POST-ACTIVITY REPORT

Stakeholder Policy Dialogue

“Reforming the Rights of Thai Workers Abroad”

17 September 2026 | Best Western Hotel, Chatuchak, Bangkok



Table of Contents

POST-ACTIVITY REPORT *1*

Stakeholder Policy Dialogue **1**

"Reforming the Rights of Thai Workers Abroad" 1

1. Background and Rationale *3*

2. Activity Overview *4*

3. Participants *5*

4. Activity Proceedings *6*

4.1 Panel Discussion 1 ..... **6**

4.2 Panel Discussion 2 ..... **6**

4.3 First Roundtable Discussion **7**

4.4 Roundtable Discussion: Before Departure for Overseas Employment **7**

4.5 Roundtable Discussion: During Overseas Employment **7**

4.6 Roundtable Discussion: Return to Thailand **7**

5. Key Issues Identified During the Activity *7*

5.1 Access to Information and Protection Before Departure **8**

5.2 Access to Rights and Assistance Mechanisms in Destination Countries **8**

5.3 Interagency Coordination **8**

5.4 Protection After Returning to Thailand **8**

6. Evaluation Results and Analysis *8*

6.1 The Value of the Dialogue as a Platform for Experience Sharing **8**

6.2 Discussion Sessions That Helped Participants Better Understand the Issues **9**

6.3 Future Interests Focused on Cooperation and Worker Protection **10**

6.4 Policy Gaps Concerning Rights, Remedies, and Institutional Operations **10**

6.5 Protection During Crises and Access to Remedial Mechanisms **11**

6.6 Protection After Returning to Thailand as an Area for Further Development **12**

6.7 Duration and Participation as Areas for Improvement **12**

7. Conclusion *12*

8. Appendices *14*

8.1 Appendix 1: Agenda **14**

8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs of the Policy Dialogue **15**

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1. Background and Rationale

Although Thailand is a major country of origin for migrant workers, its policy framework for protecting Thai workers abroad remains inadequate and fragmented. Overseas Thai workers face limited access to social protection and labour welfare and receive insufficient attention from policymakers and the media.

Economic inequality and rising living costs have encouraged lower- and middle-income households to send working-age members abroad in search of higher incomes. Remittances help cover household expenses, repay debts, and build savings (Tajaroensuk, 2018).

Thai workers migrate through various channels, including bilateral agreements with destination countries such as Taiwan, Japan (IM Japan), the Republic of Korea (EPS), and Israel (TIC). Other destinations, including Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and countries in the Middle East, are subject to Department of Employment regulations. Some workers also seek jobs independently through established migrant networks, while seasonal migration includes berry-picking in Finland and Sweden.

According to the Ministry of Labour (2025), 69,646 Thai workers were employed in 89 countries, with 52.54% working in Asia. Taiwan, Japan, and the Republic of Korea were among the main destinations. However, access to overseas employment remains constrained by high migration costs, strict qualification requirements, and recruitment systems that favour employers (Working Group on the Protection of Thai Workers Abroad, 2025). Geopolitical instability and armed conflict further compound these challenges (Kav LaOved–Worker's Hotline & Physicians for Human Rights–Israel, 2021).

As a result, Thai workers abroad face risks of workplace accidents, conflict-related injuries, labour rights violations, and exploitation. Limited access to formal recruitment channels may also push workers towards informal migration and employment without valid work permits (Tadee, 2024; Tajaroensuk, 2018). These risks can also undermine their future earning opportunities.

Despite the responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, effective protection mechanisms remain inadequate throughout the migration process, from recruitment and departure to overseas employment, family support, and return to Thailand. These gaps leave workers vulnerable to exploitation and fraud by individuals and private businesses (Chan, 2023).

Strengthening the protection of overseas Thai workers must therefore become a national policy priority. This requires a comprehensive and actionable framework with clearly defined

responsibilities for relevant agencies to safeguard workers' rights, welfare, and quality of life throughout the migration process.

