



# HAZARD EXPOSURE AND VULNERABILITY OF MIGRANTS IN THAILAND

A DESK STUDY FOR THE CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME  
"REDUCING THE VULNERABILITY OF MIGRANTS IN EMERGENCIES"

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADDMER	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response
ARCM	Asian Research Center for Migration
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBDRM	Community-based Disaster Risk Management
DDPM	Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organization
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MMN	Mekong Migration Network
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDPMC	National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee
NDPMP	National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan
NV	National Verification
ONEP	Office of National Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning
OSSC	Once Stop Service Center
SBEZ	Special Border Economic Zones
SNAP	Strategic National Action Plan
SSF	Social Security Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund







# INTRODUCTION

Thailand is an upper middle-income country with an impressive history of economic growth. With a population of over 65 million,<sup>1</sup> it is one of the most populous countries in South-East Asia. Thailand is a lead exporter in the world for rice and a range of other commodities. Through its drive on exports in the 1980s, Thailand built a strong economy on agricultural produce followed by diversifying into industrial production. Now only half the population is employed in agriculture as education and rural–urban migration feeds into diverse production and service industries.

Despite decades of strong financial fundamentals and high economic growth, persistent inequalities have left some population groups underserved and some remote communities, especially ethnic highland people, with limited services. Uneven development and persistent poverty have contributed to fuelling internal migration. Numerous migrants from the poorest and most depressed parts of the country, and in particular from the north-east, largely infertile and exposed to cyclic floods and droughts, have moved towards the most industrialized areas, and in particular the Bangkok region – the country’s business and commercial centre.

In recent times, Thailand has faced a number of crises, such as the economic shocks of the 1997 financial crisis, the tsunami in the Andaman Ocean in 2004, the 2011 floods, and political turmoil over the past decade. The global financial crisis of 2008 and political instability are the major causal factors in Thailand’s economic growth now being the lowest in the region.

Nonetheless, Thailand is the most economically advanced country within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and thus attracts many low-skilled migrants from Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar and seeks migrant workers from countries further afield. Most migrants perform labour-intensive work, amounting to 6–8

per cent of the Thai labour force. Concentrations of migrants are found in low-tech factories, such as in several hundred factories in Samut Sakhon Province and hundreds in Mae Sot, Tak Province. Migrant workers are also employed in construction and heavily in the informal sector including agriculture, fisheries, services and domestic work.

This study explores how a country with double-digit economic growth through the 1980s and into the 1990s experienced a significant influx of migrants, and what implications the migrants’ presence might hold for future emergencies, especially those arising from natural hazards.

Thailand has long been a major country of transit and origin; there are today about 180,000 Thai nationals working in Asian and Middle Eastern countries. However, this study looks at Thailand as a destination country, mainly focusing on the conditions of the approximately 3.5 million low-skilled migrants from neighbouring countries. Thailand, however, also hosts up to 100,000 skilled foreign migrant workers and professionals. And apart from more than 100,000 displaced people from Myanmar in refugee camps, there are a range of other migrant groups from different countries in transit, or seeking work or asylum.

The country has been attempting to manage labour migration flows from surrounding countries since the 1990s with the establishment of nationwide registration processes. The total number of registered migrant workers with work permits from Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar is calculated at 1,367,052 in July 2015. Estimates suggest that there may be at least 2 million more migrants in the country. Human trafficking, particularly in the fishing industry, is one of the challenges the military-backed government is facing.

This study looks into the day-to-day living conditions of migrant workers and their families, at their vulnerability to exploitation, abuses and deportation. This is particularly the case of undocumented migrants; however, documented

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1 The country’s official population was declared at 65,479,453 in the 2010 census, with estimates for 2014 of 67.2 million..

migrants may also suffer from abuses or violations, and may have safety and health concerns in their workplace. Accounting for these conditions helps to understand migrants' vulnerability in times of disasters: whether regular and irregular, they may be invisible, and forgotten by disaster planning. They may miss out on humanitarian assistance and support, unable to reclaim the bodies of dead relatives, and have problems re-establishing their legal identity and recovering permits and authorizations (International Organization for Migration - IOM, 2007).

## METHODOLOGY

The desk review was based on existing immigration data for Thailand. The initial research identified and collected data on relevant migration trends and stocks, and possible risks threatening migrants in the country, including specific conditions of vulnerability they might face. This included, in particular, looking at institutional structures and policy development on migration management.

The research also identified environmental issues in Thailand, particularly the main natural hazards that might affect the country, as well as the main disasters that affected the country in the past. These two sets of data allowed an identification of the main high-risk, high-immigration locations. The research then explored existing literature on institutional structures and policies related to disaster risk management and the environment. Lessons learned from the 2011 floods were studied to determine priorities for action and for designing recommendations.

The main data source for migration stocks was registration data, provided by IOM, which sourced them from the government. The data covers all three categories of migrant workers. It is disaggregated at the provincial level, by gender, country of origin and number of dependants. The three categories of migrants are in separate tables; therefore, to have a total number, for instance, on gender at the provincial level, it is necessary to locate the province in all three tables and add them together. The totals mainly presented here, combine just the Nationality Verification (NV) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) numbers; however, all three tables were consulted in order

to discuss disaggregated data in the text and provide percentages or numbers on the total of three categories.

The terms “documented” and “undocumented” are used interchangeably with respectively “regular” and “irregular” in this report. The section looking at migrants' distribution within Thailand is articulated around seven regions that do not correspond with the usual criteria used for administrative purposes. The central, east and south regions are split in coastal and non-coastal provinces, and divided into a South-Central and a Far South region.

The data collection process included four interviews. Two were with freelance researchers, Simon Baker and Jerry Huguet, both well-known researchers on migration in Thailand. The other two were undertaken with lecturers and researchers at Chulalongkorn University; Daniel Ray Lewis has worked on migration projections for IOM, and Emeritus Professor Supang Chantavanich is head of the Asian Research Centre for Migration and a key person on migrants' issues related to the response to the 2011 floods.



# MIGRATION NUMBERS AND TRENDS

The influx of migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar into Thailand began in the late 1980s. People mostly crossed the porous western border between Thailand and Myanmar to find employment in fisheries and agriculture (UNDP, 2015). Over time, millions of migrants have followed a well-worn path, often through difficult mountain treks in Karen State, and crossing mountains and forests across the border to get deeper into Thailand. The destination for some migrants is just border precincts, but those seeking opportunities further inside the country have to find their way around roadblocks and patrols. Migrant workers from the three countries can now be found throughout the country, many travelling deep into or across the country far from their homes.

## MIGRANTS FROM MYANMAR

Thailand shares a 2,401-km border with Myanmar. The northern borders are often mountainous and forested with rivers and valleys, and have traditionally been porous, with intense circulation of people. Tak Province, which borders Karen State in Myanmar, is a major entry point, but many Myanmar migrants also enter into the more southern provinces of Kanchanaburi and Ranong. The great majority of migrants in Thailand come from Myanmar. Most of them head for the 11 provinces bordering Myanmar, southern and northern Thailand, and Greater Bangkok. However, even in Chonburi, on the Eastern Seaboard, 40 per cent of the migrants come from Myanmar.

Many migrants originate from border provinces such as Karen and Mon States, but may also travel further distances, such as from the dry central zone. Yangon and surrounding areas are also source areas of migrants. One recent study found that the most represented ethnic group is Bamar (43.5% of the migrants from Myanmar), followed

by Shan (18.5%), Mon (15.1%), Kayin (12.5%) and others, including Kayar, Rakhine, Chin and Kachin. However, composition varies in each region (Chantavanich, Middleton and Ito, 2013).

Most migrants from Myanmar do not speak a language that is intelligible to Thais. People from the Shan State of Myanmar, bordering Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, are ethnic Tai, sharing a similar culture with Thai and speaking a Thai dialect.

## MIGRANTS FROM LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND CAMBODIA

The Mekong River divides Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and further south marks Thailand's eastern border with Lao People's Democratic Republic. The lowland population and some highland groups are ethnic Tai, and speak an almost identical dialect to the people of Isan (north-eastern Thailand). Most migrants to Thailand come from the lowlands, although increasing numbers of migrants from Lao ethnic minorities can be found in Thailand.

Another porous border separates Thailand from Cambodia. On the Thai side of the border, there are many Thai-Khmer residents mixed with Thai-Isan populations. As the Thai-Khmer populations belong to the same language group as Cambodians, their language is unintelligible to Thais. Most of the migrants from Cambodia cannot communicate in a common language with Thai populations.

According to a survey of migrants repatriated from Thailand (Baker, 2014), migrants entering Thailand from both countries generally have low levels of education, with only around 20 per cent of respondents having completed secondary education and women twice as likely as men to be uneducated (13% vs 26%). Cambodian respondents

are on average more educated, with 12 per cent uneducated and almost half having at least entered secondary education (Baker, 2014). About 56 per cent of Lao and Cambodian male respondents are single, as opposed to respectively 42 and 41 per cent of female respondents.

Cambodian migrants come from border provinces, as well as from more distant areas, such as from provinces on or near the Viet Nam border, while many Lao migrants have a shorter distance to travel. Close to 60 per cent of the Cambodians use a broker to get to the border, as opposed to 21 per cent of the Lao men and 8 per cent of the women. Similarly, under 25 per cent of Lao migrants used a broker from the border to the destination, compared to 63 per cent of Cambodians. Lao migrants are less dependent on brokers as they are more likely to enter the country with the help of social networks, especially family or acquaintances who work in the north-east, and more likely to speak Thai.

The majority of Lao respondents worked in factories (39%), the service industry (33%) and the construction industry (14%). None was employed on fishing boats. For Cambodian migrants, construction work was the most common occupation (55%), followed by farming (16%) and factory work (15%). Both groups of respondents

rated agriculture as low for work safety, although Cambodians rated fishing as the least safe. Both agriculture and fishing grant low levels of welfare assistance and freedom of movement.

Average wage for Lao respondents was almost 7,000 baht (THB) per month, and less than THB 4,000 for the Cambodians. Lao migrants are able to easily communicate in Thai, which gives them an advantage in some types of work and negotiating work conditions.

Three per cent of the Lao respondents and 4 per cent of the Cambodians met the criteria for being considered victims of trafficking, as opposed to 19 per cent and 8 per cent in previous surveys (2009 and 2010). The proportion of Cambodians who indicated that they faced exploitative working conditions declined from 23 per cent in 2009 to 11 per cent in 2010, and then to 9 per cent in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of respondents indicating they had been cheated and/or deceived in their overall work experience in Thailand decreased significantly, from 50 per cent of the respondents in 2009, to 28 per cent in 2010 and 12 per cent in 2012. These elements all indicate a marked improvement in the working conditions of Lao and Cambodian migrants in Thailand.



## RECENT MIGRATION DYNAMICS

Since the 1990s, migration into Thailand's border areas has become increasingly complex, especially on the Myanmar border. Refugees from Myanmar have been staying in nine camps along the Thailand–Myanmar border for over 20 years, and many living outside of camps have stayed in Thailand as economic migrants or displaced persons for over 25 years. In addition, members of various ethnic minorities living along the Myanmar border have moved into Thailand for long periods, many without citizenship and only with temporary residence cards. There is widespread circulation of people across borders, involving commuters, those seeking health services not available in Myanmar, as well as displaced persons. Economic migrants include daily or seasonal workers, as well as longer-term migrants.

The number of migrants coming from the three countries has been rising over the last 25 years. Immigration from Myanmar spiked following internal conflict with Kayin and Kachin armed groups. Kayin and Kachin are displaced in large numbers within their respective States as a result of fighting and persecution, and Kayins are the most numerous population in the nine refugee camps along the Thailand–Myanmar border. Ongoing conflict in Myanmar continues to be a push factor of migration to Thailand; however, the line between economic migrants and displaced persons is blurred. While many economic or political migrants are from Karen State, especially in Tak Province, many – predominantly Mon, Burman and Bamar – pass through Karen State from other areas. The great majority are economic migrants – with some, in particular those coming from Myanmar's dry zone, referred to as “environmental migrants” by some researchers. Many people have also fled conflict in the Shan State that borders northern Thailand.

Migrants from Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia are clearly economic migrants, although many of them have been identified as forced migrants and/or victims of trafficking. The latter usually become victims after migrating, through workplace exploitation or abuse. Underage women found in brothels or other sex venues are automatically recognized as trafficking victims, even though they may have voluntarily migrated into the country and sought work in the sex

venues. However, traffickers also deceive migrants, particularly underage women, at their point of origin, at border crossings or on some other point in their journey.

Labour migration dynamics are largely determined by labour shortages, especially in sectors requiring unskilled and semi-skilled work, which are filled by migrants from neighbouring countries. The Thai working age population is rapidly declining, which will result in fewer and fewer workers over the next decades (Huguet, 2014). Thais are also growing increasingly well educated and less inclined to take on low-skilled, poorly paid jobs. Thais with low skills tend to move out of the country to work in stronger economies in East and South-East Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world. Thais are still employed in most of the sectors' migrants work, such as in construction, factories and domestic work. In some areas, however, factories employ predominantly migrant workers, domestic workers are increasingly migrants, and far fewer Thais are working on fishing boats.

Migrants are found all around the country, although the highest concentration is in the Greater Bangkok region. In 2014, in order to expand its workforce and reduce migration pressures on the area, the government announced the establishment of Special Border Economic Zones (SBEZ) in 10 border areas. Tak, Mukdahan, Sa Kaeo, Trat and Songkhla are slated for the first phase. However, this strategy is perpetuating low valued-added, low-technology industries, which cannot compete on production costs with Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is hence not certain that SBEZs along the Myanmar border will have sufficient workers as foreign direct investment increases in Myanmar. Myanmar is liberalizing its economy and developing its infrastructure, with its own special economic zones on the border and major infrastructure developments planned and underway near or on the Thai border. With up to 3 million Myanmar migrants in Thailand, just a loss of 10 per cent of those over one year would have a major impact on employment and productivity. In addition, concerns have been expressed over the government handing over responsibility, control and accountability to SBEZ authorities, including on matters related to migrants' working conditions and minimum wage standards. One author contests that many migrant workers want to return to Myanmar due to exploitation and extortion from employers and authorities (Thame, 2015).



Thailand's demographics suggest that migrant workers will be still required in the foreseeable future. Thailand has a MoU with Viet Nam and is exploring other sources beyond the three surrounding countries.

It should also be noted that Thailand's political instability between 2006 and 2014 has often adversely affected policy development, implementation and enforcement, with important implications for both disaster preparedness and response and migration management. This is one underlying factor that has contributed to the ad hoc and short-term approach towards managing migration, and may have heightened the challenges the country is facing in terms of unregulated fishing, human trafficking and the registration and regularization process for migrant workers. While the current rule by the army-installed government raises questions, there have been notable advances made on several fronts during this time, including the large-scale registration of over 1.6 million previously undocumented migrants in 2014, and progress made in tackling child labour issues.

## MIGRANT WORKERS' REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The registration process of migrant workers began as early as 1992; however, the first registration covering migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar took place in

1996. Traditionally confused, complex and corrupt, the system has recently improved with the advent and then the expansion of one-stop service centres (OSSC).<sup>1</sup> Twelve OSSCs were initially opened by the Ministry of Labour (MOL); the National Council for Peace and Order increased this number to cover every province in 2014.

In 2003, Thailand established MOUs with Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to recruit migrant workers within the boundaries of their countries of origin and provide them with passports and registration papers before entering Thailand. In Myanmar, the agreement was not operationalized until 2009, and generally recruitment in other countries was slow, with a system described as "lengthy, expensive and burdensome" (Natali, McDougall and Stubbington, 2014). The number of migrants recruited through this channel was 139,000 in 2013, 251,373 in 2014 and 300,097 in July 2015.

The National Verification system (NV), an adjunct registration system to fully regularize the status of migrant workers, was introduced in 2009. NV was incorporated to record the presence of migrants already residing in Thailand, verify their documents and provide passports and registration. The NV system was open to any citizen from the three countries who had registered with the Thai authorities (most recently through the OSSCs in 2014). The MOL also coordinated with international organizations, including IOM and International

<sup>1</sup> The OSSCs include officials from the Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Public Health.

**Table 1: Registered migrants by category and nationality, July 2015**

Migrant groups	Myanmar		Cambodia		Lao People's Democratic Republic		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
MOU	147,754	49.2	124,252	41.4	28,091	9.4	300,097
NV	905,685	84	126,002	11.8	35,268	4.2	1,006,955
Total regular (MOU+NV)	1,053,439	77.1	250,254	18.3	63,359	4.6	1,367,052
Registered with temporary permits (awaiting NV)**	436,154	43.2	439,087	43.4	135,150	13.4	1,010,391
Total documented	1,489,593	62.7	689,341	29	198,509	8.3	2,377,443

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\* Number of MOU and NV migrant workers as of July 2015, excluding migrants registered with One Stop Service Centres (OSSC) in 2014. Available from <http://wp.doe.go.th/wp/images/statistic/sm/58/sm0758.pdf>.

\*\* Number of migrants registered with OSSCs in 2014 who have revised their registration status with the MOL in 2015 (statistic as of 16 July 2015). This number is not including migrants registered through OSSCs to work in the fishery sector in 2014-2015.

Labour Organization (ILO), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support information campaigns on the system in migrant communities (Natali, McDougall and Stubbington, 2014). Over time, the process has been further streamlined: now NV workers can be employed for a four-year period, after which they have 180 days to apply for a new work visa (Ibid.).

The NV and MOUs have been an important step forward in migration management. The current leadership has moved forward. The registration process has become more efficient over time, and the expansion of OSSCs has contributed to greater efficiency; however, more can be done to further streamline the process and reach even broader coverage. Furthermore, “the process has been largely employer-driven, with migrants dependent on their employers for effective implementation of the process and access to their rights upon gaining a regularized status” (Ibid.).

