## 1   Introduction

This paper will summarise the results of a 2013 survey which was conducted on migrant children in Samut Sakhon province by the Dhurakij Pundit University Research Center (DPURC), as part of the ILO-IPEC project on "Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Shrimp and Seafood Processing Areas in Thailand". The project, supported by the United States Department of Labor, aims to eliminate child labour in shrimp producing and processing areas in Thailand while ensuring decent work conditions throughout the industry.

The survey was commissioned in order to better understand the vulnerability of child migrants in Thailand to child labour and to identify policy responses which would be suited to mitigating this vulnerability. In particular, the survey aimed to inform the provisional planning authorities of service provisions for education and social protection for migrant children and their families and to assist ILO-IPEC action programme partners in their beneficiary identification.

2   Research methodology

The implementation of the survey was split into three distinct phases, as outlined below:

Figure 1: Three phases of the survey
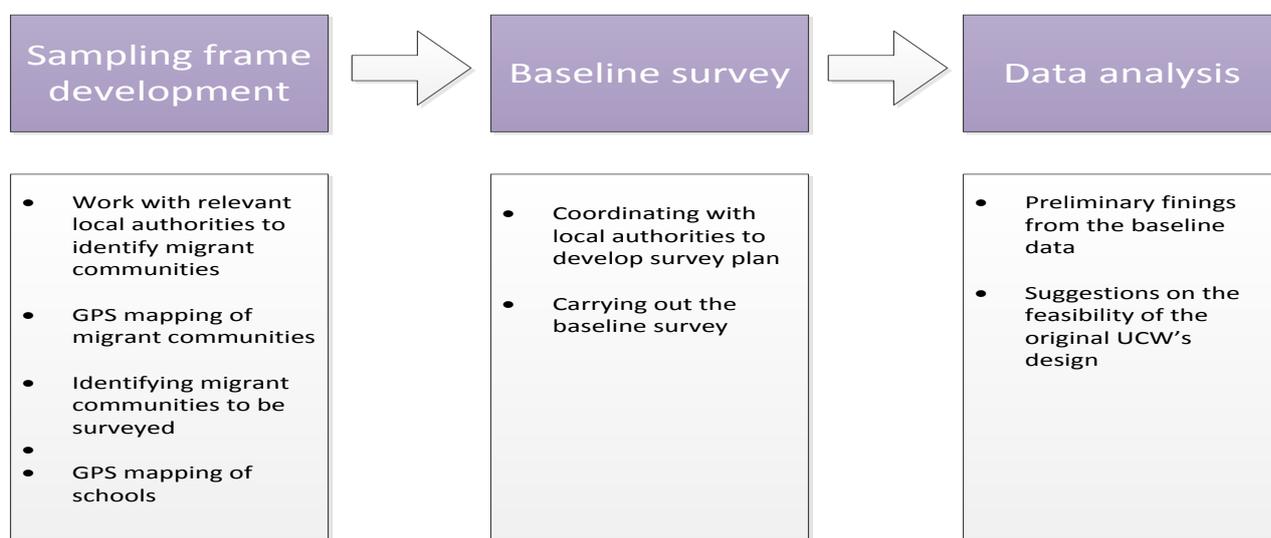
Stage One: Sampling frame development

A two-stage clustered sample design was used for this survey. First, information was gathered from local authorities on the location and size of migrant communities in Samut Sakhon province, on the basis of which the number of households to be surveyed in each community was determined.

Second, sub-areas from each community were randomly selected to be surveyed. During this stage, GPS technology was used to record the exact geographical location of migrant communities and schools.

Stage Two: Baseline survey and fieldwork

The survey plan was developed in close consultation with local authorities, health officials and community leaders who were familiar with the selected communities. In preparation for the fieldwork a one-day workshop was conducted to familiarise interviewers with the aims of the research and interview protocols. In total during the fieldwork process, data was successfully collected from 70 schools, 150 migrant communities and 4,212 migrant households (out of an estimated 77,567 migrant households which reside in the province).

Photos from the fieldwork process:

Stage 3: Data analysis

The data analysis focused on several key characteristics of migrant children and households, offering rich information on the situation of migrant children in the province. Where relevant, this analysis was also supplemented with qualitative information gathered from interviews with local officials and NGOs.

