



RAPID ASIA  
Guiding Sustainable Change



# *Migrant women's rights in the poultry supply chain in Thailand*

**OUR FOOD  
OUR FUTURE**

**WE ARE HUNGRY FOR JUSTICE**

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## Acronyms

CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
IDI	In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation preparation stages of the study

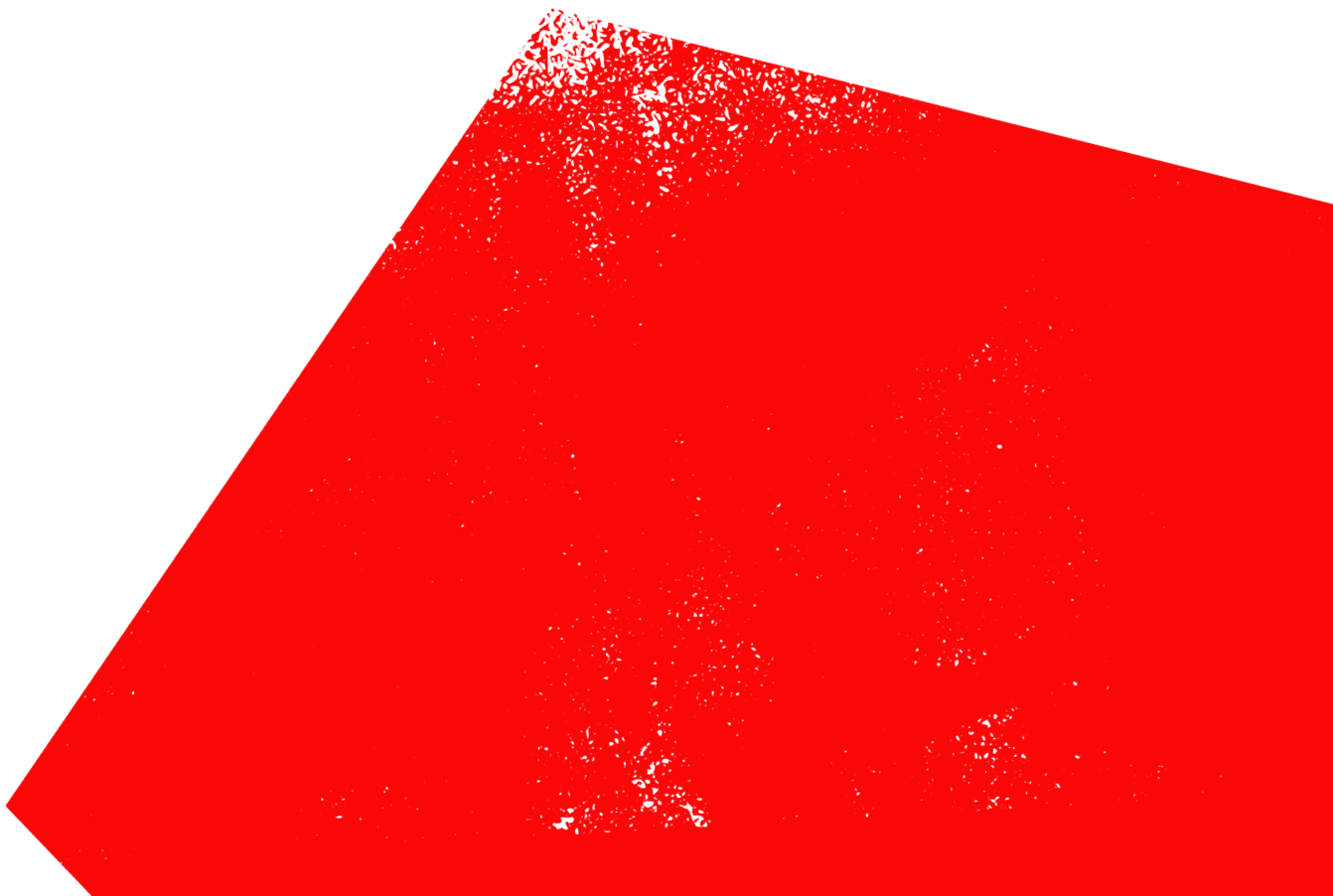
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1.

