

Proceedings of

***The Mekong Symposium on Migration:
Embracing Diversity-
Seeking Multicultural Values and Mutual Understanding***

On 27-28 October 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

Organised by Mekong Migration Network

In collaboration with

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at Chulalongkorn University and

The Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood

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Plenary 2: Ms. Estelle Cohenny, MAP Foundation; Ms. Pachara Sungden, MMN; Ms. Sasapin Siriwanij, Makhampom Theater Group

Plenary 3: Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk, Labour Rights Promotion Network, Ms. Morn Hom, Shan Women’s Action Network

Plenary 4: Dr. Cynthia Maung, Mae Tao Clinic; Liberty Thawda, Mae Tao Clinic; Ms. Han Jialing, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisfapong, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education; Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education; Ms. Yuriko Saito, Meijigakuin University

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Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank the Toyota Foundation for their generous support in making this symposium and the work of the Mekong Migration Network possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Symposium program	7
Welcome Messages	11
Dr Prawate Kid-awn, Chairperson of the Board, Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood.....	11
Dr Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet, Steering committee of MMN	12
Dr Surichai Wangew, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University.....	13
Reiko Harima, Regional Co-ordinator, Mekong Migration Network	14
Plenary 1: Embracing Diversity and Understanding the History of Migration: possible ripple effects	16
“Effect on integrating migrant children and their families”, Ms. Wai Hnin Po, Foundation for Education and Development.....	16
“Ripple Effects on Peace and Human Security”, Dr P.K. Shahjahan, South Asia Centre for Studies in Conflicts, Peace and Human Security.....	18
“Ripple effect in promoting labour rights of migrants”, Ms. Jackie Pollock, Triangle Project, International Labour Organisation.....	20
Open Discussion	22
Plenary 2: Launch of the MMN educational materials.....	25
Dragon Lake.....	25
Lesson plan presentation	27
Discussants	28
Open discussion.....	29
Plenary 3: Experiences of teaching value of multiculturalism and the history of migration	31
“Experiences in Thailand”, Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk, Deputy-chairperson, Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN)	31
“Experiences of Migrants in Thailand”, Ms. Morn Hom, Shan Women’s Action Network, Chiang Mai	33
Open discussion.....	35
Plenary 4: Challenges and opportunities in seeking multicultural values and mutual understanding	36

"Challenges and Opportunities in Thailand-Myanmar Border Areas", Ms. Liberty Thawda, Deputy Director of Child Protection and Education Program, Mae Tao Clinic, Dr. Cynthia Maung, Director of Mae Tao Clinic	36
"Challenges and Opportunities in China", Ms. Han Jialing, Professor, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology	38
"Challenges and Opportunities in Thailand", Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisfapong, Senior Specialized Policy Planner, and Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Academic Official, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education,	40
Ms. Yuriko Saito (Presented by Gabrielle Curtis) Meijigakuin University "Experiences in Japan".	43
Discussants	46
Whole group discussion and Recommendations	47
Concluding remarks	48
List of Participants	49

Introduction

One of the goals of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) is “strengthening the regional social cohesion” and working towards social and economic integration throughout the region by 2015. As a sub region of ASEAN, countries in the Mekong region have revised and updated school curriculums to reflect and include these goals. Children in primary schools are now learning about the other countries of the ASEAN region and some schools are also teaching its pupils the languages of other ASEAN countries.

The Foundation for Migrants from Mekong Neighbourhood (MMN Foundation) and its larger network, Mekong Migration Network (MMN), have been working on projects with their partner members to explore the concept of living together and how to further social integration in the region. In February 2013, MMN organised the Mekong Symposium on Migration: *Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood Living Together* in Bangkok, Thailand. Seventy two participants attended and discussed integration and living together in relation to the movement and mobility of people in the Mekong sub region.¹ The participants of the Symposium developed a comprehensive set of recommendations, including a recommendation encouraging the development of educational materials on multiculturalism to promote a greater awareness of how the migration and mobility of peoples in the Mekong region have enriched regional cultures and ways of life.

In December 2013, MMN embarked on a project to develop a set of resources to be used in educational institutions in the region. These resources consist of:

- a) An illustrated book for children aged 6-7 years on multiculturalism and living together with different cultures and nationalities; and
- b) A set of lesson plans, hand outs, activities and resources on the history of migration in the Mekong.

¹ The details of the Symposium can be found in the proceedings of “Mekong Symposium on Migration: Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood Living Together-Seeking Effective Responses to Enable Integration and Social Cohesion”, available for download at http://www.mekongmigration.org/Symposium%20Proceedings_Final.pdf

To ensure that the materials developed are relevant and effective, MMN involved educational institutions, school teachers, children and partner organisations throughout the process of developing these materials. In particular, four primary schools in Chiang Mai have collaborated with MMN on the project by facilitating activities and pilot classes with its students. This allowed MMN to take into consideration children's interests, reactions and feedback while developing the materials.

The illustrated book for children has been prepared in Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Shan and English, to make it accessible for local and migrant children studying in Thailand. As for the lesson plans, although the resource materials have been produced in Thailand, we hope that they can be used in other countries and as such, core content has been translated into several Asian languages.

On 27-28 October 2014 the Mekong Symposium on Migration: *Embracing Diversity: Seeking Multicultural Values and Mutual Understanding* was held in Bangkok, Thailand, organised by MMN in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at Chulalongkorn University and the Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood, and attended by 50 participants including researchers and representatives of civil society organisations, inter-governmental organizations, governments, educational institutions and researchers. The Symposium marked the official release of the illustrated book and educational materials. In addition, it served as a venue to further discuss issues around diversity, as the organisers recognised that a better understanding of multiculturalism throughout society is key to the realization of social cohesion, human security and peace in the region.

Symposium program

Time	Program
Day 1	
27 October 2014, Monday	
8:30-9:00	Registration of participants
9:00-9:30	<p>Welcome messages</p> <p>Facilitator: Ms. Reiko Harima</p> <p>Professor Surichai Wangew, The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University</p> <p>Dr. Prawate Kid-awn</p> <p>Chairperson, Foundation for Migrants from Mekong Neighbourhood</p> <p>Dr. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet</p> <p>Steering Committee member, Mekong Migration Network</p>
9:30-9:45	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Reiko Harima</p>
9:45-10:45	<p>Plenary 1: Embracing Diversity and Understanding the History of Migration: possible ripple effects</p> <p>Facilitator: Ms Pranom Somwong</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Ripple effect on integrating migrant children and their families” Ms Wai Hnin Po Foundation for Education and Development 2. “Ripple effect on peace and human security” P.K. Shajahan Ph.D Professor and Dean, Social Protection Chairperson, South Asia Centre for Studies in Conflicts Peace & Human Security

