

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Migration**

According to the research findings, the demographic characteristics of Myanmar migrants in four employment sectors (rubber plantation, fishing, shrimp farming and construction) in Phang-Nga province showed that they were largely male. Characteristics of work in these four sectors showed a high demand for male labor over female labor. Thus, most female migrants remained unemployed, some being housewives and some randomly working when there were jobs available for them.

Most Myanmar migrant workers in this study were in the productive age group. On the other hand, the highest number were in the 26-50 year old age group which was higher than necessary to show 'forced to work' indicators of exploitation. A higher productive age group outside the country can have an impact on the future operation of the country of origin. Migrants were more often married, according to this survey, including migrants aged below 25. Most of the surveyed workers in this age group were married except for those in the fishing boat sector.

According to the research findings of the socio-economic characteristics in the four sectors, the major ethnicities working in Phang-Nga province were Mon and Dawei. The Dawei ethnic group is located in Tennessim Division, in the Southern part of Myanmar. This division also borders Southern Thailand. The major migration route of those migrants was Kawtung-Ranong.

The majority of Myanmar migrants in this study had a primary education level and this level provided them with sufficient ability to read and write Myanmar language only. Language proficiency is important for migrant workers in Thailand. But over half of them were unable to speak Thai well, which cause them much trouble in their workplace.

Myanmar migrants in their home country were based in agriculture and fishing. Rubber plantations are a major cash crop in Phang-Nga. Fishing is also an occupation for local Thai people in this province. In addition to these two areas of work, construction and shrimp farming were also attractive occupations for migrants coming to work in Phang-Nga province.

From the research findings, the factors that motivated Myanmar migrants to come to Thailand were poverty and unemployment. The major source of association in Thailand for Myanmar migrants migrating to Phang-Nga province was family association and relative association. This fact correlates with Taylor's (2006) theory; migration networks are the most important variable driving them to migrate. Female migrants were likely to migrate for the purpose of following their spouses. This fact responds to Jansen's (1970) theory; if the choosing between two places, migrants would prefer to chose the one where their relatives or friends are already living.

## 5.2 Conclusion of Four Sectors

### 5.2.1 Rubber Plantation

Workers in this sector work seasonally. The high season for rubber cultivation was November, December, January and part of February. These months were the highest earning for them as well.

8% of migrants age below 25 were found in this sector. None of them were forced to work by either their employers or their families. One constraint on workers in this sector leaving their jobs was that their employer owed them money. The reason that migrants could not leave the job was that they were afraid of employers using violence against them. It was also the only sector which reported the occurrence of this issue. They could not leave this job because they had no where else to go. 12% of respondents in the rubber plantation sector shows that their work condition did not meet with minimum standards of decent work regarding freedom to complain and freedom to change jobs.

12% of them had retained their original ID documents. Over half of them were unable to get their original ID documents when they wanted or needed them.

This violated the concept of 'no passport or ID', although there were only a slight number of occurrences in this sector.

All workers in this sector were unable to live off-site. Living on-site is only for the convenience of work. Very few workers reported that they were verbally abused by their employer.

The major wage for them was in the form of incentive. The incentive paid was in the range of 30-50%. Workers in this sector earned the highest incentive wages across the four sectors. Some of them earned an average of over 10,000 baht per

month. Female and male earned equal wages. Payment systems were irregular in this sector. This was a violation of the criteria for ‘regular payment’ in decent work.

Respondents had to work 12-14 hour days. Surprisingly, they were happy to work these excessively long hours. Workers in this sector were entitled to regular days off each week. 16% of them were not entitled to paid sick leave. 52% of workers in this sector reported that those workers taking holidays were prohibited from coming back to work. None of them had a written contract with employers. Most of the accommodation of rubber plantation did not provide electricity. However, all of them were entitled to free accommodation.

### **5.2.2 Fishing**

The two sub-sectors of fishing employment had different characteristics of their work and payment system. 22% of migrants age below 25 were found in this sector. Fishing had the highest number of migrants aged below 25 years old. None of them were forced to work by either their employers or their family.

The majority of migrants had constraints leaving their jobs in the form of having debt with their employers. In particular, 24% of fish processing workers reported this issue. The fact was because of low wage rates. In total, 34% of workers showed that they did not have minimum rights of ‘freedom to complain’ and ‘freedom to change job’.

The fishing industry had the most significant number of respondents (68%) who had retained their original ID documents. Unlike the rubber plantation sector, most of them could get the documents when they needed or wanted them. Significantly, 23% were subject to ‘no passport ID’.

Only fish processing workers had no choice to live off-site. Close to 0.2% of them could not go out when they wanted to. Interestingly, 16% of workers stated that their employers did not like outsiders approaching them or visiting them at the work site. 12% were found to be subject to verbal abuse and use of bad words against them in this industry.

28% of fish processing workers received less than 3,000 baht. This is the major factor causing them have debt to their employer. However, monthly payments were paid regularly. Female workers did not have equal pay with males in the fish processing sector. The major source of wages for them was the incentive. Since the wage rate was low, 64% of respondents had insufficient food to eat.

