



## **Demands on International Migrants' Day 2013**

*State Enterprise Workers' Relations Confederation of Thailand (SERC)*  
*Migrant Worker Rights Network (MWRN)*

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The United Nations has proclaimed the 18<sup>th</sup> of December of every year as International Migrants Day so as to promote awareness of migrants' rights amongst every nation state and concerned parties. Migrants are entitled under international law to protection and proper treatment from governments and related sectors of society when they migrate from origin countries to destination countries without discriminated against them on the grounds of race, language, belief, colour or gender. There should be ongoing campaigns to promote protection of migrant rights by publicised activities and news regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrant workers. Additionally, all of us share the responsibility to ensure migrants are protected in practice and on equal terms with national workers, particularly given increasing migration across the world.

Migration to Thailand by the majority of overseas workers began in the late 1970s when Thailand started an industrialisation process. At that time, the population from rural communities in Thailand migrated to cities and since then agricultural and other industrial sectors faced a shortage of labour. Economic and political challenges of Thailand's neighbouring countries and a conducive geographical situation created by Thailand's porous borders connecting to neighbouring countries also facilitated regular and irregular border crossing. Workers from neighbouring countries have been flowing in to Thailand particularly from Myanmar, Laos PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam.

It is estimated there are approximately 4 million migrant workers currently in Thailand but only 1, 972, 504 are permitted to legally work. Out of those permitted to work 698, 777 migrants entered the country legally whilst 1, 273, 727 migrants entered the country irregularly. 2-3 million more migrants entered irregularly into Thailand and have not registered at all.

Migrants are crucial for Thailand's productivity and economic growth. However, these workers are also often poorly treated by officials or employers and denied human rights and decent work conditions. Migrants still face wage deductions and unlawful salaries, dangerous and unhygienic working conditions, detention in a slave-like conditions and too frequently fall victim to human

trafficking. Additionally, a long and complicated Nationality Verification process was seemingly designed to cause undue difficulties to migrants and thus facilitate exploitation by brokers. Even when migrants need assistance as genuine victims, they can face charges of irregular immigration due to unlawful entry. All these obstacles for migrants must be addressed by the government, employers and Thai and migrant unions to ensure that migrants' rights will be protected and to promote a positive image of Thailand internationally.

The State Enterprise Workers' Relation Confederation of Thailand (SERC) and Migrant Workers Right Network (MWRN) recognise the significant contribution of international migrants in Thailand and we have organised joint activities to campaign for protection of migrants' rights and to develop migrant quality of life to the same level as Thai workers. Today, on International Migrant Day, we demand to the Government of Thailand and all concerned Thai stakeholders that:

**\*\*\*\*Migrants should be treated equally to national workers.** Migrants are entitled to equal protection under the law without discrimination on any grounds as a principle enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Migrants should be protected by related laws governing labour protection, social security, health coverage and work accident compensation.

**\*\*\*\*An understanding by migrants of the right to association and collective bargaining under ILO Conventions 87 and 98 should be ensured to foster migrant's participation as members of trade unions.** Membership of trade unions will enable all migrant workers to have wage and welfare negotiations with employers and provide a means for migrants to enhance quality of life.

**\*\*\*\*Clear policies and guidelines for a long term migrant workers administration plan should be created** particularly regarding registration, nationality verification and increased efforts of the State and all its officials to work concertedly and connectedly to promote migrant wellbeing

**\*\*\*\*The migrant import (MoU) process should be simplified** to facilitate employers to file an application to employ migrants from overseas without relying on brokers. This will promote investment, reduce costs for migrants and prevent exploitation and trafficking.

**\*\*\*\*Migrants should have freedom to change their employers** as without this they can easily become victims of forced labour, debt bondage and trafficking.

**\*\*\*\*A regulation requiring working premises for migrants to include childcare centers should be created** to ensure workers can be mothers and fathers as is natural and usual in all societies

**In Solidarity**  
**State Enterprises Workers' Relation Confederation of Thailand (SERC)**  
**Migrant Workers Right Network (MWRN)**  
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