	<p>Tata Institute of Social Sciences</p> <p>3. “Ripple effect in promoting labour rights of migrants” Ms. Jackie Pollock, Triangle Project International Labour Organisation (ILO)</p>
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-11:50	Plenary 1-open discussion
11:50-12:00	Group photo
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:30	<p>Plenary 2: Launch of the MMN educational materials</p> <p>Facilitator: Reiko Harima</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children’s picture book “Dragon Lake” 2. Lesson plan on the history of migration <p>Presentation by:</p> <p>“Embracing Diversity” project team of MMN; Makhampom Theater Group; and Collaborating schools from Chiang Mai</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Morn Hom, Shan Women Action Network - Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Anh, Director of International Cooperation Department, Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences <p>Open discussion</p>
14:30-14:45	Tea break
14:45-17:00	<p>Plenary 3: Experiences of teaching value of multiculturalism and the history of migration</p> <p>Facilitator: Dr. Prawate Kid-awn</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Experiences in Thailand” Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk Deputy-chairperson Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN) 2. “Experiences in Thailand and Burma/Myanmar” Ms. Morn Hom Education Program Shan Women Action Network (SWAN) 3. “Experiences in Japan” Ms. Yuriko Saito* Meijigakuin *Presentation read by Gabrielle Curtis <p>Open discussion</p>
18:30-20:00	Welcome dinner
Day 2 28 October 2014, Tuesday	
9:00-9:15	Recap of the discussion from Day 1 Dr. Kabmanivanh Phouxay and Watcharabhorn Sa-Nguansin
9:15-10:45	Plenary 4: Panel discussion on challenges and opportunities in teaching multicultural values and cultivating mutual understanding Facilitators: Professor Surichai Wangew <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Challenges and opportunities in Thailand” Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisapong, Senior Specialized Policy Planner and Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Academic Official, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education (to be confirmed) 2. “Challenges and opportunities in Thailand-Myanmar border areas”

	<p>Ms. Liberty Thawda</p> <p>Deputy Director of Child Protection and Education Program, Mae Tao Clinic</p> <p>Dr. Cynthia Maung, Director of Mae Tao Clinic</p> <p>3. “Challenges and opportunities in China” Ms Han Jialing, Professor, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology</p> <p>Discussants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Jackie Pollock, ILO - Ms. Liz Hilton, Empower Foundation, Chiang Mai - Ms. Shruti Upadhyay, Regional Program Coordinator, Oxfam Solidarity Belgium <p>Open discussion</p>
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-15:00	Developing joint recommendations
15:00-15:30	Closing ceremony & Evaluation
15:30-16:00	Tea break
16:00-17:30	Press Conference/Remarks by Prof Surichai Wangew

Welcome Messages

Dr Prawate Kid-awn, Chairperson, Foundation for Migrants from the Mekong Neighbourhood

Dr Prawate Kid-awn opened the symposium with a welcome speech which highlighted the importance developing closer co-operation and mutual understanding among countries in the Mekong sub-region to increase peace, human security, and economic development in the region. He described the symposium as a unique opportunity to enlarge space for multicultural reflections.

The second pillar of ASEAN is the ASEAN economic community, a concept which enables countries to expand their cooperation to issues of comprehensive regional governance and administration involving all social dimensions, not just regular politics and economics. Despite great economic success and potential, the security situation of many countries in the region remains volatile. Deep seated differences over political and economic systems, ethnicity, religion, and culture, have prevented the countries of the region from seeking and reaching a shared destination.

Dr Prawate remarked that there are many potential benefits of migration, but they are not as great as they could be, and they are not as well-known as they could be.

Integration of migrants is currently a serious problem, and migrants are often denied their fundamental human rights. Dr Kid-awn stated that we must remember that we are our own countries, but we are still part of the Mekong sub-region and part of the world. We have to make urgent and substantial advances for the sake of migrants and the sake of us all.

Dr Kid-awn invited all the participants to think about this challenge, and reflect on how to embrace diversity and seek multiculturalism and mutual understanding. Looking back on history, it can be seen that much has already been done, but there needs to be even greater advances made in our efforts to promote multicultural understanding and closer cooperation.

Dr Kid-awn expressed his belief that the symposium could contribute to this goal. He concluded that we can and must move forward together in the spirit of partnership for peace and prosperity in Mekong region.

Dr Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet, Steering committee of MMN

Dr Huynh noted that the current symposium grew out of the 2013 symposium, “Living Together”, in which participants discussed the concept of living together, integration, and social cohesion.

The goal of ASEAN is to strengthen cohesion and work towards social and economic integration by 2015. With that in mind, Dr Huynh asked, how do we link the concept and reality of living together and embracing diversity? How can we be more effective and fruitful in interactions between host countries and migrant communities?

We need to have mutual understanding, we need respect for the role and contribution of migrant communities but also sharing amongst the host and migrant communities of cultural values and mutual respect of different cultures. The purpose of this symposium is to address the question, how do we change attitudes in daily interactions, not just in theory?



Dr. Surichai Wangew, Dr. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tuyet, and Mr. Prawate Kid-awn

Dr Surichai Wangew, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University

Dr Surichai reiterated that the real challenge goes beyond the meeting room, and is not just a matter of legislation, but of how we embrace migration and diversity as a part of our existence, and how the values and attitudes of multicultural living can be appreciated.

Dr Surichai referred to a pervasive sense in modern society that people want quick fixes, and do not want to reflect deeply on the issues that face them. Dr Surichai emphasized the value of reflection in order to avoid repeating history's mistakes.

He commented that there is often too much emphasis on certificates and achievements as the goal of education. Education is often individualistic, against a sustainable future,

and tells people not to work together. However, this is at the expense of placing value on learning, in and of itself.

The concept of territorial sovereignty is a relatively recent one, but is now the preoccupation of modern politics. Although that reality must be acknowledged, nation states are not enough to deal with problems we have. The question is, how can we share our experiences and values?

Dr. Surichai suggested that our work must be considered in the broader context of ASEAN integration. Integration in terms of the economy is the most discussed, but when it comes to discussing culture and learning, these matters become very contained in nation states. People talk about national values, not regional values, but values across the region are also needed. There are many sub-national cultures, and many commonalities across nations. He noted that hundreds of years ago, people were more mobile, and accepted each other more easily. Dr. Surichai stated that the notion of reflection should be considered not a luxury, but a necessity of peaceful existence and co-existence.

Dr Surichai finished by saying that he looked forward to seeing more multi-level engagement and more focused recommendations in the future.

Reiko Harima, Regional Co-ordinator, Mekong Migration Network

Ms. Harima spoke about MMN's work in general and about the educational materials that were being launched. She also noted ASEAN's intention to strengthen regional integration, and explained that ASEAN has a school studies framework curriculum that currently is implemented depending on each school's own initiative and interpretation. As of May 2014, Thailand had a translation of this ASEAN studies framework and so there is an opportunity for timely intervention on the part of civil society to make recommendations as to what kind of studies can be included in that framework.

MMN has been working on the issues of integration and social cohesion of migrants in the region for some years. After the "Living Together" symposium in February 2013, one recommendation was to develop educational materials to further understanding of multicultural values at primary school level, also lesson plans on the history of migration. Migration has always been a part of human history, and has enriched society and culture, but sometimes in the modern context it is seen in a negative light. The

educational materials aim to provide an opportunity for children to see where does migration sits in the bigger picture in human history and regional history.

Ms. Harima emphasized the significance of the symposium as part of an effort to seek peace and harmonious integration in the region. It is important that people working in various sectors work together to promote multiculturalism. It is essential it is a goal in securing human security, peace, a society where everyone can live together.



MMN Educational materials

Plenary 1: Embracing Diversity and Understanding the History of Migration: possible ripple effects

“Effect on integrating migrant children and their families”, Ms. Wai Hnin Po, Foundation for Education and Development

Ms. Po’s presentation highlighted some of the problems in policy and practice in migrant children’s education in Thailand, some of the contributions that migrant children can make, and gave some examples of the work conducted by the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) in teaching migrant children in Thailand.

There are many Burmese migrants in Thailand. Thailand and Burma has a long border so many ethnic groups were divided after the colonial era. Many people move between the two countries but don’t have official recognition in one – or either – of those countries. Burmese have come to Thailand for many reasons, both political and economic. For example, human rights abuses during and after the 1998 uprising in Burma led many to flee the country. Later, some people left due to economic mismanagement by the military junta. Many children born in Thailand to migrant families are not recognized as citizens by either country.

