

Myanmar Youth Migrants in Thailand

STRENGTHENING SKILLS, PROTECTION,
AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Comprehensive Labour Market Assessment



Summary Report

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This report is prepared for Finn Church Aid (FCA), as part of the Youth on the Move: A Regional Approach to Resilience project, with support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The Comprehensive Labour Market Assessment aims to assess migration dynamics, labour market participation, and livelihood strategies of Myanmar youth in Thailand, drawing on perspectives from migrants, employers, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, technical and vocational education and training providers (TVET), recruitment agencies, and financial institutions. In addition to documenting labour conditions, the analysis focuses on structural barriers to inclusion—such as documentation systems, access to financial services, entrepreneurship, remittances, and opportunities for skills development.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Comprehensive Labour Market Assessment provides an evidence-based analysis of the labour market situation of Myanmar youth migrating to Thailand, with the aim of informing policy development, programme design, and advocacy to promote safe migration, decent work, and social inclusion.

Migration from Myanmar has intensified in recent years as young people seek safety and livelihood opportunities in response to political instability, economic decline, and limited prospects at home. Thailand's diversified and labour-intensive economy continues to attract youth migrants, yet they face substantial challenges in legal documentation, skills alignment, financial access, and labour protection.

The study applies a mixed-methods approach, integrating a survey of 400 Myanmar youth migrants, qualitative interviews with employers, NGOs, financial service providers (FSPs), government agencies, and recruitment agents, as well as youth focus group discussions. Data was collected in Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Chiang Mai, and Tak, with complementary inputs from Mon State in Myanmar. The assessment examines labour supply, labour demand, institutional roles, ecosystem actors, and the legal and policy environment.

*HOSPITALITY AND CATERING TRAINING FOR MYANMAR MIGRANT YOUTH AT A SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN TAK, THAILAND
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA*

Key Findings

1. Migration Trends and Drivers

Migration to Thailand has **accelerated significantly since 2020**, with over **70% of surveyed youth arriving between 2020 and 2024**. The 2021 Myanmar military coup and subsequent enforcement of conscription laws have shifted migration from primarily economic to protection-driven movement.

Thailand remains the destination of choice due to geographic proximity, higher wages, and established migrant networks. However, the formal MOU recruitment system is underutilized, hindered by high costs, long processing times, and administrative complexity. Non-MOU pathways—often informal—provide faster entry but expose youth to higher legal and financial risks.

Young migrants are concentrated in manufacturing, food processing, logistics, construction, and services, especially in Samut Sakhon and Bangkok. Despite their economic importance, many remain in precarious employment, often due to irregular status and reliance on informal work arrangements.



2. Labour Supply and Skills Mismatch

Myanmar youth migrants are young, motivated, and relatively well-educated, with 59% holding a diploma or degree. Yet 65% work in jobs unrelated to their field—evidence of a pronounced skills mismatch.

Key challenges include:

- **Limited access** to Thai language and market-relevant technical training.
- **Fragmented coordination** between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and employers.
- **Gender disparities**, with women concentrated in lower-wage sectors.
- **Low awareness of formal TVET programmes.**

Despite these challenges, over 60% express a strong interest in upskilling, underscoring the demand for accessible, modular, and accredited training pathways suitable for both documented and undocumented youth.

3. Labour Demand and Employer

Perspectives

Employers view Myanmar youth as critical to sustaining key industries, especially in 3D (dirty, dangerous, difficult) jobs where labour shortages persist. Employers report challenges related to:

- **Complex and inconsistent recruitment regulations.**
- **Language barriers** and limited career progression pathways.
- **High turnover**, driven by documentation insecurity and lack of skill recognition.
- While employers value the productivity and reliability of Myanmar youth, investment in structured training and TVET partnerships remains limited.

Some employers, however, show interest in cross-border skill recognition frameworks to improve workforce stability.

4. Government Role and Policy

Perspectives

Interviews with nine key Thai agencies involved in foreign labour management indicate that Myanmar youth significantly contribute to Thailand's economy, but **youth-specific policies remain limited.**

- The institutional landscape is fragmented, with weak coordination across labour, education, and registration systems.
- Existing training and education programmes (e.g., Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC), Equitable Education Fund (EEF), Department of Industrial Promotion (DIP), Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC) provide value but lack scale and consistency for migrant youth.
- Legal protections exist under the Labour Protection Act and Foreign Workers Decree, but implementation gaps persist, especially affecting undocumented youth.
- Disconnected data systems hinder evidence-based planning.
- **Implications:** Thailand requires stronger inter-agency coordination, integrated education-to-employment pathways, modernized data systems, and greater engagement with the private sector to align skills development with labour market needs.

5. Financial Inclusion and Remittance Behaviour

Financial access among Myanmar youth migrants remains limited, with many relying on informal or semi-formal channels.

Key observations:

- 60% remit monthly, primarily using mobile apps such as TrueMoney, WavePay, and KPay.
- High remittance fees, documentation requirements, and exchange rate gaps deter youth from formal banking.
- Only 12% have accessed formal loans, while 37% rely on informal lenders.
- Financial literacy is low, especially for undocumented youth.
- The growth of digital financial platforms presents an opportunity—provided services incorporate multilingual interfaces, low fees, and flexible ID requirements.

6. Civil Society, TVET, and the Support

Ecosystem

Civil society actors address key protection gaps for migrant youth through policy, legal, and community support, though undocumented status, weak reporting systems, and limited resources require stronger coordination.

TVET providers offer language and vocational training but face systemic barriers, while community-based TVET reaches undocumented youth but needs more investment.

Recruitment agencies have both protective and exploitative roles, with high fees, irregular migration, MOU delays, and restrictive job-mobility rules increasing vulnerability despite strong employer demand, emerging ethical recruitment practices, and reforms that require more consistent implementation.

7. Legal and Policy Environment

Thailand's labour laws generally align with international standards, yet implementation remains uneven. Key challenges include:

- Complex administrative processes for work permits and renewals.
- Slow and costly MOU processes that drive migrants towards informal channels.
- Inconsistent regulatory practices across ministries and provinces.
- Limited digitalization of processes.
- Stakeholders emphasize that the bottlenecks lie not in legislation itself, but in bureaucratic processes and regulatory culture.

CONCLUSION

Myanmar youth migrants are vital contributors to Thailand's industrial, agricultural, and service sectors, forming a significant share of the workforce in manufacturing, construction, hospitality, retail, and domestic work.

Despite their essential role, these young migrants continue to face persistent and interlinked barriers related to legal status, skills development, financial access, and labour protections. Many navigate complex documentation processes, limited portability of work permits, and unclear pathways to regularisation. At the same time, opportunities for skills upgrading remain uneven, with most training systems designed for adults and rarely tailored to the realities of young migrants who balance long working hours, mobility, and language challenges.

Thailand's current migration governance framework remains largely adult-centric, fragmented across agencies, and insufficiently aligned with the needs of youth entering the labour market. While civil society organisations, TVET providers, and migrant support groups attempt to fill critical gaps—offering language classes, legal counselling, and non-formal education—these efforts often struggle with limited coordination, inconsistent funding, and challenges in scaling successful models. Private-sector engagement in youth migrant development also remains limited. Although employers rely heavily on young migrant workers to sustain business operations, few provide structured training, career progression pathways, or mechanisms to support long-term skill development.

