁵⁷ Migrant domestic workers often work long hours and live in households that do not provide adequate ventilation or cooling; they are routinely exposed to chemical hazards and expected to handle waste; they may be in situations of food scarcity and malnourishment, and do not have access to occupational health and safety. The risk of gender-based violence inherent in the sector is heightened during and following disasters or crises. In some cases, they are left behind when households evacuate from disaster risk.

Tourism is a vital sector for many States in the region and ASEAN sees it as an area for expansion.⁵⁸ It is also a sector that creates jobs for migrant workers, often through SMEs.⁵⁹ Though the sector has potential to build in climate resilience, being heavily reliant on local ecosystems means that it will be severely affected by the adverse effects of climate change such as sea level rise and extreme weather events. Tourism has been identified as a priority for some ASEAN States in their move to a green economy;⁶⁰ this will need to include reducing its greenhouse gas emissions from transport, accommodation, and activities, as well as addressing the environmental degradation associated with the sector in some locations.

Most active business entities within the ASEAN region are **micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)**, which may account for as much as 97 per cent of businesses,

51 ASEAN (2021). *ASEAN State of Climate Change Report*.

52 ASEAN (2021). *ASEAN State of Climate Change Report*.

53 Gopal, T. and Anbumozhi, V. (2019). *Effects of Disasters and Climate Change on Fisheries Sectors and Implications for ASEAN Food Security*, in Anbumozhi, V., Breiling, M., and Reddy, V. (Eds.), *Towards a Resilient ASEAN Volume 1: Disasters, Climate Change, and Food Security: Supporting ASEAN Resilience*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, pp. 161-188.

54 See for example, ILO, 2020. *Endline research findings on fishers and seafood workers in Thailand*.

55 Shaw, et al. (2022).

56 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2024). *The ASEAN Migration Outlook*. 2nd edition.

57 International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). (2023). *IDWF Position paper for the International Labor Conference 2023*. Noting that the *ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy* (2021) aims to guide the region's development of the care economy in response to complex crises and challenges, including climate change.

58 Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam identify it as a key sector: ASEAN (2021). *ASEAN State of Climate Change Report*.

59 ILO, 2022. *The future of work in the tourism sector: Sustainable and safe recovery and decent work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*. Report for the Technical Meeting on COVID-19 and Sustainable Recovery in the Tourism Sector (Geneva, 25–29 April 2022); World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC), 2021. *A Net Zero Roadmap for Travel & Tourism: Proposing a new Target Framework for the Travel & Tourism Sector*

60 ASEAN and ILO (2021). *Regional Study of Green Jobs Policy Readiness in ASEAN –Final Report*. June 2021. Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat.

69 per cent of employment, and 41 per cent of GDP in the region.⁶¹ This is a major sector for migrant workers in the informal economy, a large number of whom are women.⁶² Changes to migration in terms of migrant numbers, corridors, etc., related to climate change, will be disruptive to this sector. This sector often has less accountability on migrants' rights, as it is subject to less regulatory scrutiny, such as through labour inspections, meaning that migrants are at risk to have little or no recourse to justice or redress for worsening conditions during the climate crisis. The region's SMEs have limited access to information on climate change and resources (access to finance and the economies of scale) to adopt climate adaptation measures in a timely manner, or deal with and recover from the impacts of extreme weather events and other adverse effects of climate change.⁶³ As such, MSMEs are not only highly exposed to climate change and climate policy impacts, and this will be more pronounced for migrant workers, especially those in the informal economy, who may be excluded from various initiatives that exist to support a just transition.⁶⁴

Mining is a key sector in several ASEAN economies and ASEAN Member States are among the top global suppliers of major mineral and metal products. Job creation in the sector is projected to grow due to demand for critical minerals for renewable energy and the electric vehicle industry: projected to create up to 5.8 million jobs in the renewable sector in the region by 2050. Energy transition poses challenges for those employed in the fossil fuel industries who would face job losses and need retraining and reskilling. The mining sector in ASEAN has had very low migrant worker participation but energy transition and decarbonisation are expected to change mobility patterns across the region, with opportunities in net countries of origin, such as Indonesia, Viet Nam, and the Philippines, that could also mitigate the adverse impacts of fossil fuel phase-out on affected communities. However, the extraction and processing of critical minerals has known decent work deficits and wider negative social and environmental impacts, that necessitate political and other investment to achieve a just and inclusive energy transition.⁶⁵

► **Box 3: ILO Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205)**

The International Labour Conference adopted the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205) in June 2017, providing a normative framework to prevent crisis situations such as those arising from sudden-onset events, enable recovery and build resilience that centres the role of employment and decent work. Member States, employers and trade unions recognized that migrants, internally-displaced persons, people displaced across borders and refugees need special attention in such situations and the need for a gendered response. Recommended measures in a rights-based approach included freely chosen employment and decent work, social dialogue, social protection, and a just transition towards an environmentally sustainable economy.

