

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



1. Rationale

Thailand's emergence as an Asian economic tiger and a glittering tourist destination owes much to its open economy and embrace of globalization. Thailand made the transition from net labor exporter in early 1990s. Thailand's major immigration laws—the Foreign Employment Act of 1978, the Immigration Act 1979, and the Investment Promotion Act 1977—do not allow for the admission of unskilled foreign workers, so most of the estimated 700,000 to 800,000 (police estimate run as high as two million) unskilled foreign workers in Thailand in the mid—1990s were authorized. The financial crisis of 1997 was expected to increase unemployment among Thais, and encourage unemployed Thais to replace migrants. Many migrants did leave Thailand between 1997 and 1998—the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare estimated number of migrants fell from almost 1 million in 1998 to 644,000 in 1999. In 2002, MOLSW estimated that there were 816,000 unskilled foreign migrants in Thailand. (Martin, 2003:16)

These unskilled labors in Thailand are from Asia; Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh etc. Migrant from Myanmar is the highest number in Thailand. There are approximately two and a half million migrant workers in Thailand. Most of them are Burmese workers employed in factories, commercial farms and the food industry, and in the domestic sector. (Available from: <http://www.jesref.org>)

The phenomenon of international migration has occurred because of two main reasons; political and economical. Martial politics in some countries cause people to take refuge in other countries. They feel danger in their country because of civil war and other pressures. For economic reason, they seek for better living condition.

With world globalization period, all parts of the world are easily and quickly accessible. An advance of technology is information from one part of the world can be sent to others without boundaries, to stop it. Consequently, economic, social customs, and culture of one country can affect the human behavior of others.

However, with materialism becoming more important than humanitarian aid the migrant population has taken a phenomenon rise.

Thailand is a destination of Asian migrants because of Thailand's economic growth and progressive development; these factors attract a large number of migrants, both legal and illegal. Geographically, Thailand shares borders with neighboring countries, the total distance being 5,656 kilometers. One of these countries being Myanmar with 2,401 kilometers of shared border. The second longest border is 1,810 kilometers with Laos. The border with Cambodia is 789 kilometers and with Malaysia is 647 kilometers. (Premjai Vungsiriphisal, Siwaporn Auasalong and Supang Chantavanich, 1999:1) Some migrants come into Thailand with their families, work agencies or alone. Some of them get married to Thai citizen and have children. This also increases migrant population.

The many routes and means of entering Thailand

Most migrant's children travel by car, motorcycle, or walk from their place origin of origin to the Thai border. Some children come with agents. If they come in a large group, they usually travel by truck to the border. If they come in small groups, they travel on foot or by car to the border. They pass through the border checkpoint either legally or by bribing the Thai border officials. Some points of entry are by sea.

The Thailand-Myanmar border has many border-crossing points in Thailand's western and northern provinces:

- Mae Sai District and Chiang Kong District, Chiang Rai province
- Fang District, Chiang Mai Province
- Khunyuam District, Mae Hong Son Province
- Ta Song Yang District and Mae Sot District, Tak Province
- Sangklaburi District and Tongpaphum District, Kanchanaburi Province (Premjai et al., 1999:5)

There are many migrant workers in Thailand, both legal and illegal migrants, and one-third of them are registered. Most of migrant workers live in border areas such as Mae Sai, Mae Sod, Ranong province, or the central part of Thailand such as Samutsakhon, and Chonburi. There are some concerns and worry about social

impacts on Thailand because of the increase of migrant population. Thailand has a responsibility for migrants in terms of health and education.

Most migrants are from Burma and they cause of the largest concerns to Thailand in terms of security, health and job placement. Some migrants give birth to children in Thailand these children are entitled to Thai citizenship paper (this includes fundamental education). In contrast, many migrants are illegal and have become a stateless person. Their children either born in Thailand or brought with them enter the same stateless status. Their basic rights become a significant problem.

