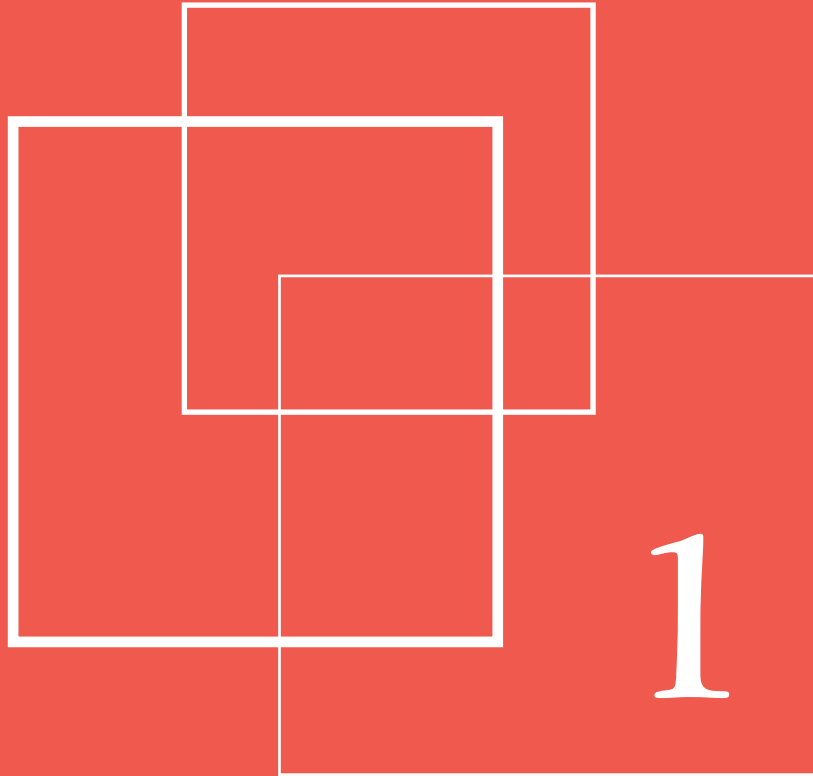


AGRICULTURE SECTOR



CHAPTER 1 : AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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1. AGRICULTURE SECTOR

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Agriculture is no longer as important a sector to the Thai economy as it once was. For example, in 2000 agriculture generated approximately 11% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By 2005 this had dropped to about 7%. This reduction was due to a reduction in crops due to a prolonged drought.¹¹

Nevertheless, a high proportion of the workforce is employed in the agriculture sector. It was estimated by the World Bank that in 2003 at least 46% of the Thai workforce was employed in agriculture. Over recent years there has been a decline in the number of internal migrants seeking unskilled or low-skilled work in Thailand, with this category of worker often seeking employment opportunities overseas. This has led to an increasing reliance upon migrant labour from neighbouring countries for filling manual jobs.

According to MOL figures from 2004, 45,000 employers in the agriculture sector requested 380,500 work permits for migrant workers, representing a fifth of the total number of work permit requests for migrant workers. In the same year, 179,000 work

permits were granted to migrant workers in the agriculture sector, making it the sector employing the largest number of registered migrants.¹² Of this number, 16,800 work permits were issued for workers from Lao PDR, 18,800 for workers from Cambodia and 143,800 for farm workers from Myanmar.¹³ Migrant workers in agriculture range in age from 14-45, with an equal representation of men and women.¹⁴

Despite the fact that it is common knowledge that many child migrants are working in the agriculture sector, there are no national statistics available on the number of either Thai or migrant children working in agriculture. A small-scale study focussing on the Thai-Cambodian border area found about 500-700 children cross the border from Cambodia to work in agriculture and earn on average 50-70 baht per day.¹⁵ However, this study does not provide an insight into the differing situations of migrant children who actually live and work on farms in Thailand as opposed to those “commuting” across the border.

¹¹ GDP: Q4/2005, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), Bangkok, 2006. Note: the GDP figure for agriculture includes agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing.

¹² Chantavanich et al, 2006.

¹³ Huguot and Punpuing, 2005.

¹⁴ Chalamwong et al, 2002.

¹⁵ Angsuthanasombat et al, 2003.

Currently, agricultural workers, whether locals or migrants, are not fully protected under labour law in respect of most issues relating to working conditions. The main policy governing migrant workers in agriculture is related to the registration of foreign workers. Registration provides migrants with temporary legal status to remain and work in the country and in doing so offers workers some protection. Only large farms that could afford the high cost of registration fees participated in the registration process before 2004. For smaller farms, such as vegetable farms, the cost of the fee represents such a substantial amount of profit that it was not viable to register workers.¹⁶ The fact that many employers could not afford the cost of registration meant there became large numbers of undocumented workers in the agriculture sector. Since 2004, the mechanism for registration has addressed some of these issues through the lowering of registration fees and by allowing workers to change employers.¹⁷ In addition, the current registration provides health insurance for workers.

1.2 Geographical site of research

This study was conducted in Nakhon Pathom province. Nakhon Pathom is located in central Thailand, 56 km west of Bangkok. There are 815,000 inhabitants, spread over seven districts. About 34% are engaged in agricultural production including rice farming, fruit and vegetable farming and livestock raising. Agriculture remains the main

economy in Nakhon Pathom. Farms tend to produce fruit, such as pomelos, guavas, tangerines, bananas and coconuts, while the livestock-oriented farms raise pigs, ducks, chickens and cattle.

Like other provinces based in the central plains, the primary source of agricultural labour was previously internal migrants from the country's northeast. There was a shift, however, in the source of agricultural labour during the 1990s when migrants from neighbouring countries, particularly Myanmar, replaced local migrants.¹⁸ Nakhon Pathom has demonstrated a high level of employer demand for migrant workers through the registration periods and a high number of work permits being granted.

In 2004, 1,860 agricultural operations were registered, 10,430 work permits were requested and 10,323 work permits were granted (see Table 1). This may be due to the fact that many of the activities involved in agriculture are labour-intensive and to remain competitive the sector relies on cheap labour, which is often provided by migrants from neighbouring countries.

A preliminary discussion between The Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) and key informants raised the issue that exploitation may be occurring on agricultural farms in Nakhon Pathom province, hence the decision to choose this geographical area for the research.

¹⁶ Martin, Philip, 2003

¹⁷ Pearson, E, 2005

¹⁸ Martin, P, 2004

Table 1: Number of registered agriculture farms in Nakhon Pathom province, May 2005

District	Plan-tations	Fruits	Vege-table	Rice	Orchid	Other	Aqua-Culture	Live-stock	Poultry	Other	Total
Kratumban	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kampaeng-saen	44	13	48	0	0	2	97	52	10	2	268
Dontum	0	6	17	1	0	0	41	17	14	0	96
Nakhon Chaisi	2	60	132	2	1	3	40	19	1	0	260
Banglane	3	24	82	3	1	2	127	12	37	0	290
Phutta-Monthon	0	2	31	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	34
Muang	17	26	63	0	0	5	95	219	17	2	444
Sampran	1	174	187	0	2	8	13	74	3	2	464
Total	67	305	561	7	4	20	413	393	82	6	1,857

Source: Ministry of Labour, 2005

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses similar research methodology to that used in the manufacturing and fishing sectors. More details on the research methodology can be found in Volume One of this report. This section will focus specifically on differences in the sampling design and data collection used for the agricultural sector.

2.1 Sampling

a) Survey of employers and migrant workers

The study surveyed 92 agricultural employers in Nakhon Pathom province using the MOL list of registered employers as the sampling frame, which was also used in the other three sectors.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used, comprising three key stages. Firstly, districts were randomly selected within the province. Given the limited timeframes, only three districts were selected out of a possible seven. The selected districts were Nakhon Chaisri, Sam Pran and Muang.

The second stage was to select sub-districts, so six to seven sub-districts were selected from each district. From each sub-district, employers were randomly selected from the registration list. The number of employers was based on the registration numbers for livestock and crop farming.¹⁹ The number was in proportion with each sub-sector. Taking into account under-registration, the researchers over-sampled from the sample by about 50%. For example, the survey aimed to select 80 employers, but the actual sample of employers which we drew from the list reached at least 120. For each employer, one or two migrant workers were selected for the survey. In total, the survey was able to include 92 employers and 129 migrant workers.

b) In-depth interviews

Thirteen employers and 13 workers were selected to participate in the in-depth interviews. To select them, the researcher reviewed the questionnaires completed by migrants to look out for any possible experiences of forced labour or labour exploitation, particularly among child workers. Researchers also

¹⁹ Livestock and crop farming are two broad categories used throughout the report. Livestock includes; pigs, chickens, ducks, cattle, fish and prawn farms. Crop farming refers to the production of fruit, vegetable, flowers and plants. These include mangoes, rose apple, guava, pomelo, jack fruit, limes, orchids, garlic chive, Chinese cabbage, asparagus, rice and lotus.

aimed to include workers from a range of ethnic backgrounds in an effort to capture a broad range of experiences. Both registered and unregistered workers were included. Once the migrant workers for interview were selected, the employers who hired these workers were contacted to see whether or not they would take part in the in-depth interviews.

2.2 Data collection

The data collection team was made up of a supervisor and nine interviewers who, between them, were able to speak Lao, Mon, Karen, Burmese and Thai. Researchers made an initial visit to selected sub-districts to provide information to local leaders regarding the study, to update the employer list and find any unregistered employers in the area. When found, unregistered employers were selected and included in the samples. A Tambon Administrative Organization Office (TAO) official assisted in introducing the interviewers to the employers. When approaching farms and employers, the research supervisor would go with the TAO official to explain to employers the aims of the study before obtaining permission to conduct any interviews.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 General characteristics of employers

As shown in Table 2, 92 employers were surveyed and slightly more men than women took part. The majority of employers owned their businesses (85%). Almost 40% had completed some level of secondary education and 14% had completed higher education. This was far below the level found in other work sectors in the report.

There were some distinct differences between employers in the livestock and crop sectors. There were significantly more male employers (78%) in livestock farms than in crop-producing farms. Those running crop farms were much more likely to own their business (92%). Employers in livestock farms were better educated, 80% having completed some schooling beyond primary level. In comparison, the majority of employers in crop farms had only completed primary school (58%).

Table 2: Percentage distribution of employers by selected characteristics

Characteristics	Percent	Number
Sex		
Male	53.3	49
Female	46.7	43
Subcontracting		
Yes	16.3	15
No	79.3	73
Both	4.3	4
Position		
Manager	13.0	12
Owner	84.8	78
Others	2.2	2
Education level		
Primary	45.7	42
Lower secondary	20.7	19
Upper secondary	18.5	17
Tertiary	15.2	14
Agriculture sub-sector		
Livestock	30.4	28
Crops and plantation	69.6	64
Total		92

3.2 General characteristics of migrants

Of the 129 migrant workers interviewed, 57% were female while 43% were male. The male migrants ranged from 11-20 years old, while the women were 13-25 years old. Only five workers (4%) were under 15 years old and a quarter of the sample were aged 15 to 17 years old. Two thirds worked in crop farming and a third in livestock (Table 3).

When comparing the characteristics of migrant workers in the two sub-sectors, two thirds of women worked on crop farms while the majority of men were engaged in livestock raising. Children are more likely to work on crop farms. Workers on crop farms

are far more likely to be registered - three quarters were registered compared to only half of workers on livestock farms.