The year 2015 has seen the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community, a major milestone for integration in the region, and likely to have consequences on migration flows. While Thailand is dependent on migrant workers for its exports, it may be ill prepared for an increase in traffic across borders and required management of population movements. However, as the flow is initially expected to involve more business and professionals, the movement of unskilled and low-skilled workers will still be governed through the MOU and NV tools for the foreseeable future.

## DIFFERENT CATEGORIES, DIFFERENT CONDITIONS

As of July 2015, as shown on Table 1, more than 1 million migrants held work permits through NV, and just over 300,000 through MOU. In addition, there were over 1 million people in the process of NV, who only had temporary permits so were not fully regularized. These migrants are regarded as registered, but without a work permit, they have few rights and little protection. An unknown number of these migrants in the process of NV may be lost to the system, and currently have until June 2016 to complete their registration. The overall total of registered migrant workers is almost

2,400,000, of whom almost 2 million are from Myanmar. Disaggregated data suggest that about 40 per cent of them are women, with a slightly higher percentage for migrants from Lao People’s Democratic Republic. However, a number of studies suggest that the country hosts at least 3.5 million migrants, suggesting that over a million of them are still not registered (Huguet, Chamratrithirong and Natali, 2012).

Registered migrants with temporary permit face serious restriction to their movements, are subject to abuse and exploitation, and can be deported as soon as their temporary stay expires (Natali, McDougall and Stubbington, 2014). Acquiring passport and registration, whether through the NV or MOU, removes restrictions to rights and freedoms; however, it does not offer full enjoyment of rights and protection from abuses. Documented migrants have some recourse to authorities and NGOs for guidance and support in the case of rights violation and exploitation by employers and middlemen, such as smugglers, traffickers and corrupt representatives of the authorities. While Thai labour laws apply to documented migrant workers, many of them experience obstacles getting paid the legal minimum wage, and most are not covered by accident and compensation plans or pensions from their employers (Huguet, Chamratrithirong and Natali, 2012), and in general, they encounter difficulties in fully accessing social protection due to their employers’ limited compliance with the law (Schmitt, Sakunphanit and Prasitsiriphol, 2013:14, cited in Harkins, 2014). Undocumented migrants are the most vulnerable to deportation and exploitation, as they have no protection and legal status.

A detailed breakdown of how different legal status translates into more or less limited access to basic services and opportunities for the three migrant groups, please refer to Table 12.

### Migrant children

All efforts targeting migrants have to take into account 300,000–400,000 children of migrants (377,000 according to 2008 ILO estimates), of which up to 150,000 are born in Thailand (UNICEF, 2014). Children too, are at risk of deportation and exploitation, especially in agriculture and 3D jobs. All children born in Thailand have the right to be registered immediately after birth, but without a birth certificate, the necessary steps to registration

cannot proceed (Feingold, 2014). The processes for birth registration and citizenship are well defined, but the process is still slow and quite complicated, requiring witnesses, fees and complex municipal procedures, and frequently results in incomplete applications (Beesey, 2014).

Thailand offers 15 years of free education for all, including to children without documentation or Thai nationality (Harkins, 2014). While this policy has enhanced the education opportunities for children of migrants and increased enrolment in Thai schools, only a third of them are enrolled in Thai schools and about 5 per cent in learning centres (Save the Children/World Education, 2015). In spite of current regulations, some Thai schools still require documentation for enrolment. Other schools will require a level of language proficiency for admission, or claim a lack of resources or space to accommodate children of migrants (Beesey, 2014).

### **Migrant workers in the fisheries sector**

Fisheries are one of the most migrant-dependent businesses in Thailand; however, the registration rate of migrant workers in this sector is very low. With many boats out at sea for months at a time, often more than a year, it is extremely challenging to meet the registration deadlines

set by the authorities. Changes are expected with new legislation brought in as a response to the European Union's yellow-carding of the fishing industry. In 2011, more than 41,000 migrants were employed in fishing businesses and almost 107,000 in fishery-related (factory and port work) activities in Thailand (Lyttleton, 2014), with a large concentration in Samut Sakhon and adjacent ports.

Forced labour on Thai long haul boats in international waters has been running as international news for the past year or more and is partly a consequence of overfishing, as boats now have to go to international waters to find adequate fish stocks. The phenomenon reportedly started after Typhoon Gay sank 200 fishing boats and caused several hundred deaths in 1989. As a consequence, the number of Thais wanting to be fisherfolks shrank, and migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar came to dominate the industry (Robertson, 2011).

In 2009 a subcommittee was established to investigate issues of trafficking and forced labour in the fishery sector (Robertson, 2011). The government improved prevention and communication strategies, increased assistance to victims and developed monitoring tools. Yet reports on workers being victims of exploitation or violence and being denied access to medical care,

## **Box 1: Rumours and reality: The fear of deportation**

Rumours and fears of deportation among undocumented migrants in Thailand are common, in particular after a deadline for registration is closed and announcements are made on the deportation of those who have not registered. The first mass exodus in Thailand was seen following the 1997 financial crisis. After the crisis, re-registration of migrant workers quickly resumed after complaints from Thai employers (Scharf, 2012).

Following regular registration windows between 2004 and 2010, there were regular rumours of large-scale deportations that generally failed to materialize. In 2012, a report had highlighted that 160,000 Cambodian migrants were at threat of deportation from Thailand. At the time, 56,776 Cambodians had completed the NV but another 165,654 were undocumented, mainly due to the difficult and expensive registration process. While mass deportations did not happen, rumours spread through the country, and more than 1 million Cambodian and Myanmar people felt threatened with possible deportation.

In June 2014, hundreds of thousands Cambodian migrants fled Thailand to return home due to rumours of deportation of irregular migrants. The Government of Thailand claimed it made no announcements regarding deportations, while the Government of Cambodia criticized its counterpart for contributing to spreading panic. Efforts by the Thai military to facilitate migrants' return to Cambodia might actually have contributed to the panic. By June 2014, over 220,000 Cambodian migrants had returned, mainly voluntarily. While Thailand tried to deny any policy on deportation, Mekong Migration Network (MMN) reported that thousands of people were deported in June 2014. This was traumatic for migrants and their families who had to flee abruptly and contract debts to finance their returns.

The mass exodus also caused logistical challenges once they had crossed the border into Cambodia. Many took advantage of local government food handouts and free transportation. It was a crisis for businesses in Thailand and for both the governments of Thailand and Cambodia. After the exodus, the Government of Cambodia slashed the price of passports to assist migrants to return to Thailand. The Government of Thailand had to make concessions and facilitate Cambodians' return, including the establishment of OSSCs for Cambodians (Mekong Migration Network (MMN), 2014).



rest, pay and other labour rights are still common (Bangkok Post, 2015a). The European Union has condemned Thailand on trafficking, as part of their yellow carding of the fishing sector, and the United States has left the country on Tier 3 in their Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) for the second year running (Talcoth, 2015).

## MIGRANT WORKERS: DISTRIBUTION AND CONDITIONS

Migrants are not distributed evenly within Thailand. An analysis of MOU and NV migrants (Table 2) show that they tend to concentrate in the Bangkok area and its vicinity (comprising Nonthaburi, Samut

Prakarn, Pathum Thani, Samut Sakhon, and Nakhon Pathom), as well as in the Central and Southern Region. Table 7 provides a picture of the presence of permanent and temporary migrants by province.

Migrants from Myanmar represent about over 75 per cent of the migrants in all regions except in the Central and North-Eastern ones (where they represent, however, over half of the total), with peaks of 92 and 99 per cent respectively in the south and north (see Table 4). Cambodians are numerous (over 37%) in the Central region, and in the Greater Bangkok area (almost 20%). Lao People's Democratic Republic migrants are a small minority in all regions except in the north-east (more than 15% of the total registered migrants).

### Migrants in Bangkok and surrounding areas

Bangkok is situated in the delta of the Chao Phraya River basin, on the northern coast of the

**Table 2: Provinces with highest number of regular migrant workers, July 2015**

Provinces		Regular migrants		OSSC (renewed)*	OSSC (fishery)**	Total
		MOU	NV			
1	Bangkok	50,506	47,380	220,749	0	318,635
2	Chonburi	36,993	94,115	100,680	3,280	235,068
3	Samut Sakhon	26,203	133,424	59,547	5,400	224,574
4	Pathum Thani	19,780	108,727	59,399	0	187,906
5	Samut Prakan	20,052	84,442	62,255	1,260	168,009
6	Chiang Mai	20,131	60,630	29,037	0	109,798
7	Nonthaburi	11,764	47,784	39,106	0	98,654
8	Surat Thani	3,239	57,122	26,042	8,290	94,693
9	Songkhla	16,512	46,570	12,672	2,199	77,953
10	Nakhon Pathom	6,811	37,664	31,619	0	76,094
11	Rayong	4,842	18,758	47,215	4,650	75,465
12	Tak	3,136	27,037	34,690	0	64,863
13	Ranong	14	49,410	12,172	2,829	64,425
14	Chachoengsao	926	13,823	25,624	290	40,663
15	Phuket	1,418	13,086	21,781	2,307	38,592
16	Ratchaburi	2,085	21,909	13,564	0	37,558
17	Prachuab Kirikhan	787	14,767	12,819	4,680	33,053
18	Kanchanaburi	2,553	15,159	14,028	0	31,740
19	Phang-Nga	3	23,486	7,040	911	31,440
20	Chumphon	41	10,805	15,894	4,071	30,811

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\* Statistic of registered migrants who renewed their cards, as of June 2015.

\*\* As of June 2015, the latest round of fishery workers registration.

**Table 3: Number of workers from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar holding work permits by sex and region, July 2015**

Region/area	NV			MOU			Total	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	#	%
Bangkok	25,809	21,571	47,380	37,239	13,267	50,506	97,886	7.2
Bangkok vicinity	239,455	172,586	412,041	50,010	34,600	84,610	496,651	36.3
Central region	131,701	91,585	223,286	50,343	38,518	88,861	312,147	22.8
North	62,819	61,569	124,388	12,398	13,225	25,623	150,011	11.0
North-East	5,365	4,581	9,946	5,297	4,165	9,462	19,408	1.4
South	148,473	101,441	249,914	25,098	15,937	41,035	290,949	21.3
Thailand	613,622	453,333	1,066,995	180,385	119,712	300,097	1,367,092	

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

Bay of Bangkok. Together with a few surrounding provinces (Samut Prakarn to the south, Samut Sakhon to the south-east, Nakhon Pathom to the north-east, Nonthaburi and Pathum Thani to the north), it constitutes Greater Bangkok.

Metropolitan Bangkok is Thailand's business and industrial centre, contributing to 40 per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP). According to the statistics provided in Table 5, it hosts over 8 million residents, and has by far the highest density in the country. Over the last decades, it has grown through intense internal migration flows, and still receives millions of temporary migrants, especially in the dry season after the rice harvest. As official statistics do not capture this population nor does the presence of long-term migrants and foreigners without legal permanent resident status, the area realistically hosts over 11 million people.

The area is a coastal floodplain through major rivers empty into the bay. The Chao Phaya, in particular, drains the central region, supporting the agricultural economy and especially rice cultivation. Waterways also provide for the transportation of

goods and people. Flooding is a major hazard in the area, as demonstrated in 2011, when the worst floods in half a century inundated Greater Bangkok after a period of heavy rainfalls on the city area and in the northern part of the watershed. Due to the high concentration of people and economic assets, any event impacting the area has the potential of significantly affecting lives, livelihoods and more in general, the country's economy.

Bangkok and its surrounding areas are only 0.5–2 metres above sea level, and land in the area is generally undergoing subsidence due to mismanagement of water resources and to the sheer weight of buildings (Sattaburuth, 2015). Exacerbated by sea-level rise and increased precipitation, this is a key concern for the city and the country (World Bank, 2010). The area is also prone to water shortages (as in 2005 and 2008), which tend to affect particularly hard rural livelihoods.

There are 306,536 registered migrants in Bangkok and inland surrounding provinces, and almost 500,000 in the Greater Bangkok area. Including

**Table 4: Numbers of workers holding work permits by nationality and region**

Region/area	Myanmar		Lao People's Democratic Republic		Cambodia		Total (NV+MOU)
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Bangkok	73,872	75.5	5,055	5.2	18,959	19.4	97,886
Bangkok vicinity	373,088	75.1	28,887	5.8	94,676	19.1	496,651
Central region	178,911	57.3	17,017	5.5	116,219	37.2	312,147
North	148,461	99.0	842	0.6	708	0.5	150,011
North-East	11,252	58.0	3,020	15.6	5,136	26.5	19,408
South	267,855	92.1	8,538	2.9	14,556	5.0	290,949
Thailand	1,053,439	77.1	63,359	4.6	250,254	18.3	1,367,052

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

**Table 5: Population statistics in Bangkok and Greater Bangkok**

Name	Area, km <sup>2</sup>	Population, 2000	Population, 2010	Density (inh/km <sup>2</sup> ), 2010	Residents
Bangkok Metropolis	1,568.74	6,355,144	8,249,117	5,258.60	5,693,884
Nonthaburi	622.3	816,614	1,333,623	2,143.10	1,179,777
Samut Prakarn	1,004.50	1,028,401	1,828,044	1,820.60	1,267,203
Pathum Thani	1,525.90	677,649	1,326,617	869.40	1,079,646
Samut Sakhon	872.30	466,281	885,559	1015.20	-
Nakhon Pathom	2,168.30	815,122	942,560	434.70	892,949
Greater Bangkok	7,762.00	10,159,211	14,565,520	1,876.64	10,648,888

Source: [www.citypopulation.de/php/thailand-admin.php](http://www.citypopulation.de/php/thailand-admin.php).

migrants with temporary permits, these figures jump respectively to 639,473 and close to 1 million (Table 6). All of them are far from their homes and sometimes from their families.

Bangkok is surrounded by a variety of industrial estates, from automotive and computer production to textile and fishery-related businesses, which employ most of the migrants. Many women are employed in domestic work, with over 30,000 having work permits in this region (out of a total of 39,000 migrant domestic workers with work permits in the entire country). Many migrants work in construction businesses in the region, comprising the bulk of the 240,000 migrants with work permits in the construction sector in the country. Almost 80 per cent of them are from Myanmar, and almost 40 per cent are women. Migrants are increasingly taking low-skilled, low-paying jobs that many Thais do not want. However, there is an intermingling of foreign workers and internal migrants across most industries and in the informal sector. 158,000 NV and 7,000 MOU migrants have work permits for various unspecified services. Around Bangkok, there are also a number of agricultural areas that

mainly employ migrants. Nakhon Pathom hosts many pig farms where Thais rarely work. Migrants work in poor conditions, mostly unregistered, receiving low wages.

Wages are generally higher in the region, particularly compared to border provinces. While there are undoubtedly many unregistered migrants in Greater Bangkok, many migrants have benefited from registration, and generally enjoy better working conditions and reduced exploitation.

### Gulf of Thailand

The Gulf of Thailand covers 320,000 km<sup>2</sup> and has a 2,637 km-long coastline, where 12 million people reside (ILO/ARCM, 2013). Its northern part is referred to as the Bay of Bangkok, encompassed to the west by the resort region of Hua Hin and to the east by the Chonburi province, often referred to as the Eastern seaboard. Further south the bay becomes the Gulf of Thailand proper, eventually reaching into the South China Sea.

The Rayong and Samut Prakarn coasts face serious pollution as a consequence of the discharge

**Table 6: Number of registered migrants in Bangkok and inland, surrounding provinces\***

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Bangkok	47,380	50,506	97,886	218,154	316,040
Nontaburi	47,784	11,764	59,548	38,276	97,824
Pathum Thani	108,727	19,780	128,507	58,902	187,409
Ayutthaya	6,297	5,528	11,825	12,325	24,150
Lop Buri	3,700	5,070	8,770	5,280	14,050
Total	213,888	92,648	306,536	332,937	639,473

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\*3 provinces excluded, less than 3,000 migrants in total.



**Table 7: Number of registered migrants in central and southern coastal provinces**

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Samut Prakarn	84,442	20,052	104,494	61,057	165,551
Samut Sakhon	133,424	26,203	159,627	57,911	217,538
Samut Songkhram	8,725	110	8,835	4,035	12,870
Phetchaburi	6,875	7,434	14,309	7,519	21,828
Prachuap Khirikhan	14,767	787	15,554	12,140	27,694
Ranong	49,410	14	49,424	11,047	60,471
Chumpon	10,805	9,625	20,430	14,919	35,349
Surathani	57,122	3,239	60,361	24,358	84,719
Total	365,570	67,464	433,034	192,986	626,020

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

of heavy metals and untreated wastewaters in the sea. Coastal ecosystems have also been damaged through the development of farming land and shrimp farms. The west side of the gulf, instead, boasts pristine beaches. Off the coast of Chumpon province, south of Hua Hin, are Koh Tao, Koh Phangan and Koh Samui, all major tourist destinations. On the other side of the thin Malay Peninsula, on the Andaman Sea, Phuket, Krabi and other areas also attract many international visitors.

The narrow peninsula also shares a mountainous, forested border with Myanmar. Part of the forest remains impenetrable, which caused the early isolation and separate political development of the region. The economy is based on rice cultivation for subsistence and rubber production for industry, and includes coconut plantations and tin mining.

Typhoons in the Gulf of Thailand are rare. However, the gulf has experienced a number of damaging cyclones and storm surges throughout the last decades. In 1992, Typhoon Gay hit Chumporn, killing 400 people in the province alone, affecting 145,000 people and 183,000 hectares of land (Phaksopa, 2006). It also triggered flash floods, exacerbated by deforestation, which damaged or destroyed thousands of homes and caused at least 365 fatalities. In 1997, typhoon Linda struck Prachuapkirikhan, resulting in 30 deaths, 102 people missing and more than 64,000 hectares of agricultural land destroyed (Ibid.).