The research noted indescribably long working hours on the fishing boats. Most migrants had to rely on 'ASEAN' to continue working during duty. On the other hand, they had been violated in the area of overtime payment, especially in fish processing. There was not any overtime payment or additional payment for their long working hours.

Although receiving no regular day off each week while on the fishing boat, they were entitled to a regular day off each month. Among the fish processing workers, days off were significant area of violation. None of them had written contracts with employers. Substantial numbers of fishing boat workers' employers did not provide accommodation. Most migrants preferred employers who provided accommodation.

### 5.2.3 Shrimp Farming

Shrimp farming was the only sector in which workers were not forced to work and there were no constraints on leaving the job, or incidents of violence. Even though 12% of respondents did not hold their original ID documents, all of them could get them when needed or wanted. Thus, the subject of 'no passport ID' was hard to explain in this sector.

There was 100% lack of freedom to move. This was because workers had to pay full attention to their work, regarding the shrimp condition. On the other hand, employers did not allow outsiders to enter the workplace. This was also one of the reasons why the researcher was unable to get a full 50 sample size. Employers were afraid of allowing outsiders to enter easily because this could contribute to destroying the shrimp.

In this industry, 12% were found to be subject to verbal abuse and employer use of bad words. Workers in this farm received pay in the range of less than 3,000 baht up to 5,000 baht. Since wage rates were low, 25% of workers reported insufficient food to eat. Most workers in this industry received the benefit of free rice from their employer which made them the only migrant worker sector in which they got benefits from their employers.

Overall there were less working hours, but 24 hour attention was required on the job. This caused 25% of workers to get insufficient sleep. No day off existed in this sector. 90% of them had no access to paid annual holiday and 45% were subject to annual holiday without pay but could still come back to the site later. Like other sectors, they had no contract with employers. In addition, like rubber

plantation workers, they had access to accommodation including free electricity and water.

#### 5.2.4 Construction

Construction had the least number of migrant workers below 25 years of age. Like the other three sectors, the issue of forced work did not exist. Most significantly, 40% of them had constraints on leaving the job in this sector. 28% of workers reported employers owing them money and 32% of them did not get paid for the work they had done. Above all, workers had to accept this exploitation of them when the other work was difficult to find. This sector also showed the most significant incidents concerning lack of minimum rights of ‘freedom to complain’ and ‘freedom to change the job’ among the four sectors.

Construction was the most significant source of migrants found below the minimum right of ‘no passport ID’. Considerably, 44% of workers had retention of original ID documents. More than half that number stated that they could not get the documents when they needed or wanted them. Although there was no significant report of control of migrant movement, 28% stated that employers disliked outsiders visiting. The highest number of reports of verbal abuse and employer use of bad language were found here.

A daily wage rate but under a monthly pay system is practiced in this sector. Female workers in this sector were basic operators who earned lower wages than male basic operators. The highest wage in this sector was between 7,000-8,000 baht and only senior workers received this maximum wage rate. Low wages and the

incident of payment violence by employers, caused migrant to have high personal debt for food.

Regular working was practiced in this sector. Since their wage rate was calculated daily, workers preferred to work without days off. There was no negotiation for paid sick leave. By irregular earning, migrants had to pay employers for electricity and water. Workers had no payment when they were unable to work. Moreover, they were unable to come back to work when they took holiday – a significantly high rate of 74%. They lived in unsuitable accommodations which lacked hygiene.

### **5.3 Expenditure**

Except for workers in the rubber plantation sector and male migrant workers in construction, the rest of the sectors (fishing, shrimp farming and female migrants in construction) were below the standard of ‘minimum wage’ compared with the statistics concerning the minimum wage rate in Thailand, Phang-Nga Province. Construction workers were the highest spenders on housekeeping expenses. Fish processing migrants had the most substantial incident of insufficient living cost due to their minimum wage rate. Migrants with a higher number of males in the productive age range, could better meet family living costs.



#### 5.4 Further Study

Migration study can give more information for further study of Myanmar migrant workers in Phang-Nga Province. Thai government is starting the new rule of registration for migrant workers. This study can give a baseline for further study regarding human right.

Although child labor was not found in this study, by observation, it was seen that children were helping their parents in the workplace. Further study of child exploitation and development is needed. The researcher also has much left over research in the area of 'decent work', such as, social security, health and safety at work, maternity and work, children at work and trade union rights, since all these subjects were outside the objectives of this study. On the other hand, the leftover subjects of 'decent work' are more closely related to social study. These subjects can be adapted to further study for the social development of migrant workers.

The additional study of expenditure of migrant workers indicates more vulnerability in the four sectors (fishing, construction, rubber plantation and shrimp farming) of Myanmar migrant workers with low wages, which can assist and support non-governmental organizations in using appropriate development programs and implementation to the appropriate sectors. Based on these migrants' real wage rates and their expenditures, an additional income program could be easy to build.