2. Activity Overview

Activity title: Stakeholder Policy Dialogue
Theme: "Reforming the Rights of Thai Workers Abroad"
Date: 17 September 2026
Time: 08:30–13:00 hrs.
Venue: Best Western Hotel, Chatuchak District, Bangkok

Target participants:

- Researchers and academics
- Government officials
- Private-sector representatives
- Recruitment agencies
- Language schools and training institutions
- Thai workers with previous overseas employment experience
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Community-based organisations (CBOs)
- Other agencies and stakeholders involved in issues concerning Thai workers abroad

Activity format:

1. Two panel discussions
2. Two rounds of roundtable discussions
3. Presentations of discussion outcomes
4. A concluding session summarising the meeting's key points

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Organiser: Mahidol Migration Center–Joint Research Unit (MMC-JRU), Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University.

Objectives:

1. To promote dialogue and collaborative problem-solving

To facilitate the exchange of perspectives among stakeholders from different sectors, including researchers, academics, government officials, private-sector representatives, recruitment

agencies, language schools, Thai workers with previous overseas employment experience, NGOs, and CBOs working on the welfare and rights of Thai workers abroad.

2. To identify structural and policy challenges and gaps

To identify challenges and gaps throughout the process of labour migration, with particular attention to three key stages:

- **Before departure:** Job searches, applications, preparation, costs, and access to information.
- **During employment in destination countries:** Employment conditions, labour rights, welfare, social protection, safety, and associated risks.
- **Return to Thailand:** Return procedures, access to entitlements, retirement benefits, pensions, compensation, and reintegration into Thailand's labour market.

3. To develop policy recommendations concerning rights, welfare, complaints, remedies, and assistance mechanisms for Thai workers abroad.

3. Participants

Participants included representatives from government agencies, international organisations, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, Thai workers with overseas employment experience, the private sector, and other relevant organisations. Participation from multiple sectors was intended to ensure that discussions reflected both policy perspectives and practical experiences.

Of approximately 16 organisational representatives who attended, excluding accompanying persons and speakers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Labour Minister's Adviser, 12 participants completed the evaluation questionnaire. This represented approximately 75% of the aforementioned organisational representatives.

The 12 respondents comprised the following categories:		
Participant category	**Number of respondents**	**Percentage**
Thai workers with overseas employment experience	3	25.0%
Government agencies	2	16.7%
International organisations	4	33.3%
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	3	25.0%
Academics/researchers	4	33.3%
Private sector/recruitment agencies/training institutions	1	8.3%
Participant category not specified	1	8.3%

Total (as stated in the original table)	**7**	**100.0%**

Among the 12 respondents, international organisations and academics/researchers were the largest groups, with four respondents each (33.3%), followed by Thai workers with overseas employment experience and NGO representatives, with three each (25.0%). Government representatives accounted for two (16.7%), while the private sector, recruitment agencies, or training institutions accounted for one (8.3%). One respondent did not specify their category.

Regarding institutional affiliation, four respondents represented the Federation of Overseas Workers of Thailand (recorded under slightly different names), while TECO, the IM Japan Bangkok Office, Chulalongkorn University's Asian Research Center for Migration, and the People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF) were each represented by one respondent. Three respondents did not specify their affiliation.

Overall, the respondents represented diverse stakeholder groups, including workers, government agencies, international organisations, civil society, and academia, reflecting the dialogue's objective of facilitating cross-sectoral exchange.

4. Activity Proceedings

4.1 Panel Discussion 1

The first panel discussion examined the situation of Thai workers migrating abroad for employment, the role of government agencies in facilitating and protecting workers, and the limitations of existing mechanisms.

Key discussion topics included trends in overseas employment among Thai workers, the role of government agencies in worker protection, and the need to develop interagency coordination mechanisms. Issues concerning workers' entitlements and funds to support worker protection were also discussed.

4.2 Panel Discussion 2

The second panel discussion presented data and experiences concerning the circumstances of Thai workers abroad, with an emphasis on access to rights and welfare and workers' experiences in seeking assistance when problems arise.

The discussion connected research findings and workers' lived experiences with the limitations of protection and assistance systems in destination countries.

4.3 First Roundtable Discussion

The first roundtable discussion focused on identifying problems arising before departure, particularly access to information about lawful overseas employment, pre-departure training, labour recruitment and placement systems, brokers, fraudulent recruitment, and the risk of human trafficking.

Participants also considered ways to improve pre-departure preparation, particularly by strengthening training content on labour rights, risk assessment, and channels for seeking assistance.