In terms of ethnicity, almost two thirds of workers were born in Myanmar. The most prominent ethnic groups were Karen (25%) and Mon (24%). Hill tribes or stateless people who had lived in Thailand and held coloured cards made up a quarter of the sample. Smaller proportions of Burman (10%) Lao (8%) and Cambodian migrants (5%) were surveyed. Hill tribe minorities, Cambodian and Shan migrants tended to work on crop farms. Burman and Karen migrants were found in greater numbers on livestock farms.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of migrants by selected characteristics

Characteristics	Livestock		Crops		Total	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Sex						
Male	52.2	24	37.3	31	42.6	55
Female	47.8	22	62.7	52	57.4	74
Age						
< 15 years	0.0	0	6.0	5	3.9	5
15-17 years	17.4	8	28.9	24	24.8	32
18 + years	82.6	38	65.1	54	71.3	92
Registration						
Registered	54.2	35	76.1	45	62.0	80
Unregistered	45.8	11	23.9	38	38.0	49
Ethnicity						
Karen	39.1	18	16.9	14	24.8	32
Mon	28.3	13	21.7	18	24.0	31
Coloured card	2.2	1	34.9	29	23.3	30
Burman	21.7	10	7.2	6	12.4	16
Lao	8.7	4	7.2	6	7.8	10
Cambodian	0.0	0	8.4	7	5.4	7
Shan	0.0	0	3.6	3	2.3	3
Total	100.0	46	100.0	83	100.0	129

The level of education of migrant workers varied. A large proportion (about 42%) had no formal education. Slightly less than half had completed between one and six years of school. Fewer than 10% had attended more than seven years of school. Male workers tended to be less educated than female workers. Interestingly, children tended to be more likely to have completed at least some schooling when compared to the adult workers. There were no clear educational differences between migrants employed in livestock and crop farming.

A key skill for migrants working in Thailand is the ability to communicate in Thai since this can

serve as a protective factor against potential abuse and exploitation. Almost a quarter of the migrants could not speak any Thai or could only speak a little. Less than a third of workers could speak Thai well or fluently. Child workers tended to be able to speak Thai more fluently than adults. Workers employed on crop farms also tended to be able to speak Thai better than those living on livestock farms. Overall, 62% of agricultural workers were registered. Male workers were more likely to register than female workers. Adult workers recorded slightly higher registration rates. Workers employed in the crop sub-sector were much more likely to register (76%) than those employed in livestock (54%).

Table 4: Percentage distribution of migrants by education and ability to speak Thai, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Characteristics	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Education								
(years of schooling)								
None	39.2	45.5	40.0	34.4	44.6	42.5	40.8	41.9
1-6 years	54.1	41.8	60.0	56.3	45.7	48.8	49.0	48.8
7-9 years	6.8	10.9	0.0	9.4	8.7	8.8	8.2	8.5
10 +	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	2.0	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Can speak Thai								
Fluently	5.4	10.9	20.0	18.8	3.3	10.0	4.1	7.8
Good	27.0	21.8	20.0	18.8	27.2	22.5	28.6	24.8
Some	45.9	40.0	60.0	31.3	46.7	53.8	26.5	43.4
Little	5.4	9.1	0.0	9.4	6.5	8.8	4.1	7.0
Not at all	16.2	18.2	0.0	21.9	16.3	5.0	36.7	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)

In livestock, the majority of migrant workers are involved in feeding and washing the animals, cleaning animal pens and shifting manure. About a quarter of workers are involved in slaughtering animals (Table 5, p14). There is a marked difference in the types of jobs done by children and adults. Child workers were more likely to be involved in feeding, cleaning and slaughtering animals. In contrast, adults were more likely to be involved in assisting the vet, raising animals, mixing up the food and loading animals for transport.

Workers on crop farms are primarily responsible for harvesting, weeding, watering and spraying chemicals (see Table 6, p14). Researchers took note of the hazardous nature of chemical spraying during their fieldwork. Often workers apply chemicals without the use of any protective clothing, such as gloves or a mask, thereby increasing their exposure. Adult men were more likely to be involved in chemical spraying.

Table 5: Percentage of migrants in livestock by assigned jobs, sex and age *

Assigned jobs	Sex		Age		Total
	Female	Male	11-17 years	18-25 years	
Feeding	77.3	66.7	75.0	71.1	71.7
Cleaning animals	63.6	45.8	62.5	52.6	54.3
Cleaning up animal waste	40.9	37.5	37.5	39.5	39.1
Slaughtering/assistant	36.4	16.7	37.5	23.7	26.1
Assisting veterinarian	27.3	20.8	12.5	26.3	23.9
Animal raising	22.7	16.7	12.5	21.1	19.6
Mixing food	4.5	29.2	0.0	21.1	17.4
Loading animals	9.1	12.5	0.0	13.2	10.9
Catching fish/chicken	4.5	16.7	0.0	13.2	10.9
Other **	13.6	16.7	12.5	15.8	15.2
Number	22	24	8	38	46

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

** "Other" includes weeding, domestic work and delivering products.

Table 6: Percentage of migrants in crop farms by assigned jobs, sex and age *

Assigned jobs	Sex		Age		Total
	Female	Male	11-17 years	18-25 years	
Harvesting	71.2	67.7	62.1	74.1	69.9
Weeding	55.8	48.4	62.1	48.1	53.0
Watering plants	42.3	58.1	37.9	53.7	48.2
Spraying chemicals	23.1	64.5	24.1	46.3	38.6
Wrapping fruit	34.6	25.8	51.7	20.4	31.3
Planting	30.8	25.8	31.0	27.8	28.9
Fertilizing	15.4	25.8	13.8	22.2	19.3
Pruning	15.4	22.6	17.2	18.5	18.1
Cleaning	17.3	12.9	13.8	16.7	15.7
Other **	5.8	6.5	0.0	9.3	6.0
Number	52	31	29	54	83

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

** "Other" includes soil preparation, sorting and packing, domestic work and sale of products.

3.3 Legal status of migrant workers

a) Registration status

It was found that nearly two thirds of migrants had registered. More male than female workers were registered and more adults than children of legal working age, while there were more workers registered on crop farms than livestock operations (see Table 7, p16).

Registration rates also varied in terms of ethnicity. A large majority of Mon (74%), Cambodian (71%) and Burman (69%) workers were registered. Karen, Lao and hill tribe workers were less likely to register than workers of other ethnic backgrounds.

Many workers agreed that registration provided benefits, such as access to healthcare, a greater sense of safety and security in their employment in Thailand, as well as helping them to find jobs more easily.

“I heard my boss say that registered workers can find work easily, their jobs are more secure and it’s safer for them to go out. My boss insisted I call him if I encountered any trouble outside of work. No one wants to employ workers without cards. But, many workers here do not have cards.” (AG, 17 year-old female migrant, Karen, crop farm)

“Yes, I am registered. I agree that registration makes me feel safer. ... No, registration is not a waste of money. My boss paid my registration fees.” (AM, 17 year-old female migrant, Burman, pig farm)

“Registration is a tedious process but it is also very useful, especially given that workers can then access healthcare facilities.” (AL, 20 year-old male migrant, Mon, livestock)

Table 7: Percentage distribution of migrants by registration status, grouped by sex, age, ethnicity and education

Characteristics	Registration		Total	Number
	Yes	No		
Sex				
Male	65.5	34.5	100.0	55
Female	59.5	40.5	100.0	74
Age group				
< 15 years	0.0	100.0	100.0	5
15-17 years	65.6	34.4	100.0	32
18+ years	64.1	35.9	100.0	92
Ethnicity				
Burman	68.8	31.3	100.0	16
Karen	53.1	46.9	100.0	32
Mon	74.2	25.8	100.0	31
Shan	66.7	33.3	100.0	3
Cambodian	71.4	28.6	100.0	7
Laotian	50.0	50.0	100.0	10
Other (coloured card)	56.7	43.3	100.0	30
Education level				
No school	63.0	37.0	100.0	54
Primary	61.9	38.1	100.0	63
Secondary	63.6	36.4	100.0	11
Tertiary	0.0	100.0	100.0	1
Total	62.0	38.0	100.0	129
(N)	(80)	(49)		

The majority of workers (66%) said their employer initially covered the cost of registration (see Table 8). Among the employers who paid the registration

cost (54), about half reported that they deducted up to 3,800 baht or up to the total cost of registration (see Table 9, p17).

Table 8: Percentage distribution of employers by money deducted for migrant's registration and sub-sector

Money deducted for registration	Sub-sector		Total
	Crops	Livestock	
Yes	59.4	57.1	58.7
No	26.6	32.1	28.3
Not applicable	14.1	10.7	13.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(64)	(28)	(92)

Table 9: Percentage distribution of employers by reported amount of money deducted for registration of migrants

Amount (baht)	Sub-sector		Total
	Crops	Livestock	
500	2.6	12.5	5.6
1,000	2.6	0.0	1.8
1,300	2.6	0.0	1.8
1,900	34.2	18.8	29.6
2,000	10.5	6.3	9.3
3,800	44.7	56.3	48.1
3,900	2.6	0.0	1.8
3,950	0.0	6.3	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(38)	(16)	(54)
Median (baht)	2,000	3,800	

“I did register. My boss paid all the registration fees, which was good. My boss also paid the registration costs for all seven workers on this farm without charging them later.” (AM 17 year-old female migrant, Burman, pig farm)

“Last year my boss didn’t pay the registration fee. But this year, she paid half the fee and did not deduct money from my wages.” (AG, 17 year-old female migrant, Karen, guava farm)

b) Types of identity documents

Over two thirds of migrant workers reported holding at least one identity card (Table 10, p18). More child

migrants and migrant workers on crop farms were without any ID cards than adult migrant workers and livestock workers, respectively. None of the children under the age of 15 possessed any ID cards. Fewer than 30% of migrants reported holding all three cards, namely a residence card, work permit and health card.

Some employers attempt to bypass the registration process because it only allows them to register migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. In areas with marked labour shortages, employers tend to also recruit workers holding coloured cards. Many of these workers have migrated from border areas, such as the provinces of Chiang Rai and

Kanchanaburi. Some are hill tribe people and were born in China. Some workers had no idea where they were born. One employer noted that he took hill

tribe workers for registration but recorded them as Burmese migrants.

Table 10: Percentage of migrants by the type of documents they hold, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Type of card	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
None	37.8	36.4	100.0	37.5	33.7	26.1	43.4	37.2
Residence card	32.4	36.4	0.0	40.6	33.7	41.3	30.1	34.1
Work permit	59.5	60.0	0.0	62.5	62.0	71.7	53.0	59.7
Health card	51.4	52.7	0.0	53.1	54.3	60.9	47.0	51.9
All three cards	27.0	30.9	0.0	37.5	27.2	37.0	24.1	28.7
Number	44	36	5	16	59	35	45	80

c) Reasons for not registering

The most popular reasons for not registering were a lack of time for registration (35%) and a lack of awareness regarding registration (20%). Other reasons were that the worker moved around a lot in their job (8%), or the employer did not allow the worker to register (2%). None thought that registration would not improve their situation, or that they might be sent home.

Child workers are almost twice as likely to indicate that they do not have an understanding of the registration process. Similarly, male workers and workers in the livestock sector were less likely to have an understanding of registration than female workers or those working on crop farms.

A greater proportion of workers in livestock said they did not have time to register (46%). The results of the

in-depth interviews supported these comments, with migrants citing the fact that they were too young, were newcomers to Thailand or “did not know” as their reasons for not registering.

“I didn’t register. I don’t know why. My boss didn’t mention anything about registration and didn’t take me to register. So I have to work like this.” (AL, 16 year-old male migrant, Karen, orchid farm)

“I have not registered because I have only come to Thailand for four months and I am too young to register. If I do register, I was told, my boss would pay half the fee. Unregistered workers are not allowed to go out. If something happens, the boss won’t take any responsibility. But I am allowed to go to the closest village, which is 1 km away...” (AH, 16 year-old male migrant, Burman, fruit orchard)

Table 11: Percentage of non-registered migrants by reasons for not registering, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector (% agree)

Reasons	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	<15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Livestock	Crops	
Didn't know about it	13.3	31.6	20.0	36.4	15.2	36.4	15.8	20.4
Move around too much	10.0	5.3	0.0	0.0	12.1	9.1	7.9	8.2
Employer didn't allow it	3.3	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	2.0
No time	33.3	36.8	0.0	54.5	33.3	45.5	31.6	34.7
Wouldn't improve situation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Might be sent home if registered	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number	30	19	5	11	33	11	38	49

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

d) Migrants' and employers' attitudes towards registration

Almost all migrants registered (96%) agreed that registration had helped them to find a job more easily, that it gave them greater job security (98%)

and that they felt safer when venturing outside their workplace. In contrast, only one in seven felt that registration made their life more difficult. There were no clear differences in attitudes on the basis of sex, age or sub-sector (Table 12).