Southern provinces are highly exposed to flooding (World Bank, 2012; Garbero and Muttarak, 2013), as the weather system brings two wet seasons a year. The six provinces on the Andaman Sea have up to eight months of rain each year. In 1998, more

than a metre of rain fell on Surat Thani and Nakhon si Thammarat, triggering thousands of flash floods and mudslides. As deforestation was a major contributor to these events, the disaster resulted in a revolt against logging and a ban on logging in Thailand (Usher, 2009). In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami hit the Andaman coast, killing 5,395 people, mainly in Phuket and Phanga. Migrants, mainly from Myanmar, many of them never identified, lost their life, assets and livelihoods.

### Migrants in the South and Far South

Most of the migrants around the Gulf of Thailand concentrate in its northern and eastern coasts. On the Bay of Bangkok, Samut Prakarn, a province with a mixed production base and many textile factories, and Samut Sakhon, an area heavily dependent on fishing and food processing, host respectively 104,494 and 159,627 migrants with work permits (Table 7). Including those with temporary permits, these numbers grow to respectively 217,000 and 165,000 registered migrants. Estimates of the total migrant presence in the Samut Sakhon province alone, however, amount to up to 300,000 individuals (Beesey, 2012; Sandar, 2011), making it the province with the highest density of migrant population. A similar proportion of undocumented migrants is to be expected in Samut Prakarn, where there is far less research and NGO presence, which could mean less knowledge among the migrants of the registration system. Over 90 per cent of migrants with work permits in Samut Sakhon are from Myanmar, as opposed to only 62 per cent in nearby Samut Prakarn, on the Cambodian side. Forty per cent of the migrants in Samut Parkarn and 47 per cent in Samut Sakhon are women.

## Box 2: Migrants' working conditions in Samut Sakhon

Most of Samut Sakhon's migrants live in Mahachai, Thailand's biggest fishing and seafood processing port. Recent research on migrants' working conditions in fish-processing factories in the area (Vartiala, 2015) has identified a series of challenges to migrants' security and well-being. Recruitment fees are still paid by the workers, and while the companies are moving in the right direction with due diligence, procedures for the respect of human rights, violations and forced labour still occur throughout their supply chains and grievance mechanisms are clearly inadequate.

There is no workers' union, and the salaries are very close to minimum wage. Even though the salary is generous for the migrant workers when compared to the wage level in Myanmar, it can only ensure a very humble standard of living in Thailand. The workers live in small rooms shared with several people. In order to be able to send money to their families back home, migrant workers try to work overtime regularly without getting any meaningful free time.

Exploitation of migrants from Myanmar in Samut Sakhon and neighbouring provinces is systematic (SIREN, 2007). Factories, including small factories and sweatshops are difficult to access and exploitation occurs. On occasions, police raids expose exploitation and even imprisonment of migrants in their worksites (IOM, 2004; Strategic Information Response Network (SIREN), 2007). This includes the exploitation of child labour. However, employers have come under pressure with increasing international and national pressure to abide by national labour standards. A recent study on child labour in Samut Sakhon among Cambodian migrants found it difficult to find underage workers in local factories.

Human trafficking practices have been prevalent in the area's fishery-related work for at least two decades. Even migrants who are, to some degree, protected from exploitation, have a reasonable income, are part of well-established communities and networks and speak Thai, can end up becoming victims of trafficking or forced labour (ILO/ARCM, 2013). Many migrants from Myanmar are reliant on brokers to reach Samut Sakhon from border areas. This leaves them in debt of up to THB 19,000, which may take several months to pay off (SIREN, 2007). Debt is strongly correlated with involvement in forced labour, as is irregular status. More than half of registered migrant workers experience some form of forced labour (Labour Rights Promotion Network and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2011).

Samut Sakhon was reached by the 2011 floods; however, it did not suffer great damage as the water was diverted to other provinces. Nonetheless, major export industries were brought to a stop, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, including migrant workers.

Samut Songkhram is immediately south of Samut Sakhon and mostly the destination of ethnic Mon migrants from Myanmar. Most migrants pay agents

up to THB 15,000 to reach the area. The migrant community in the area is well-established, with many long-term residents who speak Thai and earn decent wages. The total number of registered migrants in 2015 was 12,870, with total estimates of less than 20,000 individuals.

Prachuapkhiri and Chumpon have low numbers of registered migrants. The area hosts industries processing agricultural produce and seafood but

**Table 8: Number of registered migrants in the southern Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea\***

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Songkhla	46,570	16,512	63,082	12,145	75,227
Nakhon Srithammarat	14,199	5,019	19,218	7,736	26,954
Pattani	4,157	28	4,185	7,783	11,968
Satun	3,658	2,464	6,122	1,400	7,522
<b>Andaman Sea (West coast)</b>					
Krabi	13,701	1,279	14,980	4,019	18,999
Trang	8,069	1,660	9,729	3,988	13,717
Phanga	23,486	3	23,489	6,666	30,155
Phuket	13,823	926	14,749	20,711	35,460
Total	127,663	27,891	155,554	64,448	220,002

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\*4 provinces excluded, a total of less than 4,000 migrants.

**Table 9: Number of registered migrants in two western and two adjoining central provinces**

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Ratchaburi	21,909	1,418	23,327	12,774	36,101
Kanchanaburi	15,159	2,553	17,712	12,929	30,641
Suphanburi	5,328	274	5,602	5,630	11,232
Nakhon Pathom	37,664	6,811	44,475	30,688	75,163
Tak	27,037	3,136	30,173	34,222	64,395
Petchaboon	2,796	780	3,576	2,726	6,302
Total	109,893	14,972	124,865	98,969	223,834

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

no industrial estates. It appears that the majority of migrant workers in the area are undocumented. A study on factories in Prachuapkhirikhan found migrants' wages in the area to be well below the legal minimum, with irregular migrants receiving even lower wages than regular migrants. In addition, deductions were subtracted from wages for unknown reasons and fines imposed for 10-minute toilet breaks. ID papers were commonly withheld by employers, and working conditions were in general unsafe (Vartiala, 2013).

Ranong hosts a major port to the Andaman Sea and is a key entry and exit point for Myanmar migrants. It is also a hotspot of forced labour, with many men deceived or coerced onto fishing boats operating out of Mahachai, Songkhla, Pattani, Surat Thani or Trang (ILO/ARCM, 2013). Ranong hosts over 60,000 registered migrants, slowly increasing over recent years; however, it is likely that most of the local migrant workers are undocumented. It hosts a significant share of Rohingya migrants from Rakhine State, who are mostly stateless as Myanmar does not recognize them as citizens and who have no ID or other documents to register through the NV or MOU systems.

Surathani hosts a major port on the Gulf of Thailand and over 84,000 registered migrants. Like other southern provinces, it hosts many migrants employed in agriculture, especially in rubber plantations. Wages are likely to be low and conditions are poor for the majority of migrants. The increasing presence of Rohingya will generally add to the low rates of registration and high numbers of undocumented migrant workers.

The far south hosts a total of 155,554 migrants with work permits (220,000 including those with temporary permits). A little over half of the

migrants are found on the Andaman Sea, not including Ranong, which is further north on the Andaman Sea.

Songkhla hosts 63,000 NV and MOU migrants and a further 50,000 with temporary permits. Rubber plantations and other agricultural businesses employ many migrants, the majority of which is likely unregistered. Songkhla is also a major attraction to Malaysians for shopping, tourism and the sex industry. In a local border town commercial sex is the core economic activity, with as many as 120 establishments offering sex services. Many women from Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Yunnan are employed in sex businesses (Lyttleton, 2014). There appear to be situations where women may be forced into this type of activity, but Thais and migrants generally enter the industry voluntarily. Migrant sex workers, however, are highly vulnerable to exploitation (Beesey, 2008). In the tourist locations of the south, it is prevalently Thai women, mostly from the north-east, who cater for international tourists and expatriates.

Thai internal migrants have always been the mainstay of the workforce in the highly touristic areas along the Andaman Coast, but in recent years, increasing numbers of migrants from Myanmar are working in hotels and restaurants, mostly in lowly skilled occupations. Today, Phanga hosts over 30,000 migrant workers, Krabi about 19,000, and Phuket over 35,000, the majority of which have temporary work permits (Table 8). Phuket is likely to have more undocumented migrants in various occupations, including the service industry, as a consequence of the opportunities generated by the international tourism.



## Migrants in the West

The western provinces share a long, mostly mountainous border with Myanmar and host a variety of mining and extractive activities, dams and SBEZs. Much of the area is flood-prone, particularly Mae Sot and surrounding districts, which were affected by floods in 2010 and more severely in 2008, when a thousand people were left homeless by four consecutive days of rain (National News Bureau of Thailand (NNT), 2008). The area is also seismically active area; Kanchanaburi was affected by quakes in 1959 and 1983 and Tak in 1975.

The western provinces of Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi on the Thailand–Myanmar border have respectively over 36,000 and 30,000 registered migrants, including temporary permits, and are likely to host many more undocumented workers (Table 9). Kanchanaburi is a major crossing for migrants entering Thailand, many of whom head for Nakhon Phatom, the gateway to Greater Bangkok, which hosts over 75,000 registered migrants. Most migrants in the area are employed in agriculture. More than 90 per cent of the migrants in Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi are from

Myanmar, with over 95 per cent in Nakhon Pathom and Suphanburi. In general, women comprise 40 to 45 per cent of the total.

Tak shares a 300-km border with Myanmar and hosts 30,173 migrants with work permits, and over 34,000 with temporary permits, an estimated 150,000 unregistered migrants from Myanmar (Belton and Maung, 2004), and tens of thousands of refugees. Migrants comprise long- and short-term residents and people in transit through the area. Women constitute a majority among NV and MOU workers, with virtually all registered migrants from Myanmar.

The province is also the destination of most people displaced by the conflict in Myanmar, as well as home to four displacement sites. Thailand does not recognize them as refugees; however, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and other international agencies serve the camps' population – now amounting to about 120,000 people.

### Box 3: Migrants' working conditions in Mae Sot

The great majority of migrants in the Tak province live in Mae Sot and surrounding districts. Mae Sot is a transition point as much as it is a destination. It is one of the key nodes of the East-West Economic Corridor, a regional infrastructure being built to connect Viet Nam's sea ports on the Pacific with Mawlamyine on Myanmar's Andaman coast (Wongruang, 2014). Ten kilometres outside the city, the Thai–Myanmar Friendship Bridge crosses the Moei River to Myawaddy, an important market town in its own right, which became a special economic zone in 2011 (Lyttleton, 2014), and where a number of factories are being set up (Kongcheep, 2014). People from across the border have the right to cross into Mae Sot without passports for a one-day stay (Nobpaon and Hamayi, 2013). In addition, the city is along the main route to Samut Sakhon, Bangkok and other provinces further south.

In addition, the area is an SBEZ, where investments are encouraged through fiscal and customs privileges. This has led to the establishment of numerous labour-intensive factories, through joint ventures with Thai and foreign investors, to take advantage of cheap labour. The workforce in these factories ranges from a few dozen workers in small "house factories" to upwards of 2,000 in several sites (Lyttleton, 2014). In 2011, there were 331 factories in Mae Sot employing over 200,000 migrants (cited in Lyttleton, 2014).

Young women comprise the great majority of workers in garment factories, with more equal numbers of men and women in textile factories, where men work the heavy cloth-making machines. Men predominate in the furniture factories and agro-industry (Lyttleton, 2014). Child labour and related forms of exploitation are also common in the area (UNICEF, 2014).

Working conditions in the area are generally poor, with long hours and few breaks, workers crammed into sleeping rooms and little sanitary facilities. Wages are notoriously low, with 91.5 per cent of the migrants receiving less than the minimum wage and half receiving less than half the minimum wage. Jobs in agriculture and animal husbandry are particularly poorly paid, with almost three quarters of the migrants receiving less than half the minimum wage (Chantavanich, Middleton and Ito, 2013). Domestic workers earn around THB 2,500 per month and shop assistants between 1,400 and 4,000. Accommodation costs are often deducted from wages (Lyttleton, 2014).

Many workers opt to remain unregistered in order to save money and have more freedom to move between worksites. Raids are common, and workers are constantly arrested and sent back across the river every day, even though most come back within a day or two with no repercussions (Ibid.).

## Migrants in the North

The mountainous region of the upper north is composed of nine provinces and mostly borders Myanmar and, to a minor extent, Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is a catchment area for the floodplains of the south. Rivers springing in the region sustain Thailand's agricultural economy by supporting wet-rice cultivation and providing waterways for the transport of goods and people. However, their regime is now threatened by altered rainfall and temperature patterns (USAID, 2014). On occasions, the area has been affected by tropical storms from the Pacific Ocean in the east. Both in 2013 and 2014, typhoons dropped significant amounts of rain in the area, triggering landslides and floods (NNT, 2014; IFRC, 2013).

The northern provinces are traditional nodes of international trade, host a substantial industry in support of tourism and trade with neighbouring Myanmar and growing increasingly important as part of the trade corridor to China. The main international border crossings are in Chiang Rai, especially Mae Sai, bordering Tachilek, Shan State, via a bridge across the Mekong River. There is now also a border crossing at Chiang Khong, which was a busy ferry crossing into Huay Sai, Lao People's Democratic Republic up until the completion of the Friendship Bridge in 2014 (Lin and Grundy Warr, 2012).

This is also the area of the Golden Triangle, which in the past has supplied much of the world with heroin. Today, the Shan State is a major source of amphetamines for Thailand and the region. Wars have been fought around drugs and political security for decades and skirmishes continue today with the Myanmar military still fighting against

the Shan State Army South, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, with clashes reported as recently as August 2015 (Burma Partnership, 2015).

The area hosts about 1 million highland people of different ethnicities, of whom over 40 per cent are not citizens, have no political voice, no civil rights, and little access to services (Feingold, 2014).

There are over 100,000 registered migrants in Chiang Mai and 12,000 in Chiang Rai (Table 10). In Chiang Mai, nearly all registered migrants are from Myanmar. Women comprise almost 50 per cent of both the NV and the MOU migrants. Almost 4,000 dependants accompanied the 25,570 registered migrants with temporary permits.

Outside Chiang Mai, numbers of registered migrants are much lower, reflecting the small industrial base, low population density and high integration of migrants in a common cultural context – and therefore reduced interest in registration. The actual number of migrants is expected to be much higher, given the proximity to the Shan State in Myanmar, where many ethnic groups, particularly the Tai Yai, share language and culture with the Thais across the border. However, their area also hosts Chinese nationals, remnants of the Kuomintang with connections to Taiwan and different streams of migrants from Yunnan.

Between 1996 and 1999, 300,000 people were forced to move from Shan State into Thailand (MMN, 2014). They were undocumented, had no work permits and with limited access to education, health or rights. Many have lived in Thailand for long periods, even integrating into the Thai culture, but in the complicated process of registration and/or citizenship, are still not fully documented. Since

**Table 10: Number of registered migrants in upper and lower northern Thailand\***

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Chiang Mai	60,630	20,131	80,761	25,570	106,331
Chiang Rai	5,160	182	5,342	6,941	12,283
Phitsanulok	2,990	349	3,339	1,554	4,893
Lamphun	8,324	15	8,339	1,648	9,987
Nakhon Sawan	7,090	487	7,577	3,280	10,857
Khampaengphet	3,964	52	4,016	3,772	7,788
Total	88,158	21,216	109,374	42,765	152,139

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\*10 provinces excluded, total number of just over 11,000 migrants.

**Table 11: Number of registered migrants in North-East Thailand\***

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Nakon Ratchisima	60,630	20,131	80,761	25,570	106,331
(Korat)	6,179	5,510	11,689	13,522	25,211
Ubon Ratchatani	84	664	748	2,034	2,782
Khon Kaen	1,039	2,044	3,083	1,846	4,929
Loei	331	105	436	2,410	2,846
Total	7,633	8,323	15,956	19,812	35,768

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

\*10 provinces excluded, total number of just over 11,000 migrants.

then, many more have come across the border. Many migrants have been working illegally for decades, and still are.

In part as a consequence of their undocumented status, many migrants have used agents, bribes or their own guile to travel south, to commercial and industrial areas. For the women from Shan and highland minorities, occupation in the sex industry of the rest of the country is common (IOM, 2004). Chiang Mai, in particular, is traditionally a source area for sex workers in Bangkok and surrounding areas, including, in recent decades, for women from Thai ethnic minorities, Shan State and Yunnan.

### Migrants in the North-East

In the north-eastern part of the country, the Khorat Plateau drains into the Mekong through the Mun River. Most of the border between Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic follows the Mekong, which then flows to Cambodia before reaching the delta in Viet Nam. Dams built by China and Lao People's Democratic Republic, upstream and downstream on the Mekong River, are altering the river ecosystem and threaten the livelihoods, local economies and food security of millions of people (Middleton, 2012).

Poor soil and the long, dry season make the region the least agriculturally productive and the poorest in the country (Garbero and Muttarak, 2013). Most of the area is unfertile and widespread cassava and eucalyptus cultivation have contributed to land degradation (Usher, 2009). Droughts and floods further undermine rural livelihoods in the region.

Largely as a consequence of lack of local livelihood options and widespread poverty, the north-east is the primary source of internal migrants, millions of whom reside in Bangkok and its vicinity.

The north-east of Thailand has very few registered migrants, reflecting the lack of big industries and its overall levels of poverty. Only Korat has substantial numbers, mostly from Myanmar and Cambodia (Table 11).

Workers from Lao People's Democratic Republic tend not to register in high numbers in this region, which is the Lao-speaking area of the country, as they tend to be well integrated into the local populous and do not see the need for registration. The area, however, is relatively affluent compared to Lao People's Democratic Republic, which is the primary source of migration to the region.

