



Driving Responsible Recruitment in Asia: Myanmar Roundtable
May 15, 2019

Inclusive Labour Monitoring (ILM)



Issara Worker Voice Channels

1

DIRECT OUTREACH



- Source & destination
- In communities
- In the workplace
- In housing
- Pre-departure - source side engagement in (Myanmar & Cambodia)
- Ambassadors program

2

MIGRANT WORKER HELPLINE / FEEDBACK



Myanmar language:

1-800-010-180

Khmer language:

1-800-010-181

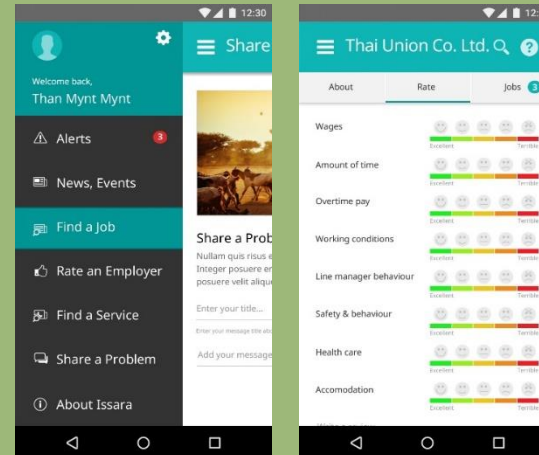
Lao & Thai language:

1-800-010-182

- Over 2,000 calls per month.
- Staffed 100% in-house
- Free to callers
- Open 24-hours, 7 days per week

3

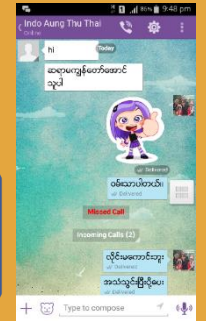
ISSARA GOLDEN DREAMS SMARTPHONE APP



- Migrant worker platform
- Yelp-like rating of employers, labor providers, NGOs
- Alerts, notifications, guides

4

SOCIAL MEDIA & MESSAGING PLATFORMS



- 150,000+ Facebook users
- Closed Facebook chats
- Direct messaging with workers



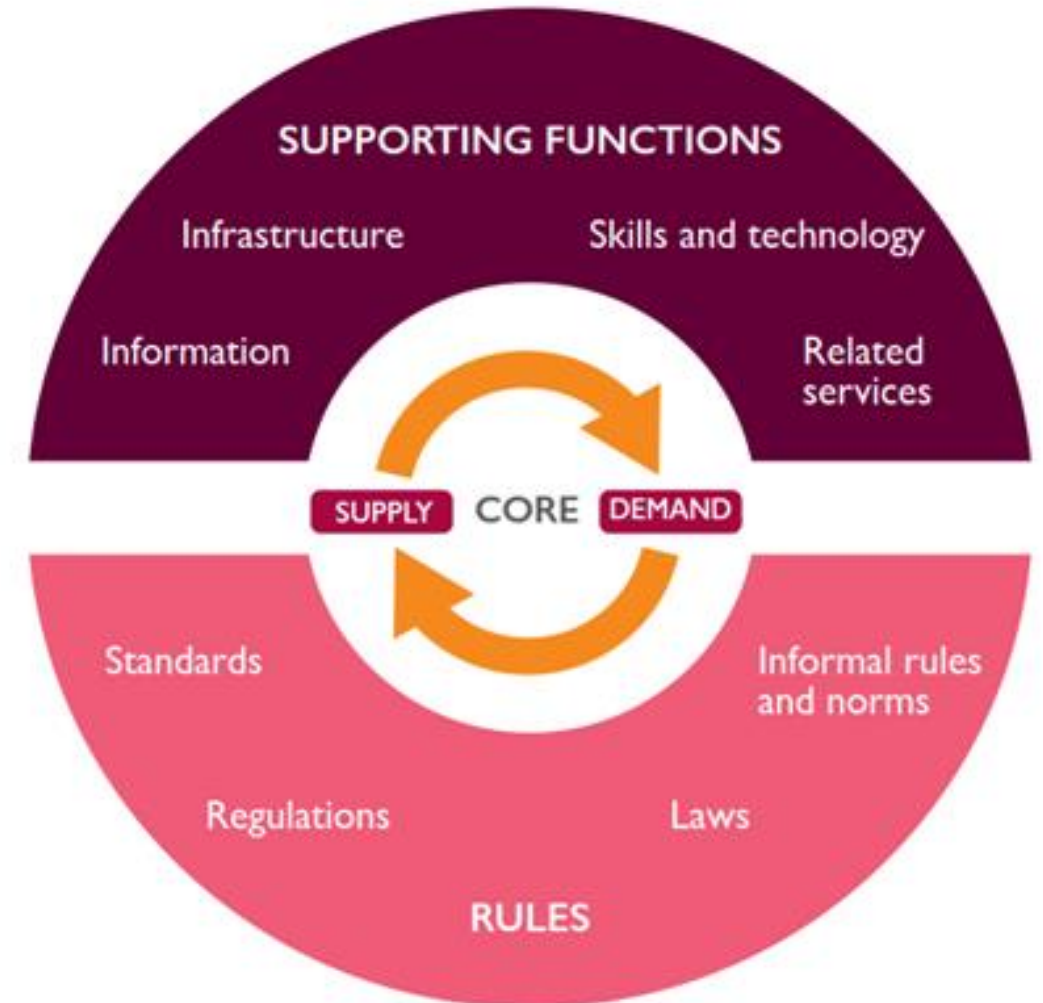
WORKER VOICE DRIVEN ETHICAL RECRUITMENT

Why Ethical Recruitment?