Table 12: Percentage of migrants by attitudes towards registration, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector (% agree)*

Attitudes towards Registration	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
Helps migrants find job more easily	97.7	91.7	NA	90.5	96.6	94.3	95.6	95.0
Provides greater job security	100.0	94.4	NA	95.2	98.3	94.3	100.0	97.5
Feel safer when outside of work	95.5	97.2	NA	90.5	98.3	97.1	95.6	96.2
Made life more difficult	13.6	16.6	NA	4.8	18.6	14.3	15.6	15.0
Number	44	36	0	21	59	35	45	80

These figures represent an agreement with the statements.

'NA' means not applicable (for all five children under 15 who were not registered).

While registration did make migrants feel safer, some registered workers continued to have unfavourable experiences with the authorities.

good for business was because they no longer needed to bribe the police and therefore this reduced their costs.

Employers were also asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding registration and the results are shown in Table 13 (see p20). In contrast to the workers' feelings, well over a third of employers said registration had many problems and that it is better to avoid it. The in-depth interviews with employers also confirmed these findings, with many saying the current registration process is very complex and time consuming.

“Before the introduction of migrant registration, we had to pay the police every month. It’s good that we don’t have to pay them any more. Those who employ unregistered workers still have to pay this kind of bribes though.” (A, female, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

“Registration consumes too much of my time and is quite complicated. During registration, the employer has to apply and follow through with the complete process. I have to make several trips to the labour office, hospital and district office, while workers only have to spend time registering their residence and having a health examination. If a worker runs away, I have to report it to the labour office and register the worker again. It’s a real waste of time.” (B, 41 year-old male employer, crop farm)

“I hired two Karen workers who had fled from Bangkok. They worked here for four months. They registered in Bangkok but all their documents were kept by their previous employer. I went to the labour office in town to register them but the officers did not allow me to do so. I still have to pay the police every month.” (D, 46-year-old female employer, crop farm)

Over three-quarters of employers agreed that the registration process had improved their businesses. A greater number of employers in the crop sector stressed this point than in the livestock sector. Employers said a key reason why registration was

Some employers were adamant that registered workers should not be allowed to leave their employer before completing a one-year contract.

“I’d prefer the period of registration to be open year round. The registration must also stipulate that a worker should work for the same employer for a full year. In other words, a worker should not be allowed to leave their current job before working for an entire year.” (C, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

Table 13: Percentage of employers by attitudes towards registration, grouped by sub-sector (% agree)

Attitudes	% agree *			Number
	Crops	Livestock	Total	
Registration process has many problems; better to avoid (not to register workers)	27.0	35.7	29.7	91
Registration process has improved my business	80.3	69.2	77.0	87

* Excludes 'don't know' and 'no answer'.

3.4 Indications of exploitation

a) Forced labour

Indications of forced labour are drawn from looking at the various working conditions and whether or not migrants are effectively trapped in the workplace

due to physical or psychological coercion inflicted by their employer or a third party. In response to direct questions on forced labour, overall, only 2% (three people) said they had been forced to work in their current job by people outside their family (Table 14). Only two people (2%) had been forced to work in their previous job.

Table 14: Percentage of migrants experienced forced labour, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Experiences	Sex		Age			Registration		Total	N
	Female	Male	<15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No		
Ever forced by other to work in current job	2.7	1.8	0.0	0.0	3.3	3.8	0.0	2.3	3
N	2	1	0	0	3	3	0		
Ever forced by other to work in previous job	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.3	2.0	1.6	
N	2	0	0	2	1	1	1		2

Little is known about the extent of trafficking and forced labour among young migrant workers in the agricultural sector in Thailand. A study conducted by the Federation of Trade Unions Burma (FTUB) in 2004 found no indication of trafficking among 14 Burmese children working in Mae Sot. Likewise, an Amnesty International study in 2005 found none of the 115 Burmese migrant workers interviewed had been trafficked. Nonetheless, some of these workers had been smuggled, that is they had voluntarily paid large sums to transporters who took them across the Thai checkpoints, often by bribing immigration officials.

According to an ILO/IOM survey,²⁰ there is a high turnover of registered migrant workers in agriculture in the provinces of Mae Sot and Kanchanaburi. To counter this, some employers prevent their workers from leaving by deducting registration costs from the workers' salaries. This illustrates how the registration

process can be used to reinforce employers' control over migrant workers, therefore increasing the potential for exploitation.

The following previous experiences of migrant workers were drawn from in-depth interviews. Their experiences include elements of forced labour, such as physical punishment, delayed payment, long working hours and being locked up in the workplace.

“When I worked on a construction site in Bangkok, my boss always shouted at me harshly and hit me round the head. Payment was often delayed. After two months of hard work, I still didn't receive any payment. So I left the construction job along with six other workers, including a Thai. We didn't know where to go to ask for help. The Thai went to complain to the labour office but I didn't hear from him again. When I worked on a golf course, the Thai students were very mean to me and said

²⁰ Chalamwong et al, 2002

my Thai was not good and that they would call the police to arrest me.” (AL, a 20 year-old male migrant, Mon, prawn farm)

“A couple of years ago, an employer from Bangkok went to Three Pagodas Pass to pick up about 100 young female workers. He took them to work at an orchid farm somewhere near Bangkok. The workers were paid 80 baht a day. They weren’t allowed to go out at all. No contact with people outside the workplace was allowed. Once every three to five years, the workers were allowed to go home, but only with their boss. They normally began working at about 5 am and didn’t finish until 10 pm every day. My cousin was one of them.” (AD, 22 year-old female migrant, Shan, crop farm)

b) Constraints preventing workers leaving current job

Workers were asked to indicate whether there were any constraints preventing them from leaving their current jobs. The vast majority (85%) reported that there were no such constraints (Table 15). The 15% of migrants who felt they were not able to leave their jobs gave the following reasons: afraid of being arrested by the police (eight); did not know where else to go (six); their employers had their original documents (four); worries over being deported (four); in debt to their employers (two); and in debt to their recruiter (one).

Table 15: Percentage distribution of migrants by constraints on leaving their current jobs, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Response	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18+ years	Yes	No	
Yes, can leave	85.1	85.5	100.0	84.4	84.8	88.8	79.6	85.3
No, cannot leave	14.9	14.5	0.0	15.6	15.2	11.3	20.4	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)

The most common reason for not be able to leave a job was because the migrants were afraid of being arrested by the police (6.2%). Four workers said their employers kept their identification cards (see Table 16). “Difficult to find a new job”, “don’t know where

to go”, and “worried about deportation” were among the reasons migrants couldn’t leave their current job. Although the number was relatively small, unregistered workers seemed to face difficulties in leaving their jobs due to fear of the authorities.

Table 16: Percentage of migrants who cannot leave their current job by reasons, grouped by sex, age and registration status (% agree)

Reasons	Sex		Age			Registration		Total (N)
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Employer keeps original cards	2.7	3.6	0.0	6.3	2.2	5.0	0.0	3.1 (4)
Afraid of being arrested by police	5.4	7.3	0.0	9.4	5.4	1.3	14.3	6.2 (8)
Difficult to find new job	2.7	3.6	0.0	6.3	2.2	1.3	6.1	3.1 (4)
Employer might report to authorities	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	2.0	0.8 (1)
Don't know where to go	4.1	5.5	0.0	6.3	4.3	1.3	10.2	4.7 (6)
Worried about deportation	4.1	1.8	0.0	3.1	3.3	0.0	8.2	3.1 (4)
Other*	5.4	3.6	0.0	3.1	5.4	3.8	6.1	4.7 (6)
Number	11	8	0	5	14	9	10	19

* Includes “employers will not allow” and “employers short of workers”.

Registration does not always increase migrant workers’ freedom to leave their jobs. However, unregistered workers face more constraints regarding their ability to leave their jobs, often fearing arbitrary arrest by the police.

“Although I’m not happy with this place and would like to find a new job in a factory, I can’t leave yet as I haven’t registered as they said I’m too young. The factory won’t employ unregistered workers. My father said if I register then I can work elsewhere. But right now I don’t have a card, I’m afraid of being arrested and sent home. I don’t want to bother anyone so I have to work here with my father.” (AH, 16 year-old male migrant, Burman, fruit orchard)

Some employers take advantage of unregistered workers and restrict their freedom of movement and their ability to leave the job.

“Registration allows migrant workers to move around freely. Once they are registered they won’t be afraid of being arrested. Unregistered workers don’t dare go out. Not having a card makes them work longer for me than registered workers.” (G, 24 year-old female employer, crop farm)

c) Retention of and control over identity documents

Of the workers who reported having at least one type of identification card, 43% did not hold the original card, this being held by their employer. Child workers (under 18) were less likely to keep the original of their card (40%), compared with those aged 18 or up (60%). Female workers were slightly more likely to keep their original documents than male workers (Table 17).

Table 17: Percentage distribution of migrants by retention of documents, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Retention	Sex		Age*		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Kept original card	60.9	51.4	60.0	55.7	55.7	100.0	56.8
Kept by other	39.1	48.6	40.0	44.3	44.3	0.0	43.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(46)	(35)	(20)	(61)	(79)	(2)	(81)

* No child workers (under 15) held any identity cards.

In terms of migrants’ attitudes towards their employer holding their documents, some were furious and desperately tried to get their documents back, while others accepted it unconditionally.

“My boss keeps my documents. I have a copy but not the original. I feel like I should keep my own cards. I would feel more secure having the original card. ...Yes, I want to ask my boss for my cards but I am put off doing so. My sister asked once, but the boss told her that it was not the right time.” (AG, 17 year-old female migrant, Karen, crop farm)

“Registration does not always benefit workers because bosses often hold migrants’ original documents. My boss keeps hold of my original documents. To tell you the truth, I don’t like the way my boss handles this at all because I feel like I have to ask permission if I want to go out.” (A, 20-year-old male migrant, Mon, prawn farm)

“I don’t want to keep my original cards because I may lose them. For me, having a copy is enough.” (AB, 23 year-old female migrant, Lao, livestock farm)

Some employers insist it is their responsibility to keep the originals of their workers’ documents. These employers feel it is sufficient for workers to have a photocopy of their documents. Employers’ main reasons for keeping workers’ documents range from safeguarding the worker from losing the document,

needing the document to re-register the worker the following year to preventing workers from running away.

“Workers holding their documents? The main problem with that is the workers can leave the job without informing their employers. We then have to waste time training a new worker. In the past, my workers would request a cash advance and then suddenly leave. Employers should keep the documents to prevent them from fleeing.” (E, 41 year-old male employer, livestock farm)

“It would hurt the employer if workers kept their original documents. Workers can already go out whenever they want because they already have cards. As a result they can also easily find a new job. Registration is a very tedious process and takes up lots of our time. It’s a waste of time registering workers if they don’t stay with the same employer for a whole year as the government intends. Moreover, if the workers leave before a year, employers are supposed to report again to the labour office, which takes more time.” (A, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

“All cards belong to the workers and they should keep hold of them. I let my workers keep the originals of their work permit and health cards but not the residence cards because the residence card is not useful for the worker.” (B, 41 year-old male employer, garlic farm)

“The employer has no right to hold the worker’s documents. It is printed on the cards that the employer cannot keep them. My workers hold their work permit and health cards. I keep their residence cards [tor ror 38/1] because I need the residence cards to register the workers with the labour office. If the workers get arrested without their original cards, they have to pay heavy fines. One of my workers who you just interviewed got arrested in Samut Prakarn. At first the police demanded a heavy fine of 5,000 baht. I tried to bargain with them and the fine was eventually reduced to 4,000 baht. I felt sorry for the girl, her parents have been working for me for years. I paid the police and didn’t gain anything. It’s easy money for the police, a source of extra income.” [\(I, 67 year-old male employer, crop farm\)](#)

Migrants who did not hold their original documents were asked whether or not they could access their documents when they wanted - 14% said they couldn’t and 6% said they did not know because they had never asked.

d) Freedom of movement

Almost all the migrants surveyed said their employer had arranged accommodation for them (98%). About the same proportion (97%) said they lived in accommodation provided on site. For the majority, housing was provided free of charge.

