

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNIFICANT OF MYANMAR MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND

This chapter discusses the significant of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand which is an important source for local economic growth in order to solve the problem of shortage labor in Thailand, because of many factors include Thailand into aging society, and Trends of Thai workers in selective choosing in jobs. This chapter ends with the impact of Myanmar workers on the economy.

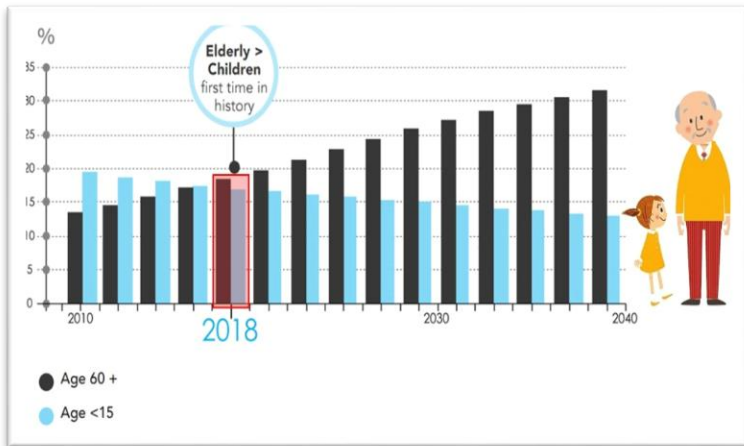
A. Aging society in Thailand

Nowadays, the situation of the population is gaining interest especially with regard to the structure of population that continual changing which is the society that entering to “aging society”. The trend of aging society is increasing around the world and also aging society has been a global phenomenon which increasing of population and decreasing of the birth rate that occurs rapidly in a short period mostly in developing countries. According to the United Nation, the aging population can be defined that the proportion of the population aged over 60, which is more than 10 percent of the total population.¹⁴ Currently, Thailand as one of first developing countries within the ASEAN region that demographic transition into an aging society, the secondary is

¹⁴ United Nation. Dept. of economic (2002). World population ageing, 1950-2050. New York: United Nations.

Singapore and the idea of aging society has been discussed due to Thailand goes into the society of aging population.

Figure 1: Proportion of the population under age 15 and



60 years or over

Resource: Foundation for older person's development

From figure 1, according to the Thailand population in 2013, the Thai population is 64.6 million and the number of elder is 9.6 million. In 2018 estimated that Thailand is confronted the problem of elders will more above than children, and its estimate that in 2030 the number of elder will increase 10 percent and it will double to 20 percent more in 2040. This reality will become more apparent soon because there is a bulge in the number of Thais aged 60-65 and most of whom have already retired from the workforce.

While other countries have taken 18-115 years to transition from an aging society to an aged society but Thailand is taking just only 10-20 years which is the fastest and earliest developing country to become an aged society. The main reason of changing the structure of the population is due to the

declining of birth rate and low fertility rate. Thailand as the country that has lowest birth rates even Thailand birth rate also is lower than that of the china. During that time, the declining of birth rate partly because of economic development due to Thai migrate to the city which is Bangkok and has shrunk family size because of Thai population who live in Bangkok has tended to have fewer children than rural. Moreover, the declining of birth rate also reflects when Thailand success in promoting to use the condoms which combat HIV.¹⁵

The most important effect of the aging society is the economic problem which facing of having more retirees people than workers. Thus, this means that the dependency burden will increase and it will be chronic problems. When Thailand into aging society definitely has negative effects to the economic growth which directly having the same workforce or declining of the workforce will directly effect on production as the major factors in economic growth and definitely lower product which may result of national income decrees than before. However, Thailand has already started of labor shortage which extremely lower of the unemployment rate in many sectors and may indicate not enough of workers are available especially unskilled workers. The survey found that many business owners have a trouble in hiring a large of workers because the worker's force is growing too slowly.¹⁶

It can be concluding that the structure of Thailand population structure like a pyramid invert which is the proportion of the elder population is increasing. Meanwhile, the proportion of child and working-age population is declining. Thus, lower of population growth will reduce the economic

¹⁵ Economic Intelligence center(2010), Insight staying ahead of Thailand's graying society, P.8

¹⁶ Ibid

growth. Similarly with the increasing of aging society also reduce the economic growth. This phenomenon that makes Thai government to solve the shortage of labor in order to drive economic in the country by the motivation of Myanmar migrant workers to come to seek employment in Thailand in order to replace Thai workers that can be regarded as one way to solve the problem of shortage labor.