### Migrants in the East

Eastern Thailand lies between the Gulf of Thailand and Cambodia. It comprises the provinces of Chonburi, Rayong, Chantaburi, Trad and Chacheungsao along the coast – an area known as the Eastern Seaboard, a highly industrialized area with numerous export-oriented industrial estates and a major seaport in Chonburi. Pattaya and four islands off the coast are major tourist destinations. The region is strategically located along the trade route with Cambodia – with most of trade activities concentrated in the major border crossing of Aranyaprathet in the Sakeo Province.

Migrants from all three countries are present in each of the provinces of the region. About 200,000 have work permits and another 200,000 have temporary permits.

Chonburi and Rayong have the greatest concentration of registered migrants. Chonburi stands out with 131,108 migrants with work permits (Table 13), 53,000 from Myanmar and more than 68,000 from Cambodia. Chonburi has an additional 100,000 migrants with temporary

**Table 12: Migrants' rights and access to services as a result of their legal status**

	Regular (NV and MOU)	Semi-regular*	Irregular	Note
Legal status	Legal	Registered (semi-regular) migrants are still officially in illegal status and subject to deportation, but are given permission to stay and work temporarily in Thailand. They can become fully regularized by completing nationality verification to obtain documentation issued by the government of their country of origin.	Illegal, as per the Immigration Act (1979). Irregular migrants are subject to detention and deportation.	A number of registered migrants become irregular if they change employers due to strict restrictions on changing employers. The identification issued for registered migrants clearly indicates the name of employer and it is employer's responsibility to inform authorities when their employment has come to an end.
Documentation	Possess all legal documentation including travel document issued by country of origin, visa and work permit.	Awaiting passport issued by the country of origin. However, registered migrants obtain a temporary non-Thai identification card issued by the Government of Thailand.	No documentation that provides legal status.	In case documentation is lost or withheld by employers, even documented migrants may be vulnerable to abuse or deportation.
Freedom of movement	Migrants enjoy freedom of movement as long as they have a travel document with valid visa.	Migrants are not allowed to travel outside their province of residence, unless they fall into these categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic workers can travel if accompanying their employers;</li> <li>- Employees in fishing or sea shipping industry can travel by vessel and stay in port areas of the destination provinces;</li> <li>- If they are called to present in court;</li> <li>- If moving for medical reasons (need provincial approval);</li> <li>- If they change employer or employer notifies authorities of the new designated work area (need provincial approval).</li> </ul>	Irregular migrants are, by definition, not permitted to stay in the country and therefore by law have no freedom of movement. They are all subject to detention and deportation if arrested, with the exception of those identified as victims of trafficking.	
Access to health care	Full access to health care with social security coverage for those who are formally employed. However, only around 40% of regular migrants are actively enrolled in the Social Security Fund (SSF).	All registered migrants are required to purchase health insurance from the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) as part of the registration process. Registered migrants can also access benefits under the Workmen's Compensation Fund, for those who suffered injuries and illness or death during or as a result of performing their work duties.	In principle, irregular migrants can access health care through the MOPH insurance scheme. However, there are different practices across Thailand, and in most areas irregular migrants do not access health insurance because of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- they are not willing to purchase the insurance as they are afraid their status will be exposed to authorities;</li> <li>- health service providers may not sell insurance to irregular migrants.</li> </ul>	Formal ability to access health care does not mean that migrants are effectively able to access such services (due to language barriers and others).



	Regular (NV and MOU)	Semi-regular*	Irregular	Note
Access to justice	In principle, regular migrants have full access to justice as they are fully protected by relevant civil, penal and labour protection law.	In principle, they have full access to complaint mechanisms. For cases of labour exploitation and forced labour, they are fully protected under criminal code and, if identified as victim of trafficking, under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. This group of migrants is not subject to deportation if they appear before the court or get in contact with law enforcement officers.	No access to justice unless they are identified as victim of trafficking in persons.	
Labour protection	Full labour protection by the Labour Protection Act.	In principle, they are entitled to be fully protected by the Labour Protection Act.	In principle, irregular migrants are also protected by the Labour Protection Act.	The Labour Protection Act provides broad coverage to all workers, irrespective of their status. Sectors such as agriculture, fishing and domestic work, however, are outside the purview of the law. In 2014, the Government issued regulations for the fishing and agricultural sectors. Relevant laws that also provide protection for workers throughout the recruitment and employment process include the following: - Labour Protection Act (1998); - Job-Seeker Protection Act (1985); - Criminal Code; - Social Security Act; - Workmen's Compensation Act; - Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008). Migrant workers in either regular or semi-regular status are generally tied to one employer and can only change employer under limited circumstances and with the agreement of the old and new employers.
Access to social security	In principle, regular migrants can enjoy all social security benefits and services. However, in reality, many of the benefits are not accessible even to regular migrants (such as unemployment benefits).	No access to social security. Migrants can access health care through the health insurance scheme, although the benefit package is more limited than that provided under the SSF. Moreover, they are not entitled to enjoy benefits other than health, such as unemployment benefit and children's benefit.	No access to social security.	Access is often limited by the employers' lack of compliance with relevant regulations.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

\* Semi-regular migrants have registered with the Government of Thailand and now awaiting nationality verification. Once they have completed the process, they will obtain a passport issued by the country of origin and a visa and work permit issued by the relevant Thai authorities and thereby become regular migrants.

**Table 13: Number of registered migrants in the Eastern Seaboard area**

Province	Migrants with work permits		NV+MOU	Temporary permits	Total
	NV	MOU			
Sara Buri	4,030	5,179	9,209	11,773	20,982
Chonburi	94,115	36,993	131,108	96,279	227,387
Rayong	18,758	4,842	23,600	45,023	68,623
Trad	6,436	1,378	7,814	13,293	21,107
Chantaburi	3,856	1,613	5,469	18,207	23,676
Chacheungsao	6,766	7,057	13,823	5,283	19,106
Prachinburi	2,970	3,266	6,236	9,836	16,072
Nakon Nayok	1,209	4,064	5,273	3,289	8,562
Sakeo	464	154	618	8,739	9,357
Total	138,604	64,546	203,150	211,722	414,872

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, MOL.

permits, including 4,000 dependants. Rayong has around 13,000 migrants from Cambodia and almost 10,000 from Myanmar with work permits, and an additional 45,000 migrants with temporary permits, plus 2,000 dependants. Cambodians dominate the fishing ports, especially those going out on Thai boats from Rayong (ILO/ARCM, 2013).

Migrants come from everywhere in Cambodia, including those from the eastern border with Viet Nam. For many recurring flood and droughts, fragile rural livelihoods, lack of income opportunities and debts have played a strong role in the decision to migrate (Bylander, 2013, cited in Lebel, 2013; Middleton et al., 2013).

# THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HAZARDS

Thailand is prone to a variety of hazards, particularly recurrent floods and storms, and widespread droughts. Such hazards hit often, and sometimes simultaneously, as in the case of the 2010 floods and droughts. Some regions are seismically active, even though no recent earthquake has heavily affected highly populated areas.

Storms, heavy rains and landslides can occur in a number of regions in the country, and are mostly linked with the rain associated with the monsoon season. Exposure to mudslide and flash flood is relatively high in mountainous provinces in the north and along the western border, as well as provinces exposed to tropical cyclones in the upper southern region. In 2012, mudslides after heavy and continued rainfalls occurred in remote villages in Chiang Mai and nearby provinces up north.

Tropical storms often come from the east through Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam and make landfall in the northern parts of the country, from where water flows downstream into the South (World Bank, 2012). Typhoons and storm surges hit the areas around the Gulf, and can cause severe coastal flood inundation, particularly when in conjunction with high tide periods. While relatively rare, such events have caused much devastation, for instance in 1962, 1989 and 1997. Coastal areas are also prone to tsunamis: the 2004 one, which killed over 5,000 people, was confined to the Andaman Sea coasts, far from highly populated areas but a major tourist destination.

Environmental change is also of concern in the country. Overfishing has already become a fundamental environmental and economic problem (see box 4), while management of urban and industrial waste and pollution are key issues for the Gulf, surrounded by major industries, ports and tourist resorts. Improper disposal of urban waste in canals and drains is a factor in floods in Bangkok, while beaches in Pattaya and Hua Hin have been severely degraded. Throughout the country, environmental mismanagement affects streams and rivers and the ecology of large tracts of fertile land. Forests continue to be degraded despite a 1989 ban on logging (Usher, 2009). Enforcement of existing environmental regulations is often insufficient, including due to corruption. The current government is clamping down on corruption and engaging strongly on protecting natural areas. It is, however, being criticized for evicting from the boundaries of national parks and nature reserves not only businesses but also communities that have long lived in balance with surrounding ecosystems (Pawakapan, 2015).

In addition, the effects of climate change are being – and over the next decades increasingly will be – felt throughout the country. Sea-level rise, exacerbated by land subsidence, is threatening Bangkok and much of the economic core of the country, through loss of land and saltwater intrusion. The Foresight project has estimated that in 2002, the population residing in low-elevation coastal zones in Thailand

**Table 14: Levels of disaster risk in Thailand and readiness to respond**

Types of disaster	Hazard	Vulnerability	Management	Disaster risk	Numeric weight of risk
Flood	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	2.39
Typhoon	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	2.31
Earthquake	Low	Low	Poor	Moderate	1.97
Landslide	Moderate	Low	Poor	Moderate	2.15
Drought	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	2.24
Fire	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	2.20

Source: Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM), Ministry of Interior (MOI), 2012 (Rerngnirunsathit, 2012).

**Table 15: Hazard timeline in Thailand**

Hazard	Period/Season
Cold spell	October–January
Drought	January–May
Flood	October–November June–September
Landslide	October–November June–September
Tropical cyclone	March–May
Earthquake	Year round
Storm surge	October–November

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

was almost 16.5 million, or 26 per cent of the total. The numbers now have undoubtedly increased well beyond these estimates, with numbers of internal migrants swelling over the past 13 years (Lebel, 2013). Increased temperatures and rainfall frequency and intensity also threaten people's lives and property, as well as ecosystem health and the economic viability of entire sectors (in particular agriculture, food processing and tourism) (Garbero and Muttarak, 2013).

## FLOODS

Floods are the most frequent and costly natural hazard in Thailand, particularly affecting the central plains, a lowland area drained by the Chao Phraya River and its tributaries that feed into the delta at the head of the Bay of Bangkok. The lower portion of the floodplains, north of and around Bangkok, regularly experience flooding.

Between 1992 and 2002, over 60 provinces were affected each year. Recent events, especially the 2011 record events, but also 2010 and 2013, have again showed how pressing an issue this is. "The extent of damage varies from year to year, sometimes reaching hundreds of million dollars and affecting more than 2 to 3 million households" (Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), 2010).

In 2001, severe damage resulted as the country was flooded 14 times; 60 provinces were affected with 244 people killed and losses for THB 3,666 million. Floods also damaged a significant number

of fish and shrimp ponds and almost 5 million hectares of agricultural land. In 2005, 48 provinces were affected by 6 flood events, which resulted in 27 deaths and losses for THB 4,700 million (DDPM, 2010). In 2010 and 2011, floods were reported as damaging a total of around 1,800,000 hectares, with estimated losses of THB 16 billion (USD 536.6 million) in 2010 (Garbero and Mukarat, 2013) and a massive THB 1.3 trillion (USD 46 billion) in 2011 (World Bank, 2011). 266 people lost their lives in 2010, with almost all provinces affected (Garbero and Mukarat, 2013), and 652 in 2011. Several hundred private and public health facilities were damaged in 2011, including private hospitals, medical and dental clinics, in addition to as many as 1.5 million homes and other structures, with around 300,000 homes being damaged in the greater Bangkok Metropolitan Region alone (Phongsathorn, 2012).

Floods again hit the country in 2012, affecting more than 2.2 million people, and causing estimated economic losses for THB 715 million. Many of the southern provinces were underwater for a month in January and then again in late December. Parts of north, north-eastern and upper southern Thailand and the central plain were inundated during the monsoon season between August and October.

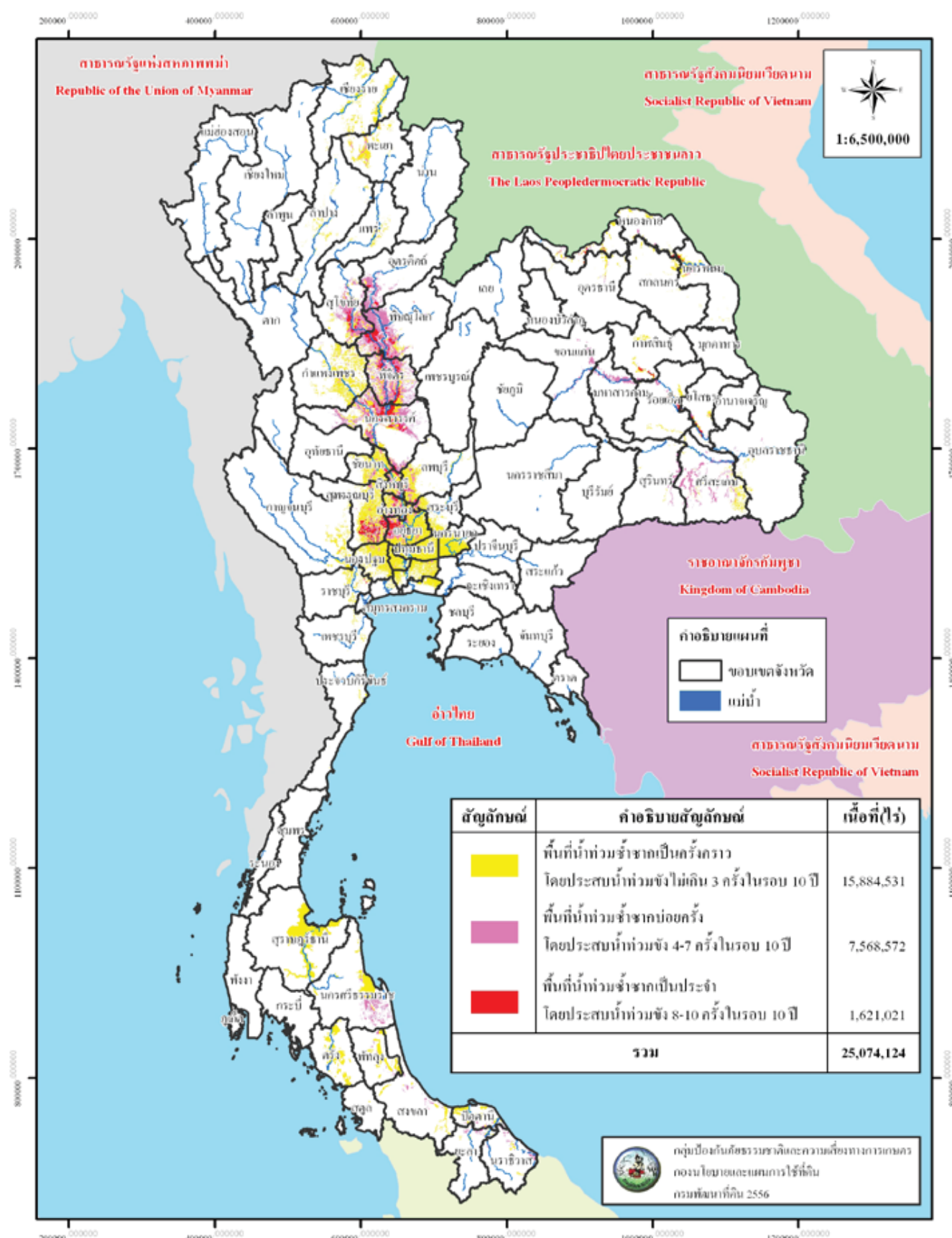
The 2012 record reflects the pattern of flood following rainfall. Located where monsoon troughs usually form, the southern provinces, and in particular Surat Thani and Ranong, are exposed to heavy rainfall and storms the year round. Chumphon and Prachuab Kirikhan experience severe flash flood during the monsoon season. Flash floods in these provinces can cause widespread damage as they tend to affect urban areas.

## DROUGHTS

Droughts are particularly frequent in the north-east, but also affect the north, and to a more limited extent, the central plains, the east and south (ONEP, 2010). Their occurrence all over Thailand appears to be increasing in severity, and it is estimated that roughly three times as many people are exposed to droughts than floods in the country (World Bank, 2012). In 2001, drought in 51 provinces affected 18,933,905 people, and damaged 274,030 hectares of agricultural land, costing THB 72 million



Figure 1: Flood hazard map



Source: NDPMP (2010–2014), DDPM, MOI.

Red areas faced 8-10 floods in the last 10 years, pink areas 4-7, yellow areas 3 or less. Floods mainly occurred in the central plains, as well as in some southern provinces that are crossed by major rivers.

(DDPM, 2010). In 2005, drought in 71 provinces affected 11,147,627 people, and caused losses for THB 7,566 million to 2,197,865 hectares of land (DDPM, 2015a). The 2010 drought damaged around 274,600 hectares of land with estimated losses of THB 1.5 billion (USD 46 million) (Garbero and Mukarat, 2013). In 2012, drought affected more than 575 districts in 53 provinces. The north-eastern provinces were again among the worst affected, together with Chachoengsao and Phuket.

The damage from an extensive drought in 2015 has not yet been assessed; however, emergency measures have been undertaken in most provinces of the north and north-east. Farmers in the central plains, sometimes referred to as the “rice bowl of Asia” (who are used to cropping two or three times per year, have been advised not to plant second rice crops, as a number of dams are at critically low levels. The priorities for the four main dams were water storage for consumption until April 2016, ecological preservation and pushing back seawater. At the same time, the densely populated areas of Greater Bangkok use enormous amounts of water, including for manufacture, hotels, golf courses and others. Hospitality services, in particular, rarely come under water restrictions. Instead, it is often

the farmers who pay for the conditions of water scarcity, many of them going deeper into debt.

