



Mekong Migration Network (MMN)



Proceedings of Migrant Consultation on Access to Social Security

6 July 2025

Mae Sot, Tak, Thailand

On 6 July 2025, the Mekong Migration Network (MMN), in collaboration with its members—the Foundation for Education and Development, MAP Foundation, Young Chi Oo Workers Association, and Arakan Workers Organization—organized a consultation with migrant workers in Mae Sot, Thailand. The objective of the event was to enhance migrant workers' understanding of Thailand's Social Security System (SSS) and to provide a safe and constructive space for them to raise questions and concerns directly with representatives of the Mae Sot Social Security Office.

Thirty-two migrant workers (17 females and 15 males) participated in the consultation. Participants were mainly factory workers, most of them employed in garment factories, holding various forms of documentation regarding their right to work in Thailand. Participants included migrant workers currently enrolled in the SSS, those previously enrolled but who had subsequently fallen out of the system, and those who had never before enrolled. All participants expressed interest in learning more about the structure, procedures, and benefits available from the SSS. The consultation was organized over two sessions.

Profile of Participants

No.	Sex	Occupation	Year Arrived in Thailand	Enrolled in SSS
1	F	Community Volunteer	2022	No
2	M	Community Volunteer	2022	No
3	M	Community Volunteer	2023	No
4	M	Factory Worker	2023	Yes
5	M	Factory Worker	2024	No
6	F	Factory Worker	2016	Yes
7	M	Factory Worker	2010	Yes
8	F	Factory Worker	2022	Yes
9	F	Factory Worker	2006	Yes
10	F	Factory Worker	1999	Yes
11	F	Factory Worker	2020	Yes
12	M	Factory Worker	2010	Yes
13	M	Factory Worker	2023	Yes
14	M	Factory Worker	2015	Yes
15	F	Factory Worker	2012	Yes
16	F	Community Volunteer	2020	No

No.	Sex	Occupation	Year Arrived in Thailand	Enrolled in SSS
17	M	Community Volunteer	2020	No
18	F	Factory Worker	2023	No
19	F	Factory Worker	2022	No
20	F	Factory Worker	2018	Yes
21	F	Factory Worker	2021	Yes
22	F	Factory Worker	2019	No
23	F	Community Volunteer	2018	No
24	F	Factory Worker	2019	Yes
25	F	Factory Worker	2022	Yes
26	M	Factory Worker	2013	No
27	F	Factory Worker	2022	No
28	M	Factory Worker	2020	No
29	M	Factory Worker	2022	No
30	M	Factory Worker	2013	No
31	M	Factory Worker	2020	No
32	M	Factory Worker	2021	No

Morning Session

The morning session focused on migrant-led discussions. Following welcome remarks and brief introductions by MMN and the other co-organizers, participants divided themselves into three discussion groups. Each group identified the specific challenges they face in accessing or maintaining coverage within the SSS. Discussion questions varied by group based on the participants' history of engagement with the system.

Group 1, consisting of migrant workers currently enrolled in the SSS, were asked to reflect on the following questions: (1) What challenges do they encounter when enrolling in and maintaining their social security status? (2) What difficulties exist in accessing accurate information about the SSS? (3) What barriers do they face when claiming benefits? and (4) What concerns do they have regarding future access to the SSS?

Group 2, comprising individuals who are no longer enrolled in the SSS, addressed the following questions: (1) Why and how did they fall out of the SSS? (2) Have they considered re-enrolling and what are the associated difficulties of doing so? and (3) What challenges have they encountered as a result of losing SSS coverage?

Group 3, made up of participants who had never before enrolled in the SSS, were asked: (1) What barriers they face that deter them from enrolling in the SSS? (2) What difficulties exist in obtaining accurate information about the SSS? and (3) What challenges arise from not having SSS coverage?

Participants working in discussion groups to identify the challenges they face within the SSS.



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Participants presenting the results of their discussions.

Subsequently, all participants reconvened for a plenary session in which each group presented summaries of their discussions in answering the above questions. From these presentations the following key challenges and corresponding recommendations were collectively compiled for presentation by two selected migrant representatives (male and female) during the afternoon session.

Key Challenges:

1. Employers often refuse without providing a reason to register migrant workers under the SSS.
2. Many migrant workers are ineligible to enroll in the SSS due to the system's restrictive criteria.
3. Accurate and accessible information about the SSS is limited.
4. Migrant workers experience difficulties obtaining the necessary documents to access benefits.
5. The process of claiming social security benefits is lengthy and lacks clarity.
6. Migrant workers are unable to easily check their enrollment status.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a streamlined process for registering and navigating the SSS.
2. Simplify procedures for obtaining the documentation required to access social security benefits.
3. Ensure clear, accurate, information is disseminated to migrant workers in languages they understand and through channels accessible to them.
4. Encourage employers to comply with their legal obligations to register migrant workers under the SSS.
5. Make arrangements for migrant workers to easily check and verify their SSS enrollment status.

Afternoon Session

During the afternoon session, the two selected migrant worker representatives took the stage to present the above challenges and recommendations to representatives of Mae Sot's Social Security Office (SSO). In so doing, they reflected on their personal experiences navigating Thailand's SSS. One of the migrants had lived in Thailand for three years and was a garment factory worker, while the other arrived in 2021 and was between factory jobs at the time of the consultation.



Migrant worker representatives took the stage to present the discussed challenges and recommendations to the representative of Mae Sot's SSO.

Their personal testimonies highlighted gaps between policy and practice, including being unable to access unemployment benefits and facing difficulties in registering for social security. Both explained that although the law guarantees comprehensive protections for workers, many still face significant challenges in registering, claiming benefits, and accessing timely support.

These challenges underscore a broader lack of clarity and accessibility within the current system. As such, they said that there is an urgent need to establish clear and accessible pathways to ensure that all workers can consistently access the benefits they are entitled to without delay.

Following their remarks, Ms. Suparada Potha, Labour Specialist, Practitioner Level at the Mae Sot SSO, gave a detailed presentation on the Thai SSS as it applies to migrant workers. She explained that workers must hold a valid work permit in order to register for social security, and the process must be completed by the employer. However, she conceded that many employers are reluctant to register workers, often claiming that workers are dissatisfied with the deductions from their wages for social security contributions. In her experience, some workers themselves request not to be registered, as they are confused about the process and entitlements. Since there is a three-month waiting period before benefits become active, workers are required to purchase migrant health insurance from Mae Sot Hospital in the interim. After doing so, some employers and workers take the view that additional social security registration is unnecessary.

Ms. Potha then outlined the seven core benefits that migrants are entitled to once enrolled in the SSS. These are (1) free medical treatment for non-work-related illness; (2) maternity benefit; (3) child support; (4) bereavement benefit; (5) retirement pensions; (6) unemployment benefit, and (7) disability benefit. Social security benefits and contributions are largely the same for both Thai and migrant workers. However, she pointed out one important difference in relation to unemployment benefits. Migrant workers can only receive unemployment benefits for 30 days as they are required to secure new employment within this period or will lose their immigration status.

Ms. Potha also noted that healthcare benefits under the SSS are limited to designated hospitals, such as Mae Sot General Hospital. Any special wards or private care must be paid for by the worker. Access can also be withheld if there is a mismatch of identity documents, or in the event where a worker later discovers that their employers have failed to make the required contributions.

As for workplace-related injuries, she explained that workers cannot access compensation immediately, as there are established procedures that must be followed. She said that it is important for workers to understand these procedures and coordinate closely with their employers. For dental care, all insured persons are entitled to basic treatments such as scaling, fillings, extractions, and wisdom tooth removal, without upfront payment, up to a maximum of THB 900 (USD 30) per year. Maternity benefits require at least five months of contributions to the system. Eligible insured persons receive a lump-sum payment, and insured women are entitled to a maternity leave allowance equal to 50 per cent of their average wage for a period of 90 days. However, the childbirth allowance can be claimed by only one parent. If the parents are not legally married, the parental relationship must be verified by two Thai nationals.

Child support, currently set at THB 1,000 (USD 31) per month, is provided for up to three children until they reach six years of age. To continue receiving this benefit during this period, workers must submit an annual Verification of the Child's Existence for children without Thai nationality. This document must be signed by authorized individuals, including administrative officers such as village headmen, sub-district heads, district chiefs, and civil servants at the professional level (practitioner level or above), the general level (operational level or above), or their equivalents.

Alternatively, documents issued by government agencies such as those from schools or embassies may also be accepted for verification purposes. If the child resides in Myanmar, a verification document may be issued by the relevant Myanmar authority responsible for confirming the identity of its citizens. This document must bear the official seal of the issuing agency and be translated into Thai. The certificate must be submitted every October in order to continue receiving child support.

Ms. Potha's presentation also briefly covered issues related to retirement pensions, which become available after a worker has made contributions for 180 months. She explained that workers can check their social security status or access benefits online using their Certificate of Identity (CI), pink card, and work permit. If they do not have a bank account, withdrawals can be made through Thailand Post.

Q&A Session

During the Q&A session that followed, workers raised practical concerns based on their personal experiences. One participant asked if child support could continue beyond the age of six. The officer clarified that child benefit ended once the child turns six, but that retroactive claims may be filed for up to two years. Another worker reported being unable to access funds from an account opened 20 years ago due to a name mismatch. The account was originally opened with her passport, but her current CI reflects a different name.

Ms. Suparada Potha responding questions from participants.



In response to questions regarding unemployment benefits, Ms Potha explained that insured persons are eligible to claim benefits upon becoming unemployed regardless of whether they were made redundant, terminated, resigned voluntarily or their contract of employment expired. In all cases, the employer must first notify the Department of Employment that the person is no longer employed by them. A certificate of unemployment will then be issued, which is required to proceed with the claim. An insured person is entitled to receive unemployment benefits for up to 180 days per year at a rate of 50 percent of their average wage. However, in cases of resignation or contract expiration, benefits are limited to 90 days per year at the lower rate of 30 percent of the average wage. However, as mentioned earlier, migrants are only entitled to receive benefits for up to 30 days.

Regarding retirement pensions, Ms. Potha stated that workers must present their CI, passport, work permit, household registration, ID, and 7-day pass at the Mae Sot post office. She emphasized the importance of keeping original documents safe, as losing them can impede their access to benefits. One participant mentioned that their employer had confiscated and later claimed to have lost their documents. Ms Potha advised that if the worker still had their original pink card, they might be able to withdraw funds, otherwise, it may be impossible to claim.

The session ended with Ms. Potha responding to some of the other issues raised by migrant workers from the morning session. She explained that many migrant workers remain unregistered because employers either fail to register them or claim that their workers are unwilling, despite most businesses being legally obliged to register their employees. Workers cannot self-register. She said that any complaints received lead to SSO officers investigating the employer.

In relation to access to accurate information, Ms Potha explained that the SSO conducts outreach sessions with the aid of interpreters. However, she said that conducting additional training often depends on the cooperation of employers. She accepted that migrant workers encounter administrative hurdles not faced by their Thai counterparts, as they are required to submit extra documents and ensure consistency of personal details across all IDs. She conceded that in Mae Sot, a limited staff of just three officers struggle to keep up with demand. Workers are therefore advised to prepare complete documents beforehand. In terms of receiving payments, she advised migrant workers to open accounts with the Krungsri or Krungthai banks to avoid unnecessary delays.

While workers can check their social security status online, she accepted that language barriers remain since the platform is only available in Thai and English. The SSO recommends using browser translation tools and is developing Burmese-language materials to make the system more accessible.

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The Mekong Migration Network (MMN) is a sub-regional network of migrant support NGOs, migrant grassroots groups, and research institutes working together to promote and protect rights of all migrants in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

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