Many workers consider housing to be an essential condition of work and take it for granted that housing be provided. They feel it wouldn’t be easy for them to find their own accommodation. The language barrier and vast areas of farm land surrounding work sites are among the many reasons making it difficult for workers to locate their own suitable accommodation.

“We used to work in a pig farm in Ratchaburi. Our previous boss was a cousin of our new boss. Before joining, we asked our previous boss whether or not the new boss provided housing on site.” [\(AK, 18-year-old female migrant, Mon, pig farm\)](#)

“I came to Thailand with my parents through the Three Pagodas Pass. I can speak Thai and Burmese well because I went to primary school in Sangkhlaburi district. Before I ended up working here, I had worked in several places, such as in a factory, and as a shopkeeper and domestic. My parents were working here before they went back to Burma to bring me here. They found me this job. Housing is not provided on this farm, but our employer allowed us to build a shelter on their plot.” [\(AD, 22 year-old female migrant, Shan, crop farm\)](#)

A few employers who took part in the in-depth interviews insisted that migrant workers, by law, were not allowed to live outside the workplace.

“...workers who find their own accommodation and live outside of the workplace have broken the law. Labour law doesn’t allow workers to do this. In other words, it implies the employer must provide housing for workers but not necessarily in the workplace. Every employer here, as far as I know, provides on-site housing.” [\(I, 67 year-old male employer, crop farm\)](#)

Table 18 presents workers’ responses to the question, “Can you refuse to live in on-site housing?” It shows that among workers whose employers provide housing on site, about half feel they cannot refuse to accept it.

Table 18: Percentage distribution of migrants who could refuse to stay in housing provided by employers, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Can refuse to stay	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
No	50.0	47.3	60.0	40.6	50.0	45.7	49.4	46.3	51.0	48.8
Yes	47.3	49.1	20.0	59.4	46.7	52.2	47.0	52.5	42.9	48.1
Not applicable	2.7	3.6	20.0	0.0	3.3	2.2	3.6	1.3	6.1	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(72)	(53)	(4)	(32)	(89)	(45)	(80)	(79)	(46)	(125)

Workers who lived in on-site accommodation were asked whether or not they were able to leave the premises and go out whenever they wanted. Some 11% of workers said they were not allowed to go out whenever they wanted to (outside of work hours). Unregistered workers were eight times more likely to report this limit to their freedom of movement than registered workers (see Table 19, p26).

The primary reasons migrants gave for not being able to go out (see Table 20) was fear of harassment by the authorities since they did not hold their original ID cards (8%), their employers not allowing them to go out (4%) and their employers telling them they might “get in trouble” (2%).

Table 19: Percentage distribution of migrants who live on site, and are able to/not able to go out when they wish, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Can go out when wanted	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
Yes	90.5	80.0	80.0	81.3	88.0	87.0	85.5	96.3	69.4	86.0
No	6.8	16.4	0.0	18.8	8.7	10.9	10.8	2.5	24.5	10.9
Not applicable	2.7	3.6	20.0	0.0	3.3	2.2	3.6	1.3	6.1	3.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(72)	(53)	(4)	(32)	(89)	(45)	(80)	(79)	(46)	(125)

Table 20: Reasons why migrants who live on site cannot go out grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status (% agree)

Reason can't go out	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total (N)
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
Employer won't allow it	2.7	5.5	0.0	3.1	3.3	4.3	2.4	3.9 (4)
Scared of harassment by authorities due to not having an ID card	5.4	10.9	0.0	9.4	7.6	8.7	7.2	7.8 (10)
Employer says worker might get in trouble	0.0	5.5	0.0	6.3	1.1	4.3	1.2	2.3 (3)
Someone else says they should not go out	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.2	0.0	0.8 (1)
Number	72	53	4	32	89	45	80	125

Two thirds of employers agreed with the statement that migrant workers “should be locked up at night to prevent their escape” (Table 21, p28). Livestock farm employers voiced this concern particularly strongly.

Similarly, 66% of employers agreed that migrant workers did not have the right to leave the workplace without their permission outside of working hours. Again employers from livestock farms agreed more strongly with this than employers from crop farms.

Although nearly two thirds of employers were aware that workers had the right to go out without their permission, only half felt that the workers should have this right (Table 22, p28).

It is our understanding that among employers from livestock farms, particularly pig farms, there is the feeling that the animals are prone to infectious diseases and so employers feel workers should remain on site as a form of “curfew” aimed at containing any such disease problems on site.

Table 21: Employers categorised by attitudes towards migrants' freedom of movement, grouped by sub-sectors

Attitudes	Sub-sector		Total
	Crops	Livestock	
Should lock workers in at night to prevent escape			
Agree	64.1	71.4	66.3
Disagree	32.8	28.6	31.5
Don't know	3.1	0.0	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(64)	(28)	(92)
Have the right to leave premises without employer's permission outside working hours			
Agree	42.2	14.3	33.7
Disagree	57.8	85.7	66.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(64)	(28)	(92)

Table 22: Employers' attitudes and understanding of migrant rights and possible adjustments to the situation

Rights	Should have				Currently have under Thai law			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Overall	Yes	No	Don't know	Overall
Voluntary overtime	84.8	9.8	5.4	100.0	65.9	11.0	23.1	100.0
Can leave the premises without permission outside work hours	33.7	66.3	0.0	100.0	61.5	19.8	18.7	100.0

e) Violence in the workplace

Migrants' experiences of abuse in the workplace are presented in Table 23 (p29). No workers reported experiencing any physical abuse by their employers or other people outside the workplace. The most common form of abuse at work is verbal abuse by the employer or senior workers (16%) and a small amount of verbal abuse by people outside the workplace

(5.4%). Slightly more female workers (18%) than male workers (12%) reported having been verbally abused by their employers. Child workers (under 15) tended to experience more abuse at work than adults. Registered workers are three times more likely to experience verbal harassment outside their place of work. This might be explained by the fact that registered workers have more contact with people outside the workplace.

Table 23: Migrants' experiences of violence at work, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Violence at work	Sex		Age			Registration		Total (N)
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Verbal abuse (scolding) by employer or senior workers	18.9	12.7	20.0	12.5	17.4	16.3	16.3	16.3 (21)
Verbally harassed by people outside of work	1.4	10.9	20.0	6.3	4.3	7.5	2.0	5.4 (7)
Physical punishment by employers or senior workers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0 (0)
Physical punishment by people outside work	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0 (0)

f) False information about types of work and working conditions

In the survey questionnaire, workers were asked whether they were provided with information about the type of job and the working conditions they would face before taking up their jobs.

working conditions. Of those who had been told, 3% said the type of work they were involved with was different and 8% said working conditions were different to what they had been previously told (Table 24). Women workers and those workers based on crop farms were more likely to receive misinformation regarding such matters.

Over 13% had not been told about the type of job in advance and 11% had not been told about the

Table 24: Migrants' experience by information given about job, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Information about job	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
Job type match								
Same	83.8	83.6	80.0	81.3	84.8	89.1	80.7	83.7
Different	0.0	7.3	0.0	6.3	2.2	4.3	2.4	3.1
Not told about job	16.2	9.1	20.0	12.5	13.0	6.5	16.9	13.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(129)
Working conditions								
Same	83.8	78.2	60.0	87.5	80.4	82.6	80.7	81.4
Different	4.1	12.7	0.0	9.4	7.6	10.9	6.0	7.8
Not told about job	12.2	9.1	40.0	3.1	12.0	6.5	13.3	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(129)

g) Payment and mechanism of payment

Migrants employed in agriculture tend to be up to 20% cheaper than Thai workers, however, this does not incorporate the additional costs of providing accommodation, food and in some cases healthcare and schooling for migrants. Several studies have found that unregistered workers receive lower wages than registered workers. Geographical location also has an impact on wages, for example, monthly wages in border areas ranged from 1,500-3,000 baht whereas in central provinces wages stood at 3-4,000 baht.²¹

Based on the survey results, wages for migrant workers in the agricultural sector range from 2,000

to 7,000 baht a month. Over a third receive less than 3,000 baht per month. The majority of workers receive between 3,001-4,000 baht per month. The average monthly wage is 3,549 baht, which is below the official minimum wage in Nakhon Pathom province.²²

Male workers were more likely to be located in the lowest wage bracket, 49% of male workers were paid less than 3,001 baht per month (Table 25). Child workers were also more likely to receive lower wages. Workers on crop farms tended to be better paid than those working with livestock. Registered workers received slightly higher wages than unregistered workers. All workers received their wages in cash.

Table 25: Percentage distribution of migrants' monthly wage, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Wage (baht)	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	<15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
< 3001	29.7	49.1	80.0	28.1	39.1	58.7	26.5	35.1	42.9	38.0
3,001-4,000	51.4	38.2	20.0	56.2	43.5	28.3	55.4	49.1	40.8	45.7
4,001-5,000	14.9	10.9	0.0	12.5	14.1	6.5	16.9	12.6	14.3	13.2
5,001+	4.1	1.8	0.0	3.1	3.3	6.5	1.2	3.9	2.0	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)
Median	3,600	3,200	2,500	3,600	3,500	3,000	3,600	3,400	3,500	3,500
Mean	3,602	3,476	2,632	3,534	3,554	3,397	3,633	3,579	3,499	3,549
Minimum	2,000	2,000	2,080	2,080	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,080	2,000
Maximum	6,000	7,000	3,500	6,000	7,000	7,000	6,000	7,000	6,000	7,000

Wages are generally calculated on a daily basis, although most workers (67%) receive their salary once a month. About 5% of workers reported receiving their payments irregularly. Unregistered workers are

about ten times more likely than registered workers to receive payment on a daily basis (Table 26, p31), illustrating the more casual working relationship of unregistered workers.

²¹ Chantavanich et al, 2006.

²² In 2005, the minimum wage in Nakhon Pathom province was 177 baht per day. For the purpose of this study, this has been converted to 4,602 baht per month, based on 26 working days per month (assuming one day off per week without pay).

Apart from their regular wages, some workers in prawn, orchid and pig farms also received bonuses for catching prawns, sorting orchids and loading pigs.

“I’ve worked here for about three months. I earn 3,000 baht a month. I was told by my boss that he would pay a bonus for the prawn catch. The catch will be carried out every three months and 10 days. The prawns are weighed and then for each

kg caught the worker will get a bonus of a baht.”
(AL, 20 year-old male migrant, Mon, livestock farm)

“I earn 150 baht a day. Although I really want to work as many days as possible, there is not enough work on this farm. At the moment, I only work about 20 days a month. (AD, 22 year-old female migrant, Shan, crop farm)

Table 26: Percentage distribution of migrants by mechanism of payment, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Payment	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 year	18-25 years	Live- stock	Crops	Yes	No	
Daily	6.8	1.8	0.0	6.3	4.3	8.7	2.4	1.3	10.2	4.7
Weekly	5.4	1.8	0.0	6.3	3.3	0.0	6.0	2.5	6.1	3.9
Fortnightly	17.6	12.7	0.0	25.0	13.0	17.4	14.5	17.5	12.2	15.5
Monthly	63.5	72.7	100.0	59.4	68.5	69.6	66.3	68.8	65.3	67.4
Irregularly	4.1	5.5	0.0	2.7	5.4	2.2	6.0	5.5	4.1	4.7
Other	2.7	5.5	0.0	0.0	5.4	2.2	4.8	5.5	2.0	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

Employers report slightly higher monthly wages than reported by the migrant workers. The majority of employers say they pay their workers on either a daily or monthly basis. Among employers who pay their workers hourly, the minimum payment per hour was 15 baht and the maximum 20 baht. Daily wages ranged from 100-200 baht with a median wage of 130 baht. Employers pay half their workers under 130 baht per day. The reasons for the discrepancy in payment could be due to the fact that there is high

turnover in agriculture and most migrants received an initial payment, which is normally low. From what we have observed during the research, the longer a migrant remains, the higher the payment he or she receives. In terms of monthly payments, employers pay between 2,500 and 7,800 baht, with a median of about 3,500 baht. According to employers, half of the workers are paid under 3,500 baht per month (Table 27).