B. Trends of the labor market

1. Trends of Thai workers

A growing of shortage labor in Thailand is one of challenge that the Thai government has facing today. Thus, there is basically the cause of shortage labor which is Thai workers lack of the skills that employers needed because of Thai education system turn out few of vocational education due to the parents decide to send their children to study in university education more than vocational education including Thai government also promote and give an opportunity to children study in university education. While vocational education directly studies in order to have a career, especially in the field of industry, agriculture and so on. As a result of reducing the number of Thai students in vocational education and this factor is limited to graduate in vocational education as an effect of shortage labor.

Besides of the continuing shortage for low vocational education, another problem was many Thais workers quite choosing in jobs especially working type such as 3-D jobs which is dirty, dangerous, and difficult due to Thai workers think that those working type is quite difficult and not interesting for them and Thai workers also have negative attitudes of Thai workers toward low skilled employment. Some Thai workers do not want to work in hire system because of this

system is uncertainty and temporary contract consequently chooses to work for their own company.¹⁷

When considered from the changing of Thai economic structure and income of population as a result to Thai population has a better life than before. Therefore, this worker's quite selective choosing in jobs is suitable for their well-being mostly 3-D or harder jobs usually it is not interesting for Thai workers. Although, the Thai government has increased labor wage but still need migrant workers because of Thai workers do not want to work those 3-D type jobs. As a result to the Thai government more open opportunity Myanmar migrant workers to replace Thai workers.

Presently, distribution of Myanmar migrant worker in 4 top sectors in Thailand:

1. Fisheries sector: This sector most migrant-dependent business is fisheries because of the large majority of Thai workers have turned away from low-skilled, labor-intensive professions due to they think that this sector is dangerous, dirty and need the energy. This has created a labor shortage in certain industries, which has led to a large increase in the numbers of migrant workers from surrounding countries particularly Myanmar workers coming to Thailand to fill this job.¹⁸ Partly due to Thailand unwilling to modernize so Thai fishing has turned to choose cheap migrant labor which is Myanmar to fill low-skill job, low-paying it has available.

In fact, the fisheries sector may not be easy because the working condition on fishing vessels such as the working

¹⁷ Yongyuth, Chalamwong(2008), Demographic change and international labor mobility in Thailand. P.9

¹⁸ The environment Justice Foundation (2013), Sold to the sea human trafficking in Thailand fishing industry. P. 17

environment may depend on the owner or the captain of the vessel like the working day and hour of work which is different working process and hours depend on different types of fishing boats. For example, larger vessels which can take around 15-20 days and require 40-50 workers and the medium-sized vessel which can be taking around 4-5 hours and require 15 workers this type of vessel will depart in the afternoon and come back at dawn. Thus, the work condition of these type fishing boats definitely different depends on the size of the vessel. When is raining while they are on the vessel they sleep in the cabin and when they get sick the workers will use the medicine that only kept in the vessel. In case of there is no the medicine on the boat they will use what they have brought with them.

2. Construction sector: This sector needs more workers than another factor because of this sector to build, repair, and maintain residential as hash work and risk to dangerous. Mostly Thai workers seeking the work that non3-D jobs which provide better wage, welfare, and working environment. These factors that make Thai workers avoid working in this job. Therefore, there is a major problem the shortage labor in the construction sector, there is shortage of labor of construction in all part such as supervisor labor, skilled craftsman, and the most shortage labor is low-skilled worker that make many company seekers for Myanmar migrant worker for fill that shortage so as scramble the worker from another company. In case of necessary need low-skilled worker definitely, there are documented Myanmar workers and undocumented Myanmar workers but mostly undocumented Myanmar workers who work because this construction sector needs more workers than another sector.

3. Agriculture sector: The agriculture sector is important for growth Thailand economy as a source of productive resource, food security which is the population has enough food to satisfy, availability, and stability that can accessibility. Thus, agriculture sector as important energy of the

country to drive the economy in country and important for industry, its continued growth has been dependent on worker but nowadays less number of Thai labor is working in agriculture and many youths went to the high school and university in the city they will refuse to come back to work agriculture because they believe that agriculture career is bored with the poor working conditions, lower amount of income and agriculture sector very unattractive to new Thai workers. Thus, because of Thai worker refuse to work in agriculture and to solve the labor shortage would be providing Myanmar migrant workers to replacing it.