4.4 Roundtable Discussion: Before Departure for Overseas Employment

The discussion covered assistance and complaint mechanisms, access to legal rights, healthcare services, passport renewal, and assistance for workers with and without valid documentation.

Participants also discussed worker protection during crises or conflicts, including issues concerning workers' rights and the rights of their family members in destination countries.

4.5 Roundtable Discussion: During Overseas Employment

Key issues included assistance and complaint mechanisms, access to legal rights, healthcare services, passport renewal, and assistance for workers with and without valid documentation.

The discussion also addressed worker protection during crises or conflicts, including the rights of workers and their family members in destination countries.

4.6 Roundtable Discussion: Return to Thailand

The final discussion focused on rights and protection after overseas employment ends. Particular attention was given to pension entitlements, compensation, procedures for addressing rights violations, and assistance for workers who return to Thailand voluntarily or are repatriated.

Participants also discussed the development of reintegration mechanisms to help returning workers re-enter Thai society and the labour market, ensuring that overseas employment does not become the only available option for workers seeking to improve their incomes.

5. Key Issues Identified During the Activity

The discussions identified four main areas of concern.

5.1 Access to Information and Protection Before Departure

Access to accurate information about lawful overseas employment was identified as a key issue. Insufficient information may increase workers' exposure to recruitment fraud, employment conditions that differ from those originally agreed upon, and employment through channels that do not provide valid documentation.

5.2 Access to Rights and Assistance Mechanisms in Destination Countries

Problems arising during overseas employment extend beyond working conditions to include workers' ability to access assistance and remedies when their rights are violated. These issues include access to legal support, healthcare, compensation, and complaint mechanisms.

5.3 Interagency Coordination

Protecting Thai workers abroad involves multiple agencies and different stages of the migration process. Effective protection therefore requires mechanisms that can facilitate information-sharing, case referrals, and assistance across relevant agencies.

5.4 Protection After Returning to Thailand

Worker protection should not end when workers return to Thailand. It should also cover access to pension entitlements, compensation, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and remedial procedures. Such support is essential to facilitate social reintegration and reduce economic vulnerability.

6. Evaluation Results and Analysis

Evaluation results from 12 respondents indicated a high overall level of satisfaction, with a mean score of 4.25 out of 5. The highest-rated item was the usefulness of the activity in facilitating discussions on the rights and protection of Thai workers abroad (4.67), followed by the relevance of the content and discussion topics (4.42).

Five items received a mean score of 4.33, covering alignment with the activity's objectives, diversity of perspectives, improved understanding of workers' challenges, identification of gaps in protection mechanisms, and the development of new perspectives and approaches. These findings indicate that the dialogue provided a valuable platform for exchanging perspectives and examining the links between workers' experiences, policy mechanisms, and agency responsibilities.

Regarding participation, opportunities to exchange opinions and experiences received a mean score of 4.25, while the sufficiency of opportunities for information and experience sharing scored 3.92. This suggests that although participants valued the exchange, more opportunities for engagement may be needed.

The lowest-rated item was the appropriateness of the activity's duration and overall management (3.58). One respondent gave the lowest possible rating, while five rated it as moderate. Open-ended feedback also highlighted the need for longer discussions and greater participation from agencies directly involved in the issues.

6.1 The Value of the Dialogue as a Platform for Experience Sharing

Open-ended comments indicated that respondents valued the exchange of experiences, the opportunity for stakeholders from different sectors to participate, and the ability to understand problems from different perspectives.

Some respondents stated that the roundtable discussions enabled participants to exchange experiences and learn information about issues they had not previously been aware of. Others noted that the discussions helped them better understand the problems and legal provisions relevant to worker protection.

These findings are consistent with the mean score of 4.67 for the usefulness of the activity and 4.42 for the relevance of its content to the circumstances of Thai workers abroad. They suggest that the dialogue served as a valuable platform for connecting experiences from different sectors and helping participants identify issues that could be further developed into policy recommendations.

