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(6 pages)

## Thai Attitudes Regarding Foreign Migrant Workers in Thailand

The ABAC Poll Research Center, Assumption University, was commissioned to conduct the survey: "Thai Attitudes Regarding Foreign Workers in Thailand," by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) from 25 November to 1 December, 2006. The population sample included 4,148 respondents from eleven provinces across Thailand.

1. The majority of the respondents stated that they do not believe migrant and Thai workers should have equal working conditions. These working conditions include: the migrant's ability to apply for any job in Thailand, the migrants should have the same working conditions under the Thai Labour Law, and migrant workers should be allowed freedom of expression.

From the results, 67.3% of the respondents believed that migrant workers should not be able to apply for any job in Thailand. 59.7% believed that migrant workers should not allowed freedom of expression. 50.3 believed that migrant workers should not have the same working conditions, under the Thai Labour Law.

When asked to state their opinions about equal working conditions for migrant and Thai workers, 79.9% said that they should have the same working hours, 75.9 % stated that they should have the same holidays, and 52.7% said they should have the same Social Security Benefits. Only 40%, however, stated that migrant and Thai workers should have equal wages.

The reasons the respondents gave for unequal wages include: migrants are not as skilled as Thai workers, they do not speak the Thai language, and Thai wages are still higher than the migrants' home-country.

2. Though the majority of the respondents were not aware of the policies regarding migrant workers in Thailand, 84.4% were familiar with the policy that all migrant workers must gain legal status through a registration period.

The results revealed that the only three out of eight policies regarding migrant workers were recognized by over 50% of the respondents. These policies include: All migrant workers must gain legal status through a registration period (84.4%), under the Thai Labor Law, Migrant must get the same treatment from employers as Thai workers, when doing the same type of work (58.7%), and all registered migrant workers have access to health care (50.9%).

3. The majority of the respondents do not think that migrant workers were necessary for sustaining the Thai economy. The reason may coincide with the fact that more than half of the respondents do not believe that the Thai Government should admit more foreigners to work in Thailand. Over 80% stated that they believe more foreign labor will have a negative impact on lower skilled or lower income Thai workers.

When asked if the Thai government should admit more foreign workers in Thailand, 58.6% said no, only 9.7% said yes, and 31.7% gave no comment.

Most respondents, 82.5%, stated that admitting foreign workers in Thailand will have a negative impact on Thai workers with lower skills and/or lower income. Only 5.2% believed that there would be no impact and 12.3% gave no comment.

4. The majority of the respondents learn negative information about migrant workers from the media, which causes them to find them untrustworthy and disloyal. Despite this, the respondents believe the migrant workers to be hard working.

When asked about the types of information about migrant workers learned from the media, 79% mentioned they had learned about migrants who committed serious crimes Thailand. When asked to state their opinions about the characteristics of migrant workers, over 70% of the respondents believed migrant workers to be hard working. Meanwhile, 19.4% said they believed the migrant workers were honest and only 19.9% said they were loyal. It can be assumed that the negative opinions were influenced by the media's portrayal of migrant workers.

5. The majority of the respondents have expressed compassion for those migrants cheated and/or abused by their employers.

When asked about the Thai Authorities prevention of this abuse, 39.3% of the respondents stated that the authorities have done enough and 34% said they have not done enough. 26.7 said, "No comment."

When asked for their initial reaction to witnessing migrants being cheated and/or abused by their employers, 61.1% said they would report the incident to the police, 47.6% would report to the NGO or other related organizations, and 24.7 would ask the employer to stop.

### **Respondent Characteristics**

Gender: 51.2% were female and 48.8% were male.

Age: 18% were 18-25, 24% were 26-35, 22.8% were 36-45, and 17.2% were 46-55, and 18% were ages 56 and above.

Education Level: 59.6% secondary or lower, 20.7% high school or vocational school, 6.1% high certificate, 12.2% bachelor's degree, 0.7% Master's degree or higher.

Present Occupation: 29% self employed, 20.6% wage worker, 8.0% housewife or retired, 5.9% private company employee, 5.4% government employee, 5.0% self-employed, 4.9% unemployed, 0.9% factory worker.

Personal Monthly Income: 48.6% 5000 baht or lower, 28.1% 5001-9999 baht, 11.8% 10,000-14,999, 9.7 % 15,000 and above.

Household Monthly Income: 21.7% 5000 baht or lower, 30.1% 5001-9999 baht, 20.6% 10,000-14,999, 26.9 % 15,000 and above.

Residence: 67.8% rural area, 23.0% Urban Area, 9.2% Bangkok

**Methodology:**

This survey research project, “Thai Attitudes Regarding Foreign Migrant Workers in Thailand,” was conducted from 25 November to 1 December, 2006.

This survey research required the use of a questionnaire for data collection, which was completed by respondents through face-to-face interviews.

The target population included Thai people over the age of eighteen. The multi-stratified sampling methodology was applied to select a sample of 4,148 respondents from eleven provinces across Thailand. These provinces include: Bangkok, Samut Prakan, Prajuap Kilikhan, Lopburi, Sukothai, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Panom, Surin, Khon Kean, Phuket, Surathani. (The level of confidentiality is 95%. The margin of error is +/- 5%.)

The ABAC Poll Research center at Assumption University was commissioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to complete this research.

**(See tables below)**

Table 1: Opinions about migrant workers in Thailand

Statement	Agree	Do not Agree	No comment
Migrant workers can apply for any job available in Thailand	24.8	67.3	7.9
Migrant workers should have the same working conditions as Thai workers, under the labor law.	41.7	50.3	8.0
Migrant workers should be allowed freedom of expression	30.6	59.7	9.7

Table 2 : Opinions about equal working conditions for migrant and Thai Workers (multiple choice)

Working Condition	%
Working Hours	79.9
Holidays	75.9
Social Security Benefits	52.7
Wages	40.0

Table 3 : Respondents awareness of policies regarding migrant workers

Statement	Aware	Not Aware
All migrant workers must gain legal status through a registration period	84.4	15.6
Under the Thai Labor Law, migrant workers must get the same treatment from employers as Thai workers, when doing the same types of work.	58.7	41.3
All registered migrant workers have access to health care	50.9	49.1
Migrant workers cannot leave the provinces in which they are employed without permission from the local authorities	43.5	56.5
Employers should post a bond for the hiring of migrant workers to ensure that they stay	41.6	58.4
Migrant workers cannot change their location of employment without permission from the local authorities	40.7	59.3
Children of migrant workers must be allowed access to Thai schools, provided that they learn the Thai language.	34.2	65.8
Migrant workers do not have the right to form unions	27.2	72.8

Table 4 : The opinions of those respondents who were aware of the policies regarding migrant workers

Statement	Agree	Do Not Agree	No Comment
All migrant workers must gain legal status through a registration period	89.9	7.4	2.7
Under the Thai Labor Law, migrant workers must get the same treatment from employers as Thai workers, when doing the same types of work.	88.3	9.4	2.3
All registered migrant workers have access to health care	90.7	7.0	2.3
Migrant workers cannot leave the provinces in which they are employed without permission from the local authorities	87.1	10.6	2.3
Employers should post a bond for the hiring of migrant workers to ensure that they stay	84.9	11.8	3.3
Migrant workers cannot change their location of employment without permission from the local authorities	86.4	10.9	2.7
Children of Migrant workers must be allowed access to Thai schools, provided that they learn the Thai language.	81.4	16.1	2.5
Migrant workers do not have the right to form unions	77.3	18.5	4.2

Table 5 : Respondents opinions about whether or not the Thai Government should admit more foreigners to work in Thailand.

Opinion	%
Yes	9.7
No	58.6
No comment	31.7
Total	100.0

Table 6 : Respondents opinions about whether or not the Thai Government's admitting more foreign workers in Thailand will have a negative impact the lower-skilled and lower-income Thai workers

Opinion	%
Yes, it will have a negative impact the lower skilled or lower income Thai Workers	82.5
There will be no impact	5.2
No comment	12.3
Total	100.0

Table 7 : Respondents opinions about how the Thai Government's admitting more foreign workers in Thailand will impact the lower-skilled and lower-income Thai workers **(multiple choice)**

Impact on Thai Workers (with lower skills or income)	%
It would make it more difficult for them to find employment	87.7
It would decrease the value of Thai labor	76.3
It would force Thai workers to settle for a lower wage	65.4

Table 8 : The respondents have learned the following information regarding migrant workers: **(multiple choice)**

Type of Information	%
Migrant workers who committed serious crimes in Thailand	79.4
Migrant workers who have worked hard	49.1
Migrant workers who have been cheated or abused by their employers (on fishing boats, factories, construction sites, shops, or farms)	41.4
Migrant workers who have spread diseases in Thailand	38.8
Migrant workers who were cheated or abused as domestic helpers.	29.1
Migrant workers who have been harassed by government officers	27.5
Migrant workers who have displayed loyalty their employers	20.9
Migrant workers have contributed to Thailand's economic growth	11.4

Table 9 : Respondent's opinions about how often migrant workers display the following characteristics

Characteristic	Always/ Most of the time	Sometime/ Rarely	No Comment
Hard Working	73.8	13.4	12.8
Honest	19.4	58.4	22.2
Loyal	19.9	57.5	22.6

Table 10 : Respondents opinions about whether the Thai Authorities have done enough to prevent migrant workers from being cheated and/or abused by their Thai employers

Opinions	%
The Thai Authorities have done enough	39.3
The Thai Authorities have not done enough	34.0
No comment	26.7
Total	100.0

Table 11 : How respondents would react to seeing a migrant worker abused by employers (multiple choice)

Reaction	%
Report to the police	61.1
Report to others (related organizations, NGO, etc)	47.6
Ask the employers to stop	24.7
Report to the media	23.5
Do nothing	15.1
Assist them in escaping from the employers	4.5

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