

## **SAFEGUARDING OF CAMBODIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND: FROM THE REGIONAL COOPERATION PERSPECTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Unbalanced economic development in Southeast Asia region has resulted in labor migration of people within and out of the region from the poorer states to the better-off states in recent decades. Cambodia has also experienced a large movement of its people to migrate and work in Thailand over the past twenty years. Majority of these labor migrants did not have legal documents to lawfully live and get employed in Thailand; hence, these unlawful migrant workers are characterized with irregular status and are not entitled to receive protection from the Thai governments. To address this issue, the “Association of Southeast Asian Nations” (ASEAN) adopted subsequent regional non-legal binding instruments, such as, “ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers” in 2007 and “ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers” in 2017. However, these regional instruments have not achieved much progress to cater protection to migrant workers in the region, particular to Cambodian workers in Thailand due to its non-legal nature to make the “ASEAN Member States” (AMS) to redesign their policies on labor migration management in line with the regional instruments to effectively protect intra-ASEAN migrant workers. The paper argued that to effectively protect Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand, the sending states, particularly Cambodia, needs to firmly implement the regional instruments with close cooperation with and friendly coordination from the receiving state, Thailand. The study concluded that the active implementation of ASEAN instruments equipped the migrant workers with the knowledge to seek and receive protection in the receiving state, Thailand.

**KEYWORDS:** ASEAN, Migrant Workers, Cambodia & Thailand