

The summary of the Consultation and Focus Group Discussion with 3 specific groups of 'Children on the Move' in Thailand

Age: 11 – 24 years old, **Number of participants:** 46 children in total **Date:** 18th – 21st May 2017

1. **Urban refugee children** (The Hmong/Mong, ethnic group from Vietnam) at Sapan Hmai, Bangkok.
2. **Children in a refugee camp** (from Myanmar) at Kung Jaw, Wiang Haeng, Chiang Mai.
3. **Children of migrant workers and migrant youth** (Tai Yai, ethnic group from Myanmar) in Chiang Mai.

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Supported by Terre Des Hommes Netherlands

Most of the children dream to have high education for a better life and future opportunities as education will help to get rid from clutches of racism and discrimination. According to their experiences, as **urban refugees**, the children experience racism and discrimination at school and many places in Vietnam because they are Christian while the great majority of Vietnamese people regard themselves as Buddhists. After move to Thailand these children able to adjust themselves and get along with host communities. **Children of migrant workers** said, they have same access to education services as Thai children, but it becomes harder for them to continue higher education. However, racism and discrimination at school still exist. For example, a teacher who had bad attitude towards one skinny migrant child tried to force her to commit that she uses illicit drugs while she kept on refusing. The teacher continued to force her to get urine test repeatedly, until she couldn't take it any further and quit from the school. However, there are some children learn how to read and write just to get a job to support their family, some need to get out from the school and follow their parents from site to site with no chance to continue their study.

The urban refugee children were confronted with negative and irresponsible news report and comments from media here in Thailand, but this was in no way even close to the devastating situation, horrible racism and discrimination they had faced back in Vietnam. The expulsion and poisoning, just to name a few, which caused them to migrate to Thailand as refugees with hope to continue moving forward to their final destination – Canada as soon as possible. **Children of migrant workers** also said negative news and all the blame such as troublemakers, criminals, drug dealers and prostitutes from the newspaper, radio and internet quickly falls upon them even when there was no evidence yet which caused them anger sometimes but nothing they can do about that, and whenever they did the good things it always went unnoticed. However, recently, media recognized and presented them in a positive light which helps to fill up the gaps, reduce their pressure and they were thankful for.

Access to services (shelter, education and health)

The urban refugee children are happy with their living condition here in Thailand as it is much better than the hell back home in Vietnam, especially certain fundamental rights including the right to freedom of religion and access to education, however, they still insist to move to the third country, and hope in Canada there will be more freedom for them to go wherever they want legally and when they can get enough higher education and a good job they can go back to help their family and friends back in Vietnam. There was no mention of sexual harassment from this group of children. **The children in the refugee camp are** also satisfied with their living condition in Thailand as they have access to the education and able to earn small income from picking chillies, onion, sewing and work at construction site within the host communities. As their parent must go to work almost every day, **the children of migrant workers** forced to confront the unexpected situations which might be dangerous and even risk their life, such as accident, fire and sexual abuse. Their living condition in the camp is better than before but still there is flooding almost every year and sometimes for the long period of time which puts them at risk of Dengue Fever and other infectious diseases and poisonous or dangerous animals. Due to the low quality materials, their house couldn't cope with strong wind or heavy rain. Children find it's difficult and embarrassed to hear or see adult sexual activities at night.

Sexual harassment, obscenity and sex abuse occurred and were often caused by people close to their family such as uncle or father's friend. The law enforcement and children's rights protection

around these issues was almost not effective. Although, there was no evidence on the sexual abuse as all men and women shared open bathrooms in this camp, but children thought it would be safer and more convenient to have their own privacy and separate bathroom.

Health services

Although, there is basic health care services available in the camp but there is stunning lack of medical support because the donations have been on and off and there is no long term support from Thai government or International Organizations. **The migrant workers** in Thailand who have their own income are capable to seek for the health care services at the hospital through the 30-Baht Scheme or health insurance which cost around 2,000 Bath per person and 365 Baht for young children, however, they feel much more comfortable to go to the clinic instead of the hospital even if it is more expensive and they have to responsible for the payment themselves. This is because there is no discrimination at the clinic. The problem is sometimes they have been asked to pay a lot of money in advance on daily basis to get the medical treatment for serious cases, which caused a high burden on them. Another serious issue related to the racism and discrimination in hospital is not able to get the medical certificate from doctor, as they need formal evidence to give to their employer. This was because sometimes doctor refused to give it.

The urban refugee children are able to seek for health care support from UNHCR.

The urban refugees children, the children in refugee camp and migrant children here in Thailand are most likely to be ripped off by the traffic police and the soldiers at the checkpoints basically due to the traffic regulations, illegal status and undocumented which result with the unfair fine depends on their satisfaction if not pay the children would be jailed or send back home. Their parents also tend to follow and accept the unfair situation just to avoid troubles and further difficulties.

On the child victim of trafficking issue, there are some migrant youths who engage in sexual services. However, normally, **the migrant children** will spend most of the time at school or home just to protect themselves and avoid from any problems but if they were arrested they must help themselves or seek help from their friends or relatives who can speak Thai fluently.

The Tai Yai, ethnic group who lives along the border line, does not receive the status as 'refugee' as the other ethnic groups because Thai government has no policy to open more refugee camp, so they scattered everywhere across the country with no support as other refugee groups in the region.

Request for Myanmar government, Thai government and World government

The urban refugees children urge Vietnam government to respect ethnic group dignity, human rights and certain fundamental rights including the right to freedom of religion, improve education and health care service within the country for everyone equally and eliminate racism and discrimination, while urge Global and Thai government to support their right to move on to the final destination, if they don't have enough evidence to prove their refugee status, then, at least allow them to continue stay here in Thailand with legal status.

All children need to be recognized, legal status would help them to be able to get a good job and improve access to other better opportunities in life.

The migrant worker children and **the children in refugee camp** urge Myanmar government to address the conflict between Myanmar and Thai Yai, stop the war and return peace and harmony to other ethnic groups. **The children in refugee camp** also ask Myanmar government to settle proper education for Thai Yai people and other ethnic groups and to clear landmines from the border. They all urge Thai government to address the stable policy on proof of Nationality and get rid of the corruption along the pipeline.

And for the Global government, both groups request to improve law effectiveness and transparency in reality. Please ensure that peace and harmony in Myanmar are not just only words and convey our concern over the impacts from rapid blasting and river dredging along the Kong river to Myanmar government. Please preserve our natural resources, reconsider about power house from green energy instead of coals and stop giving the forest concession to China as it directly supports deforestation in the long run and these are the important part of the reason which causes people to move away from their own land.