Table 27: Average payment and payment mechanism reported by employers

Payment mechanism	Minimum (baht)	Median (baht)	Maximum (baht)	Percent	N
Per hour	15	15	20	6.2	8
Per day	100	130	200	52.7	68
Per month	2,500	3,500	7,800	41.1	53
Total				100.0	129

h) Delayed payment and deductions for mistakes

An understanding regarding delayed payment and deductions from workers' wages was derived from the question, "have you experienced any of the following: deduction of payment for mistakes made, delayed payment, or irregular payment?"

Table 28 illustrates the responses regarding payment violations faced by workers. About 15% of workers experienced delays in payment. No clear pattern of delayed payment was observed in terms of sex, age and registration. A smaller number (5%) had been punished by financial deductions for making mistakes.

Table 28: Percentage of migrants experiencing payment violations, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Payment violation	Sex		Age			Registration		Total (N)
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Delays in wage payment	14.9	14.5	20.0	6.3	17.4	16.3	12.2	14.7 (19)
Money deducted for mistakes	4.1	7.3	0.0	3.1	6.5	6.3	4.1	5.4 (7)

i) Deductions and benefits

Since most payments are well below the minimum wage, migrants were also asked if they faced any

salary deductions. About 5% of workers pay for their accommodation through deductions from their wages. Charges for housing vary, ranging from 130 to 800 baht (Table 29).

Table 29: Percentage of migrants whose employers deducted money for benefits provided

Type of benefit	Receives benefit (%)	Money deducted (%)	Amount deducted (Median)	Minimum (baht)	Maximum (baht)
Housing	98.4	4.7	375	130	800
Health services	69.2	3.6	100	30	150
Registration cost	66.1	77.5	3,800	500	6,000
Food	25.6	0.0	NA	NA	NA
Recreation facilities	24.0	3.2	300	300	300
Remittances	20.2	4.2	500	500	500
Uniform or clothing	15.5	0.0	NA	NA	NA
Other	3.1	25.0	300	300	300

'NA' means 'not applicable'.

Nearly all employers reported having provided housing, water and electricity, the cost of registration, and healthcare for their workers (Table 30, p34). Slightly more than a fifth provide some food to their workers. Employers in livestock are more likely to provide benefits (with regard to nearly all items) to their workers than those farming crops.

With virtually all these benefits provided to migrant workers, very few employers said they deducted money from their workers, except for the cost of registration of workers where the majority of employers deducted the cost.

“We should provide foreign workers with free housing because they are cheap labour already. If they had to rent a house on their own, they

wouldn't have any money left. However, if they want to find their own house, that's up to them, even though I've never known any workers who want to find their own accommodation. Workers always ask for housing.” (A, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

“We should provide free housing, including water and electricity so workers will feel comfortable and work productively. It's also convenient for the workers to stay in the housing provided. The workers can closely observe the way we work here. Sometimes, if we have to leave our farm for a couple of days, it's good to have the workers around to watch over it.” (E, 38 year-old male employer, livestock farm)

Table 30: Percentage of employers providing benefits by type of benefits provided, grouped by sub-sector

Type of benefits	Sub-sector		Total
	Crops	Livestock	
Housing	96.9	100.0	97.8
Water and electricity	85.9	100.0	90.2
Registration	85.9	89.3	87.0
Healthcare	73.4	96.4	80.4
Food	15.6	53.6	27.2
Recreation	17.2	35.7	22.8
Advance wages	15.6	17.9	16.3
Remit money	10.9	7.1	9.8
Travel and recruitment costs	3.1	0.0	2.2
Loans	0.0	3.6	1.1
Other	1.6	10.7	4.3
Number	64	28	92

j) Working hours and rest periods

Table 31 the average number of daily work hours reported by workers. A large number of migrant workers (41%) work between n-12 hours a day, seven days a week. Only a few (2%) work more than 12 hours a day. Male migrants (45%) were more likely to work for longer hours than their female counterparts

(38%). Workers on crop farms (48%) also worked longer hours than those working in livestock (28%). A total of 44% of workers aged 18 years and older normally worked for 9-12 hours per day, where as the corresponding figures for younger age groups stood at 34% and 20% for 15-17 years and <15 years, respectively. This demonstrates that in general children tend to work fewer hours than adults.

Table 31: Percentage distribution of migrants by number of work hours, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Working hours	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
< 9	60.9	52.8	80.0	65.6	53.2	69.5	50.6	57.5	57.1	57.4
9-12	37.8	45.4	20.0	34.4	44.6	28.3	48.2	40.0	42.9	41.0
13-14	1.3	1.8	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2	1.2	2.5	0.0	1.6
15+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

Workers were asked whether they had regular monthly days off work. Almost two thirds said they didn't have a regular day off (Table 32). Of those who reported having days off, most only had one (12.4%) or two days (13.2%) off per month. Women and older workers were less likely to have any regular days off. Workers in the livestock sector were about 30% less likely to have a regular day off work than those working on crop farms.

The survey of employers revealed that 60% felt workers should have regular days off and a much higher proportion (70%) knew that rights regarding

regular days off existed under Thai labour law (Table 35, p37). The explanation for the discrepancy may partly be due to the way the data were collected since in this study face-to-face interviews with employers were conducted. This would make them feel uneasy about responding negatively. However, if the responses recorded were genuine, this could be demonstrating the extent to which employers were violating labour law at the study site. Labour inspection is rarely performed by provincial labour officials as expressed in an interview with the deputy chief of the provincial labour office. In other words, enforcement of labour law is very weak.

Table 32: Percentage distribution of migrants by regular days off per month, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration

Number of days	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
None	70.3	63.6	0.0	62.5	72.8	87.0	56.6	70.0	63.3	67.4
1 day	13.5	10.9	40.0	15.6	9.8	8.7	14.5	11.3	14.3	12.4
2 days	13.5	12.7	40.0	18.8	9.8	0.0	20.5	11.3	16.4	13.2
3 days	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.2	1.3	0.0	0.8
4 days	2.7	10.9	20.0	3.1	6.5	4.3	7.2	6.3	6.1	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

In responding to the question, “how many days off per month can you have with pay?”, over three quarters of the workers interviewed did not have access to paid leave at all. For those with access to paid leave, the

majority had one to two days a month. Over 90% of workers in the livestock sector reported having had no paid leave. For workers on crop farms, 80% had no paid leave (Table 33).

Table 33: Percentage distribution of migrants by monthly days paid leave, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Number of days	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
None	86.5	81.8	40.0	87.5	85.9	91.3	80.7	86.3	81.7	84.5
1 day	4.1	7.3	20.0	6.3	4.3	6.5	4.8	6.3	4.1	5.4
2 days	8.1	9.1	20.0	6.3	8.7	0.0	13.3	6.3	12.2	8.5
4 days	1.4	1.8	20.0	0.0	1.1	2.2	1.2	1.3	2.0	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

From in-depth interviews with 13 workers, all but one had days off work but did not receive any payment. Workers on fruit, vegetable and flower farms can't work on rainy days, so they don't get paid when it rains.

"I have worked here for three months. I never have a day off. I don't know why. Nobody tells me to take a day off work, I guess." (AA, 18 year-old male migrant, Shan, crop farm)

Well over half of employers also admit that migrant workers should be entitled to regular days off.

However, only one in seven agreed that workers should have voluntary overtime (see Table 34).

k) Written contract

Overall, a large majority of migrant workers (90%) did not have a written contract with their employer (Table 34). Female migrants (2.7%) were less likely to have a written contract than male migrants (14%). None of the child workers under 15 years of age reported having any written contract but at least 16% of those aged 15-17 did. As expected, no unregistered worker had a written contract.

Table 34: Percentage distribution of migrants by written contracts, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Have written contact	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Yes	2.7	14.5	0.0	15.6	5.4	12.5	0.0	7.9
No	95.9	83.6	80.0	81.3	94.6	87.5	95.9	90.7
Don't know	1.4	1.8	20.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	4.1	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)

When compared with the results from employers, however, employers claim that they strongly support the idea that workers should have a written contract with their employer. As shown in Table 35, 76% of

employers felt workers should have a written contract with their employer. The discrepancies could be partly due to weak enforcement of the regulation by labour officials.

Table 35: Percentage distribution of employers by attitudes and knowledge of migrant rights

Rights	Should have				Have under Thai law			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Overall	Yes	No	Don't know	Overall
Written contract with employer	76.1	22.8	1.1	100.0	66.3	14.1	19.6	100.0
Regular days off	59.8	33.7	6.5	100.0	69.6	14.1	16.3	100.0

3.5 Recruitment

According to a previous ILO/IOM study,²³ migrant workers use a variety of means to find work in Thailand, including the use of recruiters, migrant networks and directly approaching employers. Migrants who have no previous travel or work experience tend to rely on brokers, sometimes with negative consequences. Smaller farms are more likely to hire unregistered workers and employers recruit workers themselves from well-known collection points along the border in Mae Sot, according to the same study. Migrants seem to pay a similar amount to both recruiters and friends and relatives who help them to travel to a destination and find work, usually anything between 4,000 and 6,000 baht.

a) Methods used and payment: Employer perspectives

Table 36 shows the most common method used by employers to recruit migrant workers is through introductions by existing workers (75%). The second most common method is migrants turning up at the farms themselves in search of work (67%). Relatives of workers and friends of employers were equally important as a means of recruiting workers. Very few employers said they used job placement agencies or recruiters. On livestock farms, employers to a larger degree relied on their friends and the use of job placement agencies.

²³ Chalamwong et al, 2002.

Table 36: Percentage distribution of employers by recruitment method used, grouped by sub-sector (pg.38)

Recruiting method	Sub-sector		Total	N
	Crops	Livestock		
Current workers of mine brought them	73.4	78.6	75.0	69
Worker came own their own	73.4	53.6	67.4	62
Workers' parents or relative brought them	29.7	32.1	30.4	28
Friend of mine brought them	23.4	42.9	29.3	27
Formal agent or recruitment agency	3.1	21.4	8.7	8
Individual recruiter (informal)	9.4	0.0	6.5	6
Other	10.9	10.7	10.9	10
N	64	28	92	

One female employer, who relied on a recruiter to bring in workers, employs three workers for her 10 rai of fruit orchards. She said after two Chinese workers left, she immediately contacted a recruiter by phone. A few weeks later the recruiter brought two male Lao workers. She said among the many disadvantages of using a recruiter is that the employer is expected to take on anyone the recruiter brings along. However, she pointed out that she specifically asked for men under 20.

Employers interviewed said they often asked their current workers if they were short of workers or needed additional workers. They might also use a recruiter, they said.

“Normally, we get workers through our current workers. If we want more workers, we’ll ask them. They will call their friends in or around the areas in question. If someone is available, we’ll pay for their transportation.” (E, 41 year-old male employer, livestock farm)

“If my workers leave, I always contact a recruiter to bring in a new worker. I guess the recruiter is a migrant, too, I’m not sure. I got the recruiter’s contact number from my cousin who also owns a fruit orchard. They also employ many migrant workers. The workers also keep the telephone

number of the recruiter. They always keep in touch. I’m not sure whether the recruiter is a Thai or foreigner. He could be foreigner. The recruiter arranges for a taxi to transport the workers. I pay the recruiter 4,000 baht for each worker he brings in. The money is deducted from the worker’s wages.” (C, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

The information garnered from in-depth interviews reveals that many employers complain about the high turnover of workers. According to employers, by networking with other migrant workers migrants find out where better-paying jobs come up and they will then go to the other farm or make contact with friends who work there.

