



Migrant Situation report in Thailand on Covid-19 response

Reporting period: up to 26 March 2020

Prepared by Migrant Working Group Thailand (contact@mwgthailand.org) or <https://mwgthailand.org/th/about> or Facebook page: Migrant Working Group

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1. Number of cases

- 2 migrant workers tests Covid positive reported on 20 March 20,2020 (information obtained from MWG member). One patient is confirmed as Myanmar nationality. These two workers were working in Bangkok areas. However, there is no further official report from MoPH on number of migrant worker caseload and PUI cases up to date.

2. Health care

- Migrants are entitled for Covid-19 screening and treatment regardless legal status. Documented workers either covered by Migrant Health Insurance Scheme or Social Security Fund.

3. Major policy development related to Migrant workers

- The Thai cabinet has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Labor in relieving the employment management of migrant workers 2019 – 2020, effective from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.
- Social Security Fund remedy package
- 90 days reporting at Immigration Police
- Emergency decrees
- Border closure

4. Government measurement on migrant worker documentation

In pursuance to the cabinet resolution on 20 August 2019 concerning the management of foreign workers 2019-2020 through a special MOU arrangement, The number of migrant workers targeted per the cabinet resolution is 2,001,379 including; 1.) Those whose permits will expire before 31 March 2020: 261,491 and 2.) Those whose permits will expire after 31 March 2020: 1,739,888 It is found that the employers have already name-listed about one million migrant workers. The estimated 1.1 million workers and their employers were required to process the renewal of documents (Special MoU) at the One Stop Service Centers and related Government offices.

MWG observed that the Department of Employment has reduced the initial target from 1,739,888 to merely 1.1 million. As a result, the number of migrant workers who will be left out from the process would be about 700,000 due to several reasons including the data of the migrant workers has simply vanished from the system, the termination of their work permit as their previous employers had notified their termination of employment to the authorities, but they have failed to find a new employer within 15 days. It is concerning that the applications of the migrant workers are either pending or that they have been working in Thailand even though their permits have already been revoked.

Ministry of Labour decided to close One Stop Service Centers (OSS) in Bangkok and more OSSs were closed. On 24 March, the Cabinet approved the MOL's proposal to extend the period of renewal. All workers who are going to renew their document, employers must submit the namelist electronically by



31 March. The migrant workers and their dependents (namelist applicants), with expired permission, are allowed to stay temporary in the Kingdom until 30 June 2020 and to except the fine for overstaying as well as they are to be able to work until 30 June 2020. All migrant workers shall apply for the Non Thai Identity Card by 30 June 2020, otherwise the permission to stay in the Kingdom will be terminated. MWG estimate about 600,000 workers on process to renew the travel documents.

The Department of Employment (DOE) circulated the letter to slow/suspend the process of importing workers from neighboring countries through MoU system until situation become more regular. The DoE also sent the letter to the Immigration offices, Thai Embassies in Lao and Cambodia to defer process of granting Non-LA VISA for MoU workers. So MOU process is suspended.

The group of MoU workers whose documents are due term of 4 years are required to travel back to the origin countries and stay there for 30 days. Since the MOU process is suspended, there is no clear measurement for these workers to renew their documents.

Due to the cancellation of Thai water festival, re-entry fee of visa is not waived this year.

5. Migrant Management in the Origin country

- Myanmar Government suspends the export of migrant workers to work in Thailand.
- Regarding returning migrants from Thailand, MoHS in Myanmar has also taken the following feasible measures:
 - In-coming Myanmar nationals will be screened and home quarantined. These home quarantine people will need to report Township Health Department (phone call) and health staff and general administrative staff need to monitor these home quarantine people.
 - 3 Coordination and Administration Command Centers at Naypyidaw Office, Yangon Regional Public Health Department and Border Area Center are established with 3 shift assigned staffs starting from 23rd March 2020. Sources WHO Myanmar

6. Government remedy and migrant workers

- Migrant workers who are members of Social Security Fund under section 33 are entitled for the benefit for losing income due to the government order or employer suspension. MWG is still seeking further clarification from the office of Social Security on process for migrant workers. The detail of benefits and process for migrant workers will be shared in the next Sit-Rep.

Detail of remedy package is available <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1883650/social-security-fund-to-lend-helping-hand>

MWG visited the SSO website which data is available in Thai and there are only forms in English and Thai. <https://uat.sso.go.th/wpr/sso-covid19.html>

7. Border closure, high volume of returnees and impact on migrant worker

- In Mae Sot, MWG members observed that the higher numbers workers started leaving Thailand from 18 March and trend has been continued.
- Thailand and neighboring countries started closing border and there are reported on high volume of migrant return to the origin countries. Reuters quoted the Ministry of Interior for estimated 60,000 migrant workers from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar had returned home as of Tuesday 24 March. However, Migrant Working Group estimated that 200,000 workers have returned to the



origin countries in this past week and many workers still continue returning the origin countries through informal channel.

All border checkpoints were scheduled to be closed on 23 March, but there were demand of workers to return home. In order to avoid the crowded situation, Thai authority reopened the checkpoints on 24 March.

MWG members observed the returnees and the returnees can be categorized as 1.) Undocumented workers and workers with expired documents 2.) Workers with single entry visa who do not want to return to Thailand 3.) Workers with livelihood impact due to closure of business 4.) workers wish to return.

As of 26 March, stringent enforcement of the emergency regulation. 81 workers have been arrested source; AEC เอเชีย News - INN News

Workers from urban and industrial areas of Thailand are travelling to border towns and staying there to observe the situation.

- MWG members report that there are number of workers submitted resignation letters to employer as they are uncertain about situation and there are pressure from family at the origin urge workers to return home.

