

Questions:

## Managing Migration 2: Labour Migration in ASEAN—Its Present and Future

1) According to a recent study of the UN, the international migrant stock in the ASEAN region in the mid-year 2015 was 9,856,888 in total. The seventy percent of them were intra-regional migrants, who moved to one country from another within the region. The major receiving countries of intra-regional migrants were Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

What are possible key aspects for these three countries to be the major destinations?

(Answers)

- *Structural changes of socio-economy (i.e. industrialization, urbanization, popularization of higher education, and women's increasing participation in socio-economic activities) → Domestic labour shortage → Demand for migrant workers*
- *Aging population*
- *Higher wages*
- *Close distance*
- *Small or insufficient labour population*
- *Low unemployment rate*

2) In the ASEAN region, the major sending countries of intra-regional migrants are Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

What are possible key factors that make these countries send many workers to other ASEAN countries?

(Answers)

- *Slow structural changes of socio-economy (e.g. dependency on the primary industry, lower educational levels, lower industrial productivity) → Shortage of job → Surplus of domestic labour → pushing workers to other countries*
- *Lower wages*
- *Close distance*
- *Large labour population*
- *High unemployment rate*

### 3) What are advantages of labour migration in the ASEAN region?

*(Answers)*

*Sending countries*

- *Reduction of labour surplus*
- *Reduction of domestic unemployment rate → Reduction of social instability*
- *Increase in household income*
- *Improvement of current account*

*Receiving countries*

- *Reduction of labour shortage*
- *Underlying support of economic growth*
- *Reduction of production cost → increased competitiveness in global market*
- *Facilitation of women's participation in socio-cultural activities by providing domestic work*
- *Brain gain (e.g. promotion of innovation, increase in productivity)*

### 4) What are disadvantages of labour migration in the ASEAN region?

*(Answers)*

*Sending countries*

- *Brain drain*
- *(Brain return)*

*Receiving countries*

- *Human rights violation*
- *Administrative cost to prevent permanent residency*
- *Reduction of employment opportunity of nationals (especially low-skilled workers)*
- *Reduction of wages*
- *Negligence of the improvement of productivity and human resource management (due to the availability of low-cost labour) → delay of the transformation of industrial structure*
- *Social conflicts (due to difference in cultures and customs)*

**5) How does ASEAN try to facilitate the mobilization of high-skilled workers within the region? What are challenges regarding this?**

*(Answers)*

- *By implementing a regional scheme (i.e. Mutual Recognition Agreement, MRA) to **mutually recognize expert-skills** (e.g. engineering services, nursing services, surveying services/surveyors, architectural services, accounting services, medical practitioners, dental practitioners, and tourism professionals)*
- *Such a regional scheme does not automatically come into effect. **Implementation is controlled domestically** by each signatory State of the MRA (e.g. domestic law takes precedence over MRA; some States set a quota; bilateral negotiation is needed; domestic coordination is needed)*
- *Designated skills under the MRA cover **a very small portion of workforce** (e.g. only 1% in Viet Nam)*

**6) How does ASEAN cope with the phenomenon of the mobilization of low-skilled workers within the region? What are challenges regarding this?**

*(Answers)*

- ***Regulation and control** are sought by each ASEAN Member State and regionally*
- *Dealt with under the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC)*
- *As a matter of **security** (e.g. human trafficking and forced labor as transnational crimes)*
- ***Rights protection** of low-skilled migrant workers is sought under the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC)*
- *As a matter of humanity*