Nevertheless, the findings point to significant potential for Thailand to transition from a reactive approach to migrant labour management toward a more strategic, youth-inclusive, and evidence-based system. With targeted reforms, stronger inter-agency coordination, and deeper partnerships between government, civil society, employers, and TVET actors, Thailand can move toward a future-ready migration strategy that supports both economic competitiveness and the well-being of the young migrants who help drive its economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination:** establish a national mechanism that links labour, education, and civil registration systems with participation of civil society, migrant-led organizations, private sector, and local authorities to enable coherent, long-term planning for youth migrants.
- **Skills Development and Education Access:** promote modular, flexible, and accredited training, adaptable to both documented and undocumented youth and aligned with industry needs.
- **Enhance Legal Protection and Rights Awareness:** improve enforcement of labour laws, simplify administrative procedures, and provide targeted legal counselling and outreach.
- **Promote Financial Inclusion:** support digital, multilingual, low-fee remittance and banking services; expand migrant-friendly savings and credit products.
- **Engage the Private Sector:** develop structured partnerships with employers for on-the-job training, mentorship, and cross-border skill recognition.
- **Improve Data Integration and Evidence-Based Policy:** link data from the Department of Employment, the Department of Provincial Administration, the National Statistical Office, and education agencies to strengthen labour market monitoring, planning, and service delivery.



MYANMAR MIGRANT YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN A COOKING PRACTICE SESSION AT RAYS OF YOUTH, TAK, THAILAND
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

Labour migration from Myanmar to Thailand remains a critical livelihood strategy for young people seeking safety, income, and stability amid Myanmar's escalating political crisis. Thailand is the primary destination, employing 3.95 million foreign workers, of whom 2.94 million are from Myanmar (Foreign Workers Administration Office, Department of Employment as of October 2025). Migrant youth play essential roles in construction, manufacturing, services, and agriculture, yet continue to face persistent barriers related to legal status, documentation, social protection, financial inclusion, skills training, and decent work.

Thailand's labour market—characterised by a 40.36 million labour force, 1% unemployment, and chronic shortages in low-wage sectors—relies heavily on migrants. Wage adjustments, such as the increase to 400 THB/day in 2024 (with 600 THB planned by 2027), further influence labour mobility.

This Labour Market Assessment (LMA) aims to generate evidence-based insights into the conditions and pathways of Myanmar youth migrants, as well as the perspectives of employers, policymakers, financial service providers, NGOs, and training institutions in Thailand. It analyses not only labour dynamics but also the broader political drivers of migration, particularly forced displacement due to conflict, insecurity, and persecution.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to assess the migration dynamics, labour market participation, and livelihood strategies of Myanmar youth in Thailand, while situating their experiences within the perspectives of other key stakeholders. By incorporating the views of employers, policymakers, financial service providers, NGOs, and training institutions, the study highlights both systemic challenges and opportunities for reform. Particular attention is given to themes of documentation, skills development, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and remittances, all of which are critical to shaping more inclusive migration governance.

This study also highlights in the report that this study not only examines migration dynamics and youth livelihoods but also emphasizes programming priorities for multi-sectoral and holistic interventions in this area. We will ensure this point is reflected in both the Limitations section and the Fieldwork Narratives to provide a clearer link between the findings and practical programmatic implications.



LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR
MYANMAR MIGRANT YOUTH AT RAYS
OF YOUTH IN TAK, THAILAND
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA

1.3 METHODOLOGY

A triangulated mixed-methods approach was used: migrant youth (FGDs, interviews, 400-survey respondents), employers (7 interviews, 50 surveys), policymakers (9 interviews), financial service providers (6 interviews), and NGOs/TVET/recruitment agencies (17 interviews/FGDs). Qualitative data were thematically coded; quantitative data analysed via descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations. Ethical safeguards ensured confidentiality and protection of undocumented youth.

1.4 LIMITATIONS AND FIELDWORK NARRATIVES

The study faced several constraints, including small qualitative samples, reliance on NGO networks (potential selection bias), and limited access to conflict-affected regions in Myanmar. Employer hesitancy—often due to unclear regulations—and migrant fear of retaliation also affected data collection.

Fieldwork highlighted tensions between public perceptions and labour realities. Some Thai employers questioned the focus on migrant workers, despite nationwide shortages in labour-intensive sectors. This points to the need for stronger public awareness and dissemination of labour market data by the Ministry of Labour.

However, insights from a focus group in a shelter revealed a contrasting perspective: none of the youth intended to settle in Thailand permanently. Many viewed migration as temporary survival while continuing their political resistance. Educated youths—including teachers and journalists now working in low-wage jobs—described Thailand as “a place to survive, not a place to build a future.” Their participation in training programs was selective and focused on immediate survival rather than long-term career development.

These experiences underscore the intertwined nature of economic migration and forced displacement, illustrating how precarious livelihoods, political aspirations, and security concerns shape the trajectories of Myanmar’s younger generation. Despite methodological limitations, the study provides critical insights into the structural challenges and lived realities of migrant youth navigating Thailand’s labour market.

Chapter 2

Thai Legal Provisions Regarding Migrant Workers

This chapter outlines Thailand’s legal framework for employing migrant workers, with a focus on Myanmar nationals. While general labor protections apply to all workers, the analysis highlights migrant-specific provisions and their access to lawful employment and skills development. Although migrants are legally entitled to equal protections, limited awareness, weak enforcement, and inconsistent implementation undermine these rights. Undocumented and informal-sector workers face the highest risks, as asserting their rights may expose them to deportation and exclude them from key legal safeguards.

Consequently, informal employment is prevalent among migrants who lack the skills, permits, or documentation required for formal work.

2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Thailand’s regulations for migrant labor are based primarily on:

- Immigration Act
- Foreigners’ Working Management Emergency Decree, B.E. 2560 (2017)
- Foreign Business Act, B.E. 2542 (1999)

Under Article 37(1) of the Immigration Act, foreign nationals must obtain authorization before employment. Legal pathways for Myanmar nationals include:

- General Work
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Seasonal / Border-Pass Workers
- Necessary and Urgent Work
- Special Work under BOI / Petroleum Laws
- Deportation and Repatriation Workers
- Lenient Permission - “Pink Card” Workers

2.2 GENERAL WORK

Workers in this category are employed through standard procedures, requiring **registered employers, valid work permits, and compliance with immigration laws**. Employment is typically limited to **skilled or specialized roles** that cannot be fulfilled by Thai workers, such as:

- Technical experts and specialized professionals
- Finance, tourism, or startup sector professionals
- Academic and teaching staff

Work permit applications require **Non-B visas, employer certificates, proof of qualifications, medical certification, and prescribed forms**. Applications may be submitted online or in person, with fees ranging from 100 THB (application) to 3,000 THB (annual work permit). Work permits are issued according to sectoral labor needs and foreign-to-local worker ratios.