The impact of droughts on the central plain can be severe and long-lasting, especially for farmers. Poor farmers whose crops fail contract debts to purchase rice for consumption. It is not surprising that the bulk of internal migrants in Thailand come from the north-east. This causal relationship also shows up in Myanmar migrants coming from the dry zone, and Cambodian migrants coming from drought-stricken areas in Siem Reap.

## HAZARDS OCCURRENCE IN HIGH IMMIGRATION AREAS

The public database of the DDPM records the occurrence of tsunamis, earthquakes, storms industrial accidents, floods, mudslides and droughts at the provincial level. The database provides an overview of relative levels of disaster occurrence, frequency and impacts in each province.

### Box 4: Overfishing

In April 2015, the European Union gave Thailand a “yellow card” for failing to deal with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Gulf of Thailand. The government was given six months to redress the sector’s practices or face an import ban on seafood. The government amended the fishing law in July 2015. Illegal fishing gear (such as small mesh nets) has been banned, and fishing boats now need to register in order to be authorized to fish. The government is developing a monitoring system to keep track of the fishing boats and their catch, and as a result they may avoid the ban.

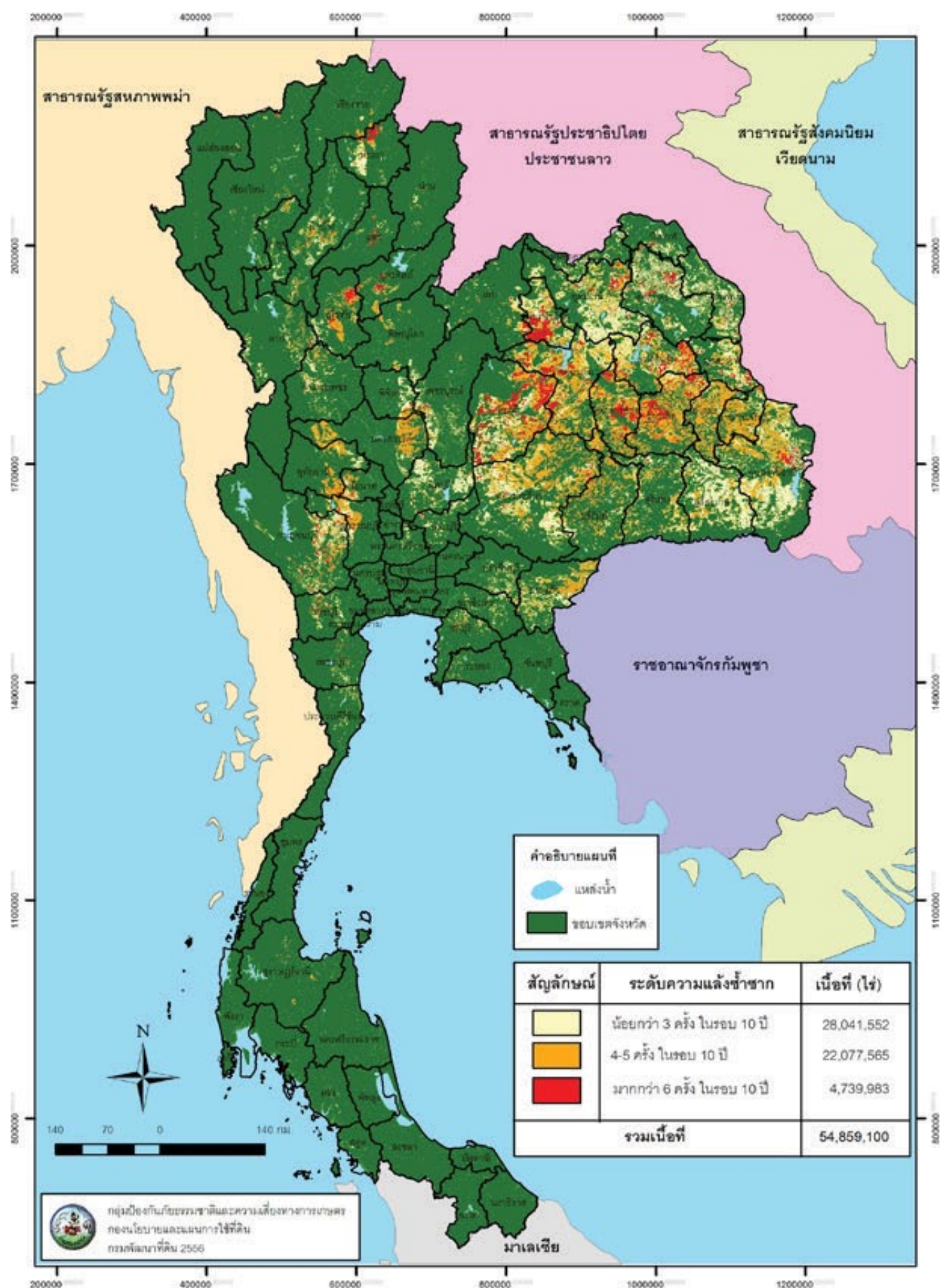
On average, 1.2 million tons of fish are caught yearly in the country. Commercial boats, which comprise 20 per cent of all boats, are used to catch 90 per cent of the fish. As large illegal trawlers are not operating anymore, 50,000 small boats are providing the bulk of the catch. This has led to a shortage of seafood and a resultant price rise (Bangkok Post, 2015b).

Three decades of bottom trawling might have already caused long-term damage to local marine ecosystems, potentially jeopardizing the livelihoods of a large number of fisherfolks. Using fine mesh nets, this method allows to scoop up large amounts of baby fish and “trash fish” for animal food or feed for prawn farms. The problem has been acknowledged since 1996 and records show that there have been significant declines in annual catches since the early 2000s (ILO/ARCM, 2013). The industry, however, warns about the potential economic losses and the risk for local jobs represented by the enactment of measures to fight overfishing (Ekachai, 2015). The Department of Fisheries has reportedly agreed to reduce the number of trawlers, yet it is likely that overfishing will resume as soon as trawler owners adapt to the government-imposed restrictions (Ibid.).

The impact of the ban would be detrimental to Thai exports and economy, at a time when GDP growth is already being revised downward. The Thai economy is dependent on a healthy gulf, as the fishing industry provides Thailand with employment, trade and investment opportunities, and supports the food security of its people (ILO/ARCM, 2013). Neighbouring countries, through trade and remittances, are also dependent on the health of the gulf.

Disruption of the fisheries sector would have implications for other industrial sectors, such as seafood processing, storage, transportation and trade, impacting communities and businesses, as well as domestic and international consumers (IOM/ARCM, 2013). Migrant workers, who are essential to the functioning of this sector, would suffer particularly heavy consequences; not only would they lose their jobs, but also their registration and work permits in case they could not find new employers.

Figure 2: Drought hazard map

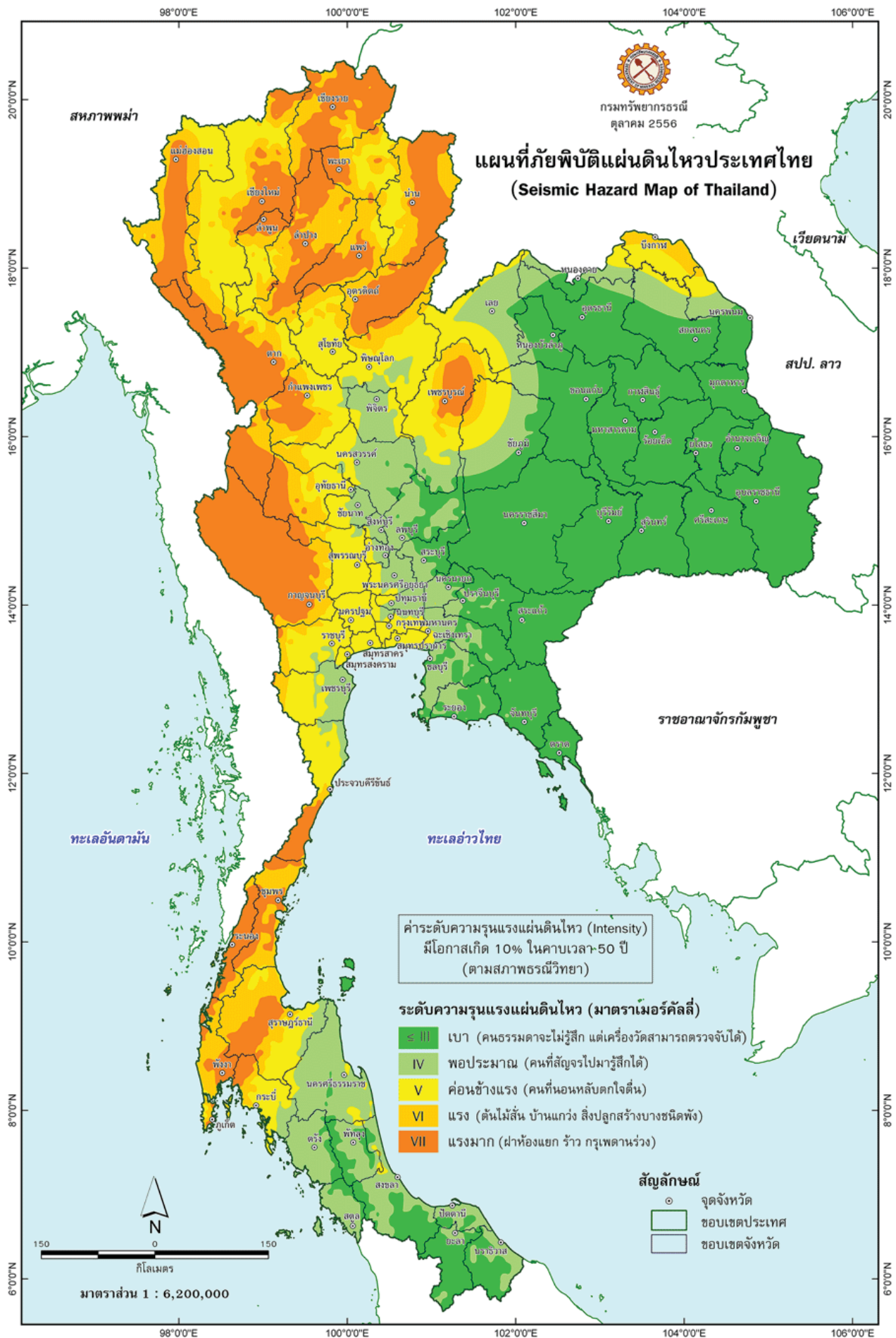


Source: NDPMP (2010–2014), DDPM, MOI.

Red areas faced drought 6 times or more in the last 10 years, yellow areas 4-5, beige areas 3 or less. Most of the northeastern provinces are drought-prone.



Figure 3: Seismic hazard map



Source: NDPMP (2010–2014), DDPM, MOI.

The map shows potential for earthquakes in Thailand. The northern and western regions are more exposed, as they are situated along active fault lines.

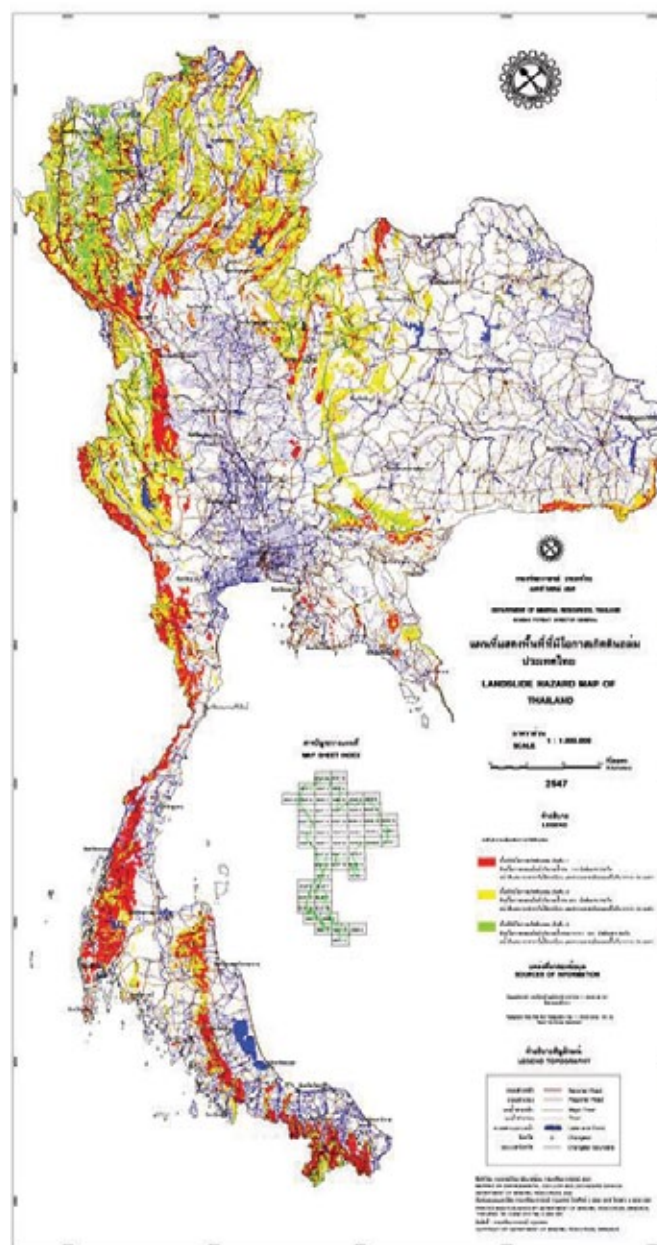


The natural hazards taken into consideration in this assessment include flood and mudslides, earthquakes, storms, droughts and tsunami. To briefly sum up the relevant natural hazard patterns, flood occurrence is very likely in the central plains with the exception of the coastal provinces. Mountainous provinces in the north and along the western border are exposed to mudslides and flash flood after heavy rainfall. The provinces along the western border are also exposed to seismic activities due to their short proximity to active fault lines, which also makes the south-western coastal provinces tsunami-prone areas. Exposure to typhoons and windstorms is high in the south, especially in the provinces situated in the steepest part of Thailand connecting the Malay Peninsula (Prachuab Kirikhan and Chumphon).

Table 16 shows the occurrence of all these events in the provinces with the highest concentration of migrants. Floods are clearly the most relevant hazard overall. With the exception of Samut Sakhon and Pathum Thani, all the 10 provinces hosting the most migrants are highly exposed to floods, and all the analysed provinces present at least a medium level of exposure. Flash floods and mudslides are of particular concern in Chiang Mai, Songkhla, Tak, Phuket and Ratchaburi – areas that host a total of about 350,000 documented migrants. Chonburi, with 235,000 migrants, is also highly exposed to droughts, as are Ratchaburi and Prachuab Kirikhan, which host an additional 70,000 migrants. Prachuab Kirikhan and Chumphon are also highly exposed to cyclones.

While exposure to hazards is higher in the southern provinces, the central plains, where most migrants reside, are highly exposed to recurring and potentially severe flooding events, which in recent years have triggered costly, frequent disasters with long-lasting impacts.

**Figure 4: Landslide hazard map**



Source: NDPMP (2010–2014), DDPM, MOI.

The map shows landslide-prone areas as of 2004. All the most exposed areas are situated along mountain ranges receiving high amounts of rainfall, mainly in the South and in the West.

Table 16: Occurrence of natural hazards in high-immigration provinces

	Provinces	Migrants*	Flood and mudslide	Drought	Cyclone	Earthquake	Tsunami
1	Bangkok	318,635	High (protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	-
2	Chonburi	235,068	High (non-protracted inundation in most of affected areas)	High	Low	Very low	Low
3	Samut Sakhon	224,574	Medium (non-protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	Low
4	Pathum Thani	187,906	Medium (protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	-
5	Samut Prakan	168,009	High (non-protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	Low
6	Chiang Mai	109,798	High (flash flood, mudslide and non-protracted inundation)	Medium	Medium	Low	-
7	Nonthaburi	98,654	High (protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	-
8	Surat Thani	94,693	High (flash flood, mudslide and protracted inundation)	Low	Medium	Low	Low
9	Songkhla	77,953	High (non-protracted inundation; flash flood in some areas)	Low	Low	Very low	Low
10	Nakhon Pathom	76,094	High (protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Low	-
11	Rayong	75,465	Medium (non-protracted inundation, flash flood and mudslide)	Low	Low	Very low	Low
12	Tak	64,863	High (flash flood and non-protracted inundation)	Medium	Medium	Medium	-
13	Ranong	64,425	Medium (flash flood, mudslide and non-protracted inundation)	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
14	Chachoengsao	40,663	Medium (mostly protracted inundation)	Low	Low	Very low	Low
15	Phuket	38,592	High (flash flood and mudslide, with possibility of inundation in some areas)	Low	Low	Low	Medium
16	Ratchaburi	37,558	High (non-protracted flash flood and inundation)	High	Low	Low	-
17	Prachuab Kirikhan	33,053	Medium (non-protracted flash flood and inundation)	High	High	Low	Low
18	Kanchanaburi	31,740	Medium (flash flood)	Medium	Low	Medium	-
19	Phang-Nga	31,440	Medium (non-protracted inundation, flash flood and mudslide)	Low	Low	Low	Medium
20	Chumphon	30,811	Medium (non-protracted inundation, flash flood and mudslide)	Low	High	Low	Low

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

\* Aggregated number of MOU and NV migrants from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, as of July 2015. This figure does not include pre-2015 registered migrant workers awaiting nationality verification.

# MIGRANTS' VULNERABILITY TO DISASTERS AND OTHER CRISES

Migration can be a risky, costly endeavor and result in negative outcomes on people's well-being and security, both in their daily life and in times of crisis. In Thailand's complex system, with different levels of recognition and protection for different groups of migrants, the level of vulnerability can be heavily influenced by the individual migrants' legal status, which reflects on their ability to access services, freedom of movement and all other elements that shape their day-to-day life in the country (see Table 13). It is the interplay of migrants' individual characteristics (such as gender, age, ethnicity and skill levels) with migration policies and the practices of recruiters, employers and middlemen that shape migrants' risk landscape.