“...We mainly grow orchids for export. I’ve been operating in this business for 13 years. I’m currently employing 16 Karen workers. The turnover of workers here is quite high. I think part of the reason is due to the fact that it is hard work. Newcomers who can’t speak Thai when they arrive here, once they have learned some of the language and gained some work experience, begin looking for a new job. They are money conscious. They will go to higher-paying places.” (A, 30 year-old female employer, crop farm)

Table 37 illustrates the various recruitment methods used by employers. Informal recruiters and job placement agencies were used by about a quarter

of employers, while the network of current workers and workers simply “showing up” were extremely popular methods.

Table 37: Percentage distribution of employers by recruitment method used by other employers in the same business and sub-sector

Recruiting method	Sub-sector		Total	N
	Crops	Livestock		
Current workers brought them along	78.1	85.7	80.4	74
Workers came by themselves	73.4	71.4	72.8	67
Workers’ parents or relatives brought them	34.4	35.7	34.8	32
Friend of mine brought them	25.0	39.3	29.3	27
Individual recruiter (informal) supplied them	18.8	3.6	14.1	13
Formal agent or recruitment agency	4.7	25.0	10.9	10
Other	4.7	3.6	4.3	4
Number	64	28	92	

Among 92 employers surveyed, nine paid to recruit migrant workers. Five employers paid 100-300 baht per worker. One employer said the amount paid was up to 10,000 baht.

they often then arrange with their employers to recruit other members of their families. Most workers who found their current employment by themselves seem to have spent a bit of time getting to know the area in which they would be working relatively well.

b) Methods used and payment: Migrant perspectives

The majority of migrant workers (53%) relied on relatives or friends to find them their current jobs, while only one in ten used a recruiter (Table 38, p40). Parents were the second-largest category with regard to finding jobs for migrant workers (20%), followed by migrants themselves (14%). More children (at least 43%) relied on their parents to find them jobs, while well over half of adult migrant workers found their current positions through friends or relative.

“I’d worked in a couple of places before coming here. My previous job was at a grocery store only 2 km from here where I worked for two years. It was alright but I got bored selling and loading stuff, so I decided to wander around and ask people in the area about other opportunities. Yes, fortunately my Thai is very good. I just happened to meet one person who told me about a vacancy in this farm. The next day I came to see the owner and here I am.” (AL, 16 year-old male migrant, Karen, crop farm)

In the case where migrant workers were already employed and were satisfied with their workplaces,

Table 38: Percentage distribution of migrants by method used to find their current jobs, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 Years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live- stock	Crops	Yes	No	
Individual recruiter	5.4	16.4	0.0	6.3	10.9	10.9	9.6	8.8	12.2	10.1
Relative/Friend	52.7	54.5	0.0	43.8	59.8	65.2	47.0	51.3	57.1	53.5
Parents arranged	21.6	18.2	80.0	37.5	10.9	8.7	26.5	20.0	20.4	20.2
Self	16.2	10.9	20.0	6.3	16.3	15.2	13.3	17.5	8.2	14.0
Other	4.1	0.0	0.0	2.7	2.2	0.0	3.6	2.5	2.0	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

c) Cost of recruitment

When trying to establish whether or not workers paid the person who found them work, only 28 workers said they had paid someone for finding them employment. Among those who used recruiters, virtually all paid the recruiter, compared to just one in six workers whose relatives or friends arranged

work for them. The amount of money paid to the person who found work for the migrant workers ranged from 500 to 40,000 baht with a median average payment of 3,750 baht and a mean average payment of 7,612.50 baht. About 32% of migrants who paid the person responsible for helping them secure employment paid 10,000 baht or more (Table 39).

Table 39: Percentage of migrants who paid for assistance in securing employment by amount paid (in baht) and recruitment method

Recruiting method	Amount paid (baht) *				Total	N
	<1,000	1,000 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	10,000+		
Recruiter	16.7	27.8	16.7	38.9	100.0	18
Friends	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	100.0	5
Relatives	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	1
Other	50.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	100.0	2
Total	21.4	32.1	14.3	32.1	100.0	28

* Descriptive statistics for the amount paid: mean=7,612.50 baht, median=3,750 baht, minimum=500 baht, and maximum=40,000 baht.

3.6 Migration and job history

In response to the question, “is this the first time you have come to Thailand?”, almost all migrant workers said it was their first time in the country (94%).

There is little variation regardless of the migrants’ gender, age and registration status. Well over a third came to Thailand when they were under 15 years of age. Male migrants tended to migrate at a slightly older age than their female counterparts (Table 40).

Table 40: Percentage distribution of migrants by migration history, grouped by sex, age and registration status

	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
First time in Thailand								
Yes	90.5	98.2	100.0	96.9	92.4	91.3	98.0	93.8
No	9.5	1.8	0.0	3.1	7.6	8.8	2.0	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)
Age at first came								
< 15 years	25.5	31.1	100.0	59.4	14.1	26.3	32.7	28.7
15-17 years	43.6	20.3	0.0	40.6	28.3	35.0	22.4	30.2
18 - 25 years	30.9	48.6	0.0	0.0	57.6	38.8	44.9	41.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)

With regard to the methods used by migrant workers when they travelled to Thailand, most made their recent journeys accompanied by transporters (45%), relatives or friends (25%) or parents (23%). Male migrants were more likely to use transporters than female migrants. Female migrant workers are more likely to be accompanied by their parents than male migrants. As might be expected, the majority of younger workers were more likely to be accompanied by their parents, while older workers tend to travel with transporters (see Table 41, p42). Different

patterns can be observed when comparing migrant labourers working on livestock farms and crop farms. The use of transporters was very common among migrant labourers working on livestock farms, more than two thirds having being hired through this method. In contrast, far fewer migrant labourers (34%) on crop farms used transporters. A slightly lower number (32.5%) were accompanied by their parents (32.5%), while 24% were accompanied by friends.

Table 41: Percentage distribution of migrants in terms of the method used to travel to Thailand, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Methods	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	<15 years	11-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
Transporter	41.9	49.1	0.0	37.5	50.0	65.2	33.7	48.8	38.8	45.0
Relative/friend	23.0	27.3	20.0	15.6	28.3	26.1	24.1	22.5	28.6	24.8
Parents	27.0	18.2	60.0	46.9	13.0	6.5	32.5	22.5	24.5	23.3
Self	2.7	3.6	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	4.8	2.5	4.1	3.1
Other	5.4	1.8	20.0	0.0	4.3	2.2	4.8	3.8	4.1	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(46)	(83)	(80)	(49)	(129)

The results, drawn from in-depth interviews, suggest migrant workers face a number of hurdles when coming to look for work in Thailand. Some faced difficulties on a personal level, particularly in relation to the long and dangerous journey they embark on.

“My older brother, who already worked in Bangkok, arranged for me to come with a recruiter from the Thai-Myanmar border near Chiang Mai. I crossed the border with my friends to meet the transporter. We walked through the jungle and were arrested by Thai police. We were put in jail for two days and sent to Chiang Mai. I spent seven days in jail in Chiang Mai. I was released because the transporter paid the police. The same transporter took me to the bus station to catch a bus to Bangkok.” (AL, 16 year-old male migrant, Karen, crop farm)

“From Three Pagodas Pass, I walked through the jungle. I was starving and had no food for two days. I also fell sick with malaria. I was sent to a hospital in Nakhon Pathom and spent seven days there. It was a long journey, involving walking, taking a pick-up truck and a boat. I can’t remember how I did it exactly.” (AL, 20 year-old male migrant, Mon, livestock farm)

Some workers feel that no matter how much they pay a transporter to bring them to Thailand, it is a price worth paying, despite the fact that they know that if they were to be arrested en route, they would be deported.

“I paid 6,000 baht for transportation to Thailand from the border in Ubon Ratchathani to Nakhon Ratchasima. I travelled in a van with other Lao migrants. Bringing migrants in is very risky since they could be caught by the police. I was happy to pay the 6,000 baht. If we were arrested, the transporter’s fate would be sealed. We would be deported and that’s it. The transporter would also be finished.” (G, 23-year-old female migrant, Lao, pig farm)

“...I came to Thailand twice... I paid the transporter 7,500 baht for the first trip and 9,200 baht for the second trip. I still owe the transporter 15,000 baht. On arrival the first time, I worked for seven months in a fertiliser factory in Nakhon Pathom. I got arrested by the police and was sent back to the border. (AL, 20 year-old male migrant, Mon, livestock farm)

3.7 Employer's attitudes/preferences towards migrants

a) Attitudes towards employment and migrant workers

Previous studies have suggested that some employers' attitudes towards migrant workers reflect racial stereotypes in Thailand in the sense that they are perceived to be a threat to national security and the registration of migrants may increase crime and disease and lead to an additional burden on the state.²⁴

Employers were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to attitudes towards employment (Table 42). The results reveal a range of responses and do not illustrate particularly clear trends as there seems to be more or less a split down the middle when examining the responses.

Slightly fewer than half of employers interviewed agreed that migrant workers worked harder than their Thai counterparts. However, twice as many employers on crop farms than livestock farms agreed with the statement. Over half of employers believed that migrant workers should have the same rights as Thai workers. About 40% agreed that migrant workers were a threat to national security.

Well over two thirds of employers agreed that migrant workers should be locked up after work to prevent them escaping. The same proportion agreed that migrant workers are good for the country because they are cheaper to employ. The majority also agreed that migrant workers are easier to control than Thai workers. As might be expected, the majority of employers believed the government should allow more migrants to enter the country and work legally. There was little variation across the two sub-sectors.

Table 42: Employers attitudes towards migrant workers, grouped by sub-sector

Attitudes	% agree *			N
	Crop	Livestock	Total	
Migrants work harder than Thai workers	55.6	28.6	47.3	43
Migrants are a threat to national security	39.7	39.3	39.5	34
Migrants are good for Thailand because they are cheaper	76.2	42.3	66.3	59
The government should allow more migrants to work here legally	71.4	60.7	68.1	62
Migrants are easier to control than Thai workers	62.9	70.4	65.2	58
N	64	28	92	

* Excluding responses of 'don't know' and 'no answer'.

In general, employing migrant workers seems to be discussed openly with other employers as can be seen in Table 43. Nearly two thirds of employers ask other employers for advice when they face problems with migrant workers and about the same

proportion discuss the benefits provided to workers. In contrast, on the issue of pay rises, it should be noted that employers are unlikely to follow suit if other employers give their workers a pay rise.

²⁴ Chalamwong et al, 2002.

Table 43: Percentage distribution of employers’ attitudes (% agree) towards employment and employment practices, grouped by sub-sector

Attitudes and practices	% agree			N
	Crops	Livestock	Total	
If I have problems in the workplace, I ask other employers for advice	88.7	73.1	84.1	74
All employers around here treat their workers in the same way	78.3	58.3	72.6	61
If one employer gives a pay rise, other employers usually follow	45.3	25.9	39.6	36
Employers discuss the benefits provided to migrant workers	65.6	74.1	68.2	60
N	64	28	92	

b) Preferences by ethnicity

Employers hire migrant workers from several ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the majority of workers are nationals of Myanmar. From the employers’ survey, the most common ethnic background among employers hiring migrant workers is Karen (27%) followed by Mon (25%). Hill tribes and others account for 25%, 13% are Burman while 11% are Lao. Livestock employers were more likely to hire Karen, Mon and Lao workers (Table 44, p45).

In terms of reasons for employing a worker with a particular ethnic background, the majority of employers insist they have little choice and employ whichever form of migrant is available in the area in which they conduct their business. Many employers claim they are keen to employ Thai workers but most Thais no longer want to work on farms.

“Thais don’t like to work on farms any more because it’s hard work. I grow lots of mangoes, which need to be regularly watered and sprayed. Thais won’t dare do these jobs anymore. Foreign labourers are more obedient, do what we tell them to and are hard working.” (C, 30-year-old female employer, crop farm)

“My farm and other farms in this area used to employ workers from the northeast. In the past, whenever we needed workers, we often contacted a

broker in Khon Kaen province. Two or three weeks later, the broker brought in a vanload of people. There was one van travelling regularly between here and Khon Kaen. But it disappeared because many factories were built there. I personally prefer to employ Thai workers but it’s hard to find them nowadays. We have to get our farm going and there is lots of work to be done. We need labour and the only option is foreign workers.” (E, 41-year-old male employer, livestock farm)

In general, the reasons employers hire migrants are their availability (66%), the fact that they work hard (36%) and are more obedient (19%). Some 15% of employers also said migrant workers are cheaper. Communication is one criteria employers use to recruit workers (see Table 45, p46).

