

Indo-Pacific Era Strategic Centre

Mapping the Geopolitics of the Next Indo-Pacific Century.

July 2025



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Towards 2030: SDGs and the Protection of Labour Migrant Rights

Danielle Lynn Goh

Migration encompasses international and internal migration, regular and irregular migration, and labour migration, in which individuals travel abroad to seek economic opportunities. The reality is that migration is an important part of development, with labour migrants contributing substantially to the global economy. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there were nearly 167.7 million international migrant workers in 2022. Labour migration of lower wage workers is a means by which migrants can reduce poverty for themselves and their households through remittances, giving them the economic security to spend on education and healthcare. Migrant remittances have also been a key driver of development in low-and middle-income countries, such as the Philippines, India, Pakistan and Mexico. The World Bank estimated that the rate of remittances would reach \$685 billion in 2024, with the top recipient countries being India, followed by Mexico, China, the Philippines and Pakistan.

At the same time, there are groups of migrants, particularly those who are low-wage workers, in sectors such as agriculture, domestic work and construction, that are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, trapped in cycles of precarity, informal work and face a lack of social protection. For example, in Asia and the Pacific, about 61.5 per cent of foreign female domestic workers are excluded from, and not protected by national labour laws. Most domestic workers do not have the same degree of protection

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and coverage as found in other occupations or sectors.

Migration is a cross-cutting issue across the SDGs, with all 17 goals comprising targets and indicators that are relevant to migration and mobility. Ensuring that the rights of migrants are protected is integral to actualising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Under SDG10 (Reduced inequalities), target 10.7 aims to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people”. In SDG8 (Economic growth and decent work), measures to eliminate forced labour and trafficking, and the protection of labour rights for migrant workers are included as indicators. Climate change also impacts migrants, with climate-related disasters such as flooding and droughts resulting in displacement or forced migration, and it is estimated that between 50 to 250 million people could be displaced by 2050 as a result of climate change. Alongside the SDGs, the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) comprises 23 objectives to foster international cooperation on global migration governance.

To improve the economic and social protection of low-wage migrant workers, the development of skills of low-wage migrant workers can aid in poverty reduction and expand career pathways for labour migrants. Governments and NGOs in destination countries should work towards providing more avenues for upskilling in industry-related courses such as caregiving, digital literacy and language learning. Skills recognition, certification and accreditation, that includes both informal and formal learning, allows for migrant workers to better access job opportunities that match their skills. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlighted in its publication on measuring the progress of migration and the SDGs, that recruitment costs have remained high for migrant workers. To tackle this, governments can intervene, for example through standard contracts signed by employers, recruiters and workers, to ensure that migrant workers do not bear

the costs of hefty recruitment fees, driven by illegal recruitment practices that often result in debt bondage. States also need to ensure that migrant workers are adequately protected in terms of remuneration, conditions of work, rights to leave and rest, access to dispute resolutions and social protection provisions within their employment contracts.

Governments must take a more inclusive and nuanced approach in their policies on migration. In the review of migration-related indicators, a disaggregation of data by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability and migratory status is needed for more meaningful and comparable data that can provide a clearer understanding of the progress made in relation to migration within the SDGs. Ultimately, the underlying perceptions and anxieties surrounding migration must be addressed. States and local populations must recognise the economic contributions of migrants, and their role in development of both ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ countries. Advancing the protection of migrants through the implementation of human rights treaties, ILO conventions and regional commitments, is key to progress in the SDGs.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Baey, Grace, and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (2018). "The Lottery of My Life: Migration Trajectories and the Production of Precarity Among Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Singapore's Construction Industry." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 27, no. 3: 249-272.