The Foundation for Education and Development worked distributing aid to the victims of the tsunami in Southern Thailand, and discovered after working in the area for some months that many children born in Thailand of migrant families were not going to school. Some had grown up with no education, and others were facing the prospect of missing out on education. This would clearly have significant effects on individuals and their communities after many years in Thailand.

In the course of their work in Southern Thailand, FED found that migrants were living apart from the locals, despite their contributing much to the local economy and community. They began teaching migrant children to fill the gap they had identified, using curricula from Burma, Thailand, and England. However, they cannot provide any certification, and that prevents many children from pursuing further education. Although they have a lot of potential to contribute to Thailand, it is difficult for them to continue their studies.

Ms. Po highlighted that Thailand’s policies on migrants have all short term, viewing them as temporary only. But many migrants have been in Thailand for over 20 years, and will never return to their home country. She stressed that long term policy must be

considered a priority. This is a significant point for the entire region, as people move around a lot in the Mekong.

With regards to policy in Thailand, children are legally able to go to school without status but in reality it is difficult for migrant children to go to school. There are many supplementary programmes to educate them, e.g., the FED teaches Burmese children Thai so they can go to Thai school. However, there are still obstacles, as if they are then entering the Thai education system they must start at nursery school, even if they are by that time well above the nursery school age.

Migrants' children born in Thai hospitals can get birth certificates but there are many restrictions which make this more difficult in practice, such as the fact that the employer has to apply for the birth certificate.

The FED has seen that when children are educated they are often very effective in helping their community. They can read and speak Thai and they understand the culture, and as a result can be a negotiator between their family and employer. Migrants themselves then become educated in these areas due to their children.

Children are also helpful in situations when people need interpretation. They offer to help their community in many areas such as government services, hospitals and police stations. In fact, Thai government departments request the FED to get their children to help translate, which demonstrates how much they have the ability to contribute to their destination society.

Ms. Po concluded her presentation with an anecdote which highlighted the fluid identities of many migrants and migrant children. At a soccer game between Burma and Thailand, the children of Burmese migrants all cheered for the Thai team, as they consider themselves Thai. This reflects the way that children root themselves where they are born. Unfortunately, she noted that governmental policies don't consider children's own identification in this regard, which inhibits integration.

“Children root themselves where they were born, but current short-sighted policy prevents full integration.”

-Ms. Wai Hnin Po, Foundation for Education and Development

Finally, Ms. Po reiterated the two key points that she considered essential to integration social cohesion in the region – that policies for integration need to be considered long term, and that education needs to be accessible.

“Ripple Effects on Peace and Human Security”, Dr P.K. Shajahan, South Asia Centre for Studies in Conflicts, Peace and Human Security

Dr. Shajahan’s presentation focused on the experience of working with minority groups in India, ways in which their lesser status is reinforced, and suggested ways to promote greater social cohesion among diverse communities.

In contrast to the Mekong region, India does not have much cross-border migration and the issues it faces are different to those in the Mekong, but there is significant cross state migration, which poses formidable challenges for labour market integration, inter community relations etc. Each state in India is in fact like a country – very large, with a lot of diversity.

Migration can be viewed not just as a problem or cause of conflict, but as an opportunity. Migration is a positive experience if it advances possibilities of human development. Forced migration, on the other hand, does lead to marginalities of people.

The first part of Dr, Shajahan’s presentation concerned the “Politics of Identity in India”. Vast majority of India’s population are followers of Hindu religion with 80.5% as per 2001. 13.4% are Muslim, and the remainder are other minorities such as Christian, Sikh, and Jain. Though equality and secularism are foundational principles of the Indian Constitution, some of the minority communities live a life of a “lesser” citizen.

Dr. Shajahan shared his own experiences as a Muslim Indian. He explained that he did not have any conception of religious identity’s significance on a personal level until he moved from the state of Kerala, where his Muslim background had not affected his life, to Mumbai. There, a religious identity was thrust on him, despite him personally not following religion. He faced many instances of discrimination, such as people refusing to sell him a house.

The conceptual understanding



Dr. Shahahan discussed the phenomenon of “othering” of minority groups. He conceptualized it as being the result of a confluence of factors, namely, the combination of a “global demonic image”, local and national historiography, popularized myths, communalized media, manufactured collective memory. To illustrate his point, Dr. Shajahan described local media coverage of the murder of a journalist in Mumbai. The police, looking for scapegoats, arrested three youths from an area well known to be predominantly Muslim. Newspaper headlines at the time emphasized both the suspects’ religion and the name of their local area. When it was discovered that in fact a fellow journalist was responsible for the crime and the innocent men were released, media coverage made no mention of those identifying features.

Another example of a minority group facing discrimination in India are the low caste Dalits. As an example of society’s attitude to Dalits, Dr Shajahan described an incident which occurred during the destructive cyclone in Orissa. In one village, everyone fled to a Hindu temple which was the only building to remain intact. At a time of emergency, caste did not matter, and everyone stayed together in the temple. When the floodwaters receded, and people returned to the village, upper caste people immediately started collecting money to cleanse the temple since it is believed that the entry of Dalits in the temple amounts to the desecration of the place of worship due to the historical hierarchical relationship based on purity and pollution.

Dr. Shajahan noted that although there were laws in place to prevent and punish discriminatory atrocities against Dalits, in practice the issues remain, and there are minimal policy initiatives to protect minority groups.

Dr. Shajahan concluded with an example of ways in which different communities can be brought together. He described a Muslim youth group initiative called “Sports for Peace Week”, which invites many groups from different communities in one area of Mumbai. In the first year, 27 different groups came together, and Sports for Peace Week has been organized every year for the last 10 years. He noted this as an example of the way in which “softer” issues – such as sports and recreation events – can be used to bring communities together and engage youth when communities are divided. He argued that collective work with disparate communities should be based on shared needs and interests, such as these. Social relations developed through such collective work not only bring the communities divided on identify lines closer to each other, but also make it possible to set collective goals for the local communities and achieve the same.

Shared Needs and Interests



“Ripple effect in promoting labour rights of migrants”, Ms. Jackie Pollock, Triangle Project, International Labour Organisation

Ms Pollock’s presentation discussed the challenges and obstacles that are encountered in efforts to promote labour rights of migrants.

Increasing ethnic and racial diversity is the inevitable consequence of migration. This is the case not just in societies, but also in workplaces. This presents challenges – to societies, to accommodate, accept, and adjust, and also to individual workplaces. Diversity affects the relationships between workers and employers, and among co-workers. Ms. Pollock suggested that such problems increase with the temporary nature of migration, as it leads to constant changing make-up of languages and cultures.

Societies tend to respond to migration by increasing the strictness of regulations – on the type of work, living conditions etc. Abuse of migrant workers is a defining feature of international migration. Addressing rights violations of migrants is difficult, as there is a legal framework in place which embraces discrimination. Migration law is inherently discriminatory – its purpose is to keep some people out. Migration law is often biased towards people with money or assets, while at the same time rules are stricter for others – for example women, often in the name of preventing trafficking but in reality often leading to discrimination against young women.

Many policies allow some people with certain skills to enter easily and become citizens. Others, often those with less valued skills such as construction or domestic work, are only allowed to migrate on temporary basis. Labour migration policies themselves discriminatory, as countries allow certain professions in and keep others out, in order to respond to labour market needs. Sometimes even particular nationalities are brought in to fill certain jobs.

This situation runs the risk of stagnating labour conditions. Workers are temporary, and sometimes afraid of asking for their rights. They may not be able to unionise. If not addressed, this disparity in wages and conditions of citizens and migrants can widen so that exploitation becomes the norm, and this ripples out beyond the workplace. If the legal framework conveys the message that discrimination is acceptable, then society will feel this is acceptable.