Apart from the availability of migrants in specific areas, the most common reasons for hiring workers of a particular ethnic background are:

- Karen are liked because they’re hard working (56%), obedient (36%), and cheaper (16%).
- Mon are liked because they’re hard working (26%), responsible (22%), and cheaper (13%).
- Burman migrants are liked because they’re hard working (33%) and cheaper (17%).
- Lao workers are liked because it’s easy to communicate (50%) and they are seen as more obedient (30%).

- Cambodians are liked because they're obedient (40%), responsible (20%) and hard working (20%).
- Hill tribe people are liked because they're cheap (26%), honest (17%) and hard working (17%).

"I employed four Burmese workers and eight Thais. The reason I employ Burmese is low cost. The daily wage for the Burmese is 120 baht but for Thais it's 170 baht. I don't see the Burmese working harder than the Thais, they are the same. However, I notice the Burmese start and stop working on time." (Employer I: male, 67 years old, agriculture, crop farm)

"I prefer Burmese workers to Isan [Thais from the northeast] workers. The Burmese seldom go home,

usually only once every two to three years, unlike Isan people, who visit at least twice a year during July to August for rice planting and December for harvesting. They spend a month or so during each visit. Since we grow guava throughout the year, we can't wait for them all the time. If the work gets a bit hard, we pay the Burmese a little bit more and they're happy, but this isn't the case for Isan people." (G, 24-year-old female employer, crop farm)

Some employers said they explicitly did not want to hire Burmese workers as they said they feared being assaulted by them. They also raised concerns that there had been cases of employers being murdered by Burmese workers.

Table 44: The ethnicity of migrants (%) employed by Thai employers, grouped by sub-sector

Ethnicity *	Percent			N
	Crops	Livestock	Total	
Burman	10.9	17.9	13.0	12
Shan	4.7	0.0	3.3	3
Mon	21.9	32.1	25.0	23
Karen	20.3	42.9	27.2	25
Other Burmese	4.7	3.6	4.3	4
Laotian	4.7	25.0	10.9	10
Cambodian	7.8	0.0	5.4	5
Hill tribe and other	35.9	0.0	25.0	23
Number	64	28	92	92

* Respondents could choose more than a single response.

Table 45: Percentage distribution of employers by reasons for employing migrant workers of particular ethnicity

Reasons for employing*	Burman	Shan	Mon	Karen	Other Burmese	Laotian	Cam-bodian	Hill tribe	Total
No choice	50.0	0.0	60.9	60.0	75.0	30.0	60.0	65.2	65.7
Hard working	33.3	100.0	26.1	56.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	17.4	36.2
More obedient	0.0	0.0	8.7	36.0	0.0	30.0	40.0	13.0	19.0
Lower cost	16.7	33.3	13.0	16.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.1	15.2
More responsible	0.0	0.0	21.7	8.0	25.0	0.0	20.0	8.7	10.5
Able to communicate	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	25.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
Current workers brought	0.0	33.3	8.7	4.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	8.7	7.6
Geographical area worker	8.3	0.0	8.7	0.0	25.0	0.0	20.0	8.7	6.7
Honest	0.0	0.0	8.7	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.4	6.7
Seldom take leave	8.3	0.0	8.7	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.7
More experienced	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	1.9
Came with parents	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	1.9
N	12	3	23	25	4	10	5	23	92

* Respondents could choose more than a single response.

c) Preference by age

Only eight of 92 employers questioned expressed a preference for employing workers under the age of 18. The main reason given was that child workers are more obedient. The reasons given by employers who do not prefer to hire under 18s includes the fact that it is against the law (2%); the workers are too young (46%); are not responsible (21%); are hard to control (11%); or are too lazy (13%).

In the results of the in-depth interviews, two of 13 employers questioned prefer to employ children.

“I prefer to employ children aged about 15-17 or at least under 20 because they’re easy to control and can learn very fast. Older people tend to know

a lot but it’s hard to change the way they want to do things.” (D, 46-year-old female employer, crop farm)

“I prefer to employ boys aged 15-16 or young men under 20. I don’t want to employ a couple or those who come with a family because they may be distracted by their family and spend less time working. I also don’t want to employ women because they will flirt with the men.” (A, 30-year-old employer, crop farm)

The majority of employers (83) preferred to hire workers aged 18-25. The main reasons were that workers in this age group are hard working, more obedient, more experienced and more skilled (Table 46, p47).

Table 46: Percentage distribution of employers by reasons for preferring to employ migrants aged 18-25 years

Reasons	Sub-sector		Total	N
	Crops	Livestock		
Hard working	62.7	62.5	62.7	52
Cheaper	6.8	0.0	4.8	4
More obedient	33.9	20.8	30.1	25
More skilled	5.1	25.0	10.8	9
More experienced	13.6	8.3	12.0	10
Other	49.2	37.5	45.8	38
Number	59	24	83	

d) Attitudes towards migrant rights

Slightly more than half of the employers surveyed agreed that migrant workers should have the same

rights as Thai citizens. This view was far stronger among employers on livestock farms than crop farms. A third felt migrant workers should have the right to join a trade union (Table 47).

Table 47: Percentage distribution of employers' attitudes towards equal rights and trade unions

Attitudes	% agree *		Total	N
	Crops	Livestock		
Migrants should have the same rights as Thais	48.4	67.9	54.4	49
Migrants should have the right to join trade unions	36.7	40.7	37.9	33
N	64	28	129	

* Excluding responses of 'don't know' and 'no answer'.

3.8 Support mechanisms

a) Who migrants live with

The living arrangements listed for migrant workers suggest the largest group of workers (36%) stayed with relatives. About the same proportion stayed with a spouse, employers or parents. Very few lived alone or with friends. More women tend to stay with a spouse or their parents than men. As might be expected, younger workers were more likely to stay

with their relatives or parents than older workers. There is little variation in terms of the agricultural sub-sectors, one exception being that workers on crop farms who tend to be younger, are about five times more likely to stay with their parents than those working on livestock farms (Table 48, p48). The main reasons child workers stay with their parents or relatives are security and support. Moreover, child workers living with family and friends on site may perhaps be safeguarded from exploitation in the workplace.

“I stay with my sister. Actually, I want to work in a restaurant or food court in Bangkok, but my mother insists I work and stay with my sister out here. Having worked here, I don’t want to leave now. I’ve never faced any problems. I feel at home here and we have free housing, electricity and water. My employer is very kind. I am a very young woman and it’s very dangerous to move around by myself.” (AM, 17 year-old female migrant, Burman, livestock farm)

“I stay with my father. I can’t speak Thai. I do whatever my father tells me to do. I don’t like farm work, it is very hot. I’d prefer to be a mechanic. Life here is okay, not great and it’s not our home. We stay in a small hut, which we built ourselves. My father and I can save up to 5,000 baht a month. It would be great if I could register as a migrant worker, but I was told that I’m too young to register. I’ll just have to wait.” (AH, 16 year-old male migrant, Burman, crop farm)

Table 48: Percentage distribution of migrants categorised by living arrangements, grouped by sex, age, sub-sector and registration status

Person lives with*	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	Yes	No	
Alone	0.0	9.1	0.0	3.1	4.3	8.7	1.2	5.0	2.0	3.9
Relatives	32.4	40.0	60.0	50.0	29.3	37.0	34.9	32.5	40.8	35.7
Spouse	45.9	1.8	0.0	3.1	37.0	30.4	25.3	32.5	18.4	27.1
Employer	23.0	32.7	40.0	12.5	31.5	26.1	27.7	22.5	34.7	27.1
Parents	27.0	18.2	80.0	40.6	14.1	6.5	32.5	20.0	28.6	23.3
Workmates	5.4	14.5	40.0	12.5	6.5	6.5	10.8	7.5	12.2	9.3
Friends	0.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	5.4	4.3	3.6	2.5	6.1	3.9
Others	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.8
N	74	55	5	32	92	46	83	80	49	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

b) Problems at work

Table 49 illustrates workers’ responses to the question, “if you have problems at work, who do you talk to? [tick all that apply]” In general, the most important source of support is relatives (45%) followed by employers (27%), workmates (21%) and

friends (12%). Government officials and NGO staff were not at all popular as a source of support among migrant workers. Male migrants were about three times more likely to receive support from friends than women. There were little variations in terms of age or sub-sector.

Table 49: Percentage distribution of migrants by type of support when encountering problems at work, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Type of support *	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	<15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
No one	1.4	3.6	0.0	0.0	3.3	2.2	2.4	2.3
Relatives	71.6	49.1	80.0	71.9	57.6	54.3	66.3	62.0
Employer	27.0	27.3	20.0	25.0	28.3	26.1	27.7	27.1
Workmates	14.9	29.1	20.0	18.8	21.7	19.6	21.7	20.9
Friends	6.8	18.2	0.0	18.8	9.8	10.9	12.0	11.6
Recruiter	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.3	0.0	1.6
Labour officer	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
NGO staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
N	74	55	5	32	92	46	83	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

c) Health

Relatives are the main source of care when workers fall sick for as many as 68% of farm workers (Table 50, p50). Employers are the second largest source of healthcare support for workers (28%) followed by friends (16%) and workmates (11%). None of the workers interviewed relied on care provided by health professionals or from NGO staff.

The most common forms of health support were taking migrants to hospital if severely sick and providing medicine for minor ailments. Among migrant workers who receive support from employers, most workers would pay for all costs incurred by themselves for any treatment outright. Sometimes they would also pay their employer for the cost of transportation. However, only a few workers had money deducted from wages, and this stood at between 30 and 150 baht.

“If I’m not feeling well, I’ll walk down to a nearby clinic. I’ve been to the clinic a couple of

times. It’s very convenient. Yes, I pay for my own treatment.” (AM, 17 year-old female migrant, Burman, livestock farm)

“Work here does not involve hard labour but I have to sit for long periods turning over soil, cutting and sorting garlic bulbs. I’ve been doing the same thing for about five years now. I have a sore hip. If I’m not feeling well, my boss gives me some medicine, but just for minor illnesses. If it’s serious, my boss will take me to the hospital. He doesn’t pay for the treatment cost, however, I have to do that myself.” (AC, 18 year-old female migrant, Mon, crop farm)

Sources of healthcare vary between male and female migrants. Female migrant workers often depend on relatives and their employers, while male migrants tend to also depend on these groups, but also their friends and workmates. Among younger workers, relatives stand out as the most important source of healthcare support.

Table 50: Migrants by type of healthcare support received if unwell (%), grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Health care *	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	<15 years	15-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
No one	2.7	5.5	20.0	0.0	4.3	4.3	3.6	3.9
Relatives	78.4	54.5	100.0	68.8	66.3	58.7	73.5	68.2
Employer	25.7	30.9	20.0	25.0	29.3	30.4	26.5	27.9
Friend	9.5	25.5	0	18.8	16.3	23.9	12.0	16.3
Workmates	2.7	21.8	20.0	12.5	9.8	13.0	9.6	10.9
Recruiter	2.7	0.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	2.2	1.2	1.6
Labour officer	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.2	0.0	0.8
Hospital staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community health workers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
NGO staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
N	74	55	5	32	92	46	83	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

d) Community contacts (outside of work)

In response to the question, “have you ever been in contact with people from any of the following groups since you have been working here?”, medical personnel and labour officials topped the list (Table 51). This is not so surprising since these officials have

to deal with workers during the registration process. Over a third of migrants had been in contact with monks. This indicates relatively strong religious support among migrant workers. Nearly a third had been involved in contact with police. Very few had seen any NGO staff.

