Size Estimates of Three Migrant Groups in Bangkok: Citizens of Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia

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The migrant laborers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia are the largest groups of foreign workers in Thailand. Effective policy making and planning related to migrant laborers and their families is impeded by the fact that they are a mix of both legal and illegal migrants which makes it difficult to determine the precise number in each group. This study attempts to provide more accurate size estimates of these groups than has been available so far.

Our estimates of the populations rely on both primary and secondary sources of data. Data from a sample of 21 Census Enumeration Areas (EA) in Bangkok were augmented by the registration of foreign migrant laborers. The size estimates based on these data indicate that the total number of migrant laborers and their dependents from these three countries residing in Bangkok is in a range of 464,943 to 681,867. It is recommended that comparable surveys be conducted in other provinces to provide a more accurate national estimate of the total migrant labor populations, including those from these three neighboring countries. Data on the migration patterns, as well as documentation of the speed and patterns of movement while in Thailand would further refine these estimates.

Keywords: *migrant population, estimation, legal and illegal migrant workers*

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Introduction

The migrant workers in Thailand from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia are the largest groups of foreign laborers in the country. Socio-economic factors in their home countries have limited their opportunities for employment, prompting these three groups to leave their home countries to migrate across the common border with Thailand in order to improve the economic circumstances of their families. It is difficult to determine the precise number of migrants at any one time because the total number includes both those who have entered Thailand legally and those who have come illegally. Thailand has not yet implemented an adequate system for estimating the number of the migrant laborers in the country and not knowing the size of these populations hinders socio-economic policy and planning related to migrant workers and their families.

This study was designed to provide a more accurate size estimate of these groups, including those who entered Thailand illegally as well as legal migrants. Bangkok was chosen as the target area for this study because it is the center of the Thai economy, and thus provides more job opportunities for everyone, including migrants. Statistics on the number of registered migrant laborers by region and their immigration status as of April 2012 (Table 1) show that the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA) had the largest numbers of migrants in the nation. Therefore, Bangkok was selected for this pilot study to estimate the number of migrants, both legal and illegal, and to develop a methodology that can easily be applied to other provinces.

Databases of Foreign Migrants Working in Thailand

Three agencies systematically collect data on migrants in Thailand: 1) National Statistical Office (NSO); 2) Ministry of Labor (MOL); and 3) Ministry of Interior (MOI). As described below, there are important differences in the types of data collected and the methodologies used by each agency.

1. National Statistical Office (NSO)

The NSO conducts a survey of non‑Thais as part of the national population and housing census. The census divides the country into census blocks or enumeration areas (EAs) and counts each member of every household. For Bangkok, each EA has approximately 150‑200 households[1] and a NSO map shows the exact physical location of each EA. The latest round of census was in 2010; it included more information about non‑Thai citizens than the previous rounds. The 2010 census included the non‑Thais in the listing to learn more about the non‑Thai citizens in Thailand while the previous rounds were concerned only about the proportion of non‑Thai citizens in the total population[2]. A total of 3.2 million non‑Thais were included in the 2010 census or 4.9% of the total population (National Statistical Office, 2011).

The enumeration of foreign residents in Bangkok from the primary sampling units yielded a total of 727,554 persons, including 349,025 from the three neighboring countries of Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia.[3] While the census attempts to reach every domicile in the country to obtain a *de facto* count of the resident populations, there are limitations of coverage and communication, especially when it comes to migrants. For example, the time at which data is collected is often when migrants are working either during normal working hours or when they have a chance to work overtime. Data collection from the migrant communities is further hampered by the inability of the data collectors to speak the languages of the migrants so that even when they have a chance to meet and interview them, the data collectors often are not able to collect the data that are needed.

2. Ministry of Labor (MOL)

The Office of Foreign Workers Administration of the Department of Employment of the MOL compiles data on the registration of foreign migrants throughout the country. The database of the MOL only recognizes the number of Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia workers in Thailand who have met the following requirements:

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1 The number of households was from the interview of a staff of National Statistical Office.