3   Key characteristics of migrant children in Samut Sakhon

Taken together, the results of the survey paint a compelling picture of the vulnerabilities and difficulties faced by migrant children and their families in Samut Sakhon province. The following section will pinpoint several key characteristics which best illustrate this:

3.1 Demographics

In total, the survey found that an estimated 14,898 migrant children are resident in Samut Sakhon province, out of a total migrant population of 255,049. The vast majority of these children are either migrants or the children of migrants from Myanmar. The following table displays estimations of their breakdown by age and gender:

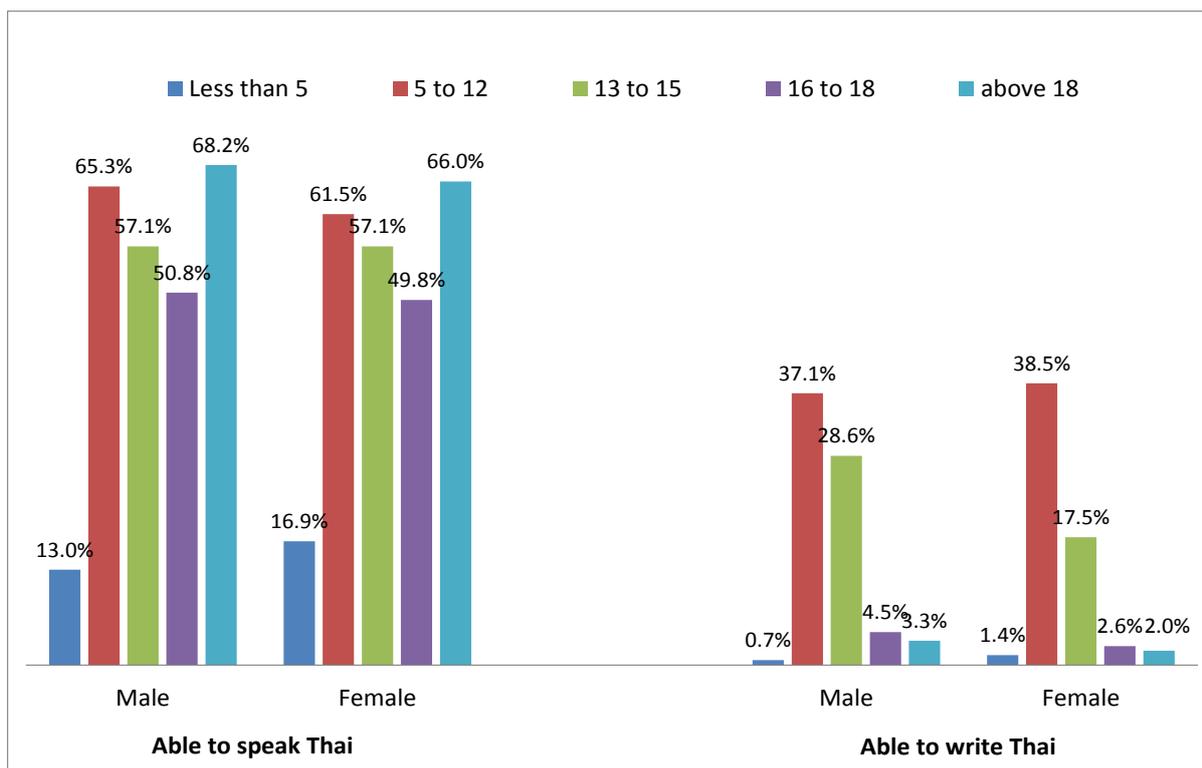**Figure 2: Age breakdown of migrant children aged 0-18 years**
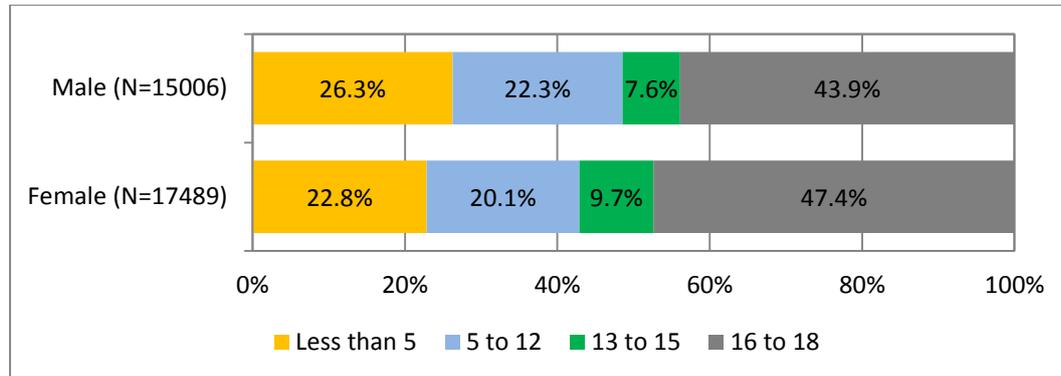
These estimates show that a significant number of migrant children in Samut Sakhon province are below the age of compulsory education, highlighting the importance of ensuring provisions for childcare and early childhood education. A further 9,689 migrant children in the province are aged 5 to 15 and therefore of compulsory school attendance age. Despite this, interviews with NGOs and local officials undertaken during the fieldwork process indicate that only around 500 migrant children per year are admitted into the provinces formal education system.