8. Employer's measurement

- Employers are reported to introduce the Health and Safety measurement at the workplace such screening, social distancing, hygiene kits etc and there are more restriction for visitor to enter the workplace.

9. Report on Migrant Rights Violation

- The first group of workers affect by COVID-19 is reported as domestic workers. MWG members report that the domestic workers were dismissed as employers wanted to restrict movement of workers. Workers in the entertainment , department stores and retailers are affected by the Public Shutdown policies.
- Due to economic recession, workers are asked to reduce working hours at this stage. MWG members reported that the case of MOU construction workers arrived Thailand in January 2020 and 60 construction workers were sent to work at 4 construction sites in Rayong, Kanchanaburi and Ayutthaya. The 60 workers have not yet received their February salary and have no social connections with other group. These workers left stranded without any money. MWG member provided emergency assistance and contacted the Myanmar embassy and the Department of Labour Welfare and Protection. MWG foresees the similar pattern of unfair dismissal and workers may need urgent support while they are waiting to file the complaint against the employers. There are limited options for workers to continue stay legally in Thailand as workers are challenged to keep up with legal compliance due the limited working hours of the Government office, nature of urgency and lack of basic needs and social supports. These are MOU workers who just have come to Thailand recently.
- Migrant Working Group members report that workers in the tourism industry in south of Thailand start terminating the employment with workers. There is no clear on the compensation package provided by workers.

10. Fishery and seafood processing workers

- The Alien Labour management committee already approved the annual fishery registration under article 83 of Fishery law but the proposal of article 83 is required further endorsement of the

cabinet. However, the disruption of Covid-19 cause delay of fishery registration. The labour shortage in Fishery sector is remaining challenge.

- There are technical backlogs of fishery workers. In normal situation, fishery workers and employers who complete the document renewal at the OSS are required to apply for Seabook. After the closure of OSS, workers who are not yet completed the document renewal are not able to apply for seabook. After March 31, fishery workers who go through the face scan during port in and port out inspection, the system of E-Pi-Po will report these workers as expired documents. The system will not allow vessel to be in or out. Some Pi-Po officials attempt to issue copy of document but it will not solve the software issue.
- Since the is decreasing demand of seafood, the small size of seafood processing (ปลั่ง)/ small- scale aggregators have suspended their operation. These type of business usually hire “homeworkers” in seafood supply chain and payment is piece rate wage. The homeworkers usually have no direct employment relationship with the small- scale aggregators. There are similar report on closure of middleman in the food distribution in farm and agricultural product and farm based migrant workers are unable to secure their incomes.
- The implication of Emergency decrees may have impact labour movement especially far-based fishing.
- There are still limitation to assess the hygienic situation on the vessel and fisher community/dwellings.

11. Gaps of services targeting migrant population

- No hotline available in migrant language to seek advice on health care and situation updates.
- Aligned with the government strategy and measures, risk communication and community engagement are being implemented through government arms and NGOs in coordinated manners. However due to rapidly evolving of the situation compounding with emergency decree enforcement effective on 26 March, this makes it difficult for partners to implement the planned activities effectively. As a result, migrant targeted key messages need rapidly updated.
- Gaps to renew document which are revoked or expired: 1.) Migrant workers whose documents are expired and required to renew their documents through MoU mechanism (returning to the origin country) are falling through the legal gap. 2.) Workers under border employment scheme (section 64) are unable to renew their documents due to border closure. 3.) workers with livelihood impact and unclear how to could access the remedy by government or employers 4.) workers who decide to return the country.
- Workers whose documents are expired on 31 March may not able to procure the health insurance due to overwhelming capacity of health facility to conduct health check-up and health insurance sale.
- There is still pragmatic to communicate with migrants in their language. Major public information is available in Thai language. MWG puts the effort to mobilise translation through contribution of MWG members.

12. MWG actions to date

- MWG will host the internal briefing session with MWG members to assess the Covid-19 and impact toward life of migrant workers. The Sit Rep # 2 is expected to issue on April 1.
- MWG issued Urgent Statement: Recommendations to Prime Minister for the prevention of Covid-19 outbreak as part of the management of foreign workers on 23 March 2020



<https://mwgthailand.org/en/press/1584960049>

- MWG issued An Open Letter : Recommendations on the management of foreign workers 2019-2020 on 18 March 2020

<https://mwgthailand.org/en/press/1584720954>

13. Advice

- Migrant workers who decide to return to the origin country are risk for not able to come back to Thailand soon. All undocumented workers attempts to return to the origin country may not be able to enter to their countries to government channel.

14. Useful information materials for migrant workers

- COVID- 19 Educational Materials by WHO

<https://sites.google.com/view/covid-19-educationalmaterials/home>

- วิธีป้องกัน ไวรัสโคโรนา (COVID-19) เบื้องต้นด้วยตนเอง (မြန်မာဘာသာစကား, ភាសាខ្មែរ)

<https://mwgthailand.org/th/news/1583480378>

- English Info graphic Emergency Decrees in English by Australian Embassy and Burmese version is translated by IOM.
- Animation for migrant workers on Covid-19 response by International Organisation for Migration
แอนิเมชันสำหรับแรงงานข้ามชาติ เพื่อรับมือสถานการณ์โควิด-19
 - Myanmar language <https://youtu.be/9LujM51s8T4>
 - Cambodian language <https://youtu.be/m6q3Mypjd7Q>

15. International news on migrant worker situation in Thailand

- <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-thailand-exodus/refile-thai-lockdown-sparks-exodus-of-60000-migrant-workers-ministry-official-idUSL4N2B12EZ>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-construction-thail/thai-coronavirus-lockdown-leaves-migrant-workers-exposed-idUSKBN21A1XW>
- https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1884615#cxrecs_s