



## **SSIIM UNESCO CHAIR**

**On Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants – Urban Policies and Practice**

**The right to adequate housing of migrants factsheets**

**N.11 Bangkok, THAILAND**

**July 2010**

**HOUSING POLICIES FOR MIGRANTS - THAILAND**

**Supang Chantavanich**

Asian Research Centre for Migration  
Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University  
Thailand

**SSIIM UNESCO CHAIR**

Univesità Iuav di Venezia  
Ca' Tron, Santa Croce 1957  
30135 Venezia- Italy  
E-mail: [info@unescochair-iuav.it](mailto:info@unescochair-iuav.it)  
Web site: [www.unescochair-iuav.it](http://www.unescochair-iuav.it)



## The right to adequate housing for migrants - factsheets

*The right to adequate housing for migrants* is a series of thematic factsheets on migrants' level of access to adequate shelter in different urban contexts. Written by academic researchers and experts solicited by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, the factsheets were aimed at providing background information for the 2010 Report of UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Dr. Raquel Rolnik.

Besides presenting the picture of the overall housing situation of migrants in the concerned contexts, authors were asked to highlight what the conditions of international migrants (regular and undocumented) are with respect to

- access to public housing and/or government subsidies
- access to housing loans
- access to the private housing market (discriminatory attitudes)
- inclusion into regularization and land tenure policies (if any, highlighting whether it is a local or a central government policy)

Authors were also invited to underline whether differences in policies/attitudes between local (poor) population (including rural-urban migrants) and international migrants are put in place and if any particularly interesting policy is being implemented that could be pointed out as innovative example.

Through the network of the partner universities, research centres and other relevant actors, SSIIM UNESCO Chair on Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants - Urban Policies and Practices aims at:

- Identifying policies and practices that promote the urban inclusion of international migrants
- Supporting local governments in shaping adequate actions to foster effective urban governance and the social/spatial integration of international migrants
- Disseminating the experiences that can provide ground for effective policy exchange (good practices)
- Raising the awareness of policy-makers and the civil society at large, on the importance of international migrants' urban social and spatial inclusion

## **1. International Migrants**

There are two major types of international migrants in Thailand: One is the professionals who obtain employment visa and the other is the undocumented migrants workers who enter the country irregular. Their conditions vis-à-vis public housing are different.

### **1.1 International professionals**

They are not included in any government subsidies in public housing. Professionals can buy or rent a unit in a condominium or a detached house in major cities in the country. The government new policy allowed them to be able to own condominium up to a total of 49% of the total in the building. For foreigners who belong to companies sponsored by the Board of Investment (BOI) can own or lease land and build a factory. In addition, foreign investors with 40 million Baht investment for 5 consecutive years can buy and own a limited amount of land for residential purposes (<http://www.business-in-asia.com/news/land-in-southeast-asia.html>)

These people usually have corporate financial support to rent a house and no local bank offer loans to this groups. Due to their high purchase power, they are targeted by many real estate development companies. Those who are married to a Thai spouse have the privilege to easily buy a house in the private housing market. In some new housing market projects in Cheing Rai and Cheing Mai in the North and Phuket in the South of Thailand, foreigners occupy more than fifty percent of the markets.

### **1.2 Undocumented migrants**

As this later group have no permanent legal status since their arrival, they are not eligible to apply for any housing subsidies or loans. They mostly stay in dormitories of their working place or rent small rooms and share that with friends. Those who stay in dormitory rarely go out because employers are afraid that they will runaway for a new job with a higher pay. Most undocumented workers are not clients of private housing market because it is unaffordable for them. Some NGOs who run a registered foundation may buy a house and employ some migrants to work and live in such housing. There is no policy, local or central, to include them into regularization of housing.

## **2. Migrants in Precarious Housing**

The share of undocumented migrants living in precarious housing (squatter settlement, slums, substandard housing) is unknown. Anecdotal information indicates that many migrants workers in Mae Sot (district town bordering Myanmar) lived in squatter settlement near the Muslim community because there are Muslim. They used carton or paper board to build makeshift huts with no toilet in the 1990s. Later, Mae Sot Municipality forced them to leave. They moved to rent small room owned by Thai landlords. One or two families may share one room. They make small compartment as their own unit. They also sub-rent electricity and pipe water from Thai landlords. In Bangkok, some Cambodian migrant workers live in the biggest slum called KlongToey which is near the seaport. They work as labourers and compete with Thai labourers in the daily wage labour market at the port. On Ram Khamhaeng Street near Assumption Business Administration College (ABAC) in Bangkok, some migrants from Myanmar stay in the area and serve Myanmar professionals who are lecturers at ABAC and live there. This has become an ethnic Burmese enclave in Bangkok.

## **3. Differences in Housing Policy for the Local Poors and Migrants**

The government adopted a new housing policy in 2001 for the urban poor. Thai people whose monthly income is under 3000 Thai Baht (US \$ 100) are entitled to apply for a low-cost housing built by the government. The housing is either a townhouse or a unit in a modest condominium. Many local poor move into the new housing. This low-cost housing is run by National Housing Authorities(NITA) (<http://arthorn.nha.co.th/arthorn>).The project is called " Baan Eur Arthorn" meaning " housing by the concerned

government". Migrants are not included in this welfare system. As for rural migrants in Thailand, slum are popular destinations for poor Thai rural migrants who moved into big cities. These slums are located in the land belonging to the government eg. the State Railway or the Crown Property. Rural poor who cannot afford to own a house usually rent a room in a slum. Klong Toey is the biggest slum of 460 Rai (approximately 180 hectares) situated in the land of the Port Authority of Thailand . It was set up in 1952. A large quarter in this slum is called " Baan Lao" meaning "village of the Lao people" because most villagers are migrants from the Northeastern region of Thailand who speak Northeastern dialect similar to Lao language.

#### **4. Some Policies on Housing for the Urban Poor**

The Port Authority of Thailand has developed a 30 year master plan to develop Klong Toey slum. In the first and second phases, the area will be converted into a market place and twelve- storey- condominium to accommodate slum dwellers who are mainly informal workers who prefer to stay in the area instead of being relocated. People who live there are in favour of the plan (<http://talk.mthai.com/topic/95335>).

Another project belong to the Crown Property. (<http://www.hr.crownproperty.or.th/home.html>). The Crown Property has development projects in many slums. In crowded areas, the Crown Property relocated people to another site and subsidize their new housing. In both old and relocated slums, the Crown Property maintains a low rental interest rate to its tenants for three years.