2.3 MOU SYSTEM

The MOU framework, established through bilateral agreements with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, targets manual labor and domestic work. Key features include:

- Initial two-year employment, renewable once (max continuous stay: 4 years)
- Transparent recruitment with regulated costs
- Recruitment via authorized agents or direct employer applications

Despite streamlined procedures, delays occur due to limited agents and high recruitment fees, prompting some employers to use pink card pathways for faster, more flexible access to labor.

2.4 SEASONAL/ BORDER-PASS WORKERS

- Short-term employment (<90 days) for manual and domestic work
- Employment restricted to border provinces, e.g., Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ranong (Myanmar), and Si Sa Ket, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi, Trat (Cambodia)

This system addresses temporary labor shortages without displacing local workers.

2.5 NECESSARY AND URGENT WORK

Foreign nationals may perform exceptional, short-term tasks (max 15 days, extendable 15 days), including:

- Technical repair, quality inspection, or mechanical work
- Academic lectures and training sessions
- Event organization
- Work may commence immediately upon notification to authorities.

2.6 SPECIAL WORK UNDER BOARD OF INVESTMENT (BOI)/ PETROLEUM LAWS

Foreign workers under investment promotion or petroleum legislation are exempt from general limitations. Work permits are issued within seven days, covering skilled professionals, executives, and family members, supporting economic development and knowledge transfer.

2.7 DEPORTATION AND REPATRIATION WORKERS

Migrant workers awaiting deportation or repatriation may be granted temporary work permits (up to 1 year, special cases up to 5 years), reflecting efforts to regularize long-term migrants, acknowledge economic contributions, and maintain social stability.

2.8 PINK CARD SYSTEM

This arrangement allows the Minister of Interior, under immigration law and Cabinet resolutions, to authorize certain foreigners to stay in Thailand and to work, even if they do not fully meet standard immigration requirements. The Cabinet decides what types of jobs these “pink card” holders can do, focusing on work that supports Thailand’s economic and social development. The pink card provides lenient permission for undocumented migrants, especially in low-skilled sectors with labor shortages, including fishing, agriculture, and manufacturing. This pathway has become the most common entry channel due to the speed and availability of experienced workers.

2.9 REFUGEES IN TEMPORARY SHELTER AREAS

Since October 2025, Myanmar refugees in nine shelters may work legally under specified regulations. Employment requires:

- Authorization from district officers
- Health screening and insurance registration
- Online work permit application (100 THB fee; first-time fee waived)
- Validity: 1 year

This initiative enhances administrative oversight, security, economic self-sufficiency, and refugee welfare.

2.10 RESTRICTED OCCUPATIONS

Certain occupations are reserved exclusively for Thai nationals or restricted with exceptions:

- Strictly reserved: wood carving, Thai massage, goldsmithing, tour guiding, legal services
- Reserved with exceptions: accountancy, civil engineering, architecture
- Reserved under employer supervision: agriculture, carpentry, dressmaking, laborer, front shop sales

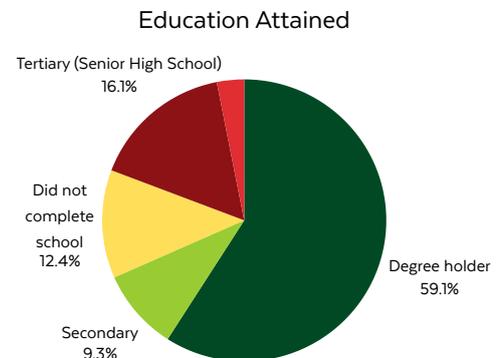
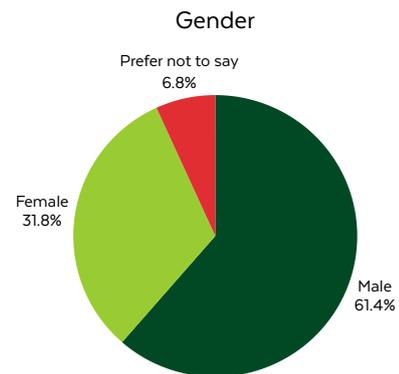
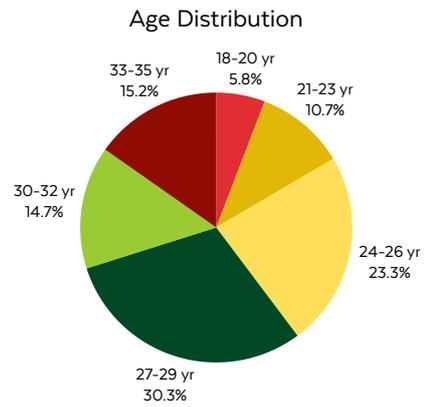
Chapter 3

Key Insights from Labour Supply

This chapter presents a comprehensive picture of Myanmar migrant youth in Thailand, integrating quantitative survey data (400 respondents, July–August 2025) and qualitative insights from focus group discussions. The analysis covers demographics, migration patterns, employment, skills, training needs, challenges, and entrepreneurial potential.



MYANMAR MIGRANT YOUTH ENGAGED IN SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ALONG THE TAK BORDER, THAILAND
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA



3.1 QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Demographics and Education

The workforce is predominantly young and educated, with a minority of low-skilled workers.

- Age: 24–35 years constitute 83.5% of respondents; 21–23 years 10.7%; under 21 years 5.8%.
- Gender: 61.4% male, 31.8% female, 6.8% undisclosed.
- Education: 59% hold degrees, 16.1% senior high school, 9.3% secondary, approx.16% primary or less.

Migration Patterns and Motivations

Migration is largely driven by safety and livelihood concerns, with heavy reliance on informal channels.

- 72% migrated between 2020–2024; main origins: Yangon (58%), Mon (14%), Kayin (9%).
- Migration drivers: conflict/insecurity (37%), economic opportunities (29%), family reasons (21%), education (8%)
- Entry channels: informal “Other” routes (~54%), indicating diverse and often informal migration pathways, official work permits (28.8%), MOU system (6.5%), seasonal/irregular/student visas (~11%).

Employment and Income

Overall, the data indicate low- to mid-wage employment, a high degree of informality, and strong urban concentration.

- The majority of respondents have limited work experience, with 74% reporting 0–5 years and 26% reporting 6–10 years.
- Daily earnings fall within low- to mid-wage ranges: 34.4% earn 300–400 THB, 13.3% earn 400–500 THB, 24.5% earn more than 500 THB, and 27.8% report receiving no wages.
- Employment is concentrated in food production and manufacturing (36.5%), services (28.1%), and other informal sectors (22.5%), with smaller proportions working in construction (6.7%), domestic/vendor work (4.5%), and agriculture (1.7%).
- Work locations are predominantly urban, with 50% employed in Bangkok and 23.8% in Samut Sakhon, while the remainder are dispersed across other provinces.