# ***Introduction***



## 1.1. Background

Thailand produces 3.3 million tonnes of chicken meat annually, which equates to 3.3% of global output, making it the eighth largest chicken producer in the world.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, its chicken exports account for 10.8% of the global market by value, the third highest of any country.<sup>2</sup> In the 2000s, Thailand became one of the world's largest exporters of processed chicken, enjoying 28.9% of global market share by volume and accounting for 86.8% of all Thai chicken exports.<sup>3</sup> The Thai poultry industry primarily produces broiler chickens, bred and raised in large farms for meat production.<sup>4</sup> They make up 93% of the chicken meat production in Thailand.<sup>5</sup>

The domestic Thai poultry sector is made up of the following six major operators: Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF), Betagro, Cargill, Thaifoods Group, Sahafarms, and Laemthong Industries.<sup>6</sup> The major producers in Thailand, including those mentioned above, invest in their own operations throughout their supply

chains in order to achieve economies of scale.<sup>7</sup> This is known as vertical integration. As a result, “large operations are the source of about 90% of all chicken produced in Thailand, while the remaining 10% is produced by small operations and almost entirely sent for processing and sale in the domestic market.”<sup>8</sup>

In terms of consumption, the Thai domestic market consumes more than two-thirds of the chicken produced in Thailand (70%) while the remaining third is exported (30%) as of 2020. As a group, European countries imported 6.48% of Thai poultry in 2020.<sup>9</sup> The European Union (EU) imports chicken meat based on a quota allocation system<sup>10</sup> through which Thailand is granted an annual quota of 92,610 metric tonnes of the EU's “uncooked salted poultry meat” and 5,100 metric tonnes of the “uncooked unsalted poultry meat” quota.<sup>11</sup> In 2022 and 2023, the country ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest supplier of poultry to the EU.<sup>12</sup> This evidence suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> Chaiwat Sowcharoensuk, *Industry Outlook 2021 – 2023, Chilled, Frozen and Processed Chicken*, Krungsri Research, 30 October 2020, <https://www.krungsri.com/en/research/industry/industry-outlook/Food-Beverage/Frozen-Processed-Chicken/10/io-frozen-processed-chicken>, page 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, page 1.

<sup>5</sup> Global Agricultural Information Network, *Thailand: Poultry and Products Annual 2018*, 6 September 2018, [https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Poultry%20and%20Products%20Annual\\_Bangkok\\_Thailand\\_9-6-2018.pdf](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Poultry%20and%20Products%20Annual_Bangkok_Thailand_9-6-2018.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Viroj NaRanong, *Thailand Development Research Institute, Structural changes in Thailand's poultry sector and its social implications*, page 7; see also Chaiwat Sowcharoensuk, page 4, [https://www.fao.org/ag/AGInfo/home/events/bangkok2007/docs/part1/1\\_4.pdf](https://www.fao.org/ag/AGInfo/home/events/bangkok2007/docs/part1/1_4.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Chaiwat Sowcharoensuk, page 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, *Thailand: Poultry and Products Annual 2019*, 29 August 2019, page 9, [https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Poultry%20and%20Products%20Annual\\_Bangkok\\_Thailand\\_8-29-2019.pdf](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Poultry%20and%20Products%20Annual_Bangkok_Thailand_8-29-2019.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> European commission (2022). *AGRI-FOOD TRADE STATISTICAL FACTSHEET – European Union – Thailand*.

poultry from Thailand contributes to the food supply chain in the EU.