4. Domestic work sector: This sector is often associated with natural female dispositions, a woman is often seen as acting appropriately for her gender in taking responsibility for the house. Thus, the category of this domestic work is including of the distribution and preparation of food, the raising of the children, basic cleanliness and hygiene, and caring for the elderly, disabled, and other in time of need. Previously domestic worker had generally been Thai rural migrants from the north and northeast area of the country. As of lately, the interest of rural migrant in the country was decrease cause due to the expansion of the industry that attack of Thai workers interests to work in the industry more than housework in Bangkok. Nevertheless, many households chose to continue to employ Myanmar migrant workers illegally to replace of a labor shortage in Thailand.¹⁹

2. Trends of Thai workers abroad

Thailand plays an important role in sending Thai workers to abroad for getting a better opportunity and a higher amount of income that make Thai workers are attracted to job

¹⁹ Srichaiwong, Pajongruk(2014), Protection of female migrant workers from Myanmar: A case study of domestic worker in Bangkok.P.12

markets else. Even though, how the labor market situation appears to be but Thai worker have continued to seek better opportunity in abroad because of high wage levels has been a major pull factor for Thai workers. The majority of Thai worker migrant to abroad from highly skilled to low-skilled workers and the major geographic destination of Thai workers include Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel.²⁰

Most of Thai workers are still young and it is obviously seen that more males than females who leave the country for seeking work in abroad. Mostly of Thai workers participate in technical work, production, and transport equipment; some are classified as labor. It is just minority that Thai workers as administrative positions, sales, and service work. Moreover, the important factor that makes Thai workers seeking work abroad is an amount of the wage is higher than Thailand that will able to send back to Thailand. The impact of Thai labor to abroad on the local economy can be measured in term of advantage which is skills development and remittance. The increasing of skilled labor from working abroad on many type of works if they return home which receives new technology from abroad. There is obviously that those returned do regain confidence and new experience from doing work in abroad. In the same time, there is the disadvantage on local economy which is the shortage of labor in the country it is the situation that relies on the energy for Myanmar migrant workers.

²⁰ Yongyuth Chalamwong(2008), Demographic change and International labor mobility in Thailand. P.11

C. The impact of Myanmar workers on the economy

A migrant worker is an important source of economic growth and has implications for long-term competitiveness in the regional and global arena. The economic development disparity means that the worker in underdeveloped countries are attracted to the neighboring country which has more opportunity in searching for jobs and working environment.²¹

Thailand has rapid economic and social development after the announcement which is used as the eleventh national economic and social development for developing country as a result to change the traditional structure from agriculture to industrial. Thus, from the economic structure in country change to industrial the Myanmar migrant worker as a key factor to drive the economy in the country. Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand have produced positive effects to the country in a different perspective on the type of country economic sustainability.

Currently, Myanmar migrant workers it is not just only to improve the employment opportunities and livelihoods of migrant workers but Myanmar migrant workers have continued to make an important role to contributing or integrate economic growth in Thailand. Myanmar migrant impact on Thai economy is important because millions of Myanmar migrant workers contribute Thailand national output such as to produce or process items or materials in exports such as seafood, rice farms and fruit farms produced, and rubber plantations. Thus, this is

²¹ Yongyuth, Chalamwong(2009), The economic role of migration labor migration in Thailand: Recent trends and implications for development. P.1

enabled for Myanmar migrant workers to improve their knowledge and skills of worker which better utilize in various sector. While allowing female workers to a more active role in participating in economies and open their opportunity. Moreover, the inflow of Myanmar migrant workers to Thailand increase it is more beneficial to the employer in order to access works that they need. Since most of the jobs are dirty, dangerous, difficult and employers do not worry about the hiring of Myanmar migrant workers such those jobs. ²²

Thai government has recognized of the need those migrant workers from neighboring countries especially from Myanmar, which employ almost 80 percent of all migrant workers in Thailand. Thailand aware that this requirement is not temporary and that effective means to manage Myanmar migrant in long-term required. ²³ Thai government had been concerning over of a labor shortage when Thailand faces labor shortage as a result of rising aging population and declining birth rate and Myanmar migrant workers are affected to the Thai economy because of Myanmar workers increasing the labor supply and increasing the production in the country. At the same time, if these Myanmar workers leave Thailand definitely there will be pressure on wage and price and have an effect on less export.

²² Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy(2010), Burmese labor migration into Thailand: Governance of migration and labor right. P.41

²³ Amporn Jirattikorn(2015), Managing Migration in Myanmar and Thailand; Economic Reforms, Policies, Practices, and Challenges. P. 19