Skills, Training, and Upskilling

- **Skills mismatch:** 66.7% of respondents work in jobs unrelated to their prior experience.
- **Common skills:** The most frequently reported skills include vocational/technical skills (33%), language skills (27.5%), and business/entrepreneurial skills (12.8%), while 22% identify as unskilled.
- **Training needs:** Key areas of interest include language training (36%), business and entrepreneurship (25%), technical/vocational skills (17%), and digital literacy (14%).
- **Willingness to upskill:** About 60% express a strong interest in learning new skills, indicating high motivation to improve employment prospects, wages, and overall stability.

Migration Hardships

Respondents reported multiple difficulties throughout the migration process, including:

- **Family separation:** 67%
- **Financial burdens and debt:** 48%
- **Safety risks during transit:** 30%
- **Legal and documentation issues:** 29%
- **Border-related challenges:** 24%

These findings highlight the significant emotional, financial, and administrative obstacles faced before arrival in Thailand.

PASTRY AND BAKERY DEMONSTRATION
SHOP ACTIVITY FOR MYANMAR MIGRANT
YOUTH AT HOSPITALITY AND CATERING
TRAINING CENTER, TAK, THAILAND
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA



Workplace Challenges in Thailand

Upon entering the labour market, migrant youth face a range of workplace-related challenges:

- **Language barriers:** 34.8%
- **Discrimination:** 14.3%
- **Low wages:** 13.2%
- **Undocumented employment status:** 11%
- **Limited access to healthcare:** 9.9%
- **Unsafe housing and hazardous working conditions:** 6–8%

These constraints contribute to ongoing vulnerability, limiting both job mobility and opportunities for skill development.

Migration Support Systems

Support during migration: family/friends (57%), agents/recruiters (34%), institutional support minimal (4%), while 5% reported migrating independently without support.

3.2 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Migration Motivation and Pathways

Youth migrate due to political instability, limited livelihoods in Myanmar, and opportunities in Thailand, aiming to support families and achieve personal goals. Employment aspirations focus on service-sector jobs (food, retail, beauty, IT), with decisions strongly influenced by family networks. Although legal channels are preferred, informal routes dominate due to limited pre-departure preparation and low institutional engagement.

Awareness and Access to Support Services

Awareness of vocational training, financial services, and migrant-support organizations is extremely low, increasing vulnerability to exploitation and limiting labor market navigation.

Work and Living Expectations

Participants aim for urban, service-sector jobs with target wages of THB 7,000–7,500, but have limited knowledge of actual working conditions. Reliance on personal contacts or brokers for employment reflects limited access to formal recruitment channels.

Perceived Risks and Challenges

Language barriers, low contract literacy, scams by unlicensed brokers, and discrimination (e.g., Mon speakers misidentified as Cambodians) are major concerns. Political instability and bureaucratic delays exacerbate these vulnerabilities, forcing many to rely on irregular pathways.

Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Thai language proficiency is viewed as essential. Youth show entrepreneurial ambitions (food stalls, tailoring, reselling goods), but legal and administrative hurdles—including work permits, visas, and pink cards—limit opportunities for self-employment or informal business activities.

Future Aspirations and Support Needs

Few alternatives exist if migration fails, often leading youth to pursue similar work in Myanmar. Demand is high for pre-departure orientation, legal guidance, financial literacy, and vocational training. Targeted interventions are critical to reduce risks and enable safe, fair, and sustainable migration pathways.

Myanmar migrant youth in Thailand are predominantly young, male, and semi-educated, concentrated in urban manufacturing and service sectors. Migration is driven by crisis, economic opportunity, and family, yet language barriers, low wages, legal insecurity, and skill mismatches pose significant challenges. Strong interest exists in training, upskilling, and entrepreneurship, but low program awareness and systemic barriers limit access. Addressing these gaps through flexible, sector-aligned programs, legal facilitation, and support networks is essential to maximize economic potential and ensure safe, equitable, and sustainable migration outcomes.

Chapter 4

Key Insights from Labour Demand

This chapter summarizes employer perspectives on the recruitment, integration, and management of Myanmar youth in Thailand's labour market, based on qualitative interviews with seven enterprises including: Nanyang Textile Co., Ltd. (textiles), Navasri Manufacturing (cleaning products), SVI (electronics), DHL (logistics), Thai Union (seafood), Nai Saen Bakery (SME bakery services), and Deleaf (cosmetics) and a survey of 50 Thai employers.

Myanmar youth are a critical component of Thailand's labour force, particularly in physically intensive, low-automation, and low-domestic-labour sectors. Employers value discipline, adaptability, and willingness to learn, but limited Thai language proficiency remains a key barrier to workplace integration and productivity. On-the-job training dominates skills development, with minimal formal linkages to TVET institutions. Administrative processes for work permits and migration documentation are significant operational constraints, although NGO-supported recruitment or proactive HR practices (e.g., Thai Union) ease compliance.

4.1 SECTORAL DEMAND FOR MYANMAR YOUTH LABOUR

- **Agriculture, Fisheries, Seafood Processing:** High dependence on migrant labour due to physical intensity, seasonal fluctuations, and rural shortages. Skills required include Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), hygiene, and food handling.
- **Manufacturing & Food Production:** Large employer of migrants, with skills mismatch common. SMEs need machine operators, technicians, and quality-control staff; TVET-trained youth are well-positioned.
- **Construction:** Steady demand for manual/semi-skilled workers; safety certification and targeted upskilling could enhance productivity.
- **Domestic Work & Caregiving:** High demand, especially for women, but limited protection and formalization. Training in caregiving, language, and workers' rights is needed.

- **Services, Hospitality, Retail:** Post-pandemic growth creates urban opportunities in customer service, food handling, and digital retail; language and digital skills are key.
- **Logistics & Transport:** Growing demand due to e-commerce; skills in inventory management, digital systems, and safety increasingly valued.
- **Health, Education, Skilled Occupations:** Emerging shortages; upward mobility possible if language, credential recognition, and licensing barriers are addressed.

4.2 EMPLOYER QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

To complement migrant youth perspectives, a survey of 50 Thai employers of Myanmar workers was conducted in August 2025 across multiple provinces. The results highlight labour demand—key sectors, employer locations, workforce sizes, and reported shortages—showing the extent of Thai businesses' reliance on migrant labour and the challenges of maintaining sufficient staffing.

- **Profile:** Manufacturing (26%) and services (24%) dominate, followed by domestic work (20%), agriculture (10%), construction (4%), and others (16%).
- **Location and Number of Workers:** Bangkok (46%) is the main hub. Most employers hire small numbers (1-10 workers, 54%).
- **Workforce Constraints:** Critical roles are physically demanding, involve night/irregular hours, or require specialized skills. Main hiring challenges include legal paperwork (26.9%), language barriers (24.7%), lack of training (16.1%), and high turnover (16.1%).
- **Training & Skills Development:** On-the-job (33.3%) and safety/compliance training (29.8%) dominate; employers show moderate openness to vocational, digital, and business skills training. Nearly half are willing to collaborate with training programs via internships, hiring graduates, curriculum support, and mentorship.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Potential gaps in small businesses filled by Myanmar migrants exist in food stalls, cultural services, retail, repair, personal care, and translation. Legal restrictions limit independent business ownership; support is possible via co-ownership, partnerships, or pilot schemes.

