



Post-COVID-19 International Migration in Thailand

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12 June 2024



- **Post-COVID-19 International Migration Situations and Policy Development in Thailand**
- **Policy Recommendations**



Post-COVID-19 International Migration Situations and Policy Development in Thailand

Source: Jerrold W. Hugueta, Sakkarin Niyomsilpa, and Sureeporn Punpuing (forthcoming). *International Migration in Thailand*, in a Handbook on Migration in Asia, Edward Elgar Publishing



1. Thailand's international migration policy is a response to short-term migration challenges, rather than a comprehensive policy to serve national development strategies

- Cabinet Resolutions are employed to solve short-term problems of migration management issues
- On the one hand, it has facilitated the migration of both low-skill and high-skill migration to solve labour shortages
- On the other hand, it has emphasized temporary migration regime and limited social protection and inclusion in Thai society

2. The MOUs on Labour Migration are designed as a mechanism to regulate labour migration, but bureaucratic and costly issues result in the continuous flows of irregular migrants

- It takes a few months to bring in MOU workers to Thailand from neighbouring countries
- In 2019, only 36 percent of registered migrant workers in Thailand were recruited via the MOU channel
- Irregular migrants in Thailand have fluctuated , but are estimated at 0.7-1.5 million persons at present

3. Integration policy is emerging, and inclusion measures are employed, despite limited in degree and scope:

- Universal health care coverage that includes regular and irregular migrant workers
- Universal education policy that includes migrant children and stateless children
- Key employment acts are applied to both Thai and migrant workers
- Social protection is accessible to migrant workers

4. The access to social protection is different for different groups of migrant workers:

- Documented migrant workers in the formal sector are enrolled in the SSF and Workmen's Compensation Fund
- Others are permitted to purchase the Migrant Health Insurance Card

5. Pathway to permanent residency and citizenship is very limited:

- For migrant workers, visa is valid for 1 year, and work permit is limited to 2 years, but renewable
- Citizenship could be approved to migrant children who have lived in Thailand for 15 years , and to stateless children who have lived in Thailand for 10 years and earn a bachelor degree

6. Thailand's migration policy is ignorant of gender issues:

- MOU statements make no reference to gender or family issues
- Healthcare programs are not sensitive to gender issues

7. Although “Education for All” policy is implemented , allowing migrant children and stateless children to attend Thai schools for 15 years, certain barriers still exist

- MOI registered 242,798 foreign children under age 15 years in Thailand in 2021. But a sizable number of them do not attend public schools
- Student loans for the tertiary education are not available to non-Thai students

8. Asylum seekers in Thailand, estimated at more than 90,000, have limited rights and have no clear future:

- Resettlement has been suspended for many years (except for some urban refugees)
- Mobility and employment opportunities are limited

9. International education policy is not unified and subject to many laws and regulations:

- Student visa does not align with the program of study
- Students are not allowed to work part-time, and local employment is not encouraged after graduation (until recently)

10. Thailand's migration policy is not unified, and not designed to serve national development strategy

- Different agencies view migration policy differently, and pursue their own policy objectives
- Long-term policy is needed to tackle ageing society and talent need of the country

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Policy Recommendations



- Mechanism to reform immigration policy to pave the way for replacement migration policy and action plan
- Pathway towards permanent residency and citizenship
- Improvement of MOUs and border regime
- Priority for global compact for migration
- Demand-driven immigration policy and different visa categories for different skills of migrants
- Extension of ASEAN MRAs to increase mobility of migrant workers in new areas
- Points-based system for skill migration focusing on skills and experiences rather than income
- Retirement migrants and foreign students should be allowed to work



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Thank You

