



# Evaluation Summary



International  
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## *Midterm Evaluation of the Safe and Fair Programme Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region (2018-2022)*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam*

**Final Evaluation:** January to August 2021

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *ROAP*

**Technical Office:** *MIGRANT*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Craig Russon and Sabrina Evangelista*

**Evaluation Consultant(s):** *Katherine Garven and Fernando Garabito*

**Project Code:**

**Donor(s) & Budget:** *EU Spotlight Initiative, Euro 25.5 million*

**Keywords:**

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

As part of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls, the Safe and Fair Programme is designed to address both the root causes and facilitating factors of violence against women and gender discrimination towards women migrant workers by promoting gender-responsive labour migration laws, policies, practices and services; supporting the organization, leadership, and empowerment of women migrant workers; and changing social attitudes towards women migrant workers.

#### Geographic Coverage

The programme supports programming in countries of origin (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam) and countries of destination (Brunei Darussalam<sup>1</sup>, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand).

#### Management Structure

It is being implemented by the ILO and UN Women, in collaboration with UNODC. It is guided

<sup>1</sup> The Programme has not implemented any activities in Brunei Darussalam beyond the initial consultation in 2019

due to lack of responses by stakeholders. However, Brunei Darussalam has been engaged in regional initiatives.

by a Project Steering Committee, a Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Reference Group, a Regional Project Advisory Committee (RPAC), and National Project Advisory Committees (PACs) in each programming country.

### **Project Context and Present Situation**

With women representing roughly half of the estimated 10 million migrants in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, labour migration is an important source of empowerment for women. However, it also can present risks of violence, trafficking and abuse throughout the migration journey from intermediaries and employers, as well as from partners and others. In countries of origin, women migrant workers face bans and legislative restrictions that limit their access to regular labour migration routes in particular sectors. They also face challenges when reintegrating into their communities upon return due to negative social perceptions against women who migrate as well as challenges relating to their prolonged absence. In countries of destination, women migrant workers face a number of discriminatory laws and practices, and are often excluded from receiving essential services, including those to support survivors of violence.

### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The midterm evaluation of the Safe and Fair Programme sought to determine ways in which the project can make mid-course corrections in order to fully realize its outcomes, and also attempts to contribute to organizational learning by identifying lessons that have been learned and emerging good practices. Specifically, its objectives were to assess the programme's relevance and coherence; identify effective strategies, barriers, and challenges to progress towards the programme's specific objectives; determine the extent to which the programme is cost-effective and was implemented in the most efficient manner; determine the extent to which it has implemented a human rights and gender responsive approach; and propose lessons

learned, best practices and recommendations for the remainder of the programme.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation drew on mixed quantitative and qualitative methods as well as contribution analysis. It used a utilization-focused design, a theory-based approach, and integrated feminist evaluation principles. It also used a participatory approach to engage relevant stakeholders; integrated a gender equality and equity approach throughout the evaluation process; and used a critical instance case study approach to further explore the programme's support for the provision of services to women migrant workers, particularly those who have experienced violence. Data was collected virtually through:

- an extensive document review;
- twenty-two focus group discussions with women migrant workers, ASEAN institutions, CSOs (women's organizations and workers' organizations), employers and recruiters, service providers, and media partners;
- sixty key informant interviews with government officials, donor organization, other UN entities and UN RCs, Safe and Fair regional programming staff and National Project Coordinators (NPCs); and
- an online survey with the programme's NPCs.

The analysis drew on an Evaluation Matrix where information was triangulated across sources to ensure analytical accuracy. The evaluation was in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Norms and Standards.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

### Relevance

The Safe and Fair Programme is aligned with international norms, standards, and priorities regarding ending violence against women (EVAW) and labour migration, and is addressing a critical need to bring together gender equality, anti-trafficking and labour migration actors to end violence against women migrant workers. It is also well aligned with UN Reform principles as well as the terms of reference of the multi-year global EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. In addition, the programme has addressed a wide range of women migrant worker needs (including shifting needs because of Covid-19) across origin and destination countries that include engaging in safe migration practices, staying safe from violence, accessing humanitarian support in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, accessing services, and forming networks to support one another. However, while the regional nature of the programme provides added value, stakeholders are calling for a stronger regional approach to further promote cross-country synergies. Specifically, there remains room to further link information and services across a women migrant worker's migration journey and better connect stakeholders participating in NPACs across programming countries.

### Coherence

The programme is effectively drawing on the comparative strengths of both UN Women and ILO and is jointly planning, implementing and reporting on shared results to support holistic programming. This has facilitated the building of inter-linkages across thematic areas and stakeholder groups and has allowed the programme to effectively target violence against women in the realm of labour migration. Even though it was initially designed prior to the formation of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, its programme design and results framework were successfully retrofitted to ensure alignment with

the initiative. The programme is also well aware of and is closely collaborating with relevant UN programming across the region. Even so, there remain areas where further collaboration could produce additional synergies, including those with other EU-UN Spotlight Initiative programmes.

### Effectiveness

The programme has effectively contributed towards strengthening legislation and governance frameworks to protect the rights of women migrant workers by mainstreaming EVAW principles throughout policy work. It has also supported 3,210 women migrant workers to join trade unions or become networked into migrant workers associations and has supported the formation of new trade unions and women migrant workers' networks. This being said, fewer training sessions took place than planned due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which means that its training target will likely not be achieved by the end of 2022.