- **Financial Inclusion:** Employers assist with payroll accounts (55–70%), but migrants mainly rely on informal networks (80%), highlighting the need for broader financial literacy and access initiatives.
- Myanmar youth are essential to Thailand’s labour and service sectors, but employers face legal, language, turnover, and skills challenges. Stronger coordination across employers, government, TVET, and civil society can improve productivity, compliance, and worker welfare.

4.3 KEY INSIGHTS FROM THAI ENTREPRENEUR INTERVIEWS

4.3.1 Sectoral Patterns and Recruitment

Criteria

Employers across sectors show a clear preference for Myanmar youth due to discipline, physical resilience, and retention.

Labor-Intensive Sectors (Nanyang, DHL, Navasri, SVI, Thai Union): Myanmar workers dominate production lines, logistics, and seafood processing. Recruitment prioritizes age (18–45), physical fitness, health, and some prior technical experience.

White-Collar and SME Roles (Deleaf, Nai Saen Bakery): Deleaf employs Myanmar youth in marketing and administration, valuing Thai proficiency, adaptability, and communication skills. Nai Saen Bakery hires through NGOs, emphasizing trustworthiness and loyalty over formal experience.

4.3.2 Workforce Trends and Future Outlook

Employers report stable to increasing demand for Myanmar labor:

- DHL: Plans to double warehouse workforce for e-commerce.
- Nanyang: Gradual replacement of Thai workers due to higher migrant retention and work ethic.
- Deleaf, SVI, Navasri: Moderate, stable demand; automation complements but does not replace migrant labor.

4.3.3 Skills Gaps and Development

- Thai language proficiency is the most critical gap, affecting workplace communication, customer service, and supervisory coordination.
- Other gaps include digital literacy, customer service, and problem-solving.

4.3.4 Training and Career Pathways

- On-the-job training (7–30 days) is standard; promotions and formal contracts improve retention.
- Minimal collaboration with TVET institutions; NGOs support screening and pre-orientation.
- Thai Union provides comprehensive training (VIP program)[1] and digital feedback platforms (Ulula)[2] for safety, rights, and continuous learning.

[1] The Vessel Improvement Program (VIP) provides systematic training on occupational safety, labour rights, and responsible fishing practices, supported by onboard mentoring that reinforces correct procedures. The program includes regular vessel assessments to ensure compliance with labour, safety, and ethical standards.

[2] The Ulula digital feedback platform strengthens worker voice by offering an anonymous reporting channel, mobile-based learning modules on rights and grievance procedures, and real-time case routing to managers. Aggregated data from the system supports continuous improvement and informs policy-aligned reforms.

4.3.5 Regulatory and Institutional Constraints

- **Compliance:** Experiences vary; recruitment agencies ease documentation for large firms, while SMEs rely on NGOs.
- **MOU system:** Legal migration pathway is limited by Myanmar's political instability, causing delays and reliance on informal channels.
- **Costs:** Workers often bear permit and housing registration fees, adding financial barriers.

4.3.6 Human Rights and Ethical Recruitment

- Thai Union demonstrates exemplary practices: compensation for past recruitment costs, third-party audits, and near-complete digital monitoring.
- While some companies adopt ethical recruitment, most migrants still face informal or exploitative pathways, highlighting the need for stronger enforcement, monitoring, and promotion of responsible practices.
- Myanmar youth are essential across labor-intensive, semi-skilled, and emerging professional roles. Effective integration depends on aligning skills with business needs, providing training and mentorship, ensuring legal documentation, and promoting ethical recruitment. SMEs and micro-enterprises can leverage formal and community-based models to access reliable, skilled migrant workers while fostering inclusion and compliance.

Chapter 5

Key Insights from Policymaker Interviews

Between August and September 2025, interviews with nine Thai government agencies revealed a fragmented but interlinked institutional landscape managing Myanmar youth and migrant labour. Agencies recognize the economic contribution of Myanmar workers, yet legal, budgetary, and constitutional constraints limit direct support. Policies are often reactive and private-sector-driven, with little systematic data or evidence to inform youth-specific programs.

5.1 ROLES OF KEY AGENCIES

- **Immigration Bureau:** Manages national security, border control, visa administration, legal stay permits, residency permit extensions, and biometric data collection. It focuses more on law enforcement than integration.
- **Department of Employment (DOE, Ministry of Labour):** Oversees legal entry and work permits, including MOU and regular channels. Policy is demand-driven, adjusting to private sector needs rather than long-term youth skills development.
- **Department of Labour Protection and Welfare (DLPW):** Enforces Labour Protection Act for all workers. Protection exists for undocumented and young workers, but enforcement is uneven and outreach limited.
- **Department of Industrial Promotion (DIP):** Provides training for industrial workforce, sometimes benefiting migrants indirectly through employer programs or donor projects; programs remain Thai-centric.
- **Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC):** Regulates private and international schools; short-term vocational and Thai language programs accessible but not systematically integrated for migrant youth.
- **Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC):** Provides vocational training for migrant and refugee youth in border provinces, with skills recognition for re-entry to Myanmar; resource constraints and limited infrastructure remain challenges.
- **Equitable Education Fund (EEF):** Supports educational inclusion for disadvantaged children, indirectly benefiting migrant youth; coverage limited outside pilot provinces.
- **Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA):** Issues Pink Cards and birth certificates, ensuring legal identity; data systems are fragmented and irregular migrants remain invisible.
- **National Statistical Office (NSO):** Collects labour data but lacks disaggregated information for Myanmar youth; reliance on employer surveys limits evidence-based policymaking.

5.2 CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Key findings from interviews and analysis of government agencies highlight policy and practice gaps, observed trends, and implications for programs. The overview identifies opportunities and priority actions to enhance the integration, protection, and skills development of migrant youth in Thailand's labour and education system.

| Dimension | Findings Across Agencies | Policy Implications |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Legal Framework | Thailand maintains a comprehensive legal structure via the Royal Decree on Managing the Work of Foreigners (2017) and the Labour Protection Act (1998) . The IB and DOPA manage legal identity, while the DOE issues demand-driven work permits. The DLPW enforces universal protection; however, practical enforcement remains inconsistent. | Current policies prioritize short-term reprieves over long-term integration. There is a need to design dedicated migration pathways for youth and expand protections to cover informal and undocumented workers. |
| 2. Skills Development | OVEC and the DIP are primary actors in vocational training, while the EEF supports educational access for vulnerable groups. | Brain Waste " occurs when skilled youth are restricted to low-skilled labor. Integrating migrant and youth skill-building into the National Human Resource Development Strategy is urgent. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) should be leveraged to enhance training efficacy. |
| 3. Education Access | OPEC and the EEF provide complementary mechanisms for alternative and private education pathways. | Promote policy alignment to ensure continuity of learning for migrant youth, particularly those residing in border zones and industrial clusters. |
| 4. Data & Information | The NSO, DOE, and DOPA maintain valuable datasets; however, these remain siloes and lack inter-agency integration. | Develop a unified migrant data system that links registration, employment history, and educational outcomes. |
| 5. Cross-Ministry Coordination | Fragmented operations persist between the mandates of the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Education . | Establish a National Inter-Agency Mechanism specifically focused on the integration of migrant youth labor and education. |