“If the legal framework effectively says that discrimination is acceptable, then society feels this is acceptable.”

-Ms. Jackie Pollock, ILO

Ms. Pollock criticized the phenomenon of “recycling” multiple migrant workers for short periods in order to fill one permanent position. She argued that where a position is permanent, a worker should be entitled to permanent work and status.

Ms. Pollock referred participants to the most recent report of the ILO Director-General, in which it was acknowledged that debates around migration are connected to issues of security and multiculturalism. Although these issues are outside mandate of ILO, they are interlinked, and the ILO’s work is based on the founding concept that lasting peace requires social justice. Our collective security depends on the provision of decent work opportunities as much as border control. The report called for vigilance about contamination of debates about migration by racist and discriminatory thinking and emphasized the need to develop an agenda on migration which took into account these complexities.

The ILO is expanding its work to document and harness the nexus between migration and social solidarity connections. By way of example, Ms. Pollock mentioned that in Italy, migrants are being trained as tour guides because due to their language skills and cultural awareness they are uniquely placed to perform such a job. She suggested that this concept could also be looked at as a possibility when migrants return to their home countries. In the Mekong region, Myanmar’s increasing popularity as a destination for Thai tourists could be an opportunity for such a venture.

Ms. Pollock noted that the Millennium Development Goals did not mention migration, which blocked advocates from making migration a higher level debate. However, the Sustainable Development Goals do include migration. She pointed in particular to Goal 8, “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”; Goal 10, “Reduce inequality within and among countries”; and Goal 16, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. Ms. Pollock exhorted migrant rights advocates to use the goals as leverage in promoting the rights of migrants.

Open Discussion

With reference to Dr. Shajahan’s example of the youth group initiated ‘Sports for Peace Week’, Liz Hilton of Empower questioned when identity is established in young people, and whether we should aim to get children younger than teenagers thinking about identity/inclusion/shared values.

Dr Shajahan agreed that youth is not the point at which we should start. The group he referred to, called the Society for Awareness, Harmony, and Equal Rights, also established a community centre where younger children can come and play, and they work on a module on identity and active citizenship. The group also gets younger primary school age children participating in the sports week, and there are other activities such as street theatre. All these activities can make children start questioning their belief about who can be their friends, their ability to connect with people who they are not supposed to interact with etc. He agreed on the need to start at an early age when identity is being established.

Dr Tuyet asked a question about how the ILO worked with governments to make better policies for migrant workers.

Ms. Pollock noted that the ILO cannot tell a government what to do, but if invited it can provide technical support and can also provide support to workers and employers. In the Mekong region, the ILO is assisting some countries to review their national laws on migration and MOUs between sending and receiving countries. The ILO's Triangle Project is working with recruitment agencies in sending countries to try to improve standards. Such engagement is voluntary but it is a positive sign that some are recognizing there should be some international standards in this regard. The ILO also supports migrants and civil society groups. The ILO itself is not the change but hopes to be a catalyst for change among other actors.

Dr Surichai asked all the panelists what they thought was the most difficult problem in their mission.

Dr. Shajahan's view is that the current political climate where identities, particularly religious, are being manipulated and being abused for political goals poses significant challenges. He is troubled by the rise of the right – political, religious, and economic – in many parts of the world. In the Indian context, identity based conflicts are on the rise, with religion as one of the most signifier. This in the context of neoliberal economic policies which give rise to the argument that welfare of minorities is a drain of scarce state resources. This logic is finding great appeal, and protection of minorities is not valued. However Dr. Shajahan expressed the view that an active civil society and a vibrant democracy will regain its strength and could work against the divisive forces.

Ms. Po highlighted the problems that shortsighted migration policies caused in Thailand. She stated that promoting culture and integration to children was easy, but changing policy was their biggest challenge. Migrants have to register yearly, and extension over

four years is difficult. The MOU between Burma and Thailand does not recognize family. All of the policies are short term, and do not provide full rights.

Ms. Pollock stated that for destination countries, the most difficult problem is the enforcement of labour laws. She also mentioned a less talked about issue, that of children who remain in their countries while their parents migrate. They are often in isolated communities, very poor, with no exposure to other countries and cultures, and may not understand where their parents are. She suggested that MMN could consider producing material for migrants' children in sending countries.

Shruti Upadhyay of Oxfam Solidarity asked about how to promote positive identities at community and policy level.

Ms. Pollock referred participants to the recommendations from the World Conference on Racism in Durban in 2001 which she believed were helpful in this regard. Among the recommendations are to encourage political/community leaders to speak out and condemn racism, and to address racist media.

Ms. Po mentioned the need to use empowering vocabulary discussing migration.

Dr. Shahjahan emphasized the importance of education, especially of children, and noted the importance of gender. In the Indian state of Kerala, for example, there is higher female literacy than in the country overall, and higher human development as a result.



Open discussion

Plenary 2: Launch of the MMN educational materials

Dragon Lake

The illustrated book “Dragon Lake” was read by Ms. Sasapin Siriwani and Ms. Estelle Cohenny gave some background on how the story was developed.

Each school involved facilitated a day’s activities of games, visual art, and role plays. At the end of the day the facilitating team met to discuss and debrief what had come out during the day’s activities.

In one activity, children were divided in two and created two imaginary countries and imagine themselves populating these countries. The facilitators then chose some inhabitants of each village and town to move to another place, and imagine that when they arrived they had lost their belongings and did not speak the local language. They had to find ways that the newcomers could then get food and a place to sleep.

Children in different groups responded in different ways. Some children knew the procedures migrants had to go through, such as immigration and police, but did not know anything about what help was offered to migrants. Other children responded welcomingly to the newcomers, and regarded them as equals. The children then discussed what it had been like as newcomers, and how they were treated.

For the children's book, the team chose to focus on rejection and acts of aggression – welcoming and not welcoming others. Questions are raised about rejection and what impact that has. Reflecting on the concept of otherness also makes us reflect on feelings of home, connectedness, and safety.

Children start experiencing and perceiving the world immediately, and by the age of 3 children integrate feelings of rejection. As adults, by passing down our own prejudices we teach children to fear the world, rather than teaching them to be open and brave. Dragon Lake does not aim to answer such questions, but to open dialogue – not only between children and adults, but also among adults as well.



Ms. Estelle Cohenny discusses the development of the book Dragon Lake

Lesson plan presentation

Ms. Pachara Sungden shared her memories of her own education in Thailand. She remarked that learning how your nation was built has a lasting impact and shapes your perception of the world around you. In Thailand, she learned in history about conflicts between Thailand and other nations. Otherness is ingrained in relationships even with close neighbours in the region.

The lesson plan on the history of migration is part of MMN's "Embracing Diversity" project, and arose from the "Living Together" symposium in 2013. The objectives are to acknowledge migration as a natural process in human history, understand the movement of people, and to celebrate cultural diversity, ultimately leading to more positive feelings and understanding of migration and migrants.

Why lesson plan on the history of migration?



The educational materials cover four discrete 1-hour lessons on features of migration; migration at a community and individual level; the history of migration in the GMS region; and global history of migration.

The lesson plans are distinctive in that they focus on allowing students to make realisations by themselves. This is a challenge, and a new learning method, but Ms.

Pachara noted that in the pilot lessons carried out in two schools, the method was very successful. Students were attentive, energetic, and active.

Ms Pachara gave a few highlights from the lesson plan. Migration can seem intangible, and so the lesson plans give a number of examples to overcome this. Technical terminology is avoided and simple words are used. Similarly, the lesson plans provide terms for the teachers to avoid in order not to promote any stereotypes.

