



11 November 2009

Dear Minister of Labor
CC Director-General, Department of Employment
Director Office of Foreign Workers Administration

Subject: Request consideration to clarify information and concerns about Burmese migrant workers' nationality verification

The Royal Thai Government has made attempts to solve the issues of migrant workers from three countries; Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, and turn them to become legal migrant workers. The Government makes agreements with neighboring countries to manage the employment and set up measures to verify the nationalities of the migrant workers from these countries in order to change their status into legal migrant workers. The procedure for workers from Cambodia and Laos has been mostly implemented with success. The cases for migrant workers from Myanmar are still under process.

The nationality verification of Burmese workers is more complex than the procedure for their counterparts from Cambodia and Laos due to the differences in management systems and situations in countries of origin. Also, the number of migrant workers from Myanmar makes up to seventy percent of workers from all three countries. These factors cause a considerable level of obstacles to the operation.

It is speculated that a source provided information to workers and employers that Burmese migrant workers need to submit the Nationality Verification Form within the 20th of November, 2009 which causes confusion among the workers and employers. Therefore, it is requested that a clarification on this measure should be made.

In the meantime, it is concerned that if the above-mentioned information is legitimate, such procedure would become an obstacle to a number of migrant workers to fulfill the requirements. This is due to the fact that some migrant workers are still poorly-informed about this nationality verification procedure especially about the processes and expenses involved. The Migrant Working Group-MWG has surveyed the opinion and understanding of more than two hundred migrant workers in various locations. It is found that there is about twenty percent of migrant workers who are unaware of the nationality verification and about fifty percent learn about it from unofficial sources of information e.g. employers, friends, agents which are potentially inaccurate and it becomes a major obstacle in access to nationality verification procedure. At the same time, it does not coincide with the latest Cabinet's Resolution on the 3rd of November, 2009 to extend the period of operation for civil registration of migrant workers from three countries. As a result, a large group of migrant workers will not be able to go on with the procedure.

Therefore, the MWG has made preliminary proposals to the measures on this issue as follows;

1. There should be an extension for the submission of Nationality Verification Form considering the suitability of the operation areas.
2. There should be a campaign to explain the details of the Nationality Verification Procedure

both on the steps and expenses for the entire operation. The expenses for each step should be broken down to ensure that the workers and employers realize the real expenses and the services and benefits that the workers are entitled to. Also, questions and concerns should be clearly answered in workers' languages. The measurement should be included monitoring any private agency who provides national verification service and should consider to set up a national verification center in a new location where is reachable for migrant workers.

3. There should be proactive and interactive public relations which is truly accessible to migrant workers either by direct approach to the migrant workers and the use of easily-understood native languages. The types of media which are popular among migrant workers are SMS, local radio and Burmese media.
4. There should be a re-evaluation and making understanding with the employers and migrant workers about Nationality Verification procedure, excessively-expensive charge and the operation of agencies.
5. There should be a sub-committee responsible for monitoring the effects of the Nationality Verification operation and reporting to Alien Labour Management Committee as a guideline which leads to a long-term improvement in migrant workers management and contingency plan for a migrant worker who is fail and unable to verify nationality.

The MGW is pleased to collaborate and assist in distributing and making understanding with migrant workers in a comprehensive information framework from government agencies and to provide information from the field and workers themselves to further benefit the operations of concerned agencies.

Sincerely yours,

The Migrant Working Group