5.3 OVERALL POLICY OBSERVATIONS

- Thailand has a mature institutional framework for foreign worker management, with legal pathways, labour protection, and identity documentation.
 - Youth-focused policies and cross-border integration remain limited; attention is primarily on adult, low-skilled migrants.
 - Fragmented databases and isolated interventions hinder evidence-based coordination, limiting education-to-employment pathways.
 - Opportunities exist to enhance inter-agency coordination, harmonize data, and integrate youth migration into human capital strategies, aligning with ASEAN labour mobility and regional qualifications frameworks.
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Chapter 6

The Ecosystem Surrounding Myanmar Migrant Labour in Thailand

This chapter provides an integrated assessment of the ecosystem shaping the work, protection, and development outcomes of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand. It examines the structures, actors, and processes that influence their access to services, labour rights, skills development, and employment pathways. The analysis focuses on four core components—financial services, civil society organizations, TVET provision, and recruitment systems—drawing on insights from interviews, field observations, and migrant worker data. Together, these findings illustrate the fragmented yet interdependent mechanisms that constitute Thailand’s migrant labour landscape, especially for youth and undocumented workers.

6.1 FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial services constitute one of the most critical yet unevenly accessible components of the migrant ecosystem. Interviews with six major financial providers—KBank, Krungthai Bank, Bangkok Bank, Western Union, TrueMoney, and an informal Myanmar remittance agent (Su Su)—reveal structural gaps that continue to disadvantage Myanmar migrants, particularly undocumented workers and youth.

6.1.1 Landscape Overview

Myanmar migrants rely on a mix of **formal**, **semi-formal**, and **informal** channels. Commercial banks provide foundational services such as savings accounts and domestic/international transfers, but access is restricted to those with complete documentation. Fintech providers, especially TrueMoney, have expanded inclusion through digital wallets, real-time transfers, and Myanmar-language interfaces, making them highly attractive to younger and digitally literate users. Traditional money transfer operators such as Western Union remain preferred by migrants who lack digital skills or rely on in-person support. Informal agents remain dominant in several migrant communities, offering convenience without compliance, consumer protection, or secure mechanisms.

6.1.2 Structural Barriers

Access to financial services remains highly uneven due to:

- **Strict Know Your Customer (KYC)/Anti-Money Laundering (AML) requirements**, which exclude undocumented migrants and limit account functionality for partially documented workers.
- **Language constraints**, with only a minority of providers offering Myanmar-language interfaces or support.
- **Digital literacy gaps** reinforce reliance on agents or intermediaries among older and less-educated workers.
- **Perceived risks**, including account freezing, fraud, and surveillance concerns, drive many migrants towards informal channels despite their vulnerabilities.

6.1.3 Financial Behaviours and Priorities

Remittances are the primary financial priority, with significant seasonal spikes during Thai and Myanmar holidays. Savings levels remain modest and geared toward basic security or future business plans. Interest in digital solutions is strongest among youth, while older workers retain a preference for cash-based transfers.

6.1.4 Financial Literacy and Inclusion Efforts

Financial literacy initiatives remain uneven. Krungthai Bank, Bangkok Bank, TrueMoney, and Western Union collaborate with NGOs to deliver Myanmar-language training and fraud-prevention workshops. TrueMoney and KBank provide multilingual digital interfaces, while informal agents offer no structured education. The overall lack of systematic literacy programming still exposes migrants to fraud and overcharging.

6.1.5 Innovation, Regulation, and Cross-Border Constraints

Low-fee accounts, multilingual apps, and real-time transfers have improved access, but cross-border remittances remain exposed to Myanmar's currency controls, banking instability, and online fraud. Strict Thai documentation requirements push undocumented migrants to unregulated brokers. Remittances remain essential yet face documentation, language, and digital barriers. Fintech broadens access but needs literacy support, while banks are trusted but limited by regulation. A more inclusive system requires tailored products, flexible rules, and coordinated literacy initiatives

6.2 CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT YOUTH

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in supporting migrant youth in Thailand, particularly those who are young and undocumented. The following examples—Migrant Working Group (MWG), Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF), and Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)—illustrate a range of approaches in rights protection, legal assistance, and youth empowerment. These are non-exhaustive examples and do not represent a full mapping of all actors.

6.2.1 Organizational Roles and Barriers

MWG engages in policy dialogue, labour rights monitoring, and information dissemination through migrant service centers and learning hubs. Its efforts are limited by gaps in government recognition and the absence of youth-specific registration mechanisms.

HRDF provides legal aid and supports youth facing labour violations, arrest, or deportation risks. Persistent challenges include lengthy legal procedures, fear of retaliation, and limited reporting tools in migrant languages.

SEM focuses on youth leadership, psychosocial support, and community-based empowerment, including flexible education pathways such as temple-based learning for vulnerable youth.

These examples reflect the diversity of CSO roles rather than a ranking of importance.

6.2.2 Collaboration and Policy Engagement

CSOs operate at multiple levels of the protection ecosystem:

- **MWG** contributes to national advocacy and policy engagement.
- **HRDF** interfaces with law enforcement and legal institutions to support rights enforcement.
- **SEM** anchors community-level empowerment and youth development.

Together, these approaches illustrate how CSOs contribute across policy, enforcement, and community levels, while recognizing that many other organizations also play important roles in migrant youth protection.

6.2.3 Impact and Limitations

Key contributions include multilingual information platforms (e.g., MitrThai.com), legal case wins that restore rights and recover wages, and educational access initiatives that enhance youth stability. However, gaps persist in youth-friendly reporting systems, culturally competent mentorship, and sustainable funding.

6.3 TVET SERVICES FOR MYANMAR MIGRANT YOUTH

TVET providers—including BEAM, Hospitality and Catering Training Centre (HCTC), and Rays of Youth under Help Without Frontiers Foundation play a crucial role in offering accessible education pathways for migrant youth facing legal, financial, and psychosocial barriers.

6.3.1 Program Delivery

- **BEAM** delivers vocational training, General Educational Development (GED) preparation, and language courses through blended learning and partnerships with Chiang Mai Polytechnic College.
- **HCTC** provides a two-year residential hospitality program linked to Mae Sot Technical College and industry partners, offering intensive instruction and internships.
- **Rays of Youth** offers short- and long-term skills training, combining technical courses with leadership development and employment placement.

All organizations embed life skills, financial literacy, and psychosocial support into their curricula.

6.3.2 Access and Support Systems

Holistic support—including scholarships, stipends, safe housing, documentation assistance, and counseling—is central to enabling migrant youth participation. Flexible programs are particularly important for youth who must balance employment with training.

6.3.3 Partnerships and Outreach

Recruitment relies heavily on migrant learning centers, community networks, alumni, local NGOs, and employer partnerships. These trust-based channels are essential for reaching undocumented and out-of-school youth.