One of the first activities students do is to come up with evidence of migration in everyday life, which demonstrates how cultures influence each other. This contrasts with the modern notion of nation-state that creates the idea of fixed boundaries, the idea that “this is ours and that is theirs”. The lessons aim to show that migration can happen to everyone, that it is natural, and that the reasons for movement are not necessarily negative.

Ms. Pachara summarized the importance of the lesson plan. First, it builds perceptions of students about migration at a young age giving them a neutral view on those who migrate, thus preventing them developing negative attitudes. It makes them acknowledge and appreciate the cultural diversity they get to enjoy in everyday life. Lastly, the younger generation is the key to greater future regional integration and social cohesion.

Discussants

Ms. Narumon Wutti-precha, a teacher at Wat Suandok Elementary School who had taken part in the pilot lesson praised the plan. She noted that in the past, it was rare for children of migrant workers to attend their school, but there are now a large number of students from migrant parents. She appreciated that the lesson plans made migration more tangible in the minds of the students. She also believed that the lesson plans reduced conflict in the school and they were enjoying diversity.

Mr. Ruangrit Chandee, a teacher at Wat Suandok Elementary School discussed his experiences working with MMN on the activities as part of the development of the book Dragon Lake. He explained that there were many migrant children at his school, which had a policy of non-discrimination. Half of the school population is from different ethnic communities.

Ms. Morn Hom from SWAN described her experiences as an ethnic Shan migrant to Thailand. She commented that Dragon Lake realistically reflected her own and her child’s life experiences of rejection. She noted that SWAN currently supports 10 schools with ethnic group studies. She expressed hope that implementing the curriculum in schools would adjust the attitudes of both teachers and students.

Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Anh from Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences praised the lesson plan and suggested that if it were to be implemented in Vietnam, it should be adjusted for the local context. She remarked that the lessons required a teacher who is creative in teaching methods and teacher training would be important.

Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisfapong, Senior Specialized Policy Planner, and Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Academic Officials, from the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), the Thai Ministry of Education, gave some information on current policy and projects with respect to education of migrants. They are currently developing a strategic plan for education in border and highland areas. They have a dual language strategy for teaching and the official policy is to accept all children into schools without

“The lesson plan could be integrated very well into the Thai curriculum on social studies.”

-Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisfapong, Senior Specialized Policy Planner, Thai Ministry
of Education

discrimination. The Ministry was trying to promote equal educational opportunities.

With regards to the proposed lesson plan, the Ministry of Education happy to replicate in other schools if the outcomes from the pilot schools are positive.

Open discussion

Several participants discussed their views that it is important to change people’s mindset to child-rights based education. Inclusive education is still new. In addition, the media, private sector, and community all have an influence on children, not just the classroom. Parents are also important. It will be necessary to consider how to involve parents to understand what is going on in the classroom.

Ms. Upadhyay, Oxfam-Solidarity, commented that the potential pitfall of creating a timeline of the history of migration is that we may promote a single truth of history. History depends in a large part on who you are and where you come from, and there may be multiple histories.

Ms. Pollock, ILO, expressed the hope that the lesson plan could be further developed. She commented that there was a lot of information about culture and identity which can be explored as separate modules. She also noted that internal migration was not

mentioned in the lesson plan and that it could be beneficial to look at both internal and cross border migration.

Ms. Liberty Thawda explained that in Mae Sot there are many different ethnicities, although they are all Burmese. As a result each ethnicity teaches its own history, and they have come up with a multidisciplinary curriculum.

A question was asked about how to make the lesson plans more commonly shared in the region, noting that cooperation between the government and schools was important for success. Ms. Harima stated that the lesson plan has been translated into Lao, Burmese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, English and she hoped further discussion at the symposium would focus on how to promote the lesson plans to different countries.

Plenary 3: Experiences of teaching value of multiculturalism and the history of migration

“Experiences in Thailand”, Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk, Deputy-chairperson, Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN)

Mr. Surapong’s presentation discussed the problems and opportunities faced by migrants in the area of education in Thailand.

By way of introduction, he noted that migration across the GMS region is normal and migrants adopt their receiving countries; this has happened for years. Nation state boundaries only started a few hundred years ago, separating people from one another, even though it used to be that people shared land.

Mr. Surapong agreed with previous comments about migrant children needing to understand their roots and background, but argued that they also need to know they are taking root in another setting, and understand where their new friends come from.

“Regardless of their background, children can learn both about where they are from and also the place in which they currently live.”

-Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk, Labour Rights Promotion Network

Mr. Surapong argued that children need an understanding about their place of residence and the rights they have, and they should have the right to take part in affairs of the country and community in which they live in order to promote peace and coexistence. This is an important point teachers will need to instill.

Mr. Surapong called for a recognition of the diversity of knowledge and wisdom, and the importance of culture and wisdom. He viewed conflicts and war as stemming from the absence of acceptance of one another, and one another’s beliefs and cultures. He acknowledged that people cannot be forced to assimilate or create unity, but thought it important to acknowledge that Thailand is facing difficulty in this regard.

Mr. Surapong reviewed some key points regarding the legal situation of migrants in Thailand. In 2005 a cabinet resolution led to the Ministry of Education promoting education for all, regardless of nationality or work permit, for adults as well as children. Since 2008, the Civil Registration Act enables the registration and issuance of civil

papers to all people, in order to recognize the status of children. In 2012 Thailand withdrew their reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, allowing all children born in Thailand to be registered.

However in practice, there are issues relating to implementation of these. Access to education is not yet enjoyed equitably. Progress in this area since 2005 has been inadequate, and some issues have not been tackled head on.

Many ethnic minorities who have been living in Thailand a long time should have been recognized. Mr. Surapong pointed out that it is impossible to find someone 100% Thai, and there is no definition of what “Thai-ness” really is. Being Thai means embracing the various ethnicities in the country, many recognized as Thai. For example, in principle Karen is a Thai language, and should be able to be taught in school.

Mr. Surapong said that in schools on Fridays Thailand encourages students to dress in their local costumes and suggested that the practice be expanded to apply to local dialects as well. This would educate teachers about what languages the students were born to raised and speak. In other schools which are already taught in Burmese, the practice could reverse, and they could introduce Thai on Friday. Overwhelmingly, migrant children want to learn Thai. Furthermore, migrant children’s opportunities will be limited if they do not learn Thai, and so Thailand should promote dual track education so their opportunities are enhanced.

The Thai government is not fully prepared at the moment to realize their obligations. Teachers are not equipped to instruct many ethnic languages. Not all children attend school, and in this regard Mr. Surapong explained that the LPN provides transport to students to take them to school, and they approach parents on an individual basis to convince them to allow their children to attend.

Mr. Surapong argued that the teaching of minority languages in schools where there are many students from other countries or ethnic groups needs to be particularly promoted. Furthermore, efforts must be made to ensure that educational qualifications throughout the region are recognized transnationally.

Overall, Mr. Surapong concluded, Thailand has the right policies in place, but they are still not yet implemented in practice.



Ms. Morn Hom, Mr. Surapong Kongchantuk, Mr. Prawate Kid-awn

“Experiences of Migrants in Thailand”, Ms. Morn Hom, Shan Women’s Action Network, Chiang Mai

Ms. Hom’s presentation gave some background information on ethnic Shan migrants in Thailand, and described the work of the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) in regards to the education of migrants. SWAN performs work at the community level in 6 different focus areas, including education, health, and income generation.

Between 1996-1999, 300,000 people were forced from Shan state and migrated into Thailand. They were undocumented, and had no work permits, access to education, health, or rights. As a result, many were exploited by their employers, or subject to Arrest, Detention and Deportation, and women were subject to sexual abuse. As a result, a group of women formed SWAN in order to support migrant groups, particularly in education.

There are currently more than 10 schools run by SWAN, from pre-school to secondary school. More than 1500 students attend the schools, and of those more than 500 are orphans. SWAN’s work is based in Chiang Rai and around the border, including in

communities based in the forest in Burma. SWAN is also increasing its work in Shan state, and will be opening a school there.

The SWAN schools along the Burmese border teach according to Shan curriculum but there are problems associated with this, because those children cannot then go on to either Thai or Burmese school. SWAN also runs schools in Thailand that teach the Thai curriculum for students who cannot get access to Thai schools. The children who graduate from these informal schools, even though they have followed the Thai curriculum, cannot receive certification and continue their schooling past primary school. Furthermore, parents' attitude tends to be that they do not see any benefit in continuing education, and many students stop schooling and start work.

Nevertheless, many students today are continuing to study bachelor's degree, and learning to be teachers or public health workers. However, they cannot receive proper accreditation so cannot teach in the formal school system or work as a qualified public health worker in Thailand.

SWAN provides support for teaching materials for teachers and students, contributes to school funding, provides financial assistance so schools can provide lunch, supports a school bus so those living a long distance from school can attend school, and also provides scholarships, particularly to support the children of parents with HIV/AIDS. SWAN also promotes extracurricular activities during school holidays, teaches adult women, and provides lessons in Shan language.

To encourage interaction with Thai communities SWAN has joined with local schools to promote teaching local cultures. SWAN also provides lessons on local dialects and Shan culture to students as a whole. As Mr. Surapong mentioned, on Friday students dress in ethnic costumes, and Ms. Hom agreed with Mr. Surapong that it would be good for students to speak in ethnic dialect on this day. Fridays are also days in which students can learn about their cultural heritage, which promotes empowerment and self-identity and confidence in their local language. Ms. Hom noted that presently, some students are afraid of being discriminated against for speaking their ethnic dialect.

“Some students are afraid of being discriminated against for speaking their ethnic dialect.”

-Ms. Morn Hom, Shan Women's Action Network

Ms. Hom noted that one of the major challenges they face is children discontinuing their education early, often because parents cannot afford to send their children to school, or the children need to contribute to earning money for the family. She recounted the story of one student who committed suicide after being forced for financial reasons to stop his education.

SWAN's schools and teachers were now gradually gaining accreditation. However, some of their teachers, despite having a wealth of experience and skill, remain not officially recognized because they have not graduated themselves, and are somewhat looked down upon. Nevertheless, many of those unaccredited teachers are still continuing their education to obtain undergraduate degrees.

Open discussion

A question was raised about the details of accreditations for migrants who wanted to be teachers or public health workers. Ms. Hom explained that informal schools are not accredited and cannot issue certificates. Students at recognized institutions can receive degrees, however, they are not eligible to sit the examination to obtain practicing licences.

Dr. Shajahan commented that formal identification can create issues of its own if measures of safety, protection and ethical use of the data are not ensured. Identity cards are resisted by rights groups in India as the data may be abused to target certain communities.

Ms. Cohenny remarked that the current system in Thailand seemed to allow migrant children the same rights to study, but only to the extent that they remain in certain spaces upon completion. When migrants' education leads them to have more mobility and the potential to move away from the peripheries, this situation is resisted.

Plenary 4: Challenges and opportunities in seeking multicultural values and mutual understanding

"Challenges and Opportunities in Thailand-Myanmar Border Areas", Ms. Liberty Thawda, Deputy Director of Child Protection and Education Program, Mae Tao Clinic, Dr. Cynthia Maung, Director of Mae Tao Clinic

Ms. Thawda and Dr Maung presented information on Burmese migrants to Thailand and the work of the Mae Tao clinic along the Thai-Burma border.

Ms. Thawda described the circumstances that have led many Burmese to migrate to Thailand. She pointed to the military dictatorship, human rights abuses in the civil war such as forced labour and land confiscation, resultant economic hardship and debt, and lack of educational opportunities. For most children, especially in border areas, they have to move in order to pursue education above primary school level.

Tak province in northwest Thailand hosts an estimated 260,000 migrant workers, and until August 2008 their children born in Thailand could not be registered, and were therefore undocumented.

The Mae Tao clinic runs Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs), which are not formal schools, but are important to provide education access to migrant children. As of 2014, there are 66 MLCs with over 13,000 students. The Child Development Centre (CDC) in Tak province is one of these schools. It started in 1994 for clinic staff, starting with nursery school, and each year has increased so it now teaches up to grade 12. In 2014, there are 864 students enrolled in CDC. The school is ethnically and religiously diverse, and it encourages multicultural activities for the students.

Ms. Thawda explained some of the internal and external challenges facing CDC. Internally, many families believe that students need not study beyond grade 9, and students are withdrawn from schooling. There are also some language barriers, as not all students speak a common language. Also, in order to get accreditation, the schools must teach the Thai language and curriculum.

In terms of external factors, community perception of migrants remains an issue as the students are often looked down upon. There is also little grassroots understanding of ASEAN and the objectives of ASEAN.

Ms. Thawda went on to review the many successes of CDC. CDC is involved in the development of citizenship education for all migrant learning centres. Teaching methods

have been improved, and student assessment methods have also been revised to reflect not only academic achievement but their participation and social relationships. They are also building mutual understanding with the Thai community and have had a lot of positive engagement from the local Thai community. CDC also connects those who complete grade 9 with government vocational class so children can prepare if they leave school to work.

As a result of the 2005 'Education for All' policy in Thailand, CDC has worked with the Thai Ministry of Education to create a "school within a school" so that children can access the Thai curriculum, and Thai teachers are sent to the MLCs. They are also introducing students to a curriculum on ASEAN.

Ms. Thawda concluded by reviewing some of the future goals of CDC. She particularly emphasized the need to advocate for accreditation for students in Thailand and Burma, and recognition within ASEAN on the barriers that documentation pose on access to education. Lastly, she called for the promotion of better community consultation on education curriculum, and ongoing support for children to embrace and feel proud of their diverse cultures and identities through education.



Dr. Cynthia Maung and Ms. Liberty Thawda

Dr Cynthia Maung gave some additional information about children and migrants in Mae Sot, particularly with regard to registration.

Dr. Maung noted that there are significant problems with registration for migrant children in Thailand. The documentation system is very slow, and new arrivals at Mae Tao Clinic are often not registered. It is a great challenge for the clinic to improve registration of children, and they have made significant achievements. The clinic provides more than 3000 people a year with access to registration.

Similarly, to obtain Burmese citizenship, the law requires that the authorities be informed within 15 days of a child's birth. When migrants return to Burma, they do not have registration documents for their children. Many parents themselves also do not have any documentation, and this restricts children's access to education, and limits social cohesion.

The Mae Tao clinic aims to improve the school and classroom environment and encourage participation from teachers and parents. Dr Maung emphasized that it was very important to integrate health care into the education program, and the clinic works with the Ministry of Health in this regard. Burmese people are often regarded in the local community as bringing disease, and the school health initiative has helped changed this perception.

"Integration and social cohesion is a child protection issue"

-Dr Cynthia Maung, Director, Mae Tao Clinic

Lastly, Dr. Maung discussed child protection, expressing the view that integration and social cohesion is a child protection issue. She noted that teachers and parents have different ways of both disciplining and caring for children, so child protection policies are being developed. Such policies need to be implemented in order to make the community stronger.

