

## Child Labour in Thailand at a Glance

300,000 children aged 15–17 are registered child workers in 2005.

An estimated 1.5 million young workers aged 15–19 are in the labour market in 2006. At least two-thirds of these young workers work in the informal sector, with their families or on their own or in micro enterprises.

Of 2,744 working children surveyed in preparation for the ILO-Thai Government programme, 35% were younger than 15 and 63% worked more than eight hours a day, usually during the day time.

At least 100,000 cross-border migrant children were found working in 43 provinces where employment of migrant workers is allowed. [Population and Social Research Institute of Mahidol University]

### Overview of Migrant Children in Thailand

Migrant children in Thailand reach the country in a variety of ways, the dominant trend varying from one area and sector to another. In border areas, some commute daily or seasonally across the frontier for work in previously identified locations. Others travel from their source areas alone in search of work with the expectation of staying for a long period. This is often facilitated by friends, relatives, or community contacts. Many children, probably a larger figure, travel with their parents or relatives into Thailand. Finally, a large proportion, especially in provinces, but also including those around Bangkok with more stable migrant populations, were born in Thailand. Older children are more likely to have travelled independently rather than younger children.

Reliable figures are not available, for internal or cross-border migrants. Internal migration is commonplace across all age groups; most Thais remain registered in their birthplace even if they move, making statistics nearly impossible to collect.

The Population and Social Research Institute of Mahidol University has found that there are at least 100,000 international migrant children in 43 (out of 76) provinces where employment of migrant workers is allowed.

As of 31 August 2004, 59,331 foreign migrant children up to 11 years old, and 15,944 children between 12 to 14 years old, were recorded in the national household registration system in the Office of Irregular Migrant Labour Administration. As of 31 May 2005, 93,082 such migrant children under 15 years old had registered in the national household registration system.

A combination of existing research, research conducted during preparation of this project of support, and extrapolation, would give a figure of around 250,000 recorded and unrecorded foreign migrant children under 18 in Thailand as a low estimate. It is likely that many of these are working – an estimate of 100,000 may be realistic. *Migrant children are far more likely to be working below the age of 15, or engaged in WFCL at any age below 18.*

Migrant children enter the workplace in a variety of ways for temporary (including daily cross-border visits as well as seasonal employment) or permanent labour. If they are 15 years or over, they can register legally. False reporting of age at registration is allegedly commonplace, however. If they are under 15, their employment is effectively illegal in Thailand. Recent interventions by key advocates on child and migrant rights have promoted more child-focused policies regarding access to services, and return and repatriation.

Foundation for Child Development (a respected Thai NGO) annual reports of 1997 to 2004 found that many migrant children did not receive enough food proportionately to their need for development. Children had to work between 10 to 12 hours a day or longer. Most children had only 4-6 hours of rest and a few said that they slept only an hour a day. Children lived together in a crowded room without sleeping materials. Sometimes they slept in a storage room. Many never left the establishments or homes of the employers, knowing that they resided illegally in the country.

### **Access to Education**

A cabinet resolution, dated 5 July, 2005, provides for access to education in the public school system for stateless children and all migrant children in Thailand.

Article 12 of the National Education Act (1999, revised 2002) promotes NGOs to operate learning centers. This provision makes it possible for the learning centers to confer legally accepted certificates, as well as to transfer credits from learning centers to schools. This act also gives learning centers the legal entitlement to government subsidies. However, the enforcing Ministerial regulation is still pending.