Knowledge gaps and the need for research

Migrant workers are at the nexus of multiple policy areas, countries, labour sectors, actors (including employers, recruiters, multiple government bodies in origin and destination countries, trade unions) and structural inequalities (including on the basis of gender, disability, and class). There is a lack of quality data in the region on the lived realities of migrants in the context of climate change, including their decision-making. More research is needed to strengthen labour migration governance, including the need for more gender-responsive policies in migration governance, and to protect the rights of migrant workers across these diverse situations in the context of climate change. This could include research on how climate change is changing migration decision-making (including destinations) and erosion of resilience leading to tipping points at which people decide to migrate; impacts on labour migrants in specific sectors and locations; on heat stress, occupational safety and health (OSH) and productivity in migrant reliant sectors.

61 Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2020). *Asia Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Monitor 2020. Volume I—Country and Regional Reviews*. October 2020.

62 UN Women, 2013. *Managing Labour Migration in ASEAN: Concerns for Women Migrant Workers*. UN Women, Asia Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok.

63 Schaper, M.T. (2022). *SME responses to climate change in Southeast Asia. Trends in Southeast Asia, TRS2/22*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

64 UNFCCC-IGES Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RCC Bangkok), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (2021). *Consultation Workshop: Building Capacity for Climate Action by SMEs in ASEAN: Summary*, 26 October.

65 ILO (2015). *Migration in ASEAN in figures: The International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database in ASEAN*. International Labour Organization, Bangkok; ILO (2022). *A just energy transition in Southeast Asia: The impacts of coal phase-out on jobs*; Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2024). *The ASEAN Migration Outlook*. 2nd edition; ASEAN Centre for Energy. (2024). *The 8th ASEAN energy outlook*; ASEAN Centre for Energy (2025). *A Guide to a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition in ASEAN*.

► 3. Inclusion of migrant workers in the just transition in the ASEAN region

To limit the adverse effects of climate change, there needs to be a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies that are as fair and inclusive as possible for all.⁶⁶ The benefits of migration can be harnessed to include meeting the skill and labour needs for a just transition in the ASEAN region, but this needs to recognize and protect the rights of all workers and ensure migrants receive equitable treatment with nationals and in line with international labour standards and human rights. Migration and other forms of human mobility are an often overlooked factor for shaping globally green transitions.⁶⁷

All ASEAN Member States are party to the Paris Agreement, in which they pledged to take into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities. The ILO has estimated that to realize this, there is a global need for at least 20 million additional workers in green sectors by 2030, which will require significant reskilling. This will affect mobility patterns in the region, but the highest growth in demand expected for these jobs is expected to be in construction, mining, manufacturing, skilled agriculture, and transport.⁶⁸ Circular economy scenarios – that aim to minimize waste and promote a sustainable use of natural resources as part of the shift towards low-carbon, resilient, and resource efficient economies and societies – show job growth in areas including recycling, energy efficiency, and construction.⁶⁹ In case of shortages, the benefits of migration can be harnessed to meeting the skill and labour needs for a just transition in the ASEAN region.

Migrant workers are not only directly affected by the physical impacts of climate change in sectors such as construction and agriculture, but also by the climate-related actions and adaptations being introduced.

► [A] transition to a green economy does not automatically result in inclusive and equitable outcomes, and sometimes risks exacerbating existing inequalities, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples, or migrant workers.⁷⁰

► **Mr Vic van Vuuren**

Acting Deputy Director-General for Policy and Director Enterprises Department, International Labour Organization

► **Box 4: For a just transition, green jobs must be decent jobs**

For the ILO, the definition of green jobs explicitly includes the requirement that they be decent work, not just jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment. However, in practice, what are often advocated as green jobs do not necessarily constitute decent work and can undermine climate efforts.⁷¹ For example, there are human and labour rights abuses and environmental harms documented in “green” jobs in the clean/renewable energy sector and for biofuels or with the recycled plastics supply chain, for example.⁷² In some such contexts in the region, such work is mostly taken by migrant workers.⁷³ The just transition cannot come at the expense of decent work standards or social justice.