In 2021, exports of goods and services accounted for 58.21% of Thailand's GDP.<sup>13</sup> The European Union is a prominent trader with Thailand. The EU is Thailand's 4th largest trading partner, accounting for 7.5% of the country's exports.<sup>14</sup> Bilateral trade between Thailand and the EU was £29 billion in 2020, £15.1 billion of which was from exported goods.<sup>15</sup>

In the months of January through April in the 2021-2023 three-year period, the European Union's poultry meat imports from Thailand have fluctuated in terms of volume but seen an overall increase in value.<sup>16</sup> While the import volume dipped from 45,777 tonnes in 2021 to 44,804 tonnes in 2022, it increased significantly to 51,943 tonnes in 2023. However, the monetary value of these imports consistently rose throughout the period, from €103 million in 2021 to €144 million in 2022, and to €187 million in 2023.

In Thailand, large poultry companies invest throughout their supply chains to achieve

economies of scale. For example, they own and operate animal feed production facilities, chickens-farming enterprises, slaughterhouses and food processing plants.<sup>17</sup> These producers account for nearly 90% of all chicken produced in Thailand.<sup>18</sup> While there is a variety of uses for the chicken produced in these settings, only broiler meat processed at modern slaughterhouses is certified for export.<sup>19</sup>

Typically, the major chicken operators in Thailand directly own and manage two primary types of broiler farms, while other independent farmers operate on a contract-farming basis. These contracted farmers are supplied with hatcheries and animal feed by the main operators, and sell the grown chickens back to them in return. These chickens are then processed in either traditional or modern slaughterhouses owned by the major operators. Modern slaughterhouses are equipped with processing mills that yield chilled chicken, frozen chicken, and other processed chicken products. Only the broiler meat processed in these modern facilities receives certification for export.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> World Bank (202). *Exports of Goods and Services (% of GDP) - Thailand*.

<sup>14</sup> European commission (No-Year). *EU trade relations with Thailand*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/cdd4ea97-73c6-4dce-9b01-ec4fd4027f9/24.08.2017-Poultry.pptfinal.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Chaiwat Sowcharoensuk. page 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Chaiwat Sowcharoensuk, *Figure 9: The Supply Chain of Thai Chicken Industry (2019)*, <https://www.krungsri.com/en/research/industry/industry-outlook/Food-Beverage/Frozen-Processed-Chicken/10/io-frozen-processed-chicken>.

<sup>20</sup> Krungsri Research, *Figure 9: The Supply Chain of Thai Chicken Industry (2019)*.



## 1.2. Migrant workers in the Thai poultry supply chain

Demand for labour in the growing poultry sector is higher than the available supply. A 2019 report by Human Rights Now suggests that one worker in a poultry farm is responsible for 28,000 – 30,000 birds per rearing cycle.<sup>21</sup> Rapid development and production of the poultry sector pushes demand for more workers. As a result, most workers who migrate to Thailand to work in this industry come from its neighbouring developing economies such as Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

It is impossible to gather precise and 100% accurate data and statistics on the number of migrant workers in the Thai poultry industry. However, according to research from the Thailand Development Research Institute, Thailand's poultry industry is dependent on migrant workers, and such dependence is increasing.<sup>22</sup> This is due, in part, to low wages and unpleasant working conditions in the industry. The Thai Department of Employment (DoE) granted work permits to 1,931,650 migrant

workers from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar in 2021. Of these registered migrant workers, at least 193,150 (roughly 10%) were employed in the livestock and agricultural sector.<sup>23</sup> In addition to registered migrant workers, the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) estimates that there are up to 2.5 million migrant workers in Thailand with an irregular status.<sup>24</sup>

These migrant workers access these jobs due to the labour shortages in the Thai market. They are largely employed to work in the agriculture sector, which historically was, and continues to be, excluded from certain basic labour rights and protections under Thai law.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, agricultural workers often live and work in remote areas, isolated from other migrant communities.<sup>26</sup> These realities, in addition to a lack of awareness, create barriers for migrant workers to access healthcare, education, and other government services.<sup>27</sup> A 2019 survey found that over 50% of migrant workers in the agricultural sector in

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21<sup>^</sup> Human Rights Now (2019). *Labour Rights Violations in the Thai Poultry Industry within the Supply Chains of Japanese Companies*.