The ecosystem surrounding Myanmar migrant labour in Thailand is characterized by strong civil society leadership, emerging but uneven financial inclusion, and critical community-based TVET pathways. However, persistent barriers—especially documentation challenges, language limitations, fragmented services, and legal insecurity—continue to constrain youth access to protection and opportunity. Strengthening coordination among financial institutions, CSOs, TVET providers, and government actors is essential to building a more inclusive and resilient system that supports the rights, skills, and long-term prospects of Myanmar migrant youth.



NOVICES AGED 6–19 AT AN SEM-SUPPORTED TEMPLE, GUIDED BY MONK LEADERS IN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PHOTO: SUNIDA PIRIYAPADA

6.4 RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

Based on interviews with five agencies operating in urban centers, border regions, and within Myanmar, the analysis explores the role of recruitment agencies in facilitating the migration of Myanmar youth to Thailand, business models, migration patterns, and structural challenges. Recruitment agencies serve a dual function: they can protect workers from exploitation, yet they also contribute to costly and restrictive migration systems.

6.4.1 Business Model and Agency Functions

Recruitment agencies in this corridor operate through three main models: full-service urban agencies handling screening, documentation, and employer coordination; border-based intermediaries mobilizing workers from conflict-affected and poor areas; and Myanmar-based agencies that focus on legal compliance and avoid undocumented cases. They primarily serve Thai employers—especially BOI-privileged factories—in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, plastics, and electronics, while generally avoiding low-paid, unsafe agricultural work. Although official Thai fees for documentation and work permits are around THB 2,000–4,000, workers often pay THB 11,000–18,000, and in some brokered cases as high as THB 30,000–50,000, highlighting weak enforcement of the Employer Pays Principle and exposing migrants to heavy debts and exploitation.

6.4.2 Migration Patterns of Myanmar Youth

Agencies note growing reliance on irregular routes as Myanmar youth flee conscription, entering Thailand without documents and only later seeking work. While the MOU system provides formal protections, it is slow, expensive, and heavily disrupted by conflict, making irregular migration faster and cheaper but far riskier in terms of exploitation and unsafe conditions. Employers tend to prefer younger workers and make hiring decisions based not only on skills but also on social and cultural factors such as visible tattoos, height, and basic technical abilities; Cambodian workers often have an advantage due to their stronger Thai

language skills and cultural familiarity, whereas Myanmar's ethnic and linguistic diversity can create communication challenges at the workplace.

6.4.3 Recruitment Processes and Structural Constraints

The MOU system, though designed to regulate labour migration, is hampered by bureaucracy, frequent policy changes, and weak coordination between Myanmar and Thai labour offices, causing delays in passports, medical checks, security clearances, and worker approvals—and sometimes cancelled job orders. Agencies face significant financial risk by advancing transport and accommodation costs, while unreliable digital registration systems and conflict-related travel restrictions in Myanmar further disrupt deployment. Accountability gaps persist when Thai employers violate contracts, but Myanmar agencies are sanctioned, and unethical competitors inflate labour demand or misrepresent job conditions, eroding trust. Agencies consistently call for joint grievance mechanisms and more predictable, coordinated processing timelines between both governments.

6.4.4 Job Mobility Restrictions and Documentation Barriers

Thailand's restrictive job mobility rules (“job lock”) tie migrant workers to a single employer for two years, with changes allowed only under six narrow legal conditions. Although migrant workers can change employer under the MOU system, the process is slow and bureaucratic, requiring bilateral approvals and often taking weeks or months—especially amid disrupted communication with Myanmar authorities. In practice, many workers switch jobs informally and risk losing legal status, while employers struggle with ongoing labour shortages, and the overall rigidity of the system undermines labour market efficiency and integration.

6.4.5 Employer Demand and Perceptions

Demand for Myanmar workers remains strong across major sectors such as logistics, warehousing, cold storage, and manufacturing. Employers commonly describe Myanmar workers as hardworking, loyal, adaptable, and fast learners. However, restrictive work permit regulations and bans on self-employment limit upward mobility and entrepreneurship among Myanmar youth.

6.4.6 Ethical Recruitment and Emerging Good Practices

Despite progress toward ethical recruitment, exploitative practices—including inflated fees, non-transparent deductions, and contract misrepresentation—remain widespread, often resulting in debt bondage among migrant workers (ILO, 2014 Protocol to Convention 29). Promising reforms include zero-cost recruitment, where employers bear all hiring expenses, demonstrating the viability of employer-led ethical recruitment.

6.4.7 Government Efforts to Improve the MOU Process

The Thai government has initiated several reforms, including extension of work permits and lenient stay permission based on Cabinet Resolutions. Ongoing monitoring by civil society and coordination with recruitment agencies are essential to meet labour needs and protect migrant rights.

Chapter 7

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

This report synthesizes the key findings and priority recommendations derived from the labour market assessment (LMA) on the migration experiences, employment patterns, and skills ecosystem of Myanmar youth in Thailand. Using mixed methods—including a quantitative survey, qualitative interviews, employer consultations, and policy analysis—the assessment highlights how shifting political dynamics, labour market demands, and regulatory constraints shape youth mobility across the Thailand-Myanmar corridor.

Myanmar youth constitute a vital segment of Thailand's workforce, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture, construction, fisheries, and services. Despite their economic contribution, they continue to face systemic barriers linked to documentation, skills recognition, financial exclusion, and limited opportunities for advancement. This chapter consolidates the overarching conclusions and outlines actionable recommendations for government agencies, employers, civil society, development partners, and cross-border institutions to strengthen fair migration and youth-responsive employment pathways.

7.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

This section synthesizes the main insights from the analysis, highlighting the structural, legal, and economic factors shaping Myanmar youth migration and employment in Thailand.

7.1.1 Fragmented Migration Ecosystem

The migration landscape remains divided between formal (MOU) and informal (non-MOU) channels operating simultaneously.

- The MOU system offers legal protection but is slow, costly, and administratively burdensome.
- Non-MOU migration is faster and more affordable but exposes youth to legal insecurity, exploitation risks, and prolonged undocumented status.

The coexistence of these parallel systems results in unpredictable recruitment processes, inconsistent protection standards, and limited planning certainty for employers.

7.1.2 Documentation and Regulatory Constraints

Complex procedures, high fees, and weak coordination across ministries continue to restrict youth access to work permits, visas, and education pathways. These obstacles push migrants toward brokers and unregulated intermediaries, increasing vulnerability and undermining compliance.

7.1.3 Skills Mismatch and Limited Mobility

A mismatch exists between:

- Youth aspirations (service, hospitality, digital, design, and creative sectors), and
- Employer demand (manufacturing, construction, welding, agriculture, and fisheries).

Skills recognition for Myanmar credentials remains limited, and TVET access for migrants is legally and administratively constrained. The absence of standardized certification or employer-training coordination restricts career pathways and reduces productivity.

7.1.4 Financial Exclusion and Reliance on Informal Channels

Limited banking access, ID constraints, and low financial literacy push youth toward informal transfer channels, exposing them to fraud, high fees, and no recourse. These barriers also reduce their ability to save securely, access credit, and engage in formal financial services, limiting long-term planning and skills investment. The lack of migrant-friendly financial products further drives reliance on brokers and cash transactions, deepening vulnerability and hindering economic inclusion.