3.1 Knowledge of the Thai language

An adequate knowledge of the Thai language is a prerequisite to being able to integrate into Thai society, take advantage of available educational opportunities, and obtain decent work opportunities. According to findings obtained from the migrant survey, although the majority of migrants above the age of 5 are able to speak Thai, the number of children who are able to write it is much lower. The survey also reveals a significant number of children and adults who are neither able to write or speak Thai.

Figure 3: Proportions of males and females who are able to speak and read Thai

Figure legend: ■ Less than 5 ■ 5 to 12 ■ 13 to 15 ■ 16 to 18 ■ above 18

Able to speak Thai

Male: 13.0%, 65.3%, 57.1%, 50.8%, 68.2%
Female: 16.9%, 61.5%, 57.1%, 49.8%, 66.0%

Able to write Thai

Male: 0.7%, 37.1%, 28.6%, 4.5%, 3.3%
Female: 1.4%, 38.5%, 17.5%, 2.6%, 2.0%

3.2 Education

When children are unable to attend school, whether it is because they are denied access, unable to meet the formal or informal costs, or unable to travel the required distances, they are at much greater risk of becoming involved in child labour. In Samut Sakhon province, despite the fact Thai legislation provides for nine years of free education for all children, a majority of children of all age groups are not currently enrolled in school.

There are also important differences in school enrolment rates between genders, since although boys and girls have similar enrolment rates at age 5-12, the enrolment rates for those aged 13-15 show markedly lower enrolment rates for girls, suggesting that girls of this age group are much more likely than their male peers to drop out of school.

Figure 4: Proportions of males and females enrolled in Thai education system
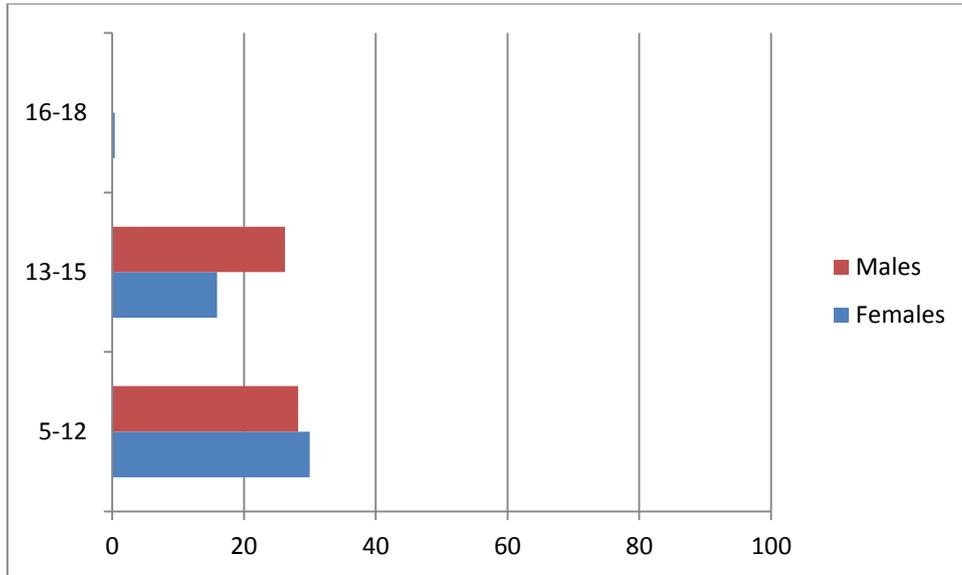
The survey also found that the major reason for non-school attendance for those below the age of 12 is the lack of a 13 digit ID number which is issued to regular migrants. This is despite the fact that the ID number is not a formal requirement for enrolment at Thai schools. For those aged between 13 and 15, 80% cite distance to school is cited as being the major reason for not attending school. Qualitative information which was gathered during the fieldwork stage suggests that many parents of migrant children believe that primary school education is sufficient for to prepare their children for future employment, indicating that the lack of decent work opportunities for migrants in Thailand severely constrains demand for education.

3.3 Engagement in paid work by age and gender

A significant proportion of migrant children in Samut Sakhon are engaged in paid work and over half of these are employed in seafood processing. A particularly important finding is that girls have a significantly higher participation rate than boys, especially in the 13-15 age group.

Figure 5: Proportion of migrant children engaged in paid work by age and gender
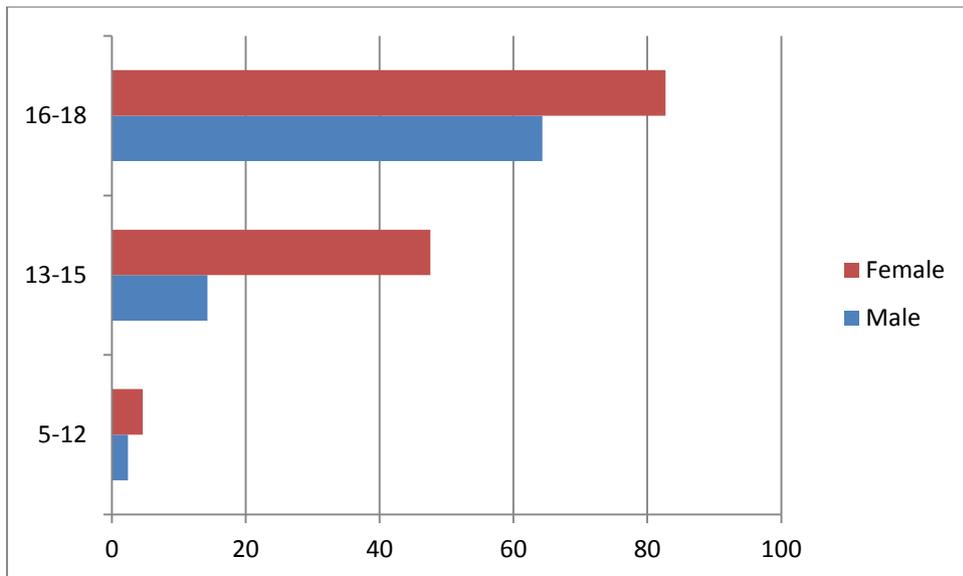
3.4 Working hours

Children of all age groups work extremely long hours. The average number of working hours increases with age and is relatively stable between males and females. However, even 5-12 year old children report long working hours of more than 30 hours per week.

Figure 6: Average hours worked per week by age and gender
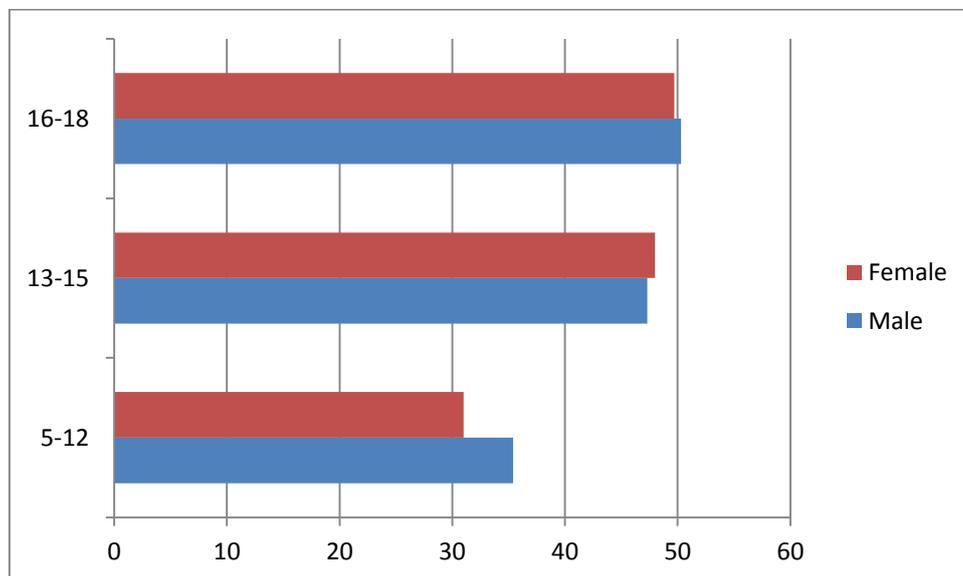
3.5 Daily wages

The majority of migrant workers across all industries are paid daily, usually on a 'piecemeal' basis depending on the amount of work completed. Daily payment means that workers can face a significant degree of income volatility and instability, particularly in seafood processing where the

amount of work which can be completed in a given day depends on the amount of raw material supplied.

In addition to the volatility, the average daily wages of migrant workers in Samut Sakhon province are extremely low and the average hovers around the Thai minimum wage of 300 baht. Another important consideration is that for both males and females wages are relatively flat with average annual wage increase of just 0.4 for both sexes implying little advancement along the job ladder depending on experience. Low wages combined with earning volatility means that many migrant households are economically vulnerable and face significant economic pressure to send children to work.
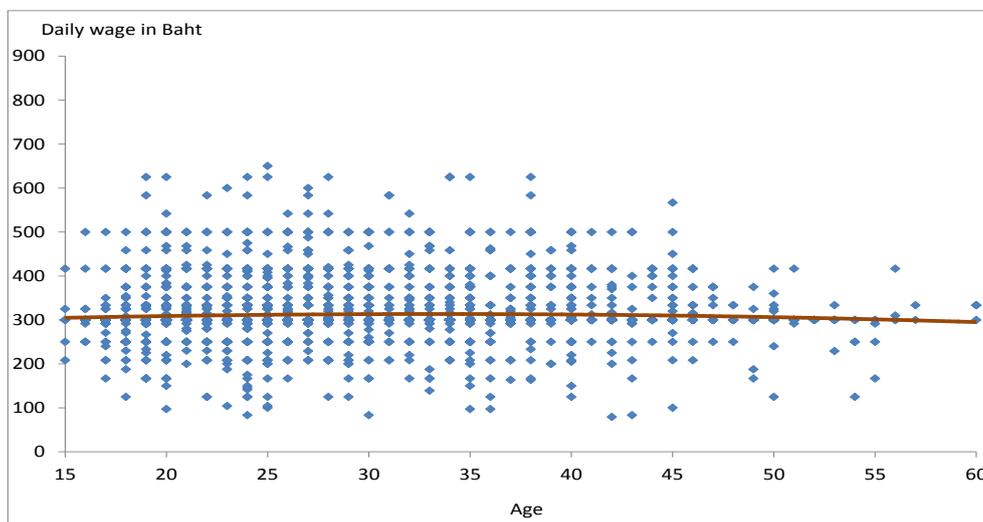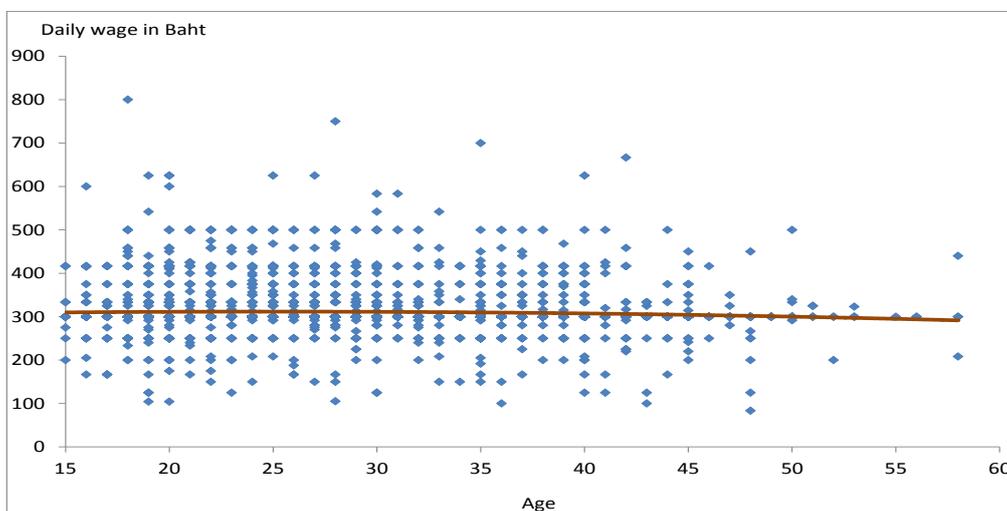
Figure 7: Daily wage profiles for males by age:

Figure 8: Daily wage profiles for females by age:

### 3.6 Wealth characteristics and living situation

The average migrant household in Samut Sakhon province contains 3.29 people and overcrowding is a persistent problem, with the vast majority of migrant households living together in just one room:

Figure 9: Number of rooms (excl. kitchen and bathroom) in migrant households
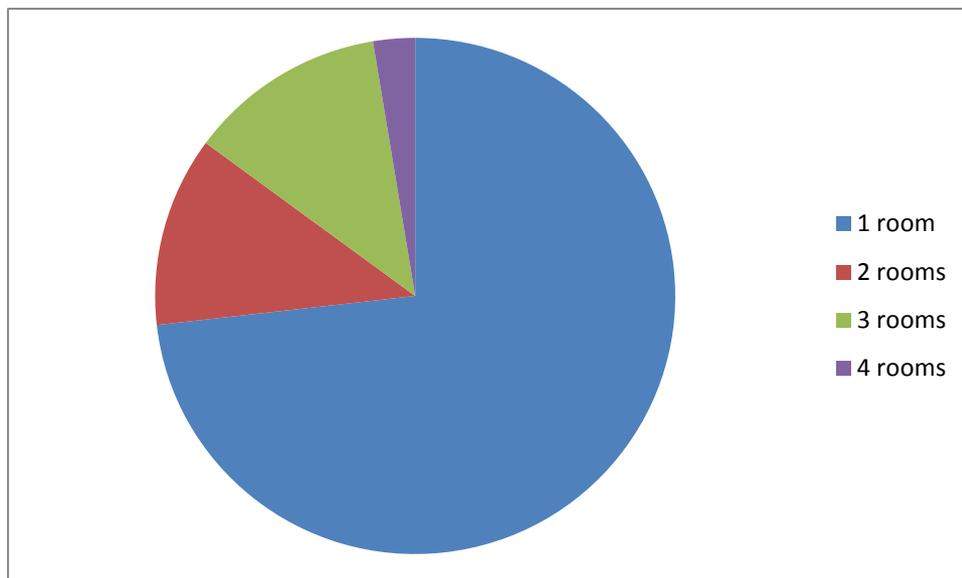
In addition, migrants tend to hold relatively few fixed assets, an indication of the insecure and transitory nature of their living situation and their reluctance to invest in long-term assets.

Figure 10: Proportion of migrants holding fixed assets
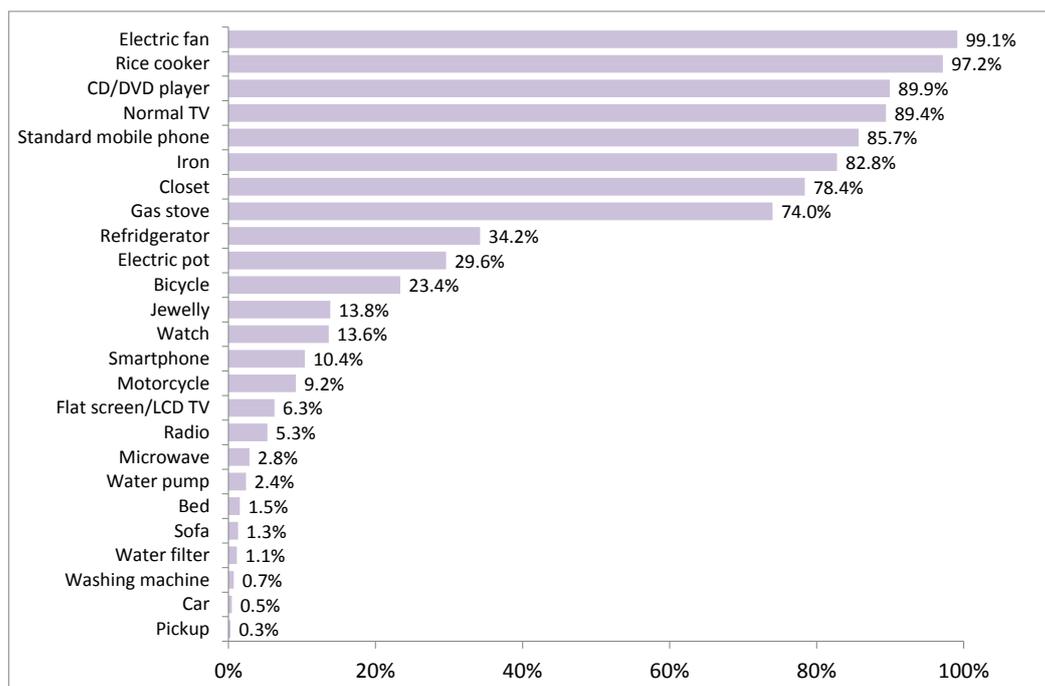
4   GIS Mapping

Using the computer software GIS, data from the migrant children survey was over-layed with maps of Samut Sakon to create visual representations of the distribution and characteristics of migrant households in the province. Such information will allow various stakeholders and agencies to better plan and target their services to migrants. For example, it could be used by health officials to plan their visiting and vaccination schedules, and by education authorities to determine which schools migrant children should be allocated to.

Further information on each household can be examined by clicking on the household icon. Figure 4.2 demonstrates some of the key household characteristics available in each household icon. The figure below demonstrates the type of information which is available in the GIS maps:

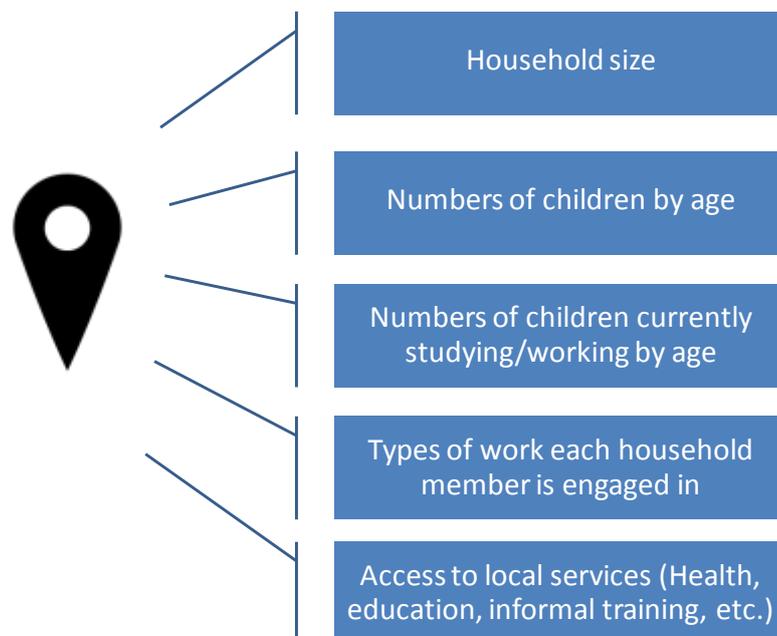*Figure 11: Information available from GIS mapping exercise*

Household size

Numbers of children by age

Numbers of children currently studying/working by age

Types of work each household member is engaged in

Access to local services (Health, education, informal training, etc.)

Figure 12: GIS map of Samut Sakhon province

5   Conclusions and recommendations

The results obtained from this survey clearly show that migrant children and households in Samut Sakhon province face multiple vulnerabilities, including in terms of their education, working conditions and living situation. Particularly significant conclusions include:

- A significant number of migrant children in Samut Sakhon province are below the age of five making it important to expand the provision of early childhood education and childcare facilities.

- Migrant children have low rates of school enrolment and high rates of engagement in employment, with those who are in employment likely to work long hours for little remuneration. In this regard, the GIS mapping could be used as a useful tool for schools and provincial planning authorities to increase the enrolment of migrant children, including by directing children to suitable schools with available places.

- Migrant girls – particularly between the age of 13 and 15 are particularly vulnerable and are much less likely than their male peers to attend school attendance and much more likely to be engaged in paid work. This underlines the need for targeted measures to boost the school enrolment of girls in this age group.

- Migrant households face significant vulnerability – including in terms of their unstable, low earnings, overcrowded living conditions and relatively few fixed assets.