22<sup>^</sup> Viroj NaRanong and Wuttipong Tunyut, "The human rights of migrant workers in the Thai poultry industry: The regulatory gaps and the guidelines for the promotion and protection," page 3–13, in Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), *TDRI Quarterly Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, September 2019, <https://tdri.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Volume-34-Number-3-September-2019.pdf>.

23<sup>^</sup> Thai Ministry of Labour, Department of Employment, *Statistics of Migrant Workers Granted Work Permits Nationwide, February 2021*, [https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien\\_th/02f9cb42bea104c2c8e39fd9e5406717.pdf](https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien_th/02f9cb42bea104c2c8e39fd9e5406717.pdf).

24<sup>^</sup> International Organisation of Migration (IOM), *Thailand Migration Context*, <https://thailand.iom.int/migration-context>.

25<sup>^</sup> For example, the 1990 Social Security Act and its regulations prescribe that employees in agricultural, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery enterprises are not eligible for registration with the Social Security Fund. See the Royal Decree on type of enterprises not applicable under the Social Security Act, B.E 2560, 18 April 2017, <http://www.oic.go.th/FILEWEB/CABINFOCENTER11/DRAWER058/GENERAL/DATA0000/00000228.PDF>.

26<sup>^</sup> Mekong Migration Network, *Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand, January 2020*, [http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/book\\_Migrant-in-Agriculture-Eng-1.pdf](http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/book_Migrant-in-Agriculture-Eng-1.pdf).

27<sup>^</sup> *Ibid.*

Thailand are undocumented.<sup>28</sup> The combination of irregular immigration status and other factors including the language barrier, informal employment conditions, isolation of worksites and plantations, lack of collective bargaining and trade unions, and weak domestic labour legislation and implementation has increased migrant workers' vulnerability and the risks of exploitation.<sup>29</sup>

Due to these factors, agricultural workers in Thailand, and in the poultry industry in particular, experience problematic working conditions including long working hours, working without sufficient rest time and holidays, and withholding of payment by employers.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, migrant workers are in debt because of the high cost of recruitment and labour migration, a fundamental violation of their human rights.<sup>31</sup>

Nowhere was this more clearly seen than in the case of 14 migrant workers from Myanmar who worked at a chicken company called Thammakaset in Lopburi Province, Thailand. The workers made a complaint to the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, alleging that the company confiscated their work permits and passports, limited their freedom of movement, and forced them to work overtime without appropriate compensation.<sup>32</sup>

The workers brought a civil suit and won 1.7 million baht in compensation from Thammakaset, which lost on appeal at the Supreme Court and was forced to pay. Following its failure to challenge the case, Thammakaset has filed dozens of lawsuits against the migrant workers and others associated with the case, claiming defamation.<sup>33</sup>

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28<sup>^</sup> Mekong Migration Network, *Migrant Agricultural Workers in Thailand*.

29<sup>^</sup> Human Rights Now, *Labour Rights Violations in the Thai Poultry Industry Within the Supply Chains of Japanese Companies: Human Rights Now Report 2019*, page 2, <http://hrn.or.jp/wpHN/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Labour-Rights-Violations-in-the-Thai-Poultry-Industry-within-the-Supply-Chains-of-Japanese-Companies-2019-2nd-Ed.pdf>.

30<sup>^</sup> Viroj NaRanong and Wuttipong Tanyut, "The Human Rights of Migrant Workers in the Thai Poultry Industry: The Regulatory Gap and The Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection," in *Thailand Development Research Institute Quarterly Review*, Vol. 34 No. 3, September 2019, pages 3–13.

31<sup>^</sup> Ibid.

32<sup>^</sup> Thammakaset Watch, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/thailand-thammakaset-watch>.

33<sup>^</sup> Global Labor Justice, *Supplying SLAPPs: Corporate Accountability for Retaliatory Lawsuits in Thailand's Poultry Supply Chain*, <https://globallaborjustice.org/glj-ilrf-icar-report-supplying-slapps/>.