It should be noted that some of these conditions are also common among Thai internal migrants, who end up living and working in similarly insecure and unsafe environments. However, internal migrants are not "illegal", are free to move in the country and do not face, at least in principle, restrictions to accessing basic services. They do not face the threat of deportation if undocumented or approaching deadlines for registration or completing a four-year stint as a worker, and do not normally live in fear of arrest.

Migrants who are forced to use brokers and smugglers in order to migrate often have increased levels of debts, and face higher risk of being deceived into trafficking or forced labour. The situation is more likely among undocumented workers; however, even NV and MOU migrants might need to resort to brokers of various kinds as part of their registration process. Cambodians, for instance, are required to use a private employment agency to be paid up front; for poorer migrants, this means having to contract debts with the agency or their future employer (Harkins, 2014). The primary legislation for protecting migrant workers during the recruitment process is the 1985 Recruitment Job Seekers Protection Act. However, formidable obstacles and constraints exist for migrant workers to even attempt to access such complaint mechanisms (ILO/ARCM, 2013).

Low-skilled workers are particularly likely to work in exploitative, unsafe and unhealthy conditions. The Government of Thailand's response to the issue of occupational health and safety has been limited to providing medical care or financial compensation rather than prevention (WHO, 2011). The relevant 1994 Workmen's Compensation Act applies to migrants with restrictions. Even documented migrants are therefore very unlikely to work in conditions of safety.

Migrants who are denied even the marginal levels of access to legal protections and redress mechanisms, such as the irregular ones, are more likely to be trapped into situations of abuse. Many live in fear of being reported to the authorities and avoid any contacts with local institutions, including basic service providers. Many more migrants, however, including many documented ones, enjoy very limited levels of visibility and representations, due to lack of compliance of their employers with labour regulations and lack of access to unions and workers' representation.

Thailand, in particular, has not ratified several conventions pertaining to workers' rights to organize, freedom of association, occupational safety and health, injury and benefits, inspections for industry and agriculture, and migration.

In the face of disasters and other crises, these situations often translate in specific conditions of vulnerability. Other determinants of migrants' vulnerability include proximity to the border, as well as the presence of NGOs or strong migrant networks in the area.

## Registration

Registered migrants, particularly those employed in large factories, large construction sites and plantations employing many registered migrants, tend to be known to the authorities. In case of a disaster, district-level officials should be able to identify where they are, either through their own records or a database at the district or central level. Many of the work sites will have a mix of

registered and non-registered migrant workers. The government has requested employers to inform them of unregistered workers; however, it is doubtful that reliable numbers will be available.

Monitoring and tracking the whereabouts and situation of unregistered migrants in times of crisis to ensure they can be reached with the appropriate assistance and support services is challenging. This was a common issue during the 2011 floods, as even though there were numerous international and national organizations willing to provide support to migrants, knowing where the migrants were and how to access them was often impossible. The situation was only made worse by the reluctance of many migrants to come out to seek or receive support and assistance because they feared they would be deported, arrested or abused.

### Freedom of movement

Limitations to freedom of movement are embedded in many migrant categories' status, and particularly in the regulations concerning migrants with temporary permits, who are not allowed to leave their province of residence and have permits tied to a specific employer. However, limitations also depend on malpractices by employers and

recruiters, such as in the case of employers illegally withholding passports to prevent migrant workers from leaving or looking for a different job. Moving is inherently risky for undocumented migrants.

In case of emergencies, such limitations can reduce migrants' capacity to evacuate, access services and assistance, and return home. During the 2011 floods, migrants were fearful to leave their residence, or their place of work due to fear of arrest. While this was most apparent in the case of undocumented migrants, documented migrants had reasons to fear that leaving their flood-affected workplace or province would make them technically "illegal" and subject to arrest and deportation.

### Access to information

Even during non-emergency situations, migrants' ability to obtain exhaustive information on procedures to obtain regular status and official documentation, and access to health care, social services, labour protection and complaints mechanisms is limited due to discrimination, language barriers, migrants' limited options for coordinating, unionizing and participating to public affairs, and the nature/location of their work. During times of crisis, this ability is further restricted and

## Box 5: Challenges to accessing health care

Since 2002, Thailand has supported the idea of universal health care. Through the 2009 Announcement by the Ministry of Public Health on Health Examinations and Insurance for Migrant Workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia, registered migrants were covered by the Migrant Health Insurance scheme, as well as the SSF. Irregular migrants were given the option to buy into the scheme; however, few have actually subscribed.

Whether public hospitals actually give migrants access to care is largely dependent on individual hospital policies (Harkins, 2014). Hospitals receive resources through the Migrant Health Insurance Scheme and the SSF for registered migrant workers. As a consequence, irregular migrants, and particularly those who have not bought in the scheme, risk being inadequately attended or refused treatment. This also applies to registered migrants who are not enrolled in the system as a consequence of their employer's negligence.

Even registered migrants, however, do not often have access to quality, comprehensive care, as discriminations are common and hospital staff tend to prioritize scarce resources to assist Thais. Migrant workers in factories who have access to quality health services are the exception rather than the rule, especially among the hundreds of factories in Mae Sot and Samut Sakhon.

Migrant Health Insurance is not generally portable, as it is linked to the hospital where the migrant originally registered. This poses serious problems in case migrants move within the country, as they may find themselves forced to travel long distances in order to access care.

At the same time, health services that non-Thais are eligible for are often underutilized, or not used at all. Even documented migrants may not be aware of the policies in place and services that are available to them (Lyttleton, 2015), while undocumented migrants are resigned to a small number of NGO clinics, private or for-profit clinics, and hospitals that are overburdened and without budgets to treat those who cannot afford services.

Existing policies and legal frameworks are not conducive to inclusive approaches and do not remove barriers for migrants and mobile populations to access quality health services. The majority of Thai nationals can access a free or affordable health and welfare services. However, too many people within Thailand's borders experience language, cultural, socioeconomic and transportation issues that limit their access to such services. NGOs and the private sector have only partly able to fill this gap.



the related conditions of vulnerability amplified at a time when it is even more important that they can access timely and accurate information on how to seek and receive assistance, support services and guidance on appropriate measures to take to ensure their safety and security.

### Access to shelters and assistance

In times of crisis, all foreign workers should, at least in principle, be treated equally. During the 2011 floods, all migrants who got into designated shelters received assistance. However, despite the efforts of the Government of Thailand to set up dedicated evacuation shelters, many migrants were reportedly not able to access them due to the lack of appropriate transportation and their distance from migrants' usual living and working locations. Migrants therefore ended up having relatively restricted options for assistance.

In principle, all migrants are entitled to access health care in emergencies. Registered migrants with work permits, however, can access health care only at the one hospital specified on their ID card. In case their designated hospital may not be accessible during emergencies, they would be in the same situation as undocumented migrants, accessing health services under emergency conditions. The level of care for Thai nationals in public hospitals is relatively low, and service provision for migrants during emergencies is likely to be even lower due to discriminations in health-care provisions. Hospitals, particularly those in high-immigration areas, might prioritize Thai nationals, then documented migrants, and last undocumented migrants. However, some hospitals, particularly in high-immigration areas, have started providing dedicated services to migrant communities, including in collaboration with NGOs – for instance by hiring bilingual staff and volunteers.

### Livelihoods

The economic and employment impacts of crises might be felt particularly hard by migrants, who tend to have reduced access to secure livelihoods and in general income opportunities, as well as limited savings and safety nets. During the 2011 floods, many migrants were working in factories that were flooded and had to cease their operations, leading to the subsequent loss of jobs. There were very little safety nets available for these migrants; even the few who were enrolled in Social Security were

unable to access unemployment insurance, as this benefit is not accessible to migrant workers.

### Extortion, exploitation and trafficking

Crisis situations, and the heightened conditions of need they induce, can also result in heightened risk of extortion, exploitation or trafficking for migrants. For example, during the floods in 2011, many migrants were extorted thousands of baht simply to return to Myanmar. There were also numerous, albeit anecdotal, reports of trafficking situations, as the ability of, and the resources available to, government authorities and civil society actors to prevent exploitation, protect migrants and punish offenders was severely compromised. Migrants might be made even more vulnerable through their attempts to find new jobs or remigrate after having returned home, often with limited access to information, having slipped back into irregular status or having contracted even larger debts.

## PAST CRISES: THEIR IMPACT ON MIGRANTS

Due to their specific conditions of vulnerability, migrants may suffer specific, particularly acute impacts in the case of disasters and other emergencies. In Thailand, this has been demonstrated in a number of diverse crises over the last decades. How migrants have fared in past disruptive events provides a variety of valuable lessons to understand their vulnerability and set up systems that can help reduce it.

### The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami

The 2004 tsunami hit a number of Thai provinces on the Andaman Sea, killing between 5,000 and 8,000 people, with the greatest loss of lives in Phuket and Phang-nga. The fishery sector, an important part of the economy of the affected areas, was severely hit, as an estimated 7,446 fishing boats were destroyed or severely damaged (IOM, 2007). The area was also dependent on agriculture, especially rubber plantations, which were heavily affected. The tourism sector, the main driver of the local economy, was also hit hard, with an estimated 40 per cent of the about 53,000 hotel rooms in the affected areas destroyed (IOM, 2007).

There were an estimated 127,000 to 200,000 migrants, mostly from Myanmar, in the six provinces hit by the tsunami, of which 22,504 were registered. As so many of them and their dependants were hidden, often with no documents, it was very difficult to estimate how many actually died or were otherwise affected. IOM estimates that 1,000 may have died, and 7,000 of those registered in fishery, construction and tourism may have been affected (IOM, 2007). Many fled to the hills, initially to escape the tsunami and then to avoid arrest. Others returned home without documents or money, in very precarious situations. Hundreds or thousands were deported, and there were reports of raids on migrant communities (IOM, 2007). Some employers were very concerned by the potential loss of labour, particularly those who had paid registration fees. There were also reports of exploitation through withholding pay or not paying due wages at all, violence, and deliberately withholding documents so that workers could not escape or look for another job. On the other hand, some employers helped out financially, 'or vouched for migrants with the authorities (IOM, 2007).

Assistance was made available to migrants, but often migrants did not come forward to accept or seek it. There were language difficulties and confusion over the provision of aid or logistical assistance, which the Myanmar embassy provided with insufficient support (IOM, 2007).

### Financial crises

Thailand's economic boom, with double-digit growth between 1987 and 1996, came to a sudden end in 1997. Bangkok was rocked by the Asian financial crisis of 1997. It was not until 2003 that GDP per capita recovered to its pre-crisis level of 1996 (Warr, 2009). At the beginning of 1997, the unemployment rate was 1.9 per cent. With the crisis, the number of unemployed soared to 2.2 million or 6.7 per cent of the labour force of the time

(UNFPA, 1998). The government estimated that 1.3 of the 2 million unemployed were migrants from rural areas, mostly from the north-east, and that 75 per cent of them returned home (Richburg, 1998), including as a consequence of policies encouraging return to rural areas. Such numbers, however, do not capture those working in the informal sector nor the foreign workers.

Part of the government's response was to send more Thais to work abroad, while restricting low-skilled migrants from coming into the country. Between January and May 1998, the government forced over 190,000 foreign workers out of Thai factories as part of a plan to replace at least 300,000 foreign workers with Thais (UNFPA, 1998).

The global financial crisis of 2008 was not as severe, but it still brought about a widespread economic slowdown, with more than 50,000 workers laid off (Chantavanich et al., 2010). Thousands of workplaces slowed production, and 9 million people became eligible for a THB 2,000 assistance handout. Migrant workers, not even those with work permits (about 500,000 at the time) did not qualify for the handout, in addition to being often already paid below the minimum wage. They were seen as competitors to Thai workers; their registrations were not renewed, no new workers were registered, and undocumented workers were deported (Ibid.). In Samut Sakhon, it was mainly undocumented workers who were laid off, and for those who stayed, documented and undocumented, the reduced work hours meant many could no longer remit money home, with some even contracting debts for surviving (Ibid.). This was a particular issue for recent arrivals who were already in debt for their recruitment fee.

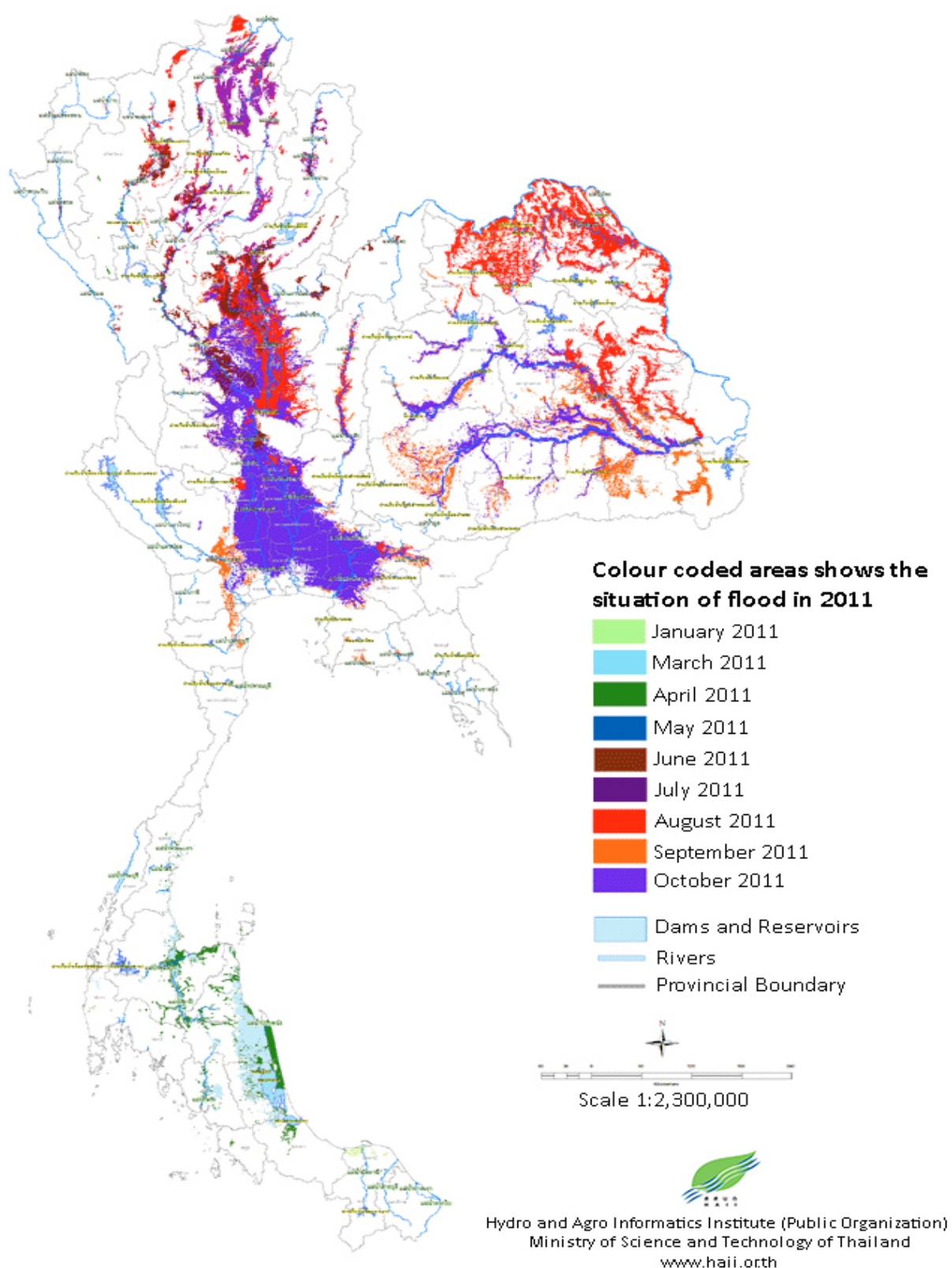
The most vulnerable in the face of the crisis were migrants in the lower economic strata, especially informal workers, who comprise a large portion of the workforce. In the 1997 crisis, family, relatives,

## Box 6: Impacts of past crises on the tourism sector

Tourism is one of Thailand's main foreign currency earners, with prospects of up to 30 million tourists annually. Increasing numbers of migrants are directly and indirectly dependent on the industry. Migrants are working on islands and other tourist resorts in hospitality industries, especially guesthouses, hotels and restaurants. In addition, the government is dependent on the industry for economic growth, and indirect effects will rebound on general levels of production and employment.

The industry has faced significant challenges in correspondence of the 2003 SARS epidemic, the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 avian flu. While recovery was in general very effective, the tsunami posed particular issues, as the first three quarters of the following year saw revenue losses of USD 1.4 billion compared to the projections.

**Figure 5: Areas affected by the 2011 floods**



**Description:**

Map of flooded area from ALOS REDARSAT satellite and THEOS satellite from January - October 2011

*provided by Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (Public Organization)*

**Source:** Ministry of Science and Technology of Thailand.

**Table 17: Number of recorded migrants in provinces affected by the 2011 floods**

Province	MOU	Work Permits/ID	Temporary Passport	Total
Bangkok	14,445	200,285	178,129	392,859
Nonthaburi	720	28,928	16,236	45,884
Pathum Thani	2,919	49,938	25,024	77,881
Ayuthaya	1,593	7,340	4,190	13,123
Nakhon Sawan	30	5,066	1,821	6,917
Nakhon Pathom	120	24,780	4,720	29,620
Lop Buri	1,705	3,328	1,681	6,714
Saraburi	2,048	10,398	2,456	14,902
Phitsanulok	4	1,232	485	1,721
Uthai Thani	-	599	156	755
Suphan Buri	63	7,140	1,940	9,143
Singburi	177	1,090	222	1,489
Chachoengsao	1,575	14,196	7,469	23,240
Nakhon Nayok	27	3,030	1,320	4,377
Phichit	-	2,960	23	2,983
Chai Nat	-	1,231	320	1,551
Samut Sakhon	1,294	128,697	37,908	167,899
Samut Prakan	4,181	46,718	20,199	71,098
Ang Thong	2	1,522	400	1,924
Sukothai	-	720	136	856
Total	30,903	539,198	304,835	874,936

Source: World Bank, 2012.

neighbours and farm work were the most helpful safety nets (Ibid.), and all assets that migrants were in general not able to access in their destinations.