Table 51: Migrants (%) by community contact, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Community contact *	Sex		Age			Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	11-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
Medical personnel	73.0	60.0	40.0	68.8	68.5	73.9	63.9	67.4
Labour official	60.8	58.2	0.0	53.1	65.2	69.6	54.2	59.7
Priest	39.2	29.1	80.0	43.8	29.3	23.9	41.0	34.9
Police officer	27.0	38.2	40.0	25.0	33.7	47.8	22.9	31.8
Teacher	5.4	3.6	40.0	12.5	0.0	2.2	6.0	4.7
NGO staff	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	2.2	2.4	2.3
Lawyer	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
N	74	55	5	32	92	46	83	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

e) Communications with families at home

In the process of communicating with family members in their home countries, about half the migrant workers interviewed arranged the communication by themselves (Table 52). The second most popular

method was through relatives (22%). Quite a large proportion (13%) of migrant workers used the services of a recruiter when wishing to communicate with family members. No clear patterns were observed when comparing the way male or female migrant workers carried out this activity.

Table 52: Percentage distribution of migrants in terms of methods used to contact family members in home countries, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Method *	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	11-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Never contact family	4.1	5.5	40.0	0.0	4.3	2.5	8.2	4.7
Self	52.7	47.3	20.0	43.8	54.3	60.0	34.7	50.4
Employer arranged	0.0	7.3	0.0	3.1	3.1	2.5	4.1	3.1
Recruiter arranged	12.2	14.5	0.0	18.8	12.0	12.5	14.3	13.2
Friends	2.7	7.3	0.0	0.0	6.5	3.8	6.1	4.7
Relatives	23.0	20.0	20.0	34.4	17.4	17.5	28.6	21.7
Others in community	10.8	9.1	20.0	9.4	9.8	7.5	14.3	10.0
N	74	55	5	32	92	46	83	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

f) Sending money home

Among the migrant workers surveyed, 3% never sent money home to their families. The most common method of sending money home was via recruiters

(40%). Interestingly, about one in ten workers chose to send money home through employers. Similarly, the commercial banking system was also used fairly often (Table 53, p52).

Table 53: Percentage distribution of migrants in terms of the methods used to send money home, grouped by sex, age and registration status

Methods *	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	11-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Don't know how	1.4	5.5	0.0	0.0	4.3	2.5	4.1	3.1
Employer	12.2	9.1	0.0	6.3	13.0	10.0	12.2	10.9
Recruiter	37.8	43.6	0.0	43.8	41.3	42.5	36.7	40.3
Friends	2.7	7.3	0.0	0.0	6.5	2.5	8.2	4.7
Relatives	23.0	12.7	40.0	21.9	16.3	17.5	20.4	18.6
NGOs	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	2.0	0.8
Banking	6.8	12.7	0.0	0.0	13.0	10.0	8.2	9.3
Other (mixed methods)	27.0	20.0	60.0	28.1	20.7	22.5	26.5	24.0
N	74	55	5	32	92	80	49	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

g) Social networks, groups and associations

In general, only a quarter of migrant workers had joined any formal or informal groups in the community. Female migrant workers (25%) were slightly more likely to be a member of a group than male migrants (18%). Likewise, registered workers were about 10% more likely to have joined

a group than unregistered workers (see Table 54). Most groups were composed of migrant workers of the same ethnic group. Only one worker belonged to a group of mixed migrant and Thai workers. The most common topics discussed within such groups related to workplace problems, health and the Thai language.

Table 54: Percentage distribution of migrants by participation in groups and sex, age, and registration

Group participation	Sex		Age			Registration		Total
	Female	Male	< 15 years	11-17 years	18-25 years	Yes	No	
Yes	25.7	18.2	40.0	18.8	22.8	26.3	16.3	20.5
No	74.3	81.8	60.0	81.2	72.2	73.8	83.7	77.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(74)	(55)	(5)	(32)	(92)	(80)	(49)	(129)

Table 55 illustrates the proportion of migrants who registered an interest in joining group activities. About 63% of workers want to join in education

activities, 61% want to learn Thai language, while about the same proportion are interested in health-related issues.

Table 55: Migrants preference regarding participation in group activities, grouped by sex, age and sub-sector

Preference *	Sex		Age		Sub-sector		Total
	Female	Male	11-17 years	18-25 years	Live-stock	Crops	
Education	58.1	69.1	81.1	55.4	63.0	62.7	62.8
Health	63.5	56.4	64.9	58.7	65.2	57.8	60.5
Thai language instruction	58.1	63.6	62.2	59.8	54.3	63.9	60.5
Registration	52.7	43.6	59.5	44.6	47.8	49.4	48.8
Reading and writing mother tongue	40.5	49.1	51.4	41.3	52.2	39.8	44.2
Problems at work	40.5	32.7	37.8	37.0	30.4	41.0	37.2
Thai law	35.1	38.2	35.1	37.0	32.6	38.6	36.4
Work skills	37.8	34.5	40.5	34.8	47.8	30.1	36.4
Social issues	29.7	29.1	32.4	28.3	32.6	27.7	29.5
Problems in Thailand	27.0	23.6	27.0	25.0	23.9	26.5	25.6
Ethnic issues	13.5	12.7	21.6	9.8	10.9	14.5	13.2
Other	14.9	12.7	10.8	15.2	19.6	10.8	14.0
N	74	55	37	92	46	83	129

* Respondents could select more than a single response.

h) Education

In response to the question, “can you attend school?”, only 9% of migrant workers responded positively, 61% said they couldn’t and 30% didn’t know whether they could or couldn’t. Migrants provided a range of reasons why they could not attend school, including having too much work to do (72%), not having a nearby school (12%), not wanting to study (10%) and because it is too expensive (9%).

“I was the top student in my class. Although I really wanted to continue studying, I had to leave school after completing grade 4 because my grandmother wanted me to help out with the family business. Of course, I was very

disappointed. I always dreamed of becoming a doctor or engineer. If I get the chance, I want to further my education. I also want to learn English. But right now I don’t have time to study because of work. I always dreamed about going to school but I feel so bad that my dream can’t ever come true. When I see Thai children go to school, it makes me want to go with them. There is one Burmese child here whose mother wants him to learn Thai. She asked me to talk with the child’s boss, but I can’t help. I don’t think migrant children can go to school because they don’t have birth certificates. I don’t know where else we can go if we want to study.” (AM, 17 year-old female migrant, Burman, livestock farm)

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Indications of labour exploitation

Although forced labour is negligible in Nakhon Pathom's agriculture sector, migrant workers faced several forms of labour exploitation, particularly a lack of freedom of movement, and regular days off. Also, many were not in possession of their identification documents, while they do not receive paid leave.

4.2 Legal status and registration

Although the registration of workers provides some legal protection and minimizes the exploitation of migrant workers, over a third of workers in agriculture are not registered. Approximately two thirds of registered workers who had their registration costs paid by the employers were in effect bonded labour and were required to pay back the costs via deductions from their wages. Nonetheless, the majority of workers expressed positive attitudes towards registration, particularly with regard to job security, safety and health insurance. A lack of time to register and lack of information regarding the registration process were the main reasons why some migrants did not register.

4.3 Working conditions

The challenges facing migrants in terms of working conditions included very low pay, restricted freedom of movement, long working hours without overtime pay and not having possession of their original ID documents. The average daily payment of 100-150 baht per day for agricultural workers is below the minimum wage. Low wages is one reason why migrant workers switch farms in search of higher wages. A high turnover of workers is of great concern amongst employers. Yet perhaps if they were willing to pay rates equal to or above the minimum wage, the migrant workers would not be in such a hurry to leave.

Nearly all migrant workers live on the site of their workplace. Workers are isolated from the local community and seldom integrate with the community. None of the employers speak the language of their migrant workers and at the same time the majority of workers have little knowledge of Thai. However, given the nature of farm work, there seems little that can be done in this regard, except perhaps consider more mobile services, which could visit migrant workers living on farms.

4.4 Employers' attitudes

Some negative attitudes towards migrant workers exist among employers. Well over two thirds felt migrant workers should be locked up at night to prevent them escaping. This view was particularly prevalent among by livestock farmers.

4.5 Support mechanisms

Social networks play a significant role in terms of support for migrant workers in the agricultural sector, and family and friends provide this. More than two thirds turn to their relatives when facing problems or when they are in need of healthcare. This reflects the fact that most child migrant workers reside with their relatives or parents. None of the workers referred to NGO staff for support. The only chance workers had to make contact with people was with government officials from the MOL during the registration period. Monks or religious leaders and employers were relatively important to the workers. The fact that child workers rely on their social network because they are more likely to live with family and friends on site could perhaps help safeguard them from exploitation in this sector.

4.6 Child labour

Under Thai law, children under the age of 15 are not permitted to work. Although a few were interviewed, the agriculture sector in Nakhon Pathom province

employs a greater number of children aged 15 and up. Employers seem to regard children as being more obedient. Children under the age of 15 were all unregistered and underpaid when compared with workers in other age groups. The violation of the law and exploitation of child labour requires particular attention.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Labour protection

Issues:

Despite the existence of the registration process and perceived benefits of registration among employers and migrant workers, a third of migrant workers are still unregistered. A large number of workers become bonded to their employer in order to pay back the costs of registration. Unregistered workers in particular are vulnerable to exploitation, particularly to extortion and abuse by the authorities and employers. However, all workers, regardless of their legal status, are prone to be arrested by the police. Although employers recognize a legal obligation to register migrant workers, many refer to the numerous problems in implementing the registration process, such as it being time consuming and too complex. There is little knowledge among migrant workers regarding registration, while most employers do not fully understand the process.

To Ministry of Labour:

- Urgently review the existing LPA to cover workers in the agricultural sector.
- Prepare information about the registration process in languages used by migrant workers and ensure it is properly disseminated well in advance of any further registration period through various channels to reach migrant workers. This information must also be provided to employers.

To the ministries of Interior, Labour and Public Health

- Registration should be more flexible to allow sufficient time for both workers and employers to complete the registration process. A fast track system for registration should be set up. For example, employers should be advised to make an appointment before coming to the office.
- Enforce the registration regulation in order to protect migrant workers and impose strong punishments against employers who hold onto workers' original documents.
- Police should be better informed about the registration process and their roles in dealing with migrant workers (this should clearly point out what they should and shouldn't do)
- Work with community organizations and NGOs to assist in the registration process.

5.2 Working and living conditions

Issues:

Many workers have flexible working schedules but nearly half of agricultural workers work more than eight hours a day. More importantly, the majority of them do not have regular rest days.

To the Ministry of Labour:

- Encourage employers, through relevant officials, local administrative government and employer associations, to provide information on working conditions both verbally and in writing to workers.
- Ensure local MOL offices are equipped to deal with complaints in relation to workers' rights, workplace problems and occupational health.
- Develop clear collaboration between NGOs and MOL inspectors to reach out to migrant workers.

To local NGOs:

- Involve informal recruiters and migrant networks in negotiating minimum standards of work.

5.3 Support mechanisms

Issues:

The nature of farm work together with the language barrier between migrants and locals in the community leads some workers to live in isolation from the community. Most migrant workers turn to their friends and relatives when facing problems instead of approaching concerned government officials. Fear of government officials together with a lack of knowledge regarding sources of assistance contribute to the low usage rates of services available. Moreover, migrant workers depend a great deal on their employers to help them access services, such as healthcare services, largely due to a lack of information and transportation to and from the places where services are located. None of the local government offices, such as hospitals and labour offices, have a single person who can speak the languages of migrant workers. This puts a heavy burden on employers.

To local government, civil society and NGOs:

- Encourage the local community network and non-government organizations, schools and Buddhist temples to organize activities and meetings for migrant workers, such as providing Thai language lessons to migrant workers.
- Disseminate information about migrant assistance organizations in the area to reach out to migrant farm workers.

To the Ministry of Labour and NGOs:

- Engage in a dialogue between employers' associations and education officials in order to find ways to break through the language barrier between migrants and employers. Government offices as well as private organizations dealing with migrant workers' issues, such as labour offices and hospitals should employ an interpreter.
- Provide migrant workers with free Thai language classes with a practical focus through NGOs or volunteers.

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