## 1.3. Supply chains and human rights due diligence

The exploitation of migrant workers outlined above and throughout the rest of this report certainly constitutes infringement, and potentially even violation, of their rights under Thai law, international human rights law, and business and human rights principles. Nevertheless, the companies that engage in this sort of behaviour continue to do business with other companies, exporting their chicken to markets around the world, including, notably, Europe. However, tracing the supply chains of individual companies and their connections to European countries and companies is exceedingly difficult. Attempts to hold companies that import chicken meat associated with labour abuses to account present many challenges. For example, Finnwatch conducted an investigation in 2015 into the supply chain of companies importing Thai chicken into Finland. It summarised the challenges of deciphering the supply chain under European law:

*Imports of Thai broiler are difficult to clarify from the customs' foreign trade statistics as broiler products that have been further processed within Europe do not show as originating in Thailand in the statistics. Norvida, which also imports chicken to Finland, estimated ... that 50 per cent*

*of broiler imported from Thailand is not visible in official import statistics. ... In practice, linking broiler meat processed in a specific factory in Thailand to a Finnish importer requires market research and submitting individual direct inquiries to well-known Finnish meat importers, companies that process and sell food in Finland (wholesale and retail) and restaurants.<sup>34</sup>*

These challenges, however, are set to be addressed with the forthcoming “Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence” from the EU. The Commission released its first proposal for this directive on 23 February 2022, and the process is currently under way. The Council of the European Union and the European Parliament<sup>35</sup> are respectively casting their votes. It is anticipated that the law will be approved in early spring 2024.

The proposal will require companies that meet certain requirements to carry out environmental and human rights due diligence activities throughout their supply chains. The aim of CSDD is to “foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour and to anchor human rights and environmental

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<sup>34</sup> Finnwatch, *Employment available in exchange for debt: Working conditions in the Thai broiler industry, September 2015, page 12, <https://finnwatch.org/images/pdf/chickenproductionThailand.pdf>.*

<sup>35</sup> The European Parliament voted in favour of the Directive on 1 June 2023 with significant improvements with regard to human rights and environmental protection compared to the Commission's initial proposal. The dialogue phase between Parliament and Council, supported by the Commission (triadogue), is currently under way to arrive at a text that can be approved by both bodies.

considerations in companies' operations and corporate governance."<sup>36</sup> It does so by establishing a "corporate due diligence duty. The core elements of this duty are identifying, bringing to an end, preventing, mitigating and accounting for negative human rights and

environmental impacts in the company's own operations, their subsidiaries and their value chains."<sup>37</sup> The directive is notable in particular because it covers the value chains of companies inside and outside of Europe, impacting corporations globally.

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<sup>36</sup> European Commission, *Corporate sustainability due diligence*, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1145](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1145).  
<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



## ***European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDD) Directive.***

The Directive is a key element in the application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which reaffirms the duty of states to protect these rights, the duty of companies to respect and remedy negative impacts, and the duty of governments to ensure access to justice for victims and just compensation in the event of violations.

According to the recently updated OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, the CSDD Directive's effectiveness hinges on a series of critical actions. These actions include developing an in-depth assessment process to prioritise potential and actual corporate impacts on all human and broad environmental rights. This process should then inform a concrete action plan for prevention and mitigation, coupled with a monitoring mechanism to oversee responses.

The Directive should be applicable across all sectors and include businesses of all types and sizes. It should encompass every actor in the value chain – from raw material producers and service providers to suppliers, local branches, subsidiaries, investors, the financial system, and consumers. The Directive also applies to the waste management and disposal sectors.

Involving a wide range of stakeholders is crucial, including workers, trade union representatives, communities, consumers, civil society, land and human rights defenders, and potentially vulnerable groups like migrants, women, and indigenous people. They should participate in risk identification, impact assessment, victim support, and justice facilitation, and should be adequately protected in the event that they speak out against corporate interests.