The programme has also strengthened the capacity of service providers (including health workers, police and justice officials, consular staff, and Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRC) staff, among others) to respond to the needs of women migrant workers, including the right to live a life free from violence, and has increased access to essential services across their migration journey. In addition, it has supported the integration of rights-based and survivor-centered approaches into laws, policies and practice on prevention and response to violence against women (VAW) to end impunity and improve women's access to essential services, including justice, with a focus on women migrant workers.

The strengthening of women migrant workers' first line of support (i.e. the family) is an area of work that currently falls outside of the programme's project document or results framework and yet requires further attention, especially the engagement of men at the community level in order to foster more empathy and support among first-responding family members as well as to inform them about what kinds of services exist and where to access them in order to be better positioned to support women migrant workers if they experience challenges or situations of violence while working abroad. Direct

engagement with men and boys is also required to address family and community violence against women migrant workers, as well as negative social attitudes towards them in their communities of origin.

The programme's work on social attitudes has been far-reaching but has also been quite scattered and has lacked a strategic and specific focus. This means that the programme has been largely unable to concretely target priority stakeholders such as employers or family/community members whose changes in social attitudes could have the largest immediate impact on the lives of women migrant workers. Communication for Development (C4D) is also largely missing from its communications work.

### **Efficiency**

The programme has delivered most of its activities in a timely fashion. Even though it experienced some delays, it has been generally quite adaptive and has successfully mitigated most of their effects. The establishment of NPACs and the RPAC has been an efficient and effective way of bringing stakeholders together to influence the programme's decision-making to ensure its alignment with their needs and priorities. Even though the programme's joint programming arrangements are mostly aligned with UN Reform principles, they are still quite resource intensive and do not fully promote efficiencies due in large part to some duplication between roles and responsibilities and high expectations regarding the degree of coordination and consultation to be done with the other joint entity. Staff (particularly NPCs and regional staff representing both entities) has reported being overworked, which could lead to consequences such as burnout and poorer quality results. The programme has invested significant resources into its M&E system. While reporting is regular and appreciated by stakeholders, it does not effectively capture the programme's contributions towards outcome and impact level results due in large part to weak outcome and impact-level indicators in its results framework.

## Impact

The programme is promoting gender transformative change by directly engaging women migrant workers as active change agents; increasing their access to resources through the provision of services; fostering institutional change through influencing national policies and frameworks; and challenging negative social biases and misperceptions against women migrant workers. The programme is already achieving a direct impact in the lives of women migrant workers by supporting increased access to services such as shelters, consular support, health services, legal aid, etc. Changes in policy to better protect the rights of women migrant workers and any improvements in social attitudes towards women migrant workers will also positively affect the lives of women migrant workers. However, it will take some time for impacts generated from these initiatives to become visible.

## Sustainability

Programming elements largely promote sustainability. The programme's research and awareness raising activities on violence against women migrant workers has brought attention to this important issue across key stakeholder groups, fostered a better understanding of the issues, and instilled among stakeholders the need to better protect the rights of women migrant workers to live a life free from violence, thus creating the necessary conditions for stakeholders to better advance the rights of women migrant workers even after the programme comes to an end. Its work on building the capacities of MRCs has strengthened the capacity of these government-run institutions to continue serving women migrant workers in a more gender sensitive way long after the programme has ended. Also, by supporting the integration of gender equality and ERAW principles into national policies and frameworks, the programme has helped to ensure that the rights of women migrant workers will be better protected in the future through the support of gender sensitive legislation. This being said, the overall length of the programme at five years is quite short to achieve long-term sustainable change. It currently does not have a sustainability

plan or any exit strategies to further promote the sustainability of its results.

## Recommendations

### Main recommendations and follow-up

**Recommendation 1: *Strengthen the regional dimensions of the programme.*** Further leveraging the Safe and Fair Programme's regional elements will facilitate the programme in better supporting women migrant workers across their migration journey by helping key stakeholders, including service providers, to learn from and network with each other to provide more coherent and coordinated services across origin and destination countries.

**Recommendation 2: *Increase programming efforts to strengthen the immediate support network (i.e. husbands and other family members) of women migrant workers.*** In order to provide women migrant workers with the support that they require, husbands and other family members need to be sensitized about the migration experience, capacitated to provide emotion and other kinds of support, and be able to help women migrant workers access essential services. Husbands and other family members are often also the source of violence against women and need to be targeted to encourage behaviour-change.

**Recommendation 3: *Further strategically target the programme's communications campaign to more effectively influence changes in social attitudes and integrate C4D elements to influence behaviour change where feasible.***

**Recommendation 4: *Further collaborate with other UN labour migration programmes across the region to promote enhanced synergies around engaging recruiters and employers and providing financial training***

*and business support to returning women migrant workers.*

**Recommendation 5: Recommendation #5: Further strengthen the Safe and Fair Programme's alignment with Results Based Management (RBM) good practices and improve the efficiency of joint programming arrangements.** By making relatively small adjustments to the Safe and Fair Programme's results framework and joint working arrangements, the programme can significantly improve its results management and reporting as well as increase staff's sense of well-being.