### The 2011 floods

Towards the end of the 2011 monsoon season, at the end of July, and in conjunction with the landfall of Tropical Storm Nock-ten, waters from the rivers flowing down from the north, heavy rain and high tides menaced the Greater Bangkok area. In order to protect the city centre, the water was diverted to the provinces immediately to the north, including locations with high concentrations of industries (and migrant workers), such as the industrial parks in Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani and Nakhon Pathom (Phongsathorn, 2012). Much of Bangkok and other provinces immediately south were indeed saved. However, the floods still affected 13.6 million people, 65 provinces, and over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of farmland. The estimated economic losses amounted to USD 45.7 billion (World Bank, 2011).

It was a controversial decision to save Bangkok, but it probably reduced the impacts of the floods; at that time of the year, the population of the metropolitan area must have been around 10 million. Bangkok is a bottleneck for the runoff of water from the north, and in the past it has often been protected from floods by diverting floodwater to agricultural land. However, in 2011, it was industrial estates and residential areas that were affected. Some communities strongly resented being flooded to save Bangkok, and in some cases, the authorities and police looked on as the floodwalls were intentionally breached (Gordon and Spoons, 2012).

The 2011 floods significantly impacted locations and industries with high migrant concentrations, including industrial parks in Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani and Nakhon Pathom, north of Bangkok. According to the MOL's record, there were more than 800,000 migrant workers, not counting irregular migrant workers, in areas affected by the floods in 2011 (see Table 17). About 600,000 were stranded in flooded locations without food,



water or electricity (Gois and Campbell, 2013 cited in Lebel, 2013). The inundation of these locations put many of them temporarily or permanently out of work, further worsening their living conditions. Lacking employment, many migrant workers decided to return to their countries of origin. Between September and November 2011, around 100,000 migrants returned to Myanmar through the Mae Sot border pass (Bangkok Post, 2012). The MOL estimated that from September to November 2011, a total of 200,000 foreign workers returned home after losing their employment (Lebel, 2013).

Overall, the 2011 floods' impacts on the migrants were severe and felt by the host communities that depended on their labour and economic contributions, and for communities and households of origin that depended on flows of remittances that were disrupted in the disaster (Lebel, 2013).

The floods were not unexpected, and the response was fairly rapid and generally effective, despite some controversy. Phongsathorn (2012) claims the initial response was confused and badly mishandled due to political infighting between the national government and the opposition-led Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, which led to contradictory reports, public confusion and a failure to take advantage of the international assistance offered. The National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan (NDPMP) 2010–2014 envisaged that emergency situations would be addressed in a comprehensive manner under the coordination of the DDPM under the Ministry of Interior (MOI). However, a parallel structure, the Flood Relief Operation Centre, was established shortly after the flood by the Prime Minister under the Ministry of Justice. As a result, the NDPMP was





not fully implemented (Save the Children/ADDMER Partnership Group, 2012).

Without the National Plan and its guiding principle of non-discrimination, there was no standard policy or practice for delivering assistance to affected migrants. Government efforts focused on Thai nationals, and assistance to migrants was provided in inconsistent manner by local authorities. However, migrants encountered recurring obstacles to accessing services, such as the following: (a) lack of interpretation services and targeted information; (b) insufficient allocation of resources (based solely on population census); (c) lack of facilities to issue official copies of documents; and (d) lack of specific care for their children.

Initially, there were nine official shelters for Thai nationals and three for migrants in the affected areas. Others were established as the flooding continued and shifted southwards. A number of schools and temples acted as informal shelters for varying periods of time. The government, however, was slow to determine where the migrants were and how to access them.

The largest facility dedicated to assist migrants was the Flood Relief and Assistance Centre for Migrant Workers established by the MOL in Nakhon Pathom. The centre aimed to meet the basic needs of migrants, including shelter and food, and provide assistance for repatriation, as well as finding new job opportunities. The centre could receive up to 1,000



migrants but never reached its maximum capacity due to migrants' unwillingness or inability to use it. The centre also had limited capacity and resources as it was largely dependent on donations (Raks Thai Foundation, 2013). The shelter in Ratchaburi, with a capacity of 500 people, was too far away for many migrants to access. Some migrants were transported to the shelter as no public transport was running. Migrants were allowed to leave but warned that they could not come back if they did. In addition, a range of particular needs faced by migrants were not addressed through the official response, including the provision of information on registration, issuance of official copies of travel documents, change of employer and re-entry policy (World Bank, 2012).

The MOL and the Myanmar Embassy cooperated, inside and outside shelters, to issue travel documents and visas, as well confirm or renew work permits. Some migrants did not have any documents as employers had kept their work permits and ID documents. A number of brokers were promising victims assistance in obtaining work permits or in returning home, but they exploited numerous migrants.

Many migrants were living in apartment blocks they could not leave, in fear of arrest, without food and essential items. Food, medicine and essential non-food items appeared to be distributed according to house registration records, despite a Medical Act explicitly opening health services to all people regardless of their ethnicity or migration status. The MOPH had to send out notification letters to hospitals and health centres to attend to all migrants in need. In addition, many migrants were psychologically traumatized.

Migrants without work permits were unlikely to be supported in the relief efforts, and many did not trust response workers and did not accept support. They were often prevented from fleeing flooded areas, and sometimes arrested while trying. Even

registered migrants were not allowed to leave to other provinces where their workplace registration was invalid. Some migrants were arrested or had to pay high fees when trying to cross the border leaving Thailand (Lebel, 2013). In October 2011, the MOL extended the work permits and allowed registered migrants to stay 90 more days in Thailand. Registered migrants were also allowed to move out from disaster-stricken areas and into other provinces, as the MOL requested the Immigration Bureau to waive travel restrictions. Despite these efforts, communication of policy changes to law enforcement authorities was insufficient, which contributed to making transportation for migrants expensive and cumbersome (IOM, 2011).

A number of non-government actors were also involved in migrant-specific response efforts. ILO established a mobile rescue unit, while IOM mobilized its networks, including officials and community organizations, to compile and distribute daily updates on the situation (IOM, 2011). Both advocated for better treatment of migrants and advised both governments and migrants. Several NGOs were cooperating to provide essential items, hygiene kits and information. The MOL and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) were cooperating with migrant networks to streamline assistance to migrants in affected areas, although such cooperation was mostly limited to Ayutthaya and Pathum Thani (IOM, 2011). Noble Compassionate Volunteer, a Myanmar NGO, arranged transport to Mae Sot for those who wanted to return home.

Some migrants were accepted offers for temporary work in some provinces, including Ayutthaya. There was a need for cleaning up and other work in safe areas, but it is not known how many migrants took up such offers. Employers of large numbers of migrants (more than 500) on occasions were contacted directly by the shelters in order to help shelter migrants.

# INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND MANDATES

Thailand has well-established structures to prevent and respond to disasters and other emergencies, and is working to further develop its disaster reduction strategies in line with international frameworks and standards, as well as integrate climate change and disaster risk into sustainable development planning at the community level. A number of concrete risk reduction initiatives have been implemented in recent years (such as upgraded data management systems for weather forecast dissemination, including in coastal and fishing communities in southern Thailand, and establishment and testing of early warning systems) (ONEP, 2010). The following section will explore the institutional structures that are more relevant to reducing the vulnerability of migrants, with particular focus on disaster situations.

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

### Environment and climate change

Thailand is a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1994, and has ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002. The United Nations' Group of 77 (G77) leadership behooves Thailand to take on serious responsibility for climate change, as the group pushed for an ambitious agreement on the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions at the 2015 Conference of Parties in Paris (Bangkok Post, 2015). Thailand is ranked twenty-third in the world of carbon dioxide emitters and yet to make solid commitments on reducing its emissions, which are constantly rising.

Environmental protection is lagging behind in the country, especially with regards to water quality and hazardous waste disposal. Improvements, however, have been evident in natural resources management, especially concerning forest resources (ONEP, 2010). The current administration

is exploring various reforms on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and development of alternative energy and energy conservation (NNT, 2015).

### Disaster risk reduction and response

The 2011 floods took place in a period where major disasters were triggering reflection and reform in the disaster management domain at the global level. However, long-lasting economic and political processes, aggravated by the political polarization of the last years, have resulted in a number of unresolved environmental concerns for the current administration.

In Kobe, in 2005, Thailand signed the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). This committed the country to address disaster risk reduction and engage in a determined, results-based plan of action for the period between 2005 and 2015. Thailand implemented the HFA through the Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction. As a member of the World Meteorological Organization, Thailand also implemented a number of risk reduction activities related to hydro-meteorological hazards, such as tropical cyclones, and is part of a group of 17 Asia-Pacific countries committed to regional cooperation to build resilience to related disasters (DDPM, 2015a).

Thailand also participated in the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's campaign on One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals, while the Ministry of Education has developed curricula for managing the risk of disasters associated with events, such as flash floods, landslides and tsunami (DDPM, 2015a). Thailand reported progress against the HFA through its National Progress Report, where some obstacles to risk reduction policies were highlighted, including governance, mitigation programmes, lack of resources at various administrative levels and limited risk awareness. The report states that minority groups have been included into risk reduction planning



since cabinet approved the NDPMP in 2009. It suggests that Provincial Disaster Management Plans take vulnerable groups into account, and the community-based approaches include minorities in community-level planning. However, little detail is given on how this inclusion actually takes place (DDPM, 2015a). The SNAP, instead, does not refer to vulnerable populations or migrants or minorities at all (DDPM, 2010). Moreover, the SNAP has not been made familiar to relevant agencies that post challenges in implementation (World Bank, 2012).

In 2015, Thailand signed the HFA's successor framework, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The DDPM is setting up a task force that includes representatives from the public health, finance and environment sectors to develop and monitor progress against the Sendai Framework. Targets include substantial reductions in mortality, reducing the number of people affected by disasters, reducing damage to critical infrastructure and increasing access to early warning systems and disaster risk information (Leoni, 2015). A number of initiatives, including the reform of the National Disaster Warning Centre, are being considered as part of the implementation of the framework.

Early warning systems, disaster prevention, mitigation and management are incorporated into the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2012–2016. Thailand's minorities, migrants or foreign workers are not mentioned in the document, if not under a negative light rather than as a group contributing to the collective well-being.

## NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

### Disaster prevention and mitigation

Thailand has an established structure and policy framework for disaster prevention and mitigation. The Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Act B.E. 2550 (2007) is the backbone of government policy relating to disaster preparedness and response. Disasters covered by the act include fire, storm, strong wind, flood, drought, epidemic in humans, epidemic in animals, epidemic in aquaculture, epidemic in plants and other public disasters (of both natural and man-made origin), accidents or all other incidents that affect the life, body or

properties of the people, or the government. The law also set up the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee (NDPMC) as the level of command in times of crisis, and defined the DDPM, an agency within the MOI, as the national focal point for managing emergency situations. The law also provides an integrated approach to civil protection and disaster management.

The DDPM also developed SNAP 2010–2019, which outlines the strategy for all agencies to work in synergy in emergency situations. The SNAP consist of the following four main strategies:

- 1) Prevention and Mitigation;
- 2) Preparedness;
- 3) Emergency Response Management; and
- 4) Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Recovery.

The NDPMP 2010–2014 was developed to set guidelines for disaster response, systematize preparedness and operating procedures, and develop and enhance the capacity of all agencies at all levels to respond appropriately throughout the disaster management cycle. The plan is the first document to outline the structure and responsibility of each government agency in disaster situations. The revised NDPMP (2015) was later issued in August 2015, in the context of the newly adopted Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The revised National Plan has strengthened parts on disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction and puts greater emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement throughout all phases of the disaster management cycle.

### Other relevant frameworks

In principle, all migrant groups are included in emergency management and response. Even though there is no mention of migrants in the NDPMP, nor any specific measure targeting them, the plan indicates that all sectors of the society should participate in disaster management and all affected people should receive relief assistance. In reality, relief assistance for migrants has been ad hoc and unplanned, and largely unsupported by targeted efforts to promote access to assistance and sufficient resource allocation. In crisis situations, there are several laws and regulations that may have (positive and negative) implications on migrants' vulnerability – and several institutions that can play a major role in determining the impacts migrants will actually suffer.

The **Immigration Act B.E. 2522** (1979) has not integrated emergency situations into its provisions, and should in theory be strictly enforced without exception in an emergency. It can be an obstacle for irregular migrants trying to move out of disaster areas or request medical assistance and life support services provided by the government. Semi-regular migrants who are awaiting nationality verification are prohibited from moving out of their province of residence. Migrants who have lost their documents in the disaster have reduced ability to seek assistance whenever no official facility to issue copies of their documents is available.

Relevant labour laws can also have important implications for migrants in disaster situations. The **Working of Alien Act** (2008) regulates foreign nationals working in Thailand, including the types of work that foreigners can undertake and rules around the issuance of work permits and changing of employers. The **Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541** (1998) is the main law offering labour protection

to all workers regardless of nationality and status, but excluding workers in the agricultural and fishing sectors, whose protections are provided by sector-specific ministerial regulations. The Labour Protection Act has no specific provision on the protection of workers in emergency situations; however, in principle, it provides comprehensive protection to all workers in all situations and can be used to enforce the law against employers who fail to protect their migrant workers in disasters.

The newly adopted **Social Security Act B.E. 2558** (2015) has included a provision to ensure employers and workers are supported in emergencies. The act allows for the provision of unemployment benefits for workers in situations where business has been halted due to a disaster, while employers are waived from contributing to the SSF in times of crisis to mitigate the negative impact.

In addition to laws governing the status, employment, protection and welfare of migrant workers, the **Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act** also





provides protection to migrants from exploitative situations, which may be more likely to occur during and after disasters. Although the law does not have specific provisions relating to disaster situations, the law is comprehensive and provides that victims of trafficking will be protected, rehabilitated and entitled to receive compensation, while also laying down strict punishments for offenders.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The main institution responsible for policymaking, and management of disaster situations is the NDPMC, chaired by the Prime Minister or appointed Deputy Prime Minister. The NDPMC achieves its mandate through drafting of the NDPMP, developing mechanisms for disaster response, and integrating government agencies in the implementation of the plan. The NDPMC closely coordinates with the National Security Council of Thailand, which is the body responsible for preventing disasters caused specifically by non-natural hazards (such as accidents). The DDPM is the secretariat of the NDPMC and the main actor to bridge policy with implementation by local administrative bodies. The provincial governors (and the Bangkok Metropolitan Director) are the main actors in the implementation of the plan. They have the primary mandate to coordinate and/or request assistance from Regional DPM Committees, armed forces, nearby provinces, and private sector actors or foundations. District and local directors (and the

Bangkok Metropolitan District Authority) represent the lowest level of command and are the first authority to act in disaster situations. They have the mandate to coordinate with nearby districts, call for support from civil defence volunteers and request assistance at the provincial level in case of more severe disasters that require the intervention of authorities at a higher level.

The provincial directors in small-scale disasters or the NDPMC in large-scale disasters can also request the assistance of other relevant ministries and departments. The role of each ministry in disaster response will be elaborated in the next section. The Ministry of Defence (MOD), in particular, plays a strong role in coordinating the deployment of armed forces in disaster areas. For small-scale disasters, provincial directors can also request assistance from provincial offices of relevant agencies, as they have the mandate to direct and coordinate all government agencies at the provincial level.

### Disaster response structure

The strategic management for disaster response in Thailand underlines standards of operation, coherence and flexibility of mandates of relevant agencies. According to the NDPMP 2010–2014, the mechanisms for disaster management are structured on four main levels: national, central, provincial and district levels. The designated level of official in charge of disaster management corresponds to the scale and severity of disaster, as described below in Table 18.

**Table 18: Disaster severity and level of director or commander in charge**

Level	Scale	Person in charge of management	Disaster emergency management mechanism
1	Small-scale disaster	Local Director, District Director, and/or Bangkok Metropolitan Director Assistant are capable of containing the situation.	Local/District Emergency Operations Centre
2	Medium-scale disaster	In cases where a disaster situation is beyond the capacity of the above mentioned director, the Provincial Director and/or Bangkok Metropolitan Director and obliged to intervene.	Provincial Emergency Operations Centre
3	Large-scale disaster with severe and widespread impact or requiring specialist or specific equipment	In cases where the situation is beyond the capacity of the second-level director, the Central Director and/or National Commander are obliged to intervene.	National Emergency Operations Centre
4	Large-scale disaster with catastrophic impact	The Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister will be in charge as the commander.	The Prime Minister

Source: NDPMP (2010–2014), DDPM, MOI.

For small-scale disasters, Local Directors and District Directors have the responsibility to manage response efforts. If the disaster is larger than one district and it cannot be dealt with alone by district-level authorities, provincial governors take charge. In large-scale disasters, the Central Director (DDPM) or the National Commander (MOI) is mandated to manage the situation. In catastrophic disasters, the Prime Minister takes charge as the commander.

In an emergency situation, Command Centres at all levels will be transformed into Emergency Operations Centres to “function as focal points to mobilize disaster resources from all agencies and direct the coordination with various civil and military agencies, as well as local administrative organizations and charitable organizations to jointly handle disaster situations in a rapid, efficient and thorough manner”. The Emergency Operations Centres consist of the following sections: Administration Section; Warning Section; Prevention and Operations Section; Public Relations Section; Communication Section;

Donation Management Section; Peace Order Keeping Section; Relief Rehabilitation Section; and other sections (as appropriate and needed).