Transparency in how impacts are assessed and addressed is also essential. Furthermore, a liability regime should be in place to hold companies accountable (including automatic parent company liability) for human rights and environmental violations and to enforce remediation for harm caused. To this end, provisions that facilitate access to justice

for victims are necessary, including inversion of the burden of proof as called for by major civil society campaigns.

The need for the Directive lies in its role within the broader regulatory framework being established by the EU to achieve the EU Green New Deal and Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. These goals include sustainable consumption and production systems, growth and decent work, climate action, and other human and environmental protection objectives.

The Directive responds to evidence that voluntary corporate social responsibility is inadequate in addressing the significant global challenges of inequality and environmental crises. Its impact extends and harmonises the path already set by several European countries with specific laws such as France's "Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law" (Loi de Vigilance, 2017) and Germany's "Supply Chain Act" (Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz, 2021).



The CSDD requires companies within the scope of its purview to publicly report on the organisation's efforts to fulfil its value chain due diligence obligations, including by publishing relevant data in an annual report. This will result in a sea change in the public's understanding of companies' operations, value chains, and their efforts to remediate any harm with which they may be associated.

In terms of its impact on Thailand and its poultry industry, the CSDD will directly affect both European and non-European companies (including Thai brands that meet the legal criteria). Such companies are expected to comply with the provisions of the directive if they have 250+ employees and a global net turnover exceeding 40 million. This size criteria may be revised during the law approval process.

There may also be indirect impacts on Thai companies. Given that the Directive encompasses the entire value chain, all global companies supplying products to those directly subject to the Directive must respect human and environmental rights provisions, thus enabling victims to access remedies.

Moreover, the law will foster greater transparency within the global value chain by disclosing information about Thai chicken providers, which is currently difficult to obtain. To prevent infringement of rights throughout the supply chain, companies that are directly subject to the law may reduce commercial ties with partners deemed at risk of non-compliance with the protected rights.

As the CSDD is debated and eventually becomes law, there will be a significant role for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the EU and commercial partner countries to play to ensure that all companies within the global value chain are faithfully and fully complying with the CSDD's provisions. In particular, where it is known that certain industries, companies, or countries present significant risk of human rights and labour abuses – as documented here with regard to migrant workers in the poultry industry in Thailand – CSOs, activists, and the public, as well as the public authorities that control customs enforcement, should call on companies known or suspected of working with certain companies or industries to vigorously report on their efforts to comply with the directive.



II.

**METHODOLOGY**



## 2.1. Exploratory study objectives

The primary objective of the study was to gain insight into the poultry value chain in Thailand and determine whether there is evidence to suggest that Thai companies may not always follow the due diligence standard established by the EU. More specifically, the study set out to explore the following two objectives.

1. To provide a deep understanding of social and human violations among female migrant workers in Thailand, who are part of a global poultry supply chain.
2. To reflect on the contributions and challenges of EU legislation in minimising exploitation of workers.

Because the study is qualitative, results cannot be generalised to the supply chain as a whole. However, it did provide insight into potential common violations, thus offering valuable guidance for legislators with regard to shaping an effective CSDD Directive. Furthermore, it offers companies operating in the European market a better understanding of what to consider when evaluating their suppliers and business partners. Another study outcome was to identify potential interventions that can improve compliance and formulate recommendations for future, more targeted research.