International Labour Organization (2022). *Measuring Labour Migration in ASEAN: Analysis from the ILO's International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Mosler Vidal, E. and F. Laczko (2022). *Migration and the SDGs: Measuring Progress – An Edited Volume*. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

'A war of the truth': Europe's heatwaves are failing to spur support for climate action

As heatwaves engulfed large swathes of Europe and North America, governments across the rich world continue to roll back policies to stop the planet from heating, while far-right parties that deny climate science lash out at environment rules even as disasters unfold. Their voters, while rarely climate deniers themselves, seem to tolerate their energetic attacks on environmental policy, if not support them.

Ajit Niranjana and Elsie McDowell

The Guardian | 4 July 2025

Do international carbon credits fight climate change?

The European Commission has proposed an EU climate target for 2040 that for the first time allows countries to count carbon credits bought from developing nations towards the EU goal. But environmental campaigners said the EU was shirking domestic CO₂-cutting efforts and warned against relying on cheap, low-value credits.

Reuters

The Straits Times | 4 July 2025

Outcry as Trump administration shuts two US government websites on climate change

The Trump administration shut down Climate.gov, a US website offering public education in climate science with key features such as a global climate dashboard. Globalchange.gov, gateway to the US Global Change Research Programme and five iterations of the country's National Climate Change Report, was also taken down.

Angelica Ang

The Straits Times | 5 July 2025

Eastern China swelters under early heatwave, threatening crops and industry

Sweltering heat enveloped China's eastern seaboard on Friday, as a high-pressure system settled over the country's most populous region, baking key agricultural and manufacturing hubs along the Yangtze River and raising fears of droughts and economic losses.

Xihao Jiang, Joe Cash and Xiuhao Chen

Reuters | 5 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Drought hotspots around the world 2023-2025

This report identifies the regions of the world that were most severely affected by droughts in 2023–2024, with some continuing into 2025. It aims to reinforce the continued importance of improving drought monitoring, planning, and response capabilities, while providing actionable insights for researchers, policymakers, and humanitarian organisations working to address drought resilience.

Paula Guastello, et al.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification | 2025

Climate change in Mediterranean World Heritage Cities

The projected severity of the flooding events will increase over time for the majority of the World Heritage Cities, followed by increasingly severe drought conditions and extreme heat events. Furthermore, the loss and damage to biodiversity, ecosystem services and territory in addition to those to cultural heritage in World Heritage Cities results in cascading effects that further amplify the negative impacts as well as the vulnerability of the World Heritage Cities and their valuable cultural heritage.

Jyoti Hosagrahar, et al.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

World Water Week 2025: Water for Climate Action

Water plays a pivotal role in global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to build resilience safeguarding ecosystems and communities. World Water Week 2025 will focus on addressing the linked emergencies of climate change, environment degradation and biodiversity loss, emphasising both mitigation and adaptation, alongside the broader goal of enhancing resilience.

Online and Stockholm, Sweden

24-28 August 2025

ENERGY SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Op-ed: Redefining energy security in Southeast Asia **Renewables not fossil gas are key to net-zero**

The region must redefine energy security to achieve sustainable growth, climate resilience and energy security, with electrification, domestic renewables and stronger regional cooperation at its core.

Hyunju Laeticia Ock

New Climate Institute | 17 June 2025

How do renewables contribute to energy security?

There are concerns that the shift to clean energy could also bring a new import dependency for metals and minerals needed to build renewable infrastructure and storage.

Holly Young

DW News | 27 June 2025

Vietnam's nuclear power revival: Ambition or overreach?

Despite considerable challenges, momentum behind Vietnam's nuclear energy revival appears unstoppable. Energy security, climate obligations, and the pressing need to move beyond coal create powerful incentives.

Nguyen Khac Giang

Eco-Business | 1 July 2025

China's climate gambit: Bet on coal while winning the green race

By spring 2025, wind and solar already supplied over a quarter of China's power, suggesting domestic coal use may have peaked. But the coal wealth remains strategic. With slower demand at home, Chinese miners are now exporting more.