"Challenges and Opportunities in China", Ms. Han Jialing, Professor, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology

Ms. Han's presentation focused on internal migration in China, and described the experience of a community centre serving migrant children in Beijing. In China, 90% of internal migration is rural-urban migration, and large numbers of these migrants are

living on the peripheries of urban centres. This trend is increasing, and numbers of migrants rose from 100 million in 2000 to 220 million in 2010. Migrant children constituted 35 million in 2010.

Migrant children living in cities face a number of challenges. Overwhelmingly they are segregated from other local communities, in many different aspects.

Despite Beijing being a modern city, migrants tend to live together in very poor, slum-like conditions that are overcrowded and poorly serviced with regards to infrastructure. It is difficult to access education and also health care, since they have no city medical insurance. Especially since their parents often have to be absent to work, there are safety issues, including risk of trafficking and accidental injuries.

They also face problems in social inclusion, as despite their de facto urban status, they are still regarded as migrants and excluded from mainstream society. Migrant families generally face discrimination and are disadvantaged in accessing public services.

Ms. Han went on to describe the work of one community based assistance organization that seeks to address some of these issues. The Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Center (MWEAC) was established in 1999. It is based in the rural-urban fringe area where there are 1300 local residents and around 4000 migrants, and staffed by volunteers including local university students, retired teachers, and community members. Its mission is to narrow the gap between migrant workers and urban residents, promote social justice, and allow migrant workers to enjoy the same basic rights and treatment as urban residents.

Ms. Han described the programs run by MWEAC at the school and community level, including teacher training and curriculum development, teacher support, volunteer training, and student interest groups and activities.

Teacher training is very important, and MWEAC aims to ensure that teachers are taught how to understand migrant children's needs, backgrounds, and values. For example, teachers may see children who seem dirty or have unwashed clothes, and judge them for this. MWEAC arranged visits for teachers to the community so they can see that these children are living in places where such things are impossible, if they have no running water. Teachers may also not understand why a student cannot afford what seems to the teacher to be a small amount to pay for school supplies, not understanding that their parents have to work and save to earn that money little by little.

MEAWC also has a school based curriculum on the culture of China that covers the culture and history of different ethnic groups in China.

MEAWC also focuses on practical learning as well as basic skills. They teach children occupational and life skills, social skills, and personal development. Parents can also participate in the lessons which is valuable as there is often little time to spend together when parents need to work.

The work of the MWEAC has led to a number of conclusions about the education of migrants. First, non-formal learning is more relevant to migrants' needs. Second, community is very important, and community resources and knowledge play a large role in migrants' non-formal education, of both adults and children. Lastly, participation of children is essential to build their self-confidence and sense of identity.

Ms. Han concluded by mentioning some of the challenges MWEAC faces. First, it is always difficult to challenge the dominant culture and values. Secondly, some of the volunteers often espouse mainstream ideology such as the necessity of college education that is not appropriate or feasible for migrants. It is also difficult to organize activities for the migrant community and train key community members as they often move frequently. Migrant children are also facing difficulties of their own as they have lost the traditional link to their specific cultural and socio-economic life. Lastly, it is a continuing challenge to involve parents, as economic pressures mean they have to work to support their families and have little or no free time.

“It is a continuing challenge to involve parents, as economic pressures mean they have to work to support their families and have little or no free time.”

-Ms. Han Jialing, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences

"Challenges and Opportunities in Thailand", Ms. Nongnuch Owatchaisfapong, Senior Specialized Policy Planner, and Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Academic Official, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education,

Ms. Owatchaisfapong gave some introductory remarks on the situation in Thailand regarding the education of migrant children.

Efforts to expand education in Thailand began in 2005 following a cabinet resolution on the need to provide all children with education, especially those without identity documents.

In allocating the education budget, the ministry must remain cognizant of the challenges Thai children face, but they are trying to equalize opportunity and allocate part of the budget to children without ID numbers. Every year, the amount of the budget has gradually increased.

In 2011 there were approximately 45,000 students without ID cards reached, and in 2013 that had increased to 57,000. Furthermore this number does not include students outside the regular education system.

The education ministry also runs special schools under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who also strongly feels a need to increase opportunities and access for migrant children. The schools under her patronage are mainly border schools and are intended for the benefit of migrants. It is her vision that migrant children are supported and therefore feel bonded with Thai society.

Ms. Owatchaisfapong noted that there are 7 million Thai children who needed to be accounted for in the budget allocation, while also including migrant children. She stated that the Ministry does not neglect migrant children and tries to do what it can, but there are necessary limitations on how they can use the government budget. She affirmed her intention to keep requesting enough budget to support migrant children and allocate equal amounts to all, but also noted that how much that could cover depended on the area in which children lived. Although the educational budget increases every year, it also becomes more and more overloaded. Thailand is still encountering problems looking after its own children, and yet it also needs to take care of migrant children. Ms. Owatchaisfapong expressed hope that the Symposium would consider how to address this obstacle, and participants would support Thailand in this endeavour.

Ms. Suwansiri elaborated on the challenges faced in providing education to migrant children. First, Ms. Suwansiri pointed out that it is not just the Ministry of Education, but many other government ministries who contribute to the welfare of children and enable students to complete education.

For children born in villages, if they go to local health centres in the community to obtain vaccines and health insurance etc., then the child is identified by the government system. For migrants, who sometimes live illegally in Thailand, the government often may not know about them, the family fears to identify themselves to the government and it is a problem to ensure these children go to school. When they do go to school, they may disappear after a short period. It may be because their parent has to leave Thailand to return to Burma for periods, and the child must go with them. This raises obvious concerns to school administrations.

“Some children may disappear after attending school for a short period...This raises obvious concerns.”

-Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Thai Ministry of Education

Some students also come to school late. Students are supposed to begin school at Grade 1 when they are age 6, but some children come to school for the first time at age 10. If this is the case, the policy is to assess the child’s potential, not age level, and start accordingly. However not all schools are in the position to be able to manage this.

Ms. Suwansiri also noted that teacher training envisages only teaching of ordinary Thai students, but does not cover teaching of those from different or ethnic or language backgrounds. To try to overcome this, some schools organize local teachers or community volunteers to assist in bilingual or multilingual programs. Teacher training in inclusive education is a big plan for the future.

“Teacher training envisages only teaching of ordinary Thai students, but does not cover teaching of those from different or ethnic or language backgrounds.”

-Ms. Wongduan Suwansiri, Thai Ministry of Education

Another issue she identified was budget, which was always stretched. Even as the number in the budget increases, the number of students increases. Furthermore, there are always other demands on the budget such as currently rebuilding schools in Chiang Rai damaged due to an earthquake. She noted that there was always a need for help and support from others outside the system.

The Ministry also remains concerned about the home situations and safety of some children. She gave an example of some children who were discovered to be living alone while their families are not in Thailand. In that situation, the school was able to arrange to provide not only free lunch, which is standard, but also breakfast and dinner for the children, and the principal and teachers worked hard to ensure the students were safe.

Ms. Suwansiri concluded by stressing that the Ministry of Education aims to look after all children – including migrants, and other disadvantaged children – and believes that every child deserves the best.



Ministry of Education officials discuss educational materials

Ms. Yuriko Saito (Presented by Gabrielle Curtis) Meijigakuin University "Experiences in Japan"

Ms. Saito's presentation gave some background on migration in Japan and presented information on the situation of migrant children, and a case study of some NGOs supporting migrant youth.

In the 18th and 19th century, there was significant outbound migration to South America, the descendants of whom are now often returning to Japan. In the early 20th century, Japan colonized Korea and part of China, and many Koreans and Chinese were brought to Japan as labour.