66 ILO (2022). *Green works to support a just transition. Policy brief.*

67 Mason, N., Gençsü, I., Feyertag, J., and Löwe, A. (2022). *Migration for climate action: How labour mobility can help the green transition. Working Paper.* London: ODI.

68 ILO (2019). *Skills for a greener future: A global view based on 32 country studies.* International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO.

69 ILO, Circle Economy and Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) (2023). *Decent Work in the Circular Economy: An Overview of the Existing Evidence Base.*

70 Statement by Mr Vic van Vuuren, Acting Deputy Director-General for Policy and Director Enterprises Department, International Labour Organization, *Panel discussion on the future of the right to work in connection with climate change actions, responses and impacts in the context of sustainable and inclusive economies.* UN Human Rights Council, 51st session, 27 September 2022.

71 ILO (2019). *Skills for a greener future: A global view based on 32 country studies.* International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO.

72 See for example, Barford, A. (2024). Avoiding the decent work deficits of the circular economy. In E. Scheja and K.B. Kim (eds.) *Rethinking Economic Transformation for Sustainable and Inclusive Development.* Edward Elgar Publishing Limited in association with International Labour Office. pp. 103–122. DOI: 10.4337/9781035348466.00009; Mason, N., Gençsü, I., Feyertag, J., and Löwe, A. (2022). *Migration for climate action: How labour mobility can help the green transition.* Working Paper. London: ODI.

73 ILO (2014). *Green jobs mapping study in Malaysia.*



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These include new production standards, technologies and safety measures, which require workers, including migrants, to acquire new skills and knowledge in order to adapt and remain employable in a changing labour market. Migrant workers' inclusion in this reskilling is crucial to ensure their inclusion in the green transition. Labour migration pathways need to be oriented to support a just transition in terms of where they are skills and labour shortages. Given the gender bias of many of these sectors, just transition plans need to include gender-specific policies to ensure equitable opportunities for women migrant workers to overcome the gendered preconceptions about where men and women should work that inform the hiring practices and labour migration pathways throughout the region.⁷⁴

Skills recognition programmes for migrant workers can help with the transfer of skills from countries of destination to countries of origin.

The need for social dialogue

Collaboration between governments and social partners is needed for the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, as workers and employers are best placed to take appropriate action in the workplace. Social dialogue is vital to address the existing decent work deficits and environmental impacts of different sectors and ensure inclusion of migrant workers in the transition to a sustainable economy.⁷⁵ This means facilitating migrants' access to re skilling programmes and training opportunities and ensuring decent work for current and future migrant workers and the protection of human rights for migrants and their families. It is also essential for ensuring that job losses are mitigated with appropriate support, including for migrant workers.

► [S]ocial dialogue needs to be at the heart of debates on and responses to the global challenge of climate change, ensuring a just transition to mitigate its worst effects, including on global inequality.⁷⁶

► ILO (2018). *Social Dialogue and the Future of Work*.

74 Napier-Moore, R. (2017). *Protected or Put in Harm's Way: Bans and Restrictions on Women's Labour Migration in ASEAN*. ILO; ILO (2022). *Green works to support a just transition*. Policy brief.

75 See further; ILO (2022). *The Role of Social Dialogue and Tripartism in a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*. Policy brief; ILO (2022). *Gender equality, labour and a just transition for all*. Policy brief.

76 ILO (2018). *Social Dialogue and the Future of Work*. Report of the ILO-AICESIS Conference. 23-24 November 2017, Athens, Greece, at p.2.