Naina Sharma

Asia Times | 10 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Strengthening guardrails against attacks on nuclear facilities

This article analyses existing instruments designed to reduce the risk of attacks on nuclear facilities as well as political practices to that end. It offers recommendations to further strengthen these norms.

Ashley Christ

International Journal of Nuclear Security, Vol. 9, No. 3 | 2025

Global EV outlook 2025

This report draws on the latest data to assess trends in electric vehicle deployment, demand for their batteries and charging infrastructure. It considers recent policy developments and industry strategies shaping the outlook for electric vehicles in different markets.

International Energy Agency

2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Recent Developments and Prospects for Nuclear Power in Southeast Asia

The International Energy Agency (IEA), in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has launched the Southeast Asia Nuclear Dialogue Series, a focused set of webinars exploring the role of nuclear energy in the region's energy transition.

Recorded Webinar

25 June 2025

FOOD SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Japan aims to advance its export decarbonisation tech to support global food security

Japan is advocating for the overseas expansion of its decarbonisation technology to enhance food security domestically and internationally. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries announced “Midori Infinity,” a package to help Japanese companies take their greenhouse gas reduction technologies overseas. This includes technology that reduces methane emissions from rice paddies and livestock and boosts carbon storage in agricultural soils.

Amanda Lim

Ag Tech Navigator | 24 June 2025

First-gen farmers: Why they choose to grow a career in farming

This article features three Singaporean first-generation farmers who pursued agriculture during the COVID-19 pandemic to boost local food resilience. It explores the early successes of these farms as well as the motivations behind what keeps these first-generation farmers going despite the difficulties in operating farms in the agribusiness industry in Singapore.

Elaine Lee

The Straits Times | 28 June 2025

Unprecedented drought threatens Syria’s food security

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned that an unprecedented drought is putting more than 16 million Syrians at risk of food insecurity. It highlighted that the extreme climatic conditions witnessed during the current agricultural season are the worst in about 60 years. These conditions have affected around 75% of cultivated areas and natural pastures used for livestock production.

Syria.News

UkrAgroConsult | 30 June 2025

PM affirms Cambodia’s food security despite border closure with Thailand

Despite the recent Cambodia-Thai border closure and the ban of transportation of all goods to enter or exit, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet has assured the public that Cambodia remains ready to ensure food security for both domestic consumption and export.

DAP News

Khmer Times | 1 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Trade-offs and synergies in food system transition: Case of the Ethiopian dairy sector

Transforming food systems in low- and middle-income countries is essential for achieving food and nutrition security. The transition pathway approach is often used to engage stakeholders in addressing major structural challenges within these systems. Such pathways involve trade-offs and synergies across sustainability dimensions, scales, and actor groups. This study aims to identify and assess these trade-offs and synergies with stakeholders in the context of doubling dairy consumption in Ethiopia.

Augustine Abioye Ayantunde, et al.

Food Security, Vol. 17 | 2025

Exploring agricultural innovation: An empirical investigation of factors influencing the adoption and non-adoption of smart fertilizer technology among farmers in developing countries

The integration of technology is increasingly vital to the advancement of global agricultural practices. Smart fertiliser technology offers promising improvements in nutrient precision and crop productivity. Yet, its adoption in developing countries is influenced not solely by its technical merits, but also by a complex mix of socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors. This study investigates these determinants to better understand the factors shaping farmers’ adoption decisions.

Nadia Adnan, et al.

Agriculture and Food Security, Vol. 14, No. 11 | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

How Government Assistance Reduces Food Insecurity

This webinar hosted by the Asian Development Bank delved into the findings from a 2023 household survey conducted across Southeast Asia and Central Asia. The survey revealed that both regions had significant levels of food insecurity, with Southeast Asia showing more severe conditions. Among the various coping strategies adopted by households, it found that government assistance programmes had a significant effect on reducing food insecurity. The webinar also highlighted the urgent need for strengthened, inclusive social assistance to mitigate food insecurity and called for continued data-driven evaluations to shape future interventions.