## 2.2. Study scope

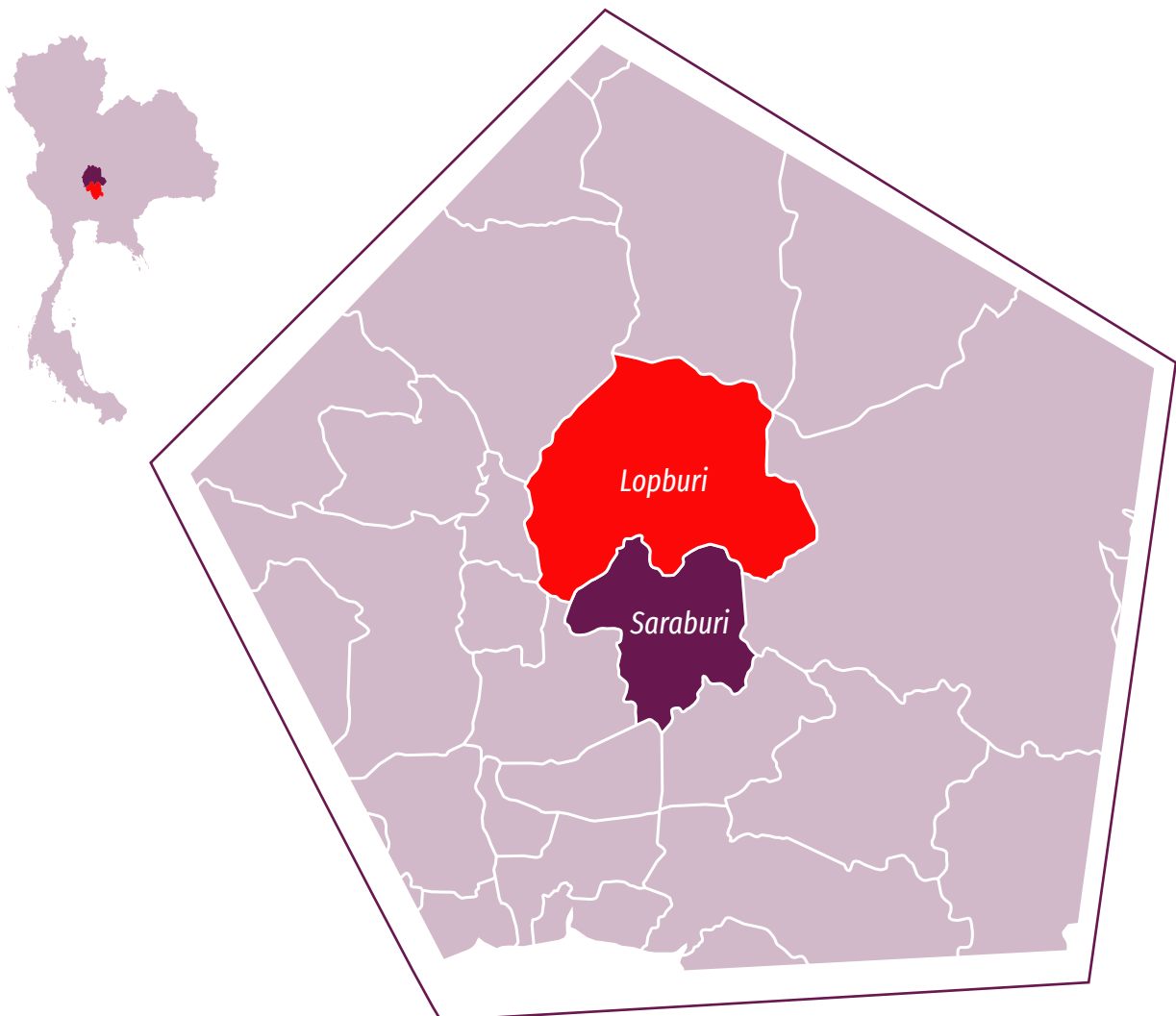
The study focused on Cambodian women migrant workers in the poultry sector. The poultry sector was selected because it has not been the subject of much research compared to other sectors such as fishing and seafood processing. Cambodian migrant workers were chosen as they are a more homogeneous target group, and because the majority of the

employees interviewed in the area of focus for the investigation are of this nationality.

In-depth interviews (IDIs) with migrant workers were carried out near poultry factories located in the Lopburi and Saraburi Provinces (**see Figure 1 below**). The key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders were carried out as face-to-face interviews and by phone.

**Figure 1: Data collection locations**

Thailand