There are about one million migrant children in Thailand and 700,000-800,000 Burmese migrant children. The rest of the population is from Cambodia, China, Lao and South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka). The exact number of them is not clear because some are illegal and lack of paper documents to identify themselves. However, the information from fieldwork research about the address of the migrant labor force suggests that children are one-fourth of all workers. (Premjai, et al., 1999:41)

Migrant children entering Thailand come alone or with their parents. They face a trouble even stay with their parents because of pressure such as broken family and working for themselves and their families. Consequently, they lack of opportunities for developing themselves. Moreover, they lack of fundamental rights and legal protections because of their illegal status.

In terms of policy, the Ministry of Education and National Security Council have different policies about the education opportunity of migrant children. The policy of the Ministry of Education, launched in 1992, addressed that Burmese migrants who are smuggles into Thailand after 9 March 1966 and have homes could receive fundamental education in Thailand. In contrast, the policy of National Security Council, launched in 1997 addressed that the Burmese migrants who come into Thailand up to 1984, and are illegal migrants could not study in Thailand. The policy of the Ministry of Public Health, supporting the policy of the Ministry of Education, has stated that anyone who gives birth to a child must give notice of the birth to a hospital or local registration office for receiving birth document. Moreover, Thailand is a member of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, addressing the educational rights of children. Consequently, this study will find out the educational opportunities and problems based on Thai policies and the Convention of the Rights of the Child of migrant children

Education is important for everyone because it improves development, mental behavior and social skills. In the Convention on the Right of the Child it clearly states that even though a child is living in one particular country and possibly stateless, they should be educated in that country. Thailand has ratified this Convention, thus Thai policies should be based on child's rights by supporting the education of migrant children.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 To examine Thai government policies and obstacles of migrant children's education.
- 2.2 To investigate problems in providing of educational service to migrant children.
- 2.3 To assess the problem and the solving of educational opportunities of migrant children.

3. Conceptual Framework

According to Thai government has unclear policy on suppress and repatriate illegal migrant workers from neighboring countries especially, Myanmar. They also enter Thailand with their families and have their spouses and children. Geographically, Thailand shares long border with Myanmar thus, it is convenient for them to cross border to work. In addition, Myanmar's politics is the push factor of going to Thailand. Burmese migrant workers living in Thailand should be concerned as human being like Thais and protected by Human Rights. Consequently, all should have basic rights. This research stresses on the educational opportunities for Burmese migrant children who are a large proportion in Thailand and tend to stay for long period.

The following keynote speech was delivered by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in her capacity as a council member of the Refugee Education Trust, which organized the symposium in Geneva, Switzerland.

"Education provides the opportunity to choose, the opportunity to choose peace."

Regarding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children could get access basic education in countries where they are living and Thailand the one

who ratified this convention in 1989. Consequently, all children even they are non-Thai citizen can access basic education. For Thai policy, in 1992, the Ministry of Education launched the regulation that support this convention by allow non-Thai citizen children to study basic education. Practically, a few children could access basic education. Consequently, Thai policies are not consistent.

4. Research Design

This research stress on educational opportunities of Burmese migrant in Samut Sakhon, thus sampling groups are divided into two main groups; children studying in Thai school (formal school), and not studying in Thai school—studying in others and not studying.

4.1 Research Site

The study is limited to migrant children from Myanmar in one locality, Muang district, Samut Sakhon Province. This is a qualitative research and having limited time thus, it stresses on only one district. Sampling groups are divided into two groups: children who study in Thai school and don't study in Thai school (study in others and don't study) are Burmese children, 6-14 years old, schooling age (Samutsakhon educational committee office, 1983:11) and in each group, there are children who were born in Thailand and Myanmar. The reason of dividing into two groups is that this research would like to find the educational opportunities of Burmese migrant children studying in formal school and the problems of educational access.

This area is one of the important areas where study about migrant and migration. In 1993, the Thai fisheries law was changed to permit migrants to work on Thai fishing boats based in 22 coastal provinces, one of them is Samut Sakhon. These jobs, in the fishery industries are dirty and Thai workers refuse to do them. Migrant workers, especially Burmese workers, are very important in this province.

The migrants from Myanmar are called “Burmese or Burmese migrant” but actually, they compose many ethnic groups from different areas in Myanmar such as Mon state, Karen and Tanintaye etc. The Burmese migrants live in Burmese community where they are near or mix with the Thai communities.

There are many migrant populations, living for several decades in Samutsakhon province. In 2004, there were 37,047 migrant workers who registered in

this province. There were 35,644 Burmese workers, 1,221 Laotian workers and 182 Cambodia workers. The proportion of Burmese workers was 96.23 percent while 3.67 percent was the proportion of Laotian and Cambodia workers (Available from: <http://www.samutsakhon.go.th>). Most of them have not registered and live in this province. Consequently, their number is higher than the survey. From Raks Thai data, there are around 300,000 Burmese migrant workers in Samutsakhon province.

Moreover, there is a large number of migrant children in this area. Some Burmese children were born in Thailand but some followed their parents from Myanmar to this province. From statistic of Samutsakhon hospital between 1996 and 2003, there were 3,702 migrant children, born in Samutsakhon hospital and 455 migrant children were born in the other hospitals in 2001 to 2003. Consequently, the number of migrant children in this province is more than 4,157 (Premjai Vungsiriphisal, 2003:5). However, the number of children is inconsistent because they are always traveling between Thailand and Burma.

In addition, this province is important for migrant study because it is one of case study of migrants and migrant children in course syllabus. Consequently, the study of educational opportunities is one way to assess the needs, opportunities, problems and solving of migrant children's education.

4.2 Steps

The research was divided into four steps as follows.

The first step: Site survey at the end of March, thesis proposal was accepted and the beginning of observation and survey, from April to May, at Sapan Pla in Mahachai district, Pongtip market, Krokkrak Nai where Raks Thai Foundation-CARE operates free informal schools. In addition, one free informal school is operated by Christian foundation at Talad Kung. At the same time making familiar and good relation with the Burmese children and their parents in this area was done and choosing the sampling groups, the migrant children, their parents, officers who are involve in local education and teachers. This step is quite important for a qualitative research because they will answer in deep detail.

The second step: Select sampling and develop questions guideline

Focus groups are divided into main two groups: children who study in Thai school and don't study are Burmese children. 5-14 years old, schooling age. The

school age of children is reduced to 5 years old because some children access kindergarten, lower than 6 years old in Thai school. However, their parents are the focus groups for interview in case of children are less than 6 years old, could not answer some questions. For the first group, 11 children studying in school are divided into 4 groups in each school for group conversation and in-depth interview. Thirty children who do not study in Thai school, they are divided into 3 groups depending on home area. At the end of May, pre-test instrument is done in this step. The reason of dividing into two groups is that place of birth (Myanmar or Thailand) may not be the factor of educational opportunities.

The third step: Field study

For group interview, the questions are based on general question and the background of the children such as “How old are you?”, “How long have you been in Thailand?”, “Have you ever studied in Thai school?”, “Have you ever studied in Burmese schools in Thailand?”

At the end of May, pre-test question was done with the children and their parents at Sapan Pla. In the beginning of June, the interview took place at Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office where sees to the local policy of migrant children in Thai schools. An interview the teachers, directors and their friends in Thai schools where migrant children study. At the same time, interviewing the migrant children who do not have access to Thai schools and their parents about their educational opportunity and problems will be done. This step will take two months, June to July.

For in-depth interview, the questions are stressed on each personal data including their background, families, their way of thinking, their intelligence and those of their parents. This interview includes their parents, teachers and classmates. The instruments for collecting data are questionnaires, tape recorder, talking note, and camera. A translator is needed for interview because some interviewees can not speak Thai. The interview includes key informants;

- Migrant children, born and not born in Thailand are studying in Thai school and informal school (by Raks Thai foundation)
- Raks Thai volunteers; Khun Narong and Khun Tone (Burmese volunteer) and Thai volunteers who teach in informal schools
- The official of Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office

- Teachers in Thai school and informal school who teach migrant children

All of these key informants will answer the educational opportunity of migrant children and solving of educational opportunities of migrant children.

The forth step: Data analysis

After the above-mentioned case study, the step of analyzing the primary data and writing has been taken into account.

4.3 Data collection methods

The research tools used for this study are described in detail below.

4.3.1 Observation: During the first step, surveying the Burmese migrant worker communities in Maung district and making familiar with the children and their families. The observation is based on the NGOs--Raks Thai foundation (CARE) center at Sapan Pla in Mahachai, Krokkraknai, Pongtip market. After that, the observation is done in other areas and in school where Burmese children study.

4.3.2 Group interview: The focus group method provided data on group interactions, which can enrich interview response, particularly with regards to educational frame of Burmese children. These group interviews are divided into two mains groups; those children studying in formal and informal schools.

Focus groups base on general question and the background of the children (Appendix B). These questions follow the same interview guidelines as the in-depth interviews and are conducted in the language of the participants, with facilitators of the same living areas and schools. The informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure is intended to encourage subject to speak freely and completely about behaviors, attitudes and opinions they possess. (Berg, 2000:111) The data from the focus group interview are collected using tape-based analysis strategy, which involved listening to the tape and preparing a brief written transcript. In addition to comments from participants, this transcript included the moderator's and observer's comments, noting nonverbal communication, such as body language and level of energy. Taping allows for the researcher to grasp the exact use of language and style of speech. The participants are assured that their comments and remarks would remain anonymous and confidential.

The reason why there are forty-one children is the time limitation. The children are divided into two main groups; those children studying in formal schools, informal schools and out of school as follows.

There are 11 students from four schools. The children of cluster one and two participated in group and in-depth interview but all of cluster three and four participated in only in-depth interview.

Cluster 1: Four students from Wat Sammakkee Tham School (there are two students are in P.1, one P.2 student and one from the kindergarten)

Cluster 2: Four students from Wat Bang Nam Von school (P.1, P.2 and P.3)

Cluster 3: Two students from Wat Ratrangsans school (P.1 and P.2)

Cluster 4: One student from Sahakorn Nikhomkler (P.6)

There are 30 children (10 of them are out of school and 20 of them study in informal schools) participating in group and in-depth interview are separated into 3 groups as follows.

Cluster 1: Eight children living in Krokkrak Nai community

Cluster 2: Nine children living in Krokkrak Nai community

Cluster 3: Ten children living in Sapan Pla area

There are 4 children (out of school) who did not participate in group interview because there are few children in the areas (behind Akeachai School, Mahachai Kar Mai and Mahachai Villa). Only in-depth interview is used for these children. Moreover, they are not fluent in speaking Thai thus interpreter is used.

4.3.3 In-depth interview: Informal in-depth interviews are conducted that offered a degree of flexibility and relaxation because the interviewees are children. For other key informants, semi-structure in-depth interviews are conducted. Guidelines for the in-depth interview (Appendix C) are designed for gathering information from Burmese migrant children and key informants. The information is stress on educational opportunities of Burmese children such as their idea about education that relevant with this research.

All Burmese children and key informants—six teachers teaching in formal school, five teachers teaching in informal school, two Burmese volunteers of Raks Thai and three government officers – Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office participated in in-depth interview.

Burmese children--individuals who participated in the in-depth or group interviews received a small gift of food or stationery.

4.4 Data analysis

The sampling groups of Burmese migrant children are collected for each respondent in the in-depth and group interviews. The observation notes and in-depth interviews with key informants are transcribed, translated and coded. The result from each children and key informants is categorized the kinds of school operated for Burmese migrant children in Samut Sakhon and obstacle of school access. The Thai Government policies on education for migrants are examined in way of practice.

5. Research Limitation

5.1 Sampling groups has language limitation because of the use of interpreter and assistant collectors.

5.2 Some of the sampling groups are too young to answer the question by themselves. Consequently, it is necessary to interview their parents.

5.3 Finding children who do not study for group and in-depth interview is quite difficult and takes time because they do not stay in Burmese community. Consequently, focus group technique is not done but only in-depth interview done.