- Poor recruitment practices can lead to debt bondage, forced labour, restricted freedom of movement, document confiscation, physical and verbal abuse, and worker vulnerabilities.
 - Unethical practice seen from community level actors, informal brokers, recruitment agencies, destination side recruitment agencies, supplier staff.
- In seafood and other industries, debt bondage can manifest itself in different ways
 - Workers not leaving a job with poor conditions due to need to pay off debt
 - Impacts how line supervisors treat an individual
 - Leads to excessive deductions
 - Results in not having food for months at start
 - Restricts freedom of movement

How do we get there? How to transform existing practice?

- Know the businesses in your supply chain and their recruitment practices – both source and destination side
- Understand current situation (worker voice)
- Discover how the recruitment market system works and how to affect change
- Take a market systems development perspective
- For sustainability – market demand and a financial viable business model is crucial





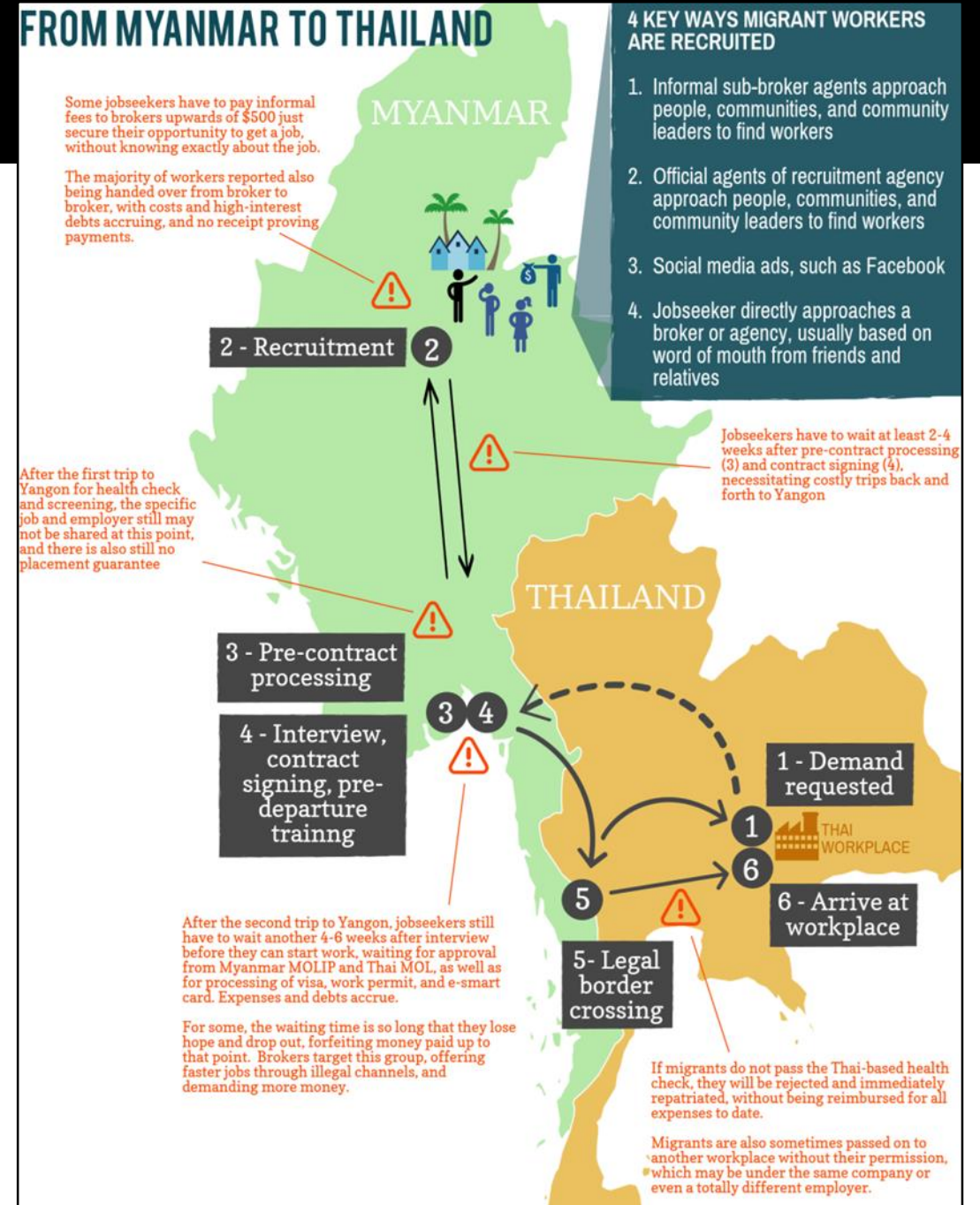
Issara Ethical Recruitment Program



1. Legal compliance: respecting all relevant laws
2. Ethical and professional conduct toward workers and each other
3. Free-of-charge services to jobseekers and workers
4. Transparent, ethical terms of engagement
5. Transparent wages, deductions, and benefits
6. Healthy, safe, exploitation-free working and living conditions
7. Access to remedy and functional, credible grievance mechanisms

Analysis

- How are workers being recruited?
- What is the decision making process?
- Who pays, how much, to whom, and when?
- What are potential intervention points?
- How to building trust and empower job seekers?
- What are the rewards/incentives or disincentives for desired behavior change?



Findings: Some of the Key Challenges

- 1: The **formal MOU channel**: expensive, time-consuming, and confusing for jobseekers
- 2: Myanmar recruitment agency **reliance on informal brokers** and agents to find workers
- 3: **Risk to jobseekers is greatest at the first mile** - high informal fees and debts to broker and agents
- 4: **Lack of due diligence**. Employers reliant on Thai RAs, reducing transparency and accountability.
- 5: **Bargaining power heavily skewed to Thai employers/agents**; selection on **price, not value added services**.
- 6: Minimal **oversight** of Thai recruitment agencies, almost near reliance on them from many employers
- 7: Migrant workers bear the brunt of recruitment costs – **worker pays**, not employer pays system
- 8: **Information asymmetries** abound throughout the labour recruitment process.

Actions Underway

- Not “picking winners”; building ecosystem through multi-stakeholder efforts
- Global buyer support and building demand and incentives for suppliers
- Addressing first-mile challenge: CSO-NET, Golden Dreams / migrant worker platforms; online education of job seekers and quality of advertising
- Ethical Recruitment Program providing measurable pathway to change with technical support and worker voice, to course correct and monitor
- Incorporating jobseeker empowerment and worker voice to build trust
- Adoption and integration of ILM principles
- Strengthened due diligence and professionalization and monitoring of the RA-employer relationship and performance; value added services

Learning

- Jobseekers and workers lack information, are not empowered in these processes, and often will not provide feedback until they are safely in employment.
- Supplier management often lacks knowledge of recruitment practices, often delegating all responsibility to HR department, or in many cases limited human resources staff or a translator.
- Many companies using a Thai or Malaysian recruitment agencies do not know how their source side recruitment agency is selected and sub-contracted.
- Companies may also directly engage with Myanmar recruitment agencies, but barriers include understanding the recruitment landscape and committing resources for contract oversight and legal requirements such as presence during interviews and employment contract signing

Challenges

- Solutions that do not engage worker voice and recourse (with employers, with recruitment agencies) will not have a real picture of practice and progress.
- Ensuring global buyers, employers and recruitment agencies have buy-in into the market case for ethical recruitment and principles, but also take concrete steps to build knowledge and improve practice.
- Understanding the effect the global purchasing practices have on recruitment – lack of consistent practice and planning can result in a rush of hiring, increasing pressures to use informal brokers and lower standards.



TACKLING LABOR & RECRUITMENT ISSUES AT A VESSEL LEVEL

ISSARA FISHERY LABOUR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (FLIP): 4 KEY COMPONENTS

- 1. Issara Remediation Initiative
- 1. Issara Ethical Recruitment Program
- 1. Multi-stakeholder Debt Relief Fund
- 1. Worker Voice at Sea



ISSARA FISHERY LABOUR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (FLIP):

(1) ISSARA REMEDIATION INITIATIVE

- ✓ Feedback collected safely and voluntarily from workers by Issara will help to ascertain remediation needs and priorities
- ✓ Contracts, timesheets, and other key human resource tools compliant with higher buyer standards as well as regulatory standards
- ✓ Educational materials on fishermen's rights in Thai language for employers, and Burmese and Khmer for fishermen (booklets, cards, large posters, etc.), including Issara's worker voice channels for assistance and advice
- ✓ Training for vessel owners, crew hiring managers, and other supervisors
- ✓ Training for fishermen

ISSARA FISHERY LABOUR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (FLIP):

(2) ISSARA ETHICAL RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

- ✓ Issara is working with Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP), recruitment agencies and vessel owners on the new MOU recruitment process for Burmese fishermen onto Thai vessels.
- ✓ The track record and confidence in the Issara ILM process, worker voice channels, ethical recruitment, and social safeguards can help ensure protection of fishermen within the process and on vessels.
- ✓ Issara's ethical recruitment program and self diagnostic tool, coupled with ILM and worker voice, is currently supporting transparency and accountability for job seekers.

Recruitment of Burmese Fishermen: Open Questions

- How can the newly established MoU process function with proper protection for fishermen?
- How can labour conditions and recruitment be monitored to ensure previous abuses not repeated?
- Does the potential benefit outweigh the risks for recruitment agencies?