► 4. Recommendations

Policy coherence and social dialogue

1. At the national level, Governments should work to ensure policy cohesion and develop connected and coordinated policy agendas for both climate change and migration. Migration and the protection of migrants' rights need to be mainstreamed in environmental and climate change policies as well as disaster preparedness and response plans and actions. Similarly, migration and labour policies need to address the adverse effects of climate change. This should include consideration of the application of national adaptation and just transition plans to all stages of migration and the diverse migrant situations in the region. Governments should embed clear targets and policy commitments within their Nationally Determined Contributions to protect migrant workers from the adverse effects of climate change and associated policy actions. This includes commitments to fair working conditions, access to training and reskilling, and integration into social protection systems. The ILO and other UN organizations are equipped to provide technical support in such efforts. Similarly at the regional (ASEAN) level, there is a need for States and ASEAN mechanisms to incorporate labour migration in its climate change policies and initiatives – and climate change in its labour/migration policies.
2. Collaboration between Governments and social partners is needed for the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, as workers and employers are best placed to take appropriate action in the workplace. Regulations on heat stress should be reviewed in consultation with social partners and admission policies considered in view of changing labour market needs as a part of a green just transition.

Research needs

3. Qualitative research on how climate change is changing migration decision-making (including destinations) and erosion of resilience leading to tipping points at which people decide to migrate; teasing out the role of climate change as a direct or indirect driver of migrations needs to be carried out. Further, sector-focused research to identify climate impacts on labour migrants in specific sectors and locations may be undertaken as well as research on heat stress, occupational safety and health (OSH) and productivity in migrant reliant sectors. Research is also needed to assess key determinants and consequences of

the transition to a green economy for migrant workers. This should include attention to gender, disability, and other inequalities in order to detect potential negative impacts of transition policies.

4. Support the work of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change (ACCC), that is being established in Brunei Darussalam to function as a regional knowledge hub on labour mobility in the ASEAN Region in the context of climate change.

Labour migration as climate resilience and adaptation

5. Governments need to invest in climate resilience to promote sustainable livelihoods in communities of origin to ensure that people are not compelled to migrate as a means of adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change.
6. Labour migration can be a valuable component of adaptation strategies and strengthening resilience by offering livelihood diversification, possible income enhancement and skills development, and remittances. Governments should enhance the availability and effectiveness of regular pathways for labour migration based on labour market requirements and ensure that recruitment is fair and working conditions equal to nationals.
7. Addressing the adverse effects of climate change on current and future migrant workers
8. Migration policy and governance needs to go beyond the framing of climate change primarily as a driver of migration to also address labour migration to areas at risk of and affected by the adverse effects of climate change. In this regard governments should ensure all workers are protected from heat stress. As highlighted in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, labour market intelligence and skills anticipation should enhance the understanding of changing skills demand in a just transition. Working with education and training institutions and the ILO, governments, workers' and employers' organizations should collaborate on inclusive skills policies and programmes that are coherent with climate, environmental, labour and other relevant policies. These should provide the necessary skills for green jobs for migrant workers already employed in relevant sectors as well as for prospective migrant workers and enhance recognition of skills and prior

learning, including in countries of origin to promote skill transfers. Particular attention needs to be given to decent work options for women migrant workers. As a nature-rich region with a significant land-use sector, ASEAN governments should ensure that training opportunities include skills development for nature-based solutions.

9. Governments should work to ensure social protection for migrant workers and their families that allows portability of applicable social security entitlements and earned benefits to support better outcomes from climate change adaptation and mitigation.
10. To ensure that all jobs are all jobs are decent, safe, and healthy for all workers, governments, employers' and workers' organizations need to urgently implement occupational safety and health management measures for all workers impacted by climate-related risks and extreme weather events and work to ensure resilient and responsive occupational safety and health management systems across all labour sectors. These should be implemented at both the national and enterprise level, including for small and medium-sized enterprises and migrant workers in the informal economy.

Labour migration as a component of just transition

11. Where there are shortages, the benefits of migration can be harnessed to meeting the skill and labour needs for a just transition in the ASEAN region. Such plans need to include gender-specific policies to ensure equitable opportunities for women migrant workers.
12. Migrant workers' inclusion in reskilling is crucial to ensure their inclusion in the green transition.
13. For a just transition, green jobs must be decent jobs, and all workers have their rights ensured.

► Acknowledgements

This brief was researched and drafted by Ms Kate Sheill (independent consultant) with contributions from Paul Tacon, Fredy Guayacan and Rebecca Napier-Moore of the ILO. Nilim Baruah, Regional Labour Migration Specialist, ILO, reviewed the Brief and led its production.

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