7.1.5 Employers Face Real Constraints

Employers struggle with:

- High turnover and unstable labour supply
- Administrative delays in registration and renewals
- Low skills among entry-level workers
- Limited retention mechanisms

Despite these constraints, many employer express strong interest in co-investing in training, apprenticeships, and cross-sector partnerships if more predictable systems are in place.

7.1.6 Civil Society is Essential but Under-Resourced

NGOs provide legal aid, documentation support, training, youth outreach, and safe spaces—but face funding insecurity, limited technical capacity, and inconsistent coordination with employers or government agencies

7.2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective migration governance and accessible documentation are vital for Myanmar youth to migrate safely and work legally in Thailand. Current systems are fragmented, slow, and costly, limiting protection and predictability. Strengthening governance and simplifying processes will reduce vulnerability, improve workforce stability, and support regional productivity.

7.2.1 Strengthen Migration Governance and Documentation Pathways

Short-term (within existing legal constraints):

- Digitize and streamline work permit renewal, registration, and employer documentation processes.
- Expand one-stop service centers at the provincial level.
- Improve cross-border information-sharing between Thailand-based service providers and Myanmar actors in exile.

Medium- to long-term:

- Reform the MOU system to reduce cost, processing time, and administrative burdens.
- Explore flexible, youth-sensitive documentation mechanisms (e.g., temporary learner/work visas, simplified pink card pathways).
- Establish bilateral agreements to recognize skills, reduce fees, and standardize recruitment practices.

7.2.2 Expand Skills Development, TVET Access, and Certification

- **Integrate NGO and community training centers into the national TVET ecosystem** through accreditation, curriculum alignment, and technical support.
- **Harmonize certification standards** under ASEAN frameworks to promote cross-border mobility and employer recognition.
- **Strengthen public-private partnerships** by co-designing bilingual training modules, apprenticeships, and modular short courses aligned with sectoral demand.
- **Enable migrant youth participation in short-term formal training** by simplifying access requirements and piloting learner visa schemes.

7.2.3 Enhance Protection, Youth Empowerment, and Connectivity

- **Improve accessibility of services** by scaling multilingual online platforms, community-based safe spaces, and youth support hubs in major migrant provinces.
- **Strengthen rights education** using creative and youth-friendly tools (e.g., peer learning, social media, storytelling).
- **Expand psychosocial support** for youth affected by trauma, displacement, or migration stress.
- **Introduce migrant youth hotlines and mobile apps** for safe reporting, case referrals, and access to services.

7.2.4 Strengthen Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship

- **Promote financial literacy** through onboarding programs, NGO-led workshops, and employer partnerships.
- **Facilitate safe access to banking** by expanding alternative ID-based KYC procedures and improving migrant-friendly fintech products.
- **Support small-scale entrepreneurship** (digital sales, repair services, food preparation, online micro-businesses) within legal boundaries by offering training in digital marketing, budgeting, and portfolio development.

7.2.5 Encourage Employer Leadership and Ethical Workforce Management

Employers have a critical role in ensuring a stable labour supply and improving migrant welfare.

Priority actions:

- Invest in bilingual, modular training integrated into the workflow.
- Develop structured retention strategies (career pathways, peer mentoring, cross-cultural orientation).
- Adopt digital HR systems for compliance and documentation management.
- Implement decent work and safety standards, including social security and living condition improvements.
- Transition to ethical, employer-paid recruitment models and participate in IRIS^[3] or similar standards.

7.2.6 Strengthen Civil Society Capacity and Coordination

- Enhance network collaboration among civil society organizations working on labor migration, TVET, protection, and community groups to harmonize support pathways and consolidate advocacy.
- Scale up service accessibility through mobile services, youth-friendly platforms, and interpreters.
- Build organizational resilience through diversified funding, shared resources, and joint training.
- Leverage evidence for advocacy by systematically documenting cases, employer practices, and service gaps to influence policy discourse.

[3] The IRIS Standard is a set of global principles that define ethical recruitment. It is based on international labour and human rights instruments. The IRIS Standard consists of two overarching principles and five specific principles: A. Respect for Laws, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; B. Respect for Ethical and Professional Conduct; 1. Prohibition of Recruitment Fees to Jobseekers; 2. Respect for Freedom of Movement; 3. Respect for Transparency of Terms and Conditions of Employment; 4. Respect for Confidentiality and Data Protection; and 5. Respect for Access to Remedy. Source:

<https://iris.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1201/files/documents/IRIS%20Standard%20Report%20.pdf>

7.2.7 Role of Development Partners

FCA and other INGOs can catalyze systemic change by serving as neutral conveners, technical advisors, and innovation drivers across government, the private sector, and civil society. Their role can include:

- Convening multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together government agencies, NGOs, and employers.
- Supporting employers to adopt decent work practices and ethical recruitment models.
- Funding pilot programs for skills development and recognition of prior learning.
- Expanding initiatives in youth empowerment, financial literacy, and community leadership.
- Developing interoperable information-sharing systems across provinces to improve coordination and service delivery.

The labour market assessment confirms that Myanmar youth migration to Thailand is both an economic necessity and a pathway fraught with risks, shaped by documentation barriers, fragmented support systems, skills mismatches, and limited financial access. These structural challenges not only constrain the economic potential of migrant youth but also increase their vulnerability to exploitation, unstable employment, and social marginalization. Addressing these issues requires coordinated reforms across government agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations, and development partners, ensuring that policies and programs are mutually reinforcing and responsive to the realities of youth migrants.

Implementing the recommendations outlined in this report—including streamlined migration governance, expanded access to TVET and skills recognition, ethical recruitment practices, financial inclusion, and strengthened cross-border partnerships—will enhance both

short- and long-term outcomes. In the immediate term, youth will benefit from improved protection, safer and more predictable employment, and greater opportunities to develop in-demand skills. Over the longer term, these measures will foster a more competent, resilient, and mobile workforce, increase labour productivity, and promote economic stability in key sectors dependent on migrant labour. Beyond individual and employer benefits, a coordinated approach will contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and inclusive migration system, strengthening regional cooperation, supporting sustainable development goals, and ensuring that migrant youth can safely access opportunities that enable social and economic mobility while reducing systemic vulnerabilities across the Thailand–Myanmar corridor.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|------|--|
| BEAM | BEAM Education Foundation |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| DIP | Department of Industrial Promotion / Department of Intellectual Property |
| DOE | Department of Employment |
| DLPW | Department of Labour Protection and Welfare |
| DOPA | Department of Provincial Administration |
| EEF | Equitable Education Fund |
| FGDs | Focus Group Discussions |
| HCTC | Hospitality and Catering Training Centre |
| HRDF | Human Rights and Development Foundation |
| LMA | Labour Market Assessment |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MWG | Migrant Working Group |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| NSO | National Statistical Office |
| OPEC | Office of the Private Education Commission |
| OVEC | Office of the Vocational Education Commission |
| SEM | Spirit in Education Movement |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |

