

Thailand

ENGLISH only

Intergovernmental cooperation on temporary migrants

The Asia-Pacific region holds more than one fourth of the world's population. Rapid population growth and continuous migratory movements continue to characterize the whole region with migratory movements taking place from, within and through the region. In the 1970s and 1980s much of the movements was from Asia to other region, but the recent trend of movements was to countries and areas within the region itself. Countries which have been actively involved in transnational migration in the region can be categorized into three groups; countries of origin, countries of destination, and country of transit. Some countries, including Thailand, fall into all three categories of transnational migration.

It is well recognized that migration between countries of the region is fundamentally tied to differences in levels of development among the countries. Among ASEAN countries, for example, there are very large disparities in economic development and demographic structure that have produced and sustained large flows of undocumented migration. The structural imbalances will continue to generate cross-border movements as long as they remain.

In Thailand, the migration situation has become more complex as the country shifted from being a labour supplying country into the position of a both labour sending and receiving country. The country has sustained a continuing influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries. The largest immigrant groups in Thailand at present stem from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos PDR respectively. One of the main actions that have been undertaken by the Royal Thai Government to reduce emigration pressure from poorer countries is the provision of aid and the promotion of employment opportunities in those countries of origin.

Given this background, we also see that irregular migration is becoming more apparent, complex and organized in the region. The challenge for the Government is to develop, individually and collectively, strategies to address the root causes of irregular migration as well as to deter and disrupt the organized ones. This requires actions at both the domestic and international levels.

There is also a need to enhance the national and regional capacity to address the complexity of migration and asylum interface. During the past two years, Thailand has concluded a number of bilateral and sub-regional arrangements/agreements with several countries, especially neighbouring countries, on migration-related issues, such as employment of migrant workers and human trafficking, which would in effect contribute to the identification of categories of persons in the mixed flows. At the same time, we have fully recognized the benefits of registration for migration management and has undertaken a registration of more than 1.3 million illegal migrant workers in August 2004. This undertaking has essentially regularized the presence of illegal migrant workers in Thailand and made them more accessible to protection. While this regularization policy is temporary in nature, we still need to

promote legal and regular channel of movements and minimize undocumented migration in the long run.

Examples of Thailand's intergovernmental cooperation on migration issues

Labour migration

- **Regularization of illegal migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos PDR**

In 2004, the Royal Thai Government had conducted a nationwide migrant registration campaign, allowing illegal migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos PDR and their families to register with the Thai authorities their intention to reside temporarily and be employed in Thailand. Around 1.3 million migrant workers and their families have registered and so far more than 700,000 of them have been issued work permits in Thailand, while about 100,000 employers have been issued permits to hire these registered migrant workers.

- **Bilateral Memoranda of Understanding in the Employment of Migrant Workers**

In 2003, Thailand signed the MOUs with Cambodia, Laos PDR and Myanmar on guidelines and procedures for employment protection and return of workers to their respective countries upon completion or termination of contracts in Thailand. The implementation of the MOUs are at the similar stage where officials of the three countries are sent to Thailand to work on the nationality identification and issuance of travel document for their nationals currently working in Thailand.

Counter human trafficking

- **Memorandum of Understanding between Thailand and Cambodia on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking**

The MOU which was signed in May 2003 establishes guidelines on cooperation in preventing human trafficking, prosecuting trafficking cases, and protecting trafficked victims. To facilitate the implementation of the MOU, the two countries have set up a Joint Working Committee in July 2004 to consider procedures for the smooth implementation of the MOU. Thailand is finalizing the similar MOU with Laos PDR and also negotiating the similar MOU with Vietnam.

- **Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region**

In October 2004 Thailand and five other Greater Mekong Sub-region countries, namely, Myanmar, Laos PDR, China, Cambodia and Vietnam, signed the MOU on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons. The principal objective of the MOU is to enhance regional capacity to combat human trafficking. The cooperation under the MOU has progressed well to the level that the six member countries have already agreed on the MOU's Plan of Action, covering policy coordination, preventive measures and law enforcement.

- **Bilateral cooperation**

- Thailand has cooperated with several destination countries, such as Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia in the return and reintegration programmes, including psychosocial assistance, for Thai trafficked victims.

- Thailand and Australia are conducting a pilot project on return and reintegration of Thai trafficked victims, focusing on public awareness campaign and capacity building for the Government and NGOs personnel.

- Thailand and the Yunnan province of China have set up the focal points for coordinating their task on combating transnational organized crime, including human trafficking. Thailand's focal point is established in the Royal Thai Police, while that of the Yunnan counterpart is at the International Cooperation Division, Yunnan Provincial Public Security Department.