2 From the interview with officers at Population Statistics Group, Social Statistics Bureau, National Statistical Office

3 Unpublished number given by Population Statistics Group, Social Statistics Bureau, National Statistical Office

(1) those with evidence of citizenship;

(2) those imported under the MOUs; and

(3) those admitted in accordance with the Cabinet Resolution 3 - citizen.

The total number of registered foreign migrants as of April 2012 was 414,797. This number is obtained from actual head count of migrant workers, but it only counts the workers and not their dependents or non-working spouses.

In Table 1 below, Bangkok has recorded 217,105 migrants who entered Thailand legally and can show evidence of citizenship in their home country, and 20,597 who are legal migrants under the provision of Measure 9[4]. In addition, 177,095 illegal migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia were in Bangkok as of April 2012. Registered migrant laborers are identified by their nationality and the aggregate number is available for the whole country only, not by province. Therefore, there is no data for the three nationalities of Myanmar, Lao, and Cambodia in each province, but the total number of these three groups is available for Bangkok.

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4 These are the migrants who live in Thailand temporarily. There are three types of migrants under Measure 9 (See description of Migrant Categories in Table 1).

Table 1: Number of registered migrant laborers, by immigration status, area of residence and nationality, as of April 2012

Place of residence	Total	Legal Entry						Illegal Entry		
		Total Legal Entry	Measure 9				Measure 12	Total Illegal Entry	Measure 13	
			Unlimited Duration	General	Under MOU		BOI Investment Promotion		Minority Groups	Cabinet Resolution 3–Citizen (Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia)
					Evidence of Citizenship	Import				
The whole kingdom	1,752,100	839,913	983	73,784	642,865	95,929	26,352	912,187	25,680	886,507
Bangkok	475,859	296,095	10	42,565	217,105	20,597	15,818	179,764	2,669	177,095
All regions	1,276,241	543,818	973	31,219	425,760	75,332	10,534	732,423	23,011	709,412
Bangkok Vicinity	383,544	157,552	-	5,482	131,745	18,784	1,541	225,992	1,281	224,711
Central	400,980	171,124	182	9,385	127,070	26,921	7,566	229,856	3,006	226,850
North	156,509	57,656	25	4,773	52,059	81	718	98,853	18,256	80,597
North-East	35,826	13,053	171	2,005	7,146	3,337	394	22,773	155	22,618
South	299,382	144,433	595	9,574	107,740	26,209	315	154,949	313	154,636
Nationality										
Myanmar		549,304	-	1,264	529,097	18,830	113	567,364	2,306	565,058
Laos		61,884	-	123	45,643	16,113	5	99,066	47	99,019
Cambodia		129,301	-	180	68,125	60,986	10	222,454	24	222,430
Other 38 Nationalities		99,424	983	72,217	0	0	26,224		23,303	0

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, April 2012; http://wp.doe.go.th/sites/default/files/statistic/7/sm05-55.pdf

Description of Migrant Categories in Table 1

Legal Entry means migrants who hold official documents issued by their home country, i.e. passport, temporary passport, certificate of identity with a visa from the Thai Embassy in their home country. When they enter Thailand, they must have a non‑immigrant visa. They must also apply to get a work permit in Thailand.

Measure 9 means migrants who live in Thailand temporarily. There are three types of migrants under Measure 9:

1. General: Migrants in this group are mostly skilled‑labor from foreign companies investing in Thailand.

2. Unlimited duration: Migrants in this group are those who were in Thailand before December 13, 1972 and have not changed their registered job.

3. MOU: There are two groups under MOU;

    (1) Those with evidence of citizenship -- This covers migrant workers who illegally entered the country but are processed through the Cabinet Resolution for addressing their status. Through this process their status can be converted to "authorizd foreign migrant for temporary stay" if they can provide evidence of citizenship authorized by their home country via a temporary passport or certificate of identity to request a work permit.

    (2) Those imported under the MOUs -- This group of migrant laborers is allowed to continue to work as house work and other labor in Thailand in accordance with the MOUs between Thailand and Lao PDR, Thailand and Cambodia, and Thailand and Myanmar.

Measure 12 covers migrants who work in Thailand in accordance with the Board of Investment (BOI) laws.

Illegal Entry: There are two types of migrants categorized as illegal;

    (1) Minority Groups

    (2) Cabinet Resolution 3‑citizens of Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia. -- Those admitted in accordance with Cabinet Resolution 3‑citizen. This includes illegal migrant laborers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia who have been allowed to stay in Thailand in accordance with the Cabinet Resolution dated January 19, 2010. They have gone through the process of demonstrating citizenship in the country of origin as of February 28, 2012 and not after June 14, 2012.

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration, 2012. Website: http://wp.doe.go.th/practice

3. Ministry of Interior (MOI)

According to the Mekong Migration Network (2012), Thai policy has allowed migrants and their families to register for a temporary residence ID card (ทร.๓๘/๑ -- Tor Ror 38/1) since June 2004. The card was free of charge and was valid for only 1 year. At that time, there were 1,284,920 migrants registered with the MOI, but only 1,161,013 people complied fully with the requirement of a photo and a finger print. There were 103,082 dependents who were under age 15 or over age 60. From July 2005 to June 2006, the policy stated that those migrants who had registered during 2004 could apply for a renewal of their permits. All migrants of working age with this temporary ID card were required to also apply for or extend the migrant workers cards. Dependents of registered migrants were also allowed to continue their temporary ID status.

The cabinet resolution in 2006 allowed migrants who had registered in July 2005 to extend for an additional year with the same employer. Workers could register with a new employer only if they could prove that they had to change employers because the employer died, changed or stopped his/her business, forced or abused the worker or did not pay the worker, or because of unfair dismissal or similar reasons.

Based on these policies, the migrant database of MOI through the Department of Administration, Ministry of Interior (2011) shows huge annual fluctuations as recorded in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of foreign laborers in the Bangkok household registration system; 2004‑2011

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number	171,375	995	34,322	1,299	15,637	200,049	2,458	175,978
Cumulative total				602,113				

Source: Household registration (ทร.๓๘/๑ -- Tor Ror 38/1) for residents from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia during the year for 2004‑2011, Department of Administration, MOI as of November 17, 2011

The household registration system counted a total of 602,113 migrants in Bangkok. The number shown for each year is the number of new migrants who registered with MOI in that year including newborn babies. In addition, there are migrant workers

who cannot access to the MOI registration system. These are illegal migrant workers under MOU and migrant workers under the Measure 9 who are not in the MOI database.

From these three current databases of foreign workers, it can be concluded that there are gaps in the estimates of the total number of foreign migrant workers in the country. NSO's census which collects data of non‑Thai citizens should be able to give accurate number of migrants, but their method has faced several difficulties in accessing non‑Thai groups. MOL database includes only the registered migrant workers but not their dependents. MOI's data are cumulative and thus could result in duplicate counts. The limitations of the various national and Bangkok data systems have hindered a more complete estimate of migrant workers and their dependents. The actual number of migrants cannot be directly counted and the exact number is not available from any existing database.

Archavanitkul and Guest (2000/2012) reviewed estimates of the number of illegal migrant workers in Thailand based on an analysis of data from several public and private sources. The number of foreign laborers that were calculated from the various databases varied greatly as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of numbers of foreign laborers in the estimated number of illegal migrant workers from several public and private sources in Thailand by Archavanitkul and Guest (2000/2012)

Source	Year	Number of illegal foreign migrants	Remark
Ministry of Interior	1993‑4	975,756	200,000 were from Myanmar
National Security Council	1993‑4	211,492	Worksite investigation
Immigration	1994	525,480	300,000 were from Myanmar
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare	1996	741,999	
	1997	986,889	
	1998	558,904	
Tak Province	1995	7,064	Mae Sot Chamber of Commerce
Phuket Province	1996	23,500	Chamber of Commerce
Mahidol University	1996	970,903	775,000 were from Myanmar
Ranong Province	1998	70,079	

Table 3 (cont.)

Source	Year	Number of illegal foreign migrants	Remark
Tak Province	1998	83,200	Provincial Council of Industry and the Chamber of Commerce
Samut Sakorn Province	1998	143,892	Provincial Health Community collaborated with business owners
Thai Immigration Authorities	1996	970,903	20% is used to estimate child migrants age 0 - 18 years

It is clear that there is a lack of consistency in the estimates of the number of illegal migrant laborers, possibly because of different methodologies and the populations under consideration. These estimates do not comprehensively cover all the worksites with migrant laborers in the country, and cannot be used in isolation from more valid data sources. For example, in 1996 Mahidol University did a survey in collaboration with provincial employment offices and chambers of commerce throughout the country. These survey data were merged with other independent sources of data from the public and private sectors, and from in - depth interviews with key informants in 15 provinces. This produced an estimate of 970,903 illegal migrant laborers, of whom 775,000 were believed to be from Myanmar. Some estimates were based on data of the Provincial Council of Industry and the Chambers of Commerce where there were migrant workers. Some data were taken from the report of Thai Immigration Authorities. Each agency has a unique method to estimate the number of migrants and, as a result, there is no reliable, national system for estimating the number of migrants in Thailand.

This study is an effort to get a more accurate number of the migrant workers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia in Bangkok by means of estimation. This estimate will make use of the secondary data on number of registered migrants collected by Ministry of Labor in April 2012 combined with the primary data from our survey conducted in the same year.
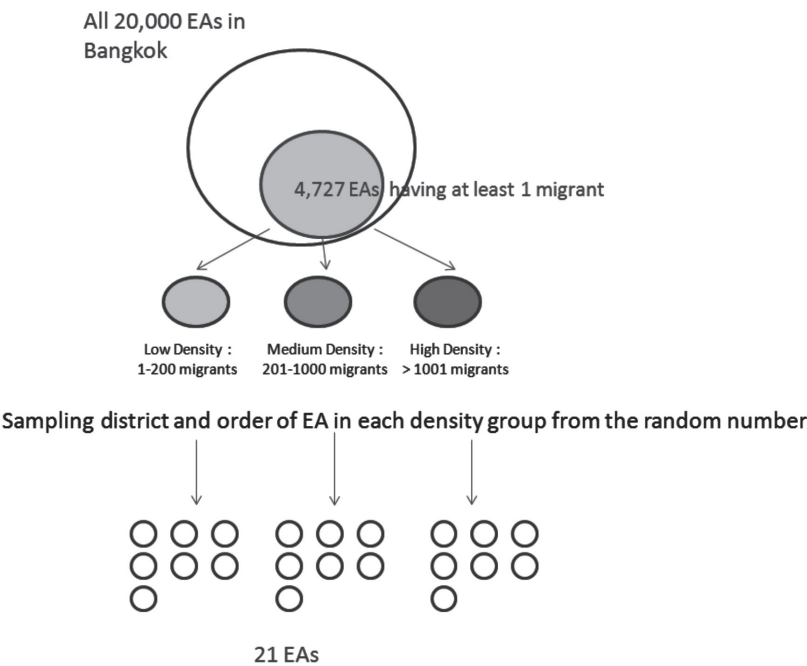
Methodology

1. The Data

This estimate uses both primary and secondary data.

a) Primary data

The primary data are from a survey of 21 census Enumeration Areas (EAs) in Bangkok. These 21 EAs were selected from 4,727 EAs which have at least one non-Thai person. These EAs are a subset of about 20,000 EAs used in the 2010 National Census in Bangkok. Because of resource limitations and the pilot nature of this project, the data collection in this study was limited to 21 EAs. It repeated the census process by counting all the people in each of the sample EAs. The 21 EAs were divided into three groups based on density of non-Thai population: high (having 1,001 non-Thais or more); moderate (having 201-1,000 non-Thais) and low (having 1-200 non-Thais). The process of selecting 21 EAs is shown in Figure 1

Figure 1: The process of selecting 21 sample EAs

All 20,000 EAs in Bangkok

4,727 EAs having at least 1 migrant

Low Density : 1-200 migrants

Medium Density : 201-1000 migrants

High Density : > 1001 migrants

Sampling district and order of EA in each density group from the random number

21 EAs

Data collectors or fieldworkers for all 21 EAs were students from the Faculty of Anthropology, Silpakorn University who worked hand‑in‑hand with translators. In order to avoid the language problems, questionnaires were prepared in both Thai and Burmese so that Burmese translators could follow each question. In some areas where Cambodian workers were found, Cambodian translator was used. However, there was no need to use a Lao translator, since Lao and Thai languages are understandable. There was a two‑day training for interviewers and translators on basic information about migrants. Questions in the questionnaire were reviewed thoroughly and there was an interview practice in a training room under observations and supervision by trainers. After that field practice was conducted in one EA specifically designated for training.

As part of a survey before the collection of data, supervisors were in the EA area to observe migrants' lives and gathered information that subsequently was used to fine‑tune the questionnaire. If there were no target groups in an area, interviewers would return three times to make sure that information about availability of the migrants was accurate. If target respondents were identified but not available for interview, arrangement was made for the interviewer to meet later. This strategy was useful and contributed to the low refusal rate from the target respondents. The data collection took place from April to June 2012.

The survey counted 1,910 non‑Thai residents in 21 sample EAs; out of these 1,847 (96.7%) were migrants from the three target countries, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. The migrants of three nationalities could be divided by gender and age‑groups as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Sample population by age and sex

Age group	Male	Female	Total	%
< 15 years	56	48	104	5.7
15‑19	120	109	229	12.6
20‑29	510	351	861	47.5
30‑39	231	213	444	24.5
40‑49	89	56	145	8.0
50 and older	11	17	28	1.5
Total	**1,017**	**794**	**1,811**	**100.00**

Table 4 (cont.)

Age group	Male	Female	Total	%
Age unknown	18	3	21	-
No response	2	1	3	-
Age and gender unknown			12	-
Total	**1,037**	**798**	**1,847**	**-**

If we classified by working-permit status, it was found that 88.2% of all migrants had working permit ID at the time of the survey. There was only one EA that had the lowest proportion of migrants with working permit ID (64.3%) as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Number and proportion of the sample migrants who had working permit ID, by EA

EA no.	Not having working permit ID	Having working permit ID	Proportion with ID
3	5	9	64.3%
12	0	22	100.0%
21	0	184	100.0%
24	2	32	94.1%
29	2	36	94.7%
42	0	1	100.0%
48	14	44	75.9%
50	0	1	100.0%
74	62	418	87.1%
86	1	76	98.7%
131	16	77	82.8%
177	5	114	95.8%
178	42	125	74.8%
211	14	73	83.9%
254	7	18	72.0%
258	26	287	91.7%
568	1	4	80.0%
924	10	24	70.6%
Total	**207**	**1,545**	**88.2%**

Remark: Data in this table are from 18 out of 21 EAs; three EAs are excluded because the migrants could not be reached for interview.

b) Secondary data

Secondary data are taken from the registration of foreign migrant laborers administered by the Ministry of Labor (MOL). The number of registered migrant laborers in Bangkok in April 2012 was used as the base for this estimation; it is obtained from empirical head count of authorized foreign laborers (See section 2 "Ministry of Labor (MOL)" above).

2. Process of estimation

Base population: The registration of foreign workers in Bangkok administered by MOL in April 2012 (i.e. the same year as our survey) provides a minimum number of 414,797 migrant workers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia which is used as the base population for the present estimation. This number includes only those migrant workers who are officially registered and hence have work permit ID cards but does not include dependents of these workers such as their children and old relatives. The reason for using the MOL instead of MOI database is because the MOL source gives an actual number of registered migrants; although the number of their dependents are not available, these can be estimated using the proportions of migrants population by age group obtained from our survey which show 5.7% of the surveyed migrants being children below age 15 (see Table 4 above). The data from MOI which show numbers of both migrant workers and their dependents are not suitable for this purpose since there is a huge annual fluctuation as already observed in Table 2 above.

Proportion with working permit ID cards: Since the estimate aims to obtain the number which includes all migrant workers from the three countries, with and without the work permit, it is important to know the proportion who have the work permit ID cards. Our survey of migrants in 18 EAs reveals that, overall 88.2% of the migrant workers have working permit ID cards while the smallest proportion of 64.3% of those who have this ID cards is found in one of the sample EAs. These proportions can be used to estimate the medium and maximum number of migrants in Bangkok (See below).

Proportion of migrants' dependents: In general terms, dependents are children under age 15 and the elderly aged 60 and older. In our 2012 survey of 21 EAs we found that 5.7% of the migrants in the survey were children under age 15 and 1.5% were those aged 50 years and older. The latter, however, were currently working. Based

on their working status these older migrants should not be considered as dependents. As such, only 5.7% of the migrants in Bangkok are dependents. This proportion will be used to estimate an actual number of children of adult migrant workers in Bangkok.

Results

1. Minimum Estimate

According the MOL, division of foreign workers in April 2012, the number of migrant with ID card is 414,797. This is considered as the minimum number since it includes only those who are 15 years and older with ID card (i.e. registered); it does not include children under age 15. However, as noted above, in our survey of 21 EAs in Bangkok we found 5.7% of the migrants are children in this age-group. That is to say that the majority of 94.3% (or 100-5.7%) are adult migrants in the working age-group of 15 years and older. Based on this, we can assume that the 414,797 migrants with ID from the MOL record account for 94.3% of the total migrant population. Using this assumption, we can estimate (1) the minimum number of migrants in the working age-group, and (2) the number of their children (dependents). Added up, these estimated numbers represent a total minimum number of migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia in Bangkok. Result is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Minimum estimates of migrants of all age-groups from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia including their children in Bangkok

Age group	Minimum number	Remark
Base population	414,797	Based on the MOL registration, April 2012
Total number of migrants aged 15 years and older	439,870	Calculation: 414,797/94.3*100
Children under age 15	25,073	Calculation: 439,870*.057
Total	464,943	Calculation: 439,870+25,073

The minimum estimate above yields the total of 464,943 migrants. Among these, 439,870 persons are in the working age group, and 25,073 are children under age 15.

2. Medium estimate

The medium estimate uses the proportion of 88.2% of the total migrants with working permit to adjust the base population of 414,797 migrants in order to obtain a total number of adult migrants in the working age-group. This yields an estimated number of 470,291 migrant workers. But this number does not include children age under 15. To estimate number of children, we multiply this number by the 5.7% of children population. Result is given in Table 7.

Table 7: Medium estimates of migrants of all age-groups from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia including their children in Bangkok

Age group of Migrant	Medium number	Remark
Base population	414,797	Based on MOL registration, April, 2012
Total number of migrants aged 15 years and older	470,291	Calculation: 414,797/88.2*100
Children under age 15	26,807	Calculation: 470,291*.057
Total	497,098	Calculation: 470,291+26,807

According to this medium estimate, total number of the migrant population is 497,098. Among these, 470,291 are in the working age group and 26,807 are children under 15 years of age.

3. Maximum estimate

This estimate uses the lowest percentage of the migrant workers with the working permit (i.e., registered) which was 64.3% (based on our 2012 survey which shows one EA with the lowest proportion of migrant workers with work permit -- Table 5). When applied to the base population of migrants aged 15 years and older, this gives 645,096 migrants who are in the working age-group. To obtain the overall total of migrants in Bangkok, the number of children under age 15 must be added. As children under age 15 accounts for 5.7% (our 2012 survey -- Table 4), we can multiply this proportion to the number of those in the working age-group above (645,096) to get the number of children. Adding this to the number of migrants in the working age-group results in the overall total of migrants (adults and children) living in Bangkok. Results of this maximum estimate show the overall number of

681,867 migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia in Bangkok. Out of these 645,096 are adults in the working age‑group and 36,771 are children under age 15 (Table 8).

Table 8: Maximum estimates of migrants of all age‑groups from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia including their children in Bangkok

Age group of Migrant	Maximum number	Calculation
Base population	414,797	Based on MOL registration, April, 2012
Total number of migrants in working age‑group (aged 15 years and older)	645,096	Calculation: 414,797/64.3*100
Children under age 15	36,771	Calculation: 645,096*.057
Total	681,867	Calculation: 645,096+36,771

The three estimates above give different numbers of foreign migrant workers in Bangkok: The minimum estimate gives 464,943 individuals while the medium and maximum estimates give the numbers of 497,098 and 681,867 respectively.

Summary and Recommendations

1. This study draws upon primary and secondary data about migrants in order to estimate the size of the migrant workers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia in Bangkok. The estimate makes adjustments made on the basis of the proportion of migrant workers with working permit and the estimated number of children age under 15. The primary data are from a household survey of the sample EAs selected from those used in the 2010 census. The secondary source of data is from the MOL database on registered migrants living in Bangkok. The finding reveals that approximately 88% of migrants on average in Bangkok have a worker ID seems rather high relative to other provinces. It is likely that Bangkok is not the first site of employment for these migrants. Many of the migrants have gained experiences in border and coastal provinces first and then worked their way to better jobs in Bangkok. With this experience they are more fluent in Thai and are comfortable traveling around the country. They would also be more knowledgeable about the procedures for registering for a worker permit, and have a stronger network to assist

in the process. Thus, it may be possible that migrant laborers in other provinces outside Bangkok have a lower proportion who have work permit than their counterparts in Bangkok. If this is the case, the adjustment factors used for Bangkok estimate may not be directly applied to other provinces due to probable differences between the Bangkok migrant population and those in the border and coastal provinces.

2. It is recommended that comparable surveys be conducted in other provinces to provide a more accurate national estimate of the migrant population from these three neighboring countries. Priority may be given to the ten provinces with the largest number of migrant laborers. Using local resources, similar study may be conducted by applying the same methodology as in this pilot (with their own local adjustment factors to reflect local patterns of registration and age distribution of migrants). Data collection staff should be fluent in the language of the migrant respondents. This will improve cooperation and accuracy of responses. The data can be used to inform policy and planning for socio-economic development at the local, regional and national levels.

3. There should be a close examination of the source of data on the number of registered migrants. There should also be a consideration of seasonal fluctuations in demand for migrant labor or changes in migrant labor policy, such as guest-worker initiatives, amnesty programs, etc.

4. At present, the structure of the Thai population is changing. There is a declining birth rate while the demand for labor is increasing. Given the shortage of Thais in the younger working-age groups, there is an increased demand for foreign migrant labor to fill the gap especially when ASEAN countries are going to become ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. Thus, the concerned agencies need to maintain up-to-date estimates of the migrant populations and projections of future demand for labor. With the increasing size of the migrant labor in Thailand, there need to be consideration of access to health services for migrants and care for their infants and young children who live with them.

5. The common pattern of movement of migrant laborers from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia is found to begin with works in border provinces or coastal areas before eventually seeking works in Bangkok. Data on the migration patterns of migrants can help inform the estimates. It is also important to document the speed

and patterns of migration while in Thailand. This will help increase the precision of estimates of the *de facto* migrant labor population, and define the optimal intervals between surveys of this population.

Limitations

As this study is the first systematic effort which used both primary and secondary data on migrant laborers, results should be more accurate than in previous estimates. However, the estimates value may be subject to variance based on the following:

1. The base population for this estimation (414,797) was from MOL which is limited to actual registered migrants having working permits only.

2. Asking migrants about possession of a work permit is a sensitive topic. This could lead to confused or falsified responses. Respondents may think that interviewers would like to find out whether they are illegal migrants. Another problem is that some migrant workers did not hold ID cards with them at the time of interview and just assumed that they had or did not have working permit ID. This could yield an over-or under-report which can affect accuracy of the number actually having working permit, and hence data quality.

Future research

There is a need to collect additional data from migrants such as the date of first entry into Thailand, point of origin, and place and duration of residence before settling in Bangkok. Knowing the point of origin for migrants will also help inform research into related areas such as the health service system at the point of origin. This will promote improved cross-border collaboration in the future.

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