The latter part of the 20th century saw Japan receive refugees from Indochina, and since the 1980s, many economic migrants. These include undocumented migrant workers who are often subject to exploitative work conditions. There has also been human trafficking in Japan.

The status of migrants in Japan is very variable, depending on their visa status and background. For example, the descendants of Japanese migrants to other countries have more possibilities of naturalization, which is not open to undocumented migrants.

The term “migrant children” can refer to foreign children (Japanese who have relations and connection with foreign countries) new ethnic Japanese (the children of refugees or international marriage etc.) and Japanese rooted to other countries (returnees from other countries and their families).

Such children can face problems in matters of education, social affairs (social welfare, social skills, social relationships), and work/career. If people fall short in any of these areas, it can lead to social exclusion.

Statistics from a Ministry of Education study in 29 cities with high levels of migrant in habitants demonstrate that migrant children are falling behind in education. At elementary level, 0.5% of migrant children do not attend school and 20% were unaccounted for – either missing, moved, or also not attending school. In Junior High 1% were not attending school and 20% remained unaccounted for.

To support education for foreign children the Japanese government aims to research the situation of foreign children’s education, and support the teaching of subjects and of Japanese conversation. The Ministry of Education also provides some support by providing texts for teachers in various languages as well as sample letters home to parents that schools can use. However, there is no migrant education in the curriculum.

Ms Saito’s presentation provided some information about NGOs in Icho housing estate in Kanagawa prefecture. There are many migrants and their families living in this housing estate.

There is a support group run by Japanese known as Community Development for Multi-culture, which runs various activities such as language support, career counseling, and community activities. The benefits of this go both ways as it is good for Japanese society to recognize multi-culture in Japan, and the migrants improve their skills for living in Japan.

There is also a youth self-help group called Stand By Me for youth with multicultural backgrounds. They organize their own activities, such as researching and discussing identity, and are supported by junior high school teachers who can incorporate their activities in classes on international studies.

The group was set up by Cambodian child of refugees who wanted to find out about his history. He felt that society did not understand his complex feelings of identity, even those who supported him.

There are challenges in connecting migrant and host communities. There is conflict between host society and new migrants but also intra-community conflict. For example, migrant parents may not want to discuss their reasons for migrating with their children, especially when they may have had trouble integrating themselves. There may also be conflict in the same generation, between successfully integrated individuals and those facing problems. Also, while each ethnic community has their own characters, Japanese tend to not recognize differences. It is necessary to recognize ethnic society but also respect people as individuals.

Challenging to bridging the gap between Host society and migrant youth ("stand by me"'s case)



Ms. Saito's presentation concluded with recommendations to promote migrant historical education, both in schools and in the general publics; respect individual migrants and their autonomy; and promote social inclusion and avoid social exclusion by such things as hate speech against migrants.

"It is necessary to recognize ethnic society but also respect people as individuals."

-Yuriko Saito, Meijigakuin University

Discussants

Ms. Hilton from Empower Foundation remarked that as other symposium participants had noted, government regulations cannot create social inclusion on their own. But it is obvious that government neglect of migrant children can create bigger barriers to social cohesion. Things like neglect of infrastructure, or basic things like the process for birth registration, builds into a system that cannot take care of migrant children.

“Government regulations cannot create social inclusion on their own. But it is obvious that government neglect of migrant children can create bigger barriers to social cohesion.”

-Liz Hilton, Empower

Immigration laws and law enforcement are still about stigma. Stigma and discrimination is systematic as it starts from the system – not just individuals’ treatment of migrants.

Ms. Upadhyay of Oxfam-Solidarity commented that culture should be treated not like a wall that needs to be tolerated but like a river that needs to be embraced. We should also consider how to capitalize on this time and build upon it and ASEAN solidarity and social cohesion.

“Culture should be treated not like a wall that needs to be tolerated but like a river that needs to be embraced”.

-Shruti Upadhyay, Oxfam Solidarity

Ms. Pollock of ILO noted that in considering issues around education of migrant children, there were many elements to keep in mind, including having education that is accessible, and having education that is multicultural. She also remarked that education is often considered in terms of cost to countries but it is greater than that, as many benefit from education, including the country of destination providing education. Migrants in general also benefit societies, for example by revitalizing dying rural areas.

“In considering issues around education of migrant children, there are many elements to keep in mind, including having education that is accessible, and having education that is multicultural”.

-Ms. Jackie Pollock, ILO

Whole group discussion and Recommendations

At the conclusion of the plenary sessions, participants discussed ways to further the aims of the Symposium. As a starting point, participants reviewed the recommendations from the ‘Living Together’ Symposium. With regards to working and living conditions of migrants, many participants noted the need to advocate for a living wage, rather than a minimum wage. It was suggested that research be carried out as to current wage structure in GMS countries as a basis for future advocacy.

Ms. Upadhyay, Oxfam Solidarity, also suggested that freedom of information policies be advocated for in ASEAN countries, as an extension of the focus on access to education for migrant workers.

Ms. Hilton, Empower Foundation, suggested that the availability of professional and qualified translation across the region was also an urgent need, particularly for serious legal or medical situations. In addition, she suggested that it should be advocated that anti-discrimination laws be broadened to prohibit discrimination on the basis of occupation and immigration status.

Ms. Thawda reiterated that teacher accreditation remained a pressing problem, and also noted that depictions of migrants in the media remained an issue. Ms. Hilton and Ms. Pollock suggested that migrant advocates could consider engaging national press councils and formulate media training to try to combat negative depictions in media.

With regards to materials for children, Ms. Pollock’s suggestion that books be produced for the children of migrants who were in different countries was raised, and Dr. Shajahan suggested creating animated films, including of Dragon Lake. The idea of adapting the lesson plans for use in other countries was also discussed.

Dr. Shajahan also mentioned that an online “observatory” of the experiences of migrants could be established and curated by multiple organisations, in order to create a repository of information that could be useful for advocates, as a similar enterprise was being established with regard to conflicts in India.

Participants then agreed to take action on the following recommendations:

1. Develop an animated film version of the picture book “Dragon Lake” to enable wider circulation;

2. Develop more illustrated books on migration for children, including for children who stay in their countries of origin;
3. Advocate for the recognition of teachers in migrant learning centres and the provision of teaching and lesson planning materials for them;
4. With the aim of rolling out the lesson plan in all GMS countries, participant organisations will review current relevant initiatives in their home countries and hold consultations.

Concluding remarks

Dr. Surichai Wangew began his remarks by emphasizing the need for research institution and grassroots NGOs to continue to engage and support each other.

He expressed the view that the real issue of politics, especially in Thailand, is to determine ways to live together with people of different views, backgrounds, and opinions. He also noted that people can belong to more than one place, and if we forget that, we risk conflict.

Dr. Surichai reiterated the notion that the world tends to focus on the short-term, but it is necessary to reflect on history, and particularly shared history.

In continuing the theme of migrant education, Dr. Surichai noted that migrant children should be considered both a resource and as actors for the future. He expressed the hope that partnerships among the participants of the Symposium would bring marginalized issues to mainstream attention, and looked forward to the efforts of the Symposium being a catalyst for the future.

List of Participants

China	
Ms. Han Jialing (Professor)	Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology
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Ms. Jackie Pollock (GMS Triangle Project)	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Ms. Wai Hnin Po (Programme Officer for Burma)	Foundation for Education and Development
Thailand	
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Ms. Morn Hom (Education Program Staff)	Shan Women Action Network (SWAN)
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Ms. Liberty Thawda (Deputy Director)	Child Protection and Education Program Mae Tao Clinic
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Ms. Liz Hilton	Empower Foundation
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Mr. Ruangrit Chandee (Teacher)	Pong Noi School
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