6.2 Discussion Sessions That Helped Participants Better Understand the Issues

Respondents were asked which sessions had helped them gain the clearest understanding of issues concerning the rights and protection of Thai workers abroad. They could select more than one answer. The results were as follows:

- **Roundtable Discussion 3:** 9 respondents (75.0%)
- **Roundtable Discussion 1:** 8 respondents (66.7%)
- **Roundtable Discussion 2:** 8 respondents (66.7%)
- **Panel Discussion 1:** 7 respondents (58.3%)
- **Panel Discussion 2:** 7 respondents (58.3%)

The findings show that all three roundtable sessions were selected by a substantial proportion of respondents, with Roundtable Discussion 3 receiving the highest number of selections.

However, because respondents could select multiple sessions and some selected every session, these results should be interpreted as indicating which sessions respondents considered useful. They should not be taken as direct evidence that the roundtable format was more effective than the panel format.

6.3 Future Interests Focused on Cooperation and Worker Protection

The topic most frequently identified for future activities or discussions was cooperation between Thailand and destination countries, selected by all 12 respondents (100%).

Other topics of interest were:

- **Protection of workers during crises or conflicts:** 10 respondents (83.3%)
- **Complaints, access to justice, and remedies:** 10 respondents (83.3%)
- **Social security, entitlements, and compensation:** 9 respondents (75.0%)
- **Protection and assistance for workers after returning to Thailand:** 9 respondents (75.0%)
- **Workers' rights and welfare in destination countries:** 8 respondents (66.7%)
- **Labour placement and protection before departure:** 7 respondents (58.3%)

These findings suggest that respondents prioritised strengthening cooperation between Thailand and destination countries alongside mechanisms for protecting and providing remedies to workers in different circumstances.

Their interests covered all three stages of the migration process: before departure, during overseas employment, and after returning to Thailand. This highlights the need to approach worker protection as a continuous process encompassing the entire labour migration cycle.

6.4 Policy Gaps Concerning Rights, Remedies, and Institutional Operations

When asked which issues should be developed into policy recommendations or further measures, the largest number of respondents selected workers' rights, welfare, and protection in destination countries, with 10 respondents (83.3%).

The other priorities were:

- **Complaint mechanisms, access to justice, and remedies:** 9 respondents (75.0%)
- **Prevention and resolution of labour rights violations:** 8 respondents (66.7%)
- **Assistance and protection mechanisms for Thai workers abroad:** 7 respondents (58.3%)
- **Cooperation between Thai agencies and agencies in destination countries:** 7 respondents (58.3%)

- **Rights and welfare after returning to Thailand:** 7 respondents (58.3%)
- **Preparation and protection before departure for overseas employment:** 6 respondents (50.0%)
- **Labour placement and recruitment processes:** 6 respondents (50.0%)

Open-ended comments also highlighted problems such as employment conditions that differed from the original agreements, difficulties accessing compensation and remedies, delays or gaps in government assistance mechanisms, and concerns about recruitment practices and protection against unlawful brokers.

In addition, respondents suggested developing policies that reflect workers' actual circumstances and experiences, supported by stronger coordination among relevant agencies.

These issues indicate that establishing rights or introducing protective measures alone may be insufficient if workers continue to encounter barriers to accessing information, lodging complaints, obtaining remedies, or receiving assistance from relevant agencies.

Policy development should therefore address both the substance of workers' rights and their practical ability to access protection mechanisms.

6.5 Protection During Crises and Access to Remedial Mechanisms

Ten respondents (83.3%) expressed interest in further discussions on protecting workers during crises or conflicts. The same number wanted further discussion on complaints, access to justice, and remedies.

These findings indicate that respondents considered it important to strengthen assistance mechanisms for situations in which workers face events that threaten their lives, employment, or safety. They also emphasised the need for accessible channels through which workers can lodge complaints and claim their rights when they suffer harm.

Open-ended comments further highlighted the need for timely assistance and remedies, as well as solutions to problems involving compensation and employment conditions that do not comply with agreed terms.

Accordingly, stronger coordination among relevant agencies and clearer assistance procedures should be considered integral to the development of worker protection mechanisms.

6.6 Protection After Returning to Thailand as an Area for Further Development

Nine respondents (75.0%) expressed interest in further discussions on protection and assistance for workers after returning to Thailand. Meanwhile, seven respondents (58.3%) selected rights and welfare after returning to Thailand as an area requiring further policy development.

Open-ended comments highlighted the need to provide support after employment contracts end, particularly in relation to pension entitlements, healthcare, and access to employment opportunities upon returning to Thailand. Respondents also referred to entitlements and assistance available to workers returning from overseas employment.

These findings suggest that return to Thailand should not be regarded as the end of the labour migration process. Rather, it should be recognised as a distinct stage within the worker protection system, potentially encompassing access to entitlements, healthcare, and support to help workers resume employment or continue their lives in Thailand under appropriate conditions.

6.7 Duration and Participation as Areas for Improvement

The item concerning the appropriateness of the activity's duration and management received a mean score of 3.58 out of 5, the lowest among the ten evaluation items. Meanwhile, the item assessing whether participants had sufficient opportunities to exchange information, experiences, and opinions received a mean score of 3.92.

Open-ended comments also indicated a desire for more time and suggested organising follow-up dialogues to monitor problems and develop practical approaches for implementation.

These findings suggest that future activities should allocate time in accordance with the number of issues to be discussed and the intended outcomes of the dialogue. Additional time could be devoted to in-depth exchanges, the development of joint recommendations, and the identification of responsible agencies or follow-up mechanisms.

It is also important to consider the participation of agencies directly involved in worker protection, so that recommendations emerging from the dialogue can be further discussed and developed at the policy or implementation level.

7. Conclusion

The stakeholder policy dialogue, “Reforming the Rights of Thai Workers Abroad,” brought together representatives from government agencies, academia, civil society, international organisations, and Thai workers with overseas employment experience to discuss challenges across the labour migration process.

The discussions highlighted gaps in protection at every stage, from pre-departure preparation and access to information to workplace protection, complaint and remedial mechanisms, and support after returning to Thailand.

Evaluation results from 12 respondents showed an overall mean satisfaction score of 4.25 out of 5. The highest-rated item was the usefulness of the dialogue in facilitating discussions on workers' rights and protection (4.67), while the duration and management received the lowest score (3.58). These findings highlight the value of stakeholder exchange while indicating the need for more discussion time and improved facilitation.

For future discussions, all 12 respondents (100%) prioritised cooperation between Thailand and destination countries. Other priorities included workers' rights and welfare, protection during crises, access to entitlements and compensation, complaint mechanisms, access to justice, and post-return protection.

Overall, the dialogue underscored the need for continuous protection mechanisms throughout the labour migration process and stronger cooperation between Thai agencies and their counterparts in destination countries. The next step is to translate the issues raised into a policy brief outlining workers' actual challenges, assistance and remedial mechanisms, agency responsibilities, and practical policy recommendations.

These evaluation findings are based on 12 respondents and should not be considered representative of all participants or Thai workers abroad.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Agenda

Agenda: Stakeholder Policy Dialogue
"Reforming the Rights of Thai Workers Abroad"
Thursday, 17 September 2026 | 08:30–13:00 hrs.
Venue: Best Western Hotel, Chatuchak District, Bangkok

Time	Activity
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:15	• **Welcome and Opening Remarks** by Associate Professor Dr. Sudarat Musikawong, Mahidol Migration Center–Joint Research Unit (MMC-JRU), Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. • Group photograph.
09:15 – 10:00	**Panel Discussion 1: Challenges in the Placement of Thai Workers Abroad: Perspectives from Government and Stakeholders.** Moderator: Associate Professor Dr. Sudarat Musikawong.
10:00 - 10:45	**Panel Discussion 2: Evidence, Current Situations, and Access to Welfare and Rights Protection for Thai Workers Abroad.** Moderator: Ms. Reena Tadee.
10:45 - 10:50	Break
10:50 - 11:35	**Roundtable Discussion, Round 1: Challenges at Different Stages of the Labour Migration Process for Thai Workers Abroad.** Refreshments served in the meeting room.
11:35 - 12:20	**Roundtable Discussion, Round 2: Identifying Joint Solutions.**
12:20 - 13:00	Presentation of discussion outcomes and closing summary
13:00	Lunch

8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs of the Policy Dialogue



Figure 1. Participants



Figure 2. Panel Discussion 1



Figure 3. Panel Discussion 2



Figure 4. Roundtable Discussion



Figure 5. Roundtable Discussion