

Mandalay Statement

Improving Access to Health Services by Migrants in Mekong Region: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam

March 26, 2014

Delegations from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam met in Mandalay during March 23-26, 2014, to discuss policy, financing, and service delivery issues on migrants' health.

We recognize that migrants in the Mekong Region, a large majority being undocumented, are vulnerable to ill health and exploitation due to poor work and employment conditions, as well as inadequate legal and labour protection. Despite their contributions to host-country economies, they have limited access to health and other social services due to legal, financial and cultural barriers. When they do access services, the resulting expenditure is a major burden. There are inconsistent policies across sectors such as labour, immigration and health.

There are rich experiences and innovation in managing and improving the health of migrants in the Mekong Region, though these are often financed by out of pocket payment, a prepayment scheme, or donors. Various cross border collaborations have gone through many years of trial and error, from which a lot was learned, though much remains to be improved in order to translate commitment and MOUs into actual implementation at scale.

We pledge our firm commitment to improving access to health services by migrants. This requires multi-sectoral actions by public security, immigration, health, labour, social security, civil society and private employer constituencies. Close collaboration among agencies responsible for migrants' health in host and sending countries is essential. The main bottleneck is financing health services for migrants and their dependents. The upcoming ASEAN Economic Community requires closer collaboration across countries, recognizing private sector as an indispensable partner.