Field Operations Centres will also be established to provide rapid rescue and relief operations. The heads of field operations centres report directly to Emergency Operations Centres. In the field, district and local administrations have the responsibility to immediately intervene for disaster relief and disaster mitigation. This includes the following:

1. evacuating citizens from at-risk or disaster-affected areas in accordance with local contingency plans;
2. conducting search and rescue efforts;
3. assessing damages and identifying affected population;
4. issuing documents to guarantee access to relief services among affected persons; and
5. mobilizing assistance in the area and from nearby districts or requesting assistance from the provincial level.





The NDPMP also details structured countermeasure procedures for various types of hazards, such as:

1. flood and landslide;
2. tropical cyclone;
3. fire;
4. chemical and hazardous material;
5. transport hazard;
6. drought;
7. cold weather;
8. forest fire and haze; and
9. earthquakes.

### Main government agencies involved in emergency response

Other governmental agencies that are involved in emergency response include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which has the following responsibilities:

1. coordinate with relevant international organizations and authorities of countries of origin in disaster prevention and mitigation;
2. request collaboration and assistance before, during and after disasters; and
3. provide updates on disasters and other emergencies to countries of origin and other international actors.

and the MSDHS, with the following responsibilities:

1. prepare and manage temporary shelters for affected persons;
2. provide assistance for vulnerable populations; and
3. support social workers in physical, mental and social rehabilitation.

The MOI is home to the DDPM, the focal point of disaster prevention and mitigation in Thailand. The MOI is responsible for declaring a disaster, which will enable all agencies to organize assistance in accordance with the law and the National Plan. It also has the responsibility to order nearby provinces and districts to gather resources and assist disaster-stricken areas. The Minister of Interior is also the head of National Command Headquarters (or National Emergency Operations Centre in emergency situations), taking charge of disaster management in large-scale disasters (disaster scale 3).

The DDPM is the national focal point and the main agency responsible for the implementation of the DPM Act. Its mandate includes:

1. drafting the National Plan;
2. conducting research;
3. assisting all local and national agencies;
4. providing assistance for affected populations;
5. providing trainings and recommendations for all stakeholders; and
6. monitoring and evaluating implementation of the National Plan.

The MOPH is responsible for providing adequate medical resources and personnel, as well as preparing medical teams in emergency situations, such as the Provincial Medical Emergency Response Team and Surveillance Rapid Response Team. In emergency situations, the MOPH has the role as Public Health and Medical Incidence Commander, as well as setting up Public Health Emergency Operation Centres.

The MOL is tasked with providing training and disseminating technical knowledge of disaster prevention and mitigation in workplaces, especially prevention of man-made disasters in the workplace (through the Department of Skill Development). In emergency situations, the MOL has the responsibility of collecting data on workers who are affected by disasters and providing protection and assistance according to the Labour Protection Act (through the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare). The Department of Social Security's mobile unit is also tasked with providing social security services for affected workers.

The plan also identifies roles for communities, volunteers, private sector actors and civil society organizations (CSOs), including advocacy organizations and NGOs, primarily in disaster preparedness and response. Coordinating with them is crucial, as highlighted in the 2011 floods. In addition to receiving donations and contributions from external actors, they performed the bulk of the assistance and advocacy work (Save the Children/ADDMER Partnership Group, 2012).

### Coordination with international actors

Based on the experience and lessons learned from the floods in 2011, **cooperation with international actors** in crisis situations has been a big challenge. At that time, a clearly designated process for requesting and coordinating international assistance was not in place (Ibid.), even though the NDPMP 2010–2014 had identified the MFA as the focal point for international cooperation. Thailand welcomed international assistance, but held back

from officially requesting it.

However, through the NDPMP 2015, international assistance and coordination has been integrated into national structures of disaster preparedness, risk reduction and rehabilitation. The new NDPMP assigns MFA a clearer mandate to coordinate with all external actors in the following:

1. requesting and receiving international assistance;
2. developing standard operating procedures for international organizations and other international agencies regarding requesting and receiving of such assistance; and
3. facilitating processing of in-kind assistance upon arrival.

This is to ensure coordination with international partners before, during and after emergency situations.

Coordination of relief efforts with **the governments of countries of origin of affected non-nationals** is key in emergencies, in the light of their specific conditions of vulnerability and limited access to social services in disaster situations. During the floods in 2011, coordination with embassies and foreign missions in Thailand was not streamlined as planned in the NDPMP. The MFA, despite being assigned as the main coordinator, had a limited role, as missions tended to directly coordinate with the Central Command and the Office of the Prime Minister. Moreover, there was no established cooperation mechanism with countries of origin. The one exception was the Flood Relief and Assistance Centre for Migrant Workers, established by the MOL in coordination with institutions in countries of origin, which allowed migrants to register with their consular services and issued a Certificate of Identity for the migrants who wished to return to their home country.

### Community-based Disaster Risk Management

As provided in the NDPMP 2015, disaster preparedness measures include the following:

1. rolling out Community-based Disaster Risk

Management (CBDRM) trainings and disaster management exercise and drills;

2. developing of evacuation plans;
3. developing capacities for managing temporary shelters;
4. establishing a disaster study organization;
5. developing a disaster database;
6. stockpiling resources; and
7. developing business continuity plans.

CBDRM is the main mechanism to build capacity at the local level to prepare for and respond to disaster situations. It focuses on strengthening communities' capacity in disaster prevention, response, mitigation and recovery. CBDRM activities, such as the development of local disaster prevention plans, disaster management plans and evacuation plans, have been implemented since 2004, often with the support of local authorities in identifying risks and strengths, resources and equipment required in disaster response. The CBDRM approach promotes ownership of DRM activities within the community and facilitates the development of individual capacities and civil society networks that contribute to community-level disaster preparedness and response. Local administrations, including township and district offices, are responsible for CBDRM capacity-building. Migrant-inclusive CBDRM could be a great avenue to ensure that migrants' specific needs and conditions of vulnerability in disasters are adequately addressed through preparedness and response efforts.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thailand is at a key moment of its history, with a solid outlook of long-term stability and further development. However, it also faces the potential for crises and shocks (from the challenges encountered by the fishing sector to the impact of natural hazards) that could affect its economy and society in the decades to come.

The country's resilience, development and well-being are strictly dependent on its capacity to solve issues related to immigration and migrants' presence in the country. This requires addressing conditions of extreme vulnerability, such as those of forced labourers in the fishing sector and sex industry or of the Rohingya, but also improving the living and working conditions of millions of documented and undocumented foreign workers that power, and increasingly will power, Thailand's productive system.

Over the past decades, all governments of Thailand have strived to balance the need of migrant workers against security concerns and the positions of large sections of the Thai population, ranging from apathy to outright hostility (Talcoth, 2015). Migration management has largely evolved into a streamlined system, less conducive to corruption, strengthened by the expansion of the OSSCs by the current administration. However, much can still be done to promote better, safer living conditions for migrants and gaps remain in the capacity of Thai actors to protect registered migrants, as well as encourage millions of undocumented migrants to register. Inspections barely reach the factories where most migrants work, where violation of regulations, abuses and exploitation are common. Even the simple admission that migrants are integral to the continued growth of the economy and the well-being of the country has been difficult for power-holders.

Lack of registration severely limits the quality and quantity of services migrants have available in normal times, and is a key determinant of their vulnerability to disasters. Unregistered migrants cannot be easily tracked and assisted, and face

limitations to movement and access to assistance that can result in more severe short- and long-term impacts. Recent attempts at opening up registration for all migrants in Thailand represent a key step towards better estimating their numbers and serving them in normal times and times of disaster. However, much more needs to be done to regularize the large share of currently undocumented migrants.

In addition, the immigration system should be reformed to allow more freedom of movement and change of employment, access to documents and information, and services and assistance. Changes are needed in labour protection, including better mechanisms to ensure compliance with regulations by employers in support of Thailand's expanding industries. Furthermore, effective unions or industry collectives should be empowered to work for improving working conditions and workers' rights. In factories with large numbers of migrants, these could include migrant representatives, or migrant workers could have their own associations or unions.

The government needs to go beyond security concerns and support more inclusive immigration policies as key for Thailand's economic growth. To do this, it needs to acknowledge that migrants are entitled to the same rights and benefits as Thais. Big steps have been taken in this direction, particularly in terms of health and welfare, but migrants are far from being equals, and recent initiatives to open up economic zones on the border testify of an ongoing attitude to consider migrants' dignity and their rights largely negotiable (Teerakowitkajorn, 2015).

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Due to the significant presence of migrants in Thailand, including them in prevention, preparedness and response efforts should be a key concern for authorities at all levels.

The government's acknowledgement of the contribution of migrants to the Thai society and the creation of an enabling environment for the development of mixed communities at lower levels of government can effectively support this process.

Better inclusion would allow overcoming a number of barriers migrants face when accessing information, services and resources before, during and after disasters. In hazard-prone, high-density areas, there are well-established communities of migrants who have been in the country a long time and can speak and write Thai. Many factory workers can speak at least basic Thai. In such communities and factories, migrants can easily be involved and trained to be leaders in the case of a disaster. Some efforts have already gone in this direction. The Mae Sot public health department, for instance, trains hundreds of Myanmar migrants as volunteer health workers, hoping they would be able to provide counseling and other forms of support to disaster-affected migrants (IOM, 2007).

However, more systematic efforts need to take place to this end, in particular to make sure that migrants employed in smaller factories, fisherfolks, domestic workers and those working informally are well prepared and well assisted in the case of a disaster. Inclusive practices by public disaster management authorities and service providers are key to this end.

Another area in which migrant-specific efforts can be key is employment after disasters. It is not clear whether the government sought out migrant workers for priority employment on public work programmes following the 2011 floods. However, this was the case for many internal and international migrants in the reconstruction after the 2004 tsunami (IOM, 2007).

The tsunami and floods have demonstrated that there is support for migrants in times of crises, but that resources and capacities are insufficient to offer systematic assistance. There is little evidence that migrants, and in particular the most vulnerable among them, will be well covered in coordinated relief and recovery efforts in future events. While Thailand is growing increasingly capable of preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters, lessons learned on migrants' needs and conditions of vulnerability have yet to be fully recognized and integrated in disaster risk reduction and management efforts.

Constructive engagement of migrants before, during and after disasters could actually help migrants gain visibility and play a positive role in their local communities, which bears significant opportunities for their further integration. Disasters are opportunities to build more inclusive and just societies (Phongsathorn, 2012). How migrants have fared in past disruptive events affecting Thailand's society provides a variety of valuable lessons to what is needed.

## MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

The mid- to long-term aim should be to cooperate with NGOs, employers and associations to establish a more streamlined registration system to reach more migrants with registration and work permits, which will facilitate logistics and support in a disaster. Positive roles of migrants should be recognized, such as their positive contribution to the Thai economy and society. Government agencies should also address the urgency of working towards more equal treatment and less discrimination in laws and regulations.

Migrants' freedom of movement should be guaranteed, as well as – in the event of a disaster – logistical and other support.

The government needs to strengthen its multi-stakeholder approach to combat human trafficking, especially fostering the engagement of the private sector. Comprehensive, holistic and long-term policies on migration are needed to overcome current institutional gaps and victim protection measures should be strengthened during the screening process for potential victims. At the same time, communication and information on relevant policy provisions should target all migrants and perspective migrants who are at risk of trafficking in persons.

Collection and management of migration data is crucial for all policies, including disaster risk management and response, especially for registered migrants. Data should include MOU, NV and those with temporary permits, and can be improved by breaking down numbers into categories at the district level.



## LABOUR PROTECTION

The Thai labour protection system should be enhanced to cover worker representation and unionization. Networks of migrants and civil society should also be strengthened to ensure they have community support and networks to voice their needs for protection. At the same time, the Thai labour protection system should work towards reducing discrimination and exploitation of migrants, including enshrining their rights and responsibilities in policy instruments.

Vulnerable migrants at risk of exploitation and trafficking or migrants living in precarious situations should be particularly protected. These migrants, when their situation is exacerbated by crises, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, loss of livelihood and suffering longer-term impacts. The government and civil society need to ensure that protection of this group of most vulnerable migrants is sustained (and strengthened when needed) in disaster situations.

All migrants suffering from exploitation during disasters should be guaranteed access to adequate remedies afterwards.

## DRR AND RESPONSE

Migrants should be included in institutional arrangements for disaster preparedness and response. Risk assessments and capacity assessments should be made public and accessible by migrants to ensure awareness of risk in migrant communities. Early warning and emergency communication planning should include the migrant community. Coordinated emergency preparedness and response mechanisms, especially at the local level, as well as risk reduction programmes, should be planned, taking into consideration migrants' specific capacities and conditions of vulnerability, particularly those associated with their legal status and socioeconomic conditions.



Clear and comprehensive information on evacuation and disaster response planning and efforts should be made available for migrants to ensure that they are aware of what to do and where to find support in emergencies.

Local, district and provincial administration should use CBDRM as a tool to better involve migrants in planning efforts, as well as enhance awareness among host communities of migrants' presence and characteristics, which can lead to integration into community-level emergency response systems and efforts. At the same time, CBDRM can also be used to educate migrant communities about the risks they face, preparedness measures and available options for assistance, as well as the active role they can play in emergency situations. Migrants can be included in capacity and resource mapping, information management and evacuation planning in their community or district. Relevant authorities should encourage migrant leaders to communicate and disseminate risk reduction and preparedness information among their communities.

Relevant organizations and government agencies mandated by the NDPMP to take part in disaster responses should engage with and take into consideration migrant populations in their planning, in order to provide a truly comprehensive response, as well as make use of all resources available within the migrant communities for a more efficient, better coordinated disaster response.

Employers should be obliged to have contingency measures in place in the event of disasters, such as logistical support, documents available and payments sent to banks or other addresses. The contingency measures and plans should be integrated with local and district preparedness and response plans. Migrant workers should be familiarized with the plans so that they can adequately respond in emergency situations.

Policy and programming for preparedness should include networks of migrants that can provide leadership linked with migrant communities and Thai authorities. Key persons of the migrant communities should be engaged as leading parties in dissemination of information on local risks, preparedness awareness and response procedures, as well as early warnings and emergency communications.

Strong collaboration with government agencies and other main actors in home countries will

provide effective protection and assistance of migrant workers in emergency situations. Consular services should be involved more clearly, more systematically and at an earlier stage in all activities aiming to protect their nationals and facilitate safe evacuation and voluntary repatriation, as well as provide assistance for migrants upon their re-entry to Thailand. Bilateral cooperation and consultation, including potentially through the development of operating procedures clarifying and streamlining communication and coordination modalities between the governments involved, can help achieve this aim.

## MIGRANTS' MOBILITY

The government should take the measure implemented during the 2011 floods, to temporarily allow migrants to travel freely, as their standard practice during emergency situations.

For migrants who wish to return to their country of origin, information regarding transportation or other services available to facilitate the return and the policy upon return should be communicated very clearly (IOM, 2011).

Measures are needed to waive restrictions in movement for migrants. Migrants should be able to travel across provinces to avoid disaster-stricken areas and gain access to assistance.

Government should establish strong measures to ensure safe cross-border migration during disasters. Recommendations drawn from the mass returns of migrants during the 2011 floods include the following:

1. establishing centres to accommodate migrants waiting to cross the border;
2. ensuring all cross-border movements are done during daytime; and
3. regulating brokers, especially those operating at the border, to prevent abuse of vulnerability of migrants in crisis (IOM, 2011).



## STATUS AND DOCUMENTATION

Alternatives to official documentation, such as officially certified copies of passports/work permits should be made available for migrants in emergency situations. As data on migrants are computerized, units to issue such documentation should be available in areas with high populations of migrants. This documentation is very important as it is the basic necessity to guarantee migrants their legal status and ability to travel.

Migrants should be able to maintain their status even when they return home during disaster situations. At the same time, migrants should be allowed to change employers, either temporarily or permanently, to maintain their work status in Thailand during disaster situations (MWG, ANM and TLSC, 2011).

## ON THE GROUND

Migrants should be considered in repeated, updated needs assessments to make sure that appropriate services can be provided to address their specific vulnerabilities.

All basic services and life support (especially health care, shelter, clean water and food) should be made available for migrants regardless of their legal status and available documentation.

Access to assistance for migrant children, regardless of their status, should be guaranteed, and information for migrants on care and special protection for their dependants should be available.

Registration systems should be established in emergency situations to ensure that the government has a record of migrants to facilitate

their access to assistance. This is especially the case for areas where migrants may not move to shelters but choose to stay within disaster-stricken areas. The registration will also help the government in assessing the need for assistance in specific areas, which will contribute to overall planning for disaster response. Shelters run by charities or NGOs should also be incorporated into broader planning and management to reflect the actual situation of needs.

Clear, translated early warnings and emergency communications should be available to migrants. This can be done in cooperation with the migrant community, CSOs and other NGOs, particularly those in high-immigration areas.

Government agencies should also take precautions to ensure that migrants do not fall into situations of exploitation and trafficking. In case migrants decide to return to their home country, there should be measures to curb abusive and exploitative activities along their journey. Clear information on policies supporting migrants' movement during crises can be key to preventing migrants from falling into situations of abuse.

Migrants should be able to go to any shelter, and each shelter should have interpreters on site, or at least available by phone. Signages should be recognizable by migrants. At the same time, there should be special shelters set aside for migrants with interpreters, logistical support and all other assistance required, and adequate for large numbers. These shelters need to be linked to consular posts to ensure that migrants have proper channels for consular access.

Migrant-friendly hotlines, at the very least in Myanmar language, should be made available and accessible by migrants to facilitate information dissemination and service provision before, during and after disasters.

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