



Mekong Migration Network (MMN)

28th October 2011

MIGRANTS FROM THE MEKONG CALL FOR INCLUSION IN FLOOD RELIEF SERVICES AND THE RIGHT TO RETURN TEMPORARILY

The Mekong Migration Network (MMN) is deeply concerned for the well being and safety of the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers in the flooded provinces of Thailand. Member organizations based in Bangkok and surrounding areas are trying hard to provide relief and support to migrant workers from Burma, Lao and Cambodia, but are finding it impossible to reach all the migrants affected. Many of the industrial estates where migrants worked are now flooded and the factories closed. One of MMN members, MAP Foundation, based in Chiang Mai, is receiving constant phone calls from migrants in Pathum Thani who have no electricity, food and most worryingly, drinking water. Feeling excluded from relief efforts and isolated from any assistance, many of the migrants just want to get home as quickly as possible. Oftentimes, their phone batteries die during the conversation.

The Mekong Migration Network therefore calls on the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to work closely with the Royal Thai government and civil society to ensure that migrant workers receive relief supplies immediately and have equal access to all services.

Although Immigration Bureau Commissioner Pol Lt General Wibul Bangthamai issued a memo on 25th October notifying immigration offices in flooded provinces to allow migrant workers to seek visa renewal elsewhere, most migrants do not hold their own documents as they have been confiscated by the employers, others do not have access to any form of transportation to escape the flooded areas and all migrants are unsure how they will survive in another province without an income.

Migrants who want to return home to sit out the floods also face numerous obstacles. Those migrants who only have the Temporary ID card (Tor Ror 38/1) and migrant workers card immediately lose their legal status in Thailand when they cross back into their country of origin. If they were to return to Thailand after the floods, they would be considered illegal migrants again. Migrants with Temporary Passports are allowed to leave but need to make a re-entry visa somewhere before they leave. Many migrants are so traumatized at this point, that they just want to get home as quickly as possible. And lastly, the major cross border point for migrants leaving Thailand to Myanmar, the Mae Sot/Myawaddy crossing is closed. Migrants cannot therefore leave or enter legally at this point.

The Mekong Migration Network therefore calls on the Royal Thai Government to:

- 1. Instruct relevant government agencies and/or local authorities in safe, dry provinces to immediately set up systems to temporarily register migrant workers who have fled the flooded provinces and to allow these migrants access to all essential services.*

www.mekongmigration.org

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2. Issue a directive allowing migrants to leave Thailand temporarily and to return after the floods have receded without any penalties. Thailand's computerized register of migrant workers can be used to reactivate their permits and visas on return.

The Mekong Migration Network also calls on the Governments of Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao to:

1. Issue a directive allowing migrants to return to their home country and to later return to Thailand without facing any penalties.
2. To provide effective consular services from their embassies to migrants affected by the floods, including advertising and answering a phone line dedicated to migrants.

The Mekong Migration Network also calls on the Governments of Myanmar and Thailand to:

1. Immediately open the border crossing at Mae Sot/Myawaddy in a humanitarian response to the crisis affecting migrants from Myanmar to allow their safe and legal return.

Finally, in order to ensure more comprehensive and immediate responses for migrants in the region in case of future disasters or conflicts, **we call on all governments in the region to take immediate steps to act on Recommendation B (10)** of the 4th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, Bali, Indonesia , October 24th - 25th 2011, to formulate national disaster preparedness plans in consultation with and with the participation of migrant workers and migrant organisations; and to set up at national level assistance/contingency funds to cover repatriation costs.

Signed on behalf of the Mekong Migration Network



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Mekong Migration Network(MMN) is a network of civil society organizations from Burma, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan, China who have been working together to promote the rights of migrants in the Mekong region through joint research, advocacy and capacity building since 2001. The MMN has currently 38 member organizations.

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