



Golden Dreams 2.0

Innovation to empower workers and eliminate labour exploitation and human trafficking

Global supply chains are often multi-tiered and complex, and visibility of labour conditions is low. Recruitment of migrant workers in Southeast Asia can be exploitative, putting many in debt bondage and other conditions of forced labour. Large power and information asymmetries hurt job seekers and workers. Empowering workers with better information and transparency in employment and recruitment can help revolutionize ethical sourcing and anti-human trafficking.

WHAT IS GOLDEN DREAMS 2.0?

Golden Dreams is a smartphone app, originally launched in 2017, for current and prospective workers from Cambodia and Myanmar. It is a platform in Burmese and Khmer languages for job seekers and workers to access and exchange information in both home and destination countries, including reviews of employers, recruiters, and service providers—in a way similar to Yelp. In 2021, Issara launched Golden Dreams 2.0, with updated features such as peer discussion forums, and a platform for an upcoming recruitment marketplace to connect job seekers with actual open jobs advertised by registered recruiters and employers.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOLDEN DREAMS 2.0?

GD 2.0 aims to reduce exploitative recruitment, forced labour, and human trafficking by empowering job seekers and workers with information and support, and increasing the transparency of recruiters and employers. The app provides key information and peer-to-peer sharing on employment and recruitment conditions, as well as policy and news updates, at both source and destination—critical information for both job seekers and workers. It leverages high smartphone prevalence among migrant workers in Southeast Asia to provide a tool that puts power in the hands of job seekers and workers. Workers provide their perspective on labour conditions, and access information to help them adapt and avoid exploitation.

KEY FEATURES OF GOLDEN DREAMS 2.0

- ✓ The latest updates on rights, policies, and laws related to migrant workers in destination countries, as well as other news
- ✓ Updated information on employers, recruitment agencies, and service providers such as hospitals and NGOs
- ✓ Rating and review functions to allow users to exchange views and opinions about employers, recruiters, and service providers
- ✓ Discussion groups and community polling to encourage collective expression of views and problem solving, and learn the opinions of other workers on common issues they face
- ✓ Easy and secure registration through Facebook or the creation of a secure userID
- ✓ Ability to share a problem or seek immediate assistance from the Issara team, 24 hours a day, through a free phone helpline or private messaging
- ✓ COMING SOON IN 2021! Job recruitment marketplace

WHAT IS INNOVATIVE ABOUT GOLDEN DREAMS?

- **GENUINE LOCAL OWNERSHIP.** The app has deep buy-in and ownership by job seekers and workers, civil society, trade unions, government, and leading recruitment agencies, all of whom contributed to the app's design.
- **AMPLIFYING WORKER VOICE.** Features allow for peer-to-peer sharing through ratings of employers and recruiters, polls, and even discussion forums—all amplifying the voices, knowledge, and power of workers.
- **DYNAMIC & RELIABLE.** The app is dynamic—it is not a static information-access-only platform, but is both interactive and updated on a daily basis by a multi-lingual team tapped into the latest labour migration policies and processes.
- **ACCESSIBLE ANYWHERE.** The app engages job seekers and workers across the full migration journey. It provides safeguarded access to the most updated information, and an anonymized user experience wherever workers are: there is no need to travel to a physical office or interact with unknown authorities to get information.
- **VALUABLE BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE.** The app was designed for workers and the promotion of safer migration, but provides companies with a critical view of conditions in their supply chains that is vastly more credible than information gained from an audit.
- **SCALABLE.** We are changing and strengthening the recruitment systems of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. The approach is poised for growth through the rest of Asia to include more worker nationalities and destination countries, since the infrastructure and best practices for stakeholder engagement are in place.

MORE ON THE GOLDEN DREAMS JOB MARKETPLACE

In-depth consultation with workers, trafficking survivors, and civil society and

trade unions have highlighted that if there is not a platform for finding and matching job seekers with actual jobs, there will still be a space for informal and exploitative brokers to thrive. Therefore, building on Issara's work with Burmese and Cambodian recruitment agencies, agency associations, government, and employers in Malaysia and Thailand, we started developing the recruitment marketplace feature for Golden Dreams 2.0.

On the platform, workers will be able to apply for jobs posted by vetted, legally registered recruiters, with detailed information on the terms and conditions of employment as provided by employers. Mandatory fields for recruitment agencies to fill out regarding the terms and conditions of employment for each publicly posted vacancy means greater transparency and accountability.

With a few clicks, job seekers can file applications, and recruitment agencies can professionally manage applications in a secure and digitized way. An algorithm developed by an MIT research team will smooth the matching process. Huge stacks of paper files, including the personally identifiable information (PII) of job seekers, will be a thing of the past!

HOW IS GOLDEN DREAMS WORKING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MYANMAR MILITARY COUP?

COVID-19 has closed national borders, and formal international labour recruitment into Thailand is currently suspended (as of May 2021). The military coup in Myanmar also prevents Burmese workers abroad from returning home. Golden Dreams continues to provide support to workers in Thailand, and preparations are still ongoing with employers and recruitment agencies for when cross-border labour recruitment resumes.

In response to the pandemic and military coup, the Golden Dreams marketplace will pilot supporting foreign migrant workers in Thailand to find and change employment, which is an urgent need for the hundreds of thousands of workers who have formalized their documentation but have no job, or who have been laid off due to workforce reductions.

"In Golden Dreams 2.0, it is very easy to inquire about the information we want, and we can find the data very easily. I shared my knowledge to choose official recruitment agencies to prevent cheating by illegal brokers, and do's and don'ts information for safe migration. I hope that Golden Dreams 2.0 creates better migration for common people in legal ways."

- Burmese migrant worker



"Golden Dreams is a safe platform for job seekers to find their favorite jobs in a safe way. As there is detailed info about the recruitment agencies, it is safe to connect between job seekers and agencies directly. I always read the comments under my agency from the Golden Dreams app. It would be so good if Issara could connect with more factories that will provide zero cost systems for migrant workers."

- Burmese recruitment agency



"Over the past 8 years, there has been no information available. I would not have come across the hardships I did if there had been an app like Golden Dreams."

- Human trafficking survivor

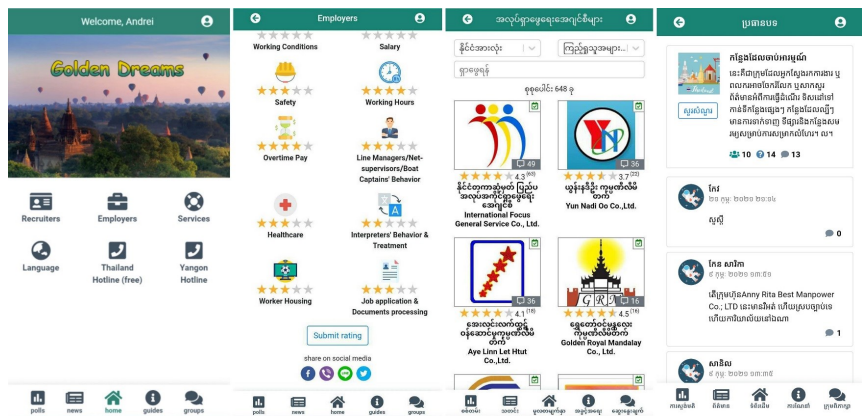


"I used GD1 since I was working in Thailand, and I had participated in Issara's empowerment trainings too. The reason why I used Golden Dreams was to know my rights and to create a better working environment. So, I use the Golden Dreams app and I share about GD2 with my friends too."

- Burmese migrant worker

DID YOU KNOW??

Golden Dreams is a play on words. Burmese migrant workers refer to themselves as *shwe*, or ‘golden people.’ Thus, Golden Dreams (*shwe ei’ mat* in Burmese) translates literally to ‘golden dreams’, but also refers to the dreams of migrant workers. The name of the original app, in 2017 (when there was only a Burmese app), was determined through opinion polls of workers! Then in 2020, opinion polls with Cambodian workers helped to determine the name *Subin Issara*—Issara Dreams—in Khmer.



Screenshots of Golden Dreams, from left to right: Landing screen; categories for workers to rate employers (shown in English); overview of recruitment agencies for browsing, showing rating scores (in Burmese); community discussion forum (in Khmer).

HOW IS GOLDEN DREAMS HELPING TO END FORCED LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Information is power, and Golden Dreams has the power to drive real behaviour and systems change at a scale required to make a measurable reduction in labour exploitation and human trafficking:

- **Migrant workers** are educating themselves fully about their rights in destination countries, and finding safe, well-paying jobs without the need to rely on brokers—even before Day 1 of the migration journey begins.
- **Exploited workers, including victims of forced labour**, have a safe, private way to seek assistance and intervention, and are better equipped to learn their rights and options before reporting abuses.
- **Job seekers** weighing overseas employment options through informal/undocumented channels will be incentivized to choose safer, formal channels, since the middleman costs will be eliminated and timeframes made more transparent.
- **Global brands and retailers, as well as suppliers/employers**, have an unsurpassed view of the labour and recruitment conditions faced by migrant workers across their supply chains. Want to know how workers review a factory? Look it up on Golden Dreams!
- **Recruitment agencies and recruitment agency federations** are better identifying and addressing exploitative elements within their business and industry, and more generally are modernizing and professionalizing their sector’s systems.
- **Suppliers/employers** will have to be more accurate and transparent in the terms and conditions of employment they disclose to recruiters for public posting, and more accountable for delivering jobs to workers exactly as advertised. The aim is to eliminate the practices that still exist of workers being promised one set of working conditions but then being forced to accept something different upon arrival to the workplace.
- **Relevant government ministries of both origin and destination countries** will be able to strengthen their official bilateral recruitment channels based on real data regarding the structural weaknesses and failures of current systems.