Recorded Webinar

29 May 2025



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

HIV surge in the Philippines due to poor sex education, policy gaps

The Philippines is facing a surge in HIV infections with 57 new cases daily. The surge disproportionately affecting young males aged 15-24 due to conservative culture and delayed testing due to fear and lack of awareness. The government has declared HIV a national health emergency.

Mara Cepeda

The Straits Times | 6 July 2025

Why nightmares could increase dementia risk and how to get better sleep

Frequent nightmares can be a marker of earlier dementia and even a driver of it, with cortisol being the main culprit, according to a study by Dr Abidemi Otaiku, a neuroscientist at Imperial College London. Nightmares have also been linked to Alzheimer's disease in a 2024 study by a team at Boston University in the US state of Massachusetts.

Anthea Rowan

South China Morning Post | 7 July 2025

More nurses to anchor care in community settings as Singapore's population ages

Singapore plans to train more nurses for community care, nursing home leadership, and end-of-life care to meet the needs of its aging population, aiming for earlier detection, health interventions, and better support for its rapidly aging population, strengthening preventive care efforts.

Joyce Teo

The Straits Times | 7 July 2025

Common bacteria found in the stomach has no symptoms but could cause 12 million cancers, study warns

New research reveals *H. pylori* bacteria could cause nearly 12 million stomach cancer cases by 2101. Implementing quick screening and treatment programs for the bacteria could reduce stomach cancer cases by up to 75%, urging urgent global prevention strategies.

Gabriela Galvin

EuroNews | 7 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATION

Pneumococcal vaccination for new residents entering older adult care homes in England: national observational surveillance study

The incidence of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) increases with age, and residents of care homes for adults have a high risk of death compared to the general population. The observational surveillance study found that vaccinating 121,587 new care home residents could prevent 75% of 422 cases and 80% of 197 deaths.

Fariyo Abdullahi, et al.

The Lancet Healthy Longevity, Vol. 6. No. 6 | 2025

Impact of a digitally enabled, time-restricted eating weight management program, the Roczen program, on eating behaviors, depression symptoms and health-related quality of life

The study supported patients on a time-restricted eating intervention (TRE) Roczen Program plan with behavioral and social support. It shows that the program engenders clinically significant weight loss and improves emotional eating, uncontrolled eating, binge eating scale (BES), depression and a higher quality of life for those who are not already at high risk for eating disorder and can potentially be effective and safe.

Siri Steinmo, et al.

Eating Behaviors | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC) 2025

AAIC 2025 brings together health experts from around the world at the largest international conference on dementia research. Researchers, clinicians and dementia professionals will share theories, breakthroughs and best practices in the field. The full conference program is now available on the AAIC website.

Online and Toronto, Canada

27-31 July 2025

BIOSECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Tackling dengue threat together

The lack of dengue treatments in the region is not only a scientific challenge— it is an equity issue. For Thailand, dengue costs an estimated 14.2 billion baht annually, mostly from hospitalisations and lost productivity. It is therefore time that Southeast Asia invests in long-term solutions— including medicines— that can help reduce dengue’s human toll and economic burden.

Prasert Auewarakul and Vanessa Daniel

Bangkok Post | 14 June 2025

Ending TB in Southeast Asia: ASEAN’s vaccine diplomacy and digital health tools

ASEAN has consistently taken a proactive role in controlling tuberculosis (TB) in the region. But with the region accounting for a significant share 45% of global TB cases, the fight remains a long and winding road. The plan now is to focus on improving access to treatment, addressing challenges related to latent TB, advancing diagnostic technologies, and developing M72/AS01E TB vaccine candidate.

Mochammad Fadjar Wibowo and Mutiara Indriani

The Conversation | 24 June 2025

NATO fund backs biotech startup in push to counter biological threats

The NATO Innovation Fund has made its first investment in a biotechnology company. The fund is co-leading a \$35 million fund-raising round for Portal Biotech, which uses protein sequencing to detect engineered threats and defend against biological warfare.

Supantha Mukherjee

Reuters | 30 June 2025

From coop to cave: Inside the high-tech hunt for H5N1 and Disease X

In wet markets teeming with live birds, slaughterhouses butchering pigs and even limestone caves home to millions of bats, scientists are deploying air samplers to capture snapshot of the pathogens lurking in the atmosphere—from avian influenza to coronaviruses, and perhaps even the next ‘Disease X.’

Sarah Newey and Narin Sun

The Telegraph | 1 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Data and AI-enabled biological design: Risks related to biological training data and opportunities for governance

This paper assesses current knowledge about the link between biological data and AI-bio model capabilities, describes the anticipated impacts of new biological data sources, and outlines potentially dangerous capabilities that could come from broad availability of certain types of biological data. It then recommends strategies to limit the potentially dangerous capabilities arising from said biological data.

Allison Berke, et al.

Research and Development (RAND) | 2025

Forecasting biosecurity risks from LLMs

This study systematically assesses expert beliefs about the biosecurity risks posed by large language models (LLMs) as artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities improve. It is conducted through surveys of 46 domain experts in biosecurity and biology, along with 22 expert forecaster.

Bridget Williams, et al.

Forecasting Research Institute | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

The 5th World Biological Science and Technology Conference 2025 (BIOST 2025)

The conference will focus on Genetics & Genomics, Molecular Diagnostics & Biomarkers, Cancer Molecular & Cell Biology, Protein, Peptide, and Proteomics, Biomaterials and Biopolymers, Biotechnology and Bioengineering.

Singapore

9-11 December 2025

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Transnational crime in Cambodia and Indonesia: Strengthening regional and national responses

Transnational crime networks in Cambodia and Indonesia have been responsible for heinous cybercrime, including illegal online gambling and scams. These networks target vulnerable populations and undermine human security. Addressing these challenges requires stronger law enforcement cooperation, regulatory reforms, and coordinated regional and national strategies to dismantle the criminal networks.

Jeselyn and Danielle Lynn Goh

RSIS Commentary | 19 June 2025

Judge blocks Trump's rule barring migrants at US-Mexico border from claiming asylum

A federal judge blocked a Trump administration policy barring migrants who cross the US-Mexico border from seeking asylum.

Angélica Franganillo Díaz and Priscilla Alvarez

CNN | 2 July 2025

The Australia-Tuvalu climate migration treaty is a drop in the ocean

Rising sea levels as a result of climate change are an existential threat to the people of Tuvalu, a low-lying Pacific Island nation. The Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union is the world's first climate migration agreement. Each year, Australia will grant residency to 280 Tuvaluans.

New Scientist

2 July 2025

In Taiwan, migrants flee oppressive workplaces for life on the periphery

Taiwan's undocumented workforce is rising fast. The number of unaccounted-for migrants on the island has doubled in the last four years, reaching 90,000 this January, according to the Ministry of Labor.

Michael Beltran

Al Jazeera | 8 July 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Facilitating gainful labour migration in Southeast Asia remains an elusive task

ASEAN has focused on facilitating high-skilled labour mobility, although the vast majority of migrant workers occupy medium- and low-skilled jobs. Disparities in labour standards and uncoordinated migrant labour systems continue to impede the realisation of an integrated regional labour market.

Lee Hwok Aun

Fulcrum | 2025

Beyond borders: The role of consular services in legal identity and identity management

This publication examines how consular services can support people's right to legal identity. It shows how consular tasks, such as civil registration, identity and travel document issuance and protection in emergencies, connect to national identity systems and international standards.

IOM

2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Making Migrant Return and Reintegration Sustainable: Lessons from Two Continents

This webinar explores emerging models, policy shifts, and lessons learned from the European and Latin American approaches to reintegration and support for returning migrants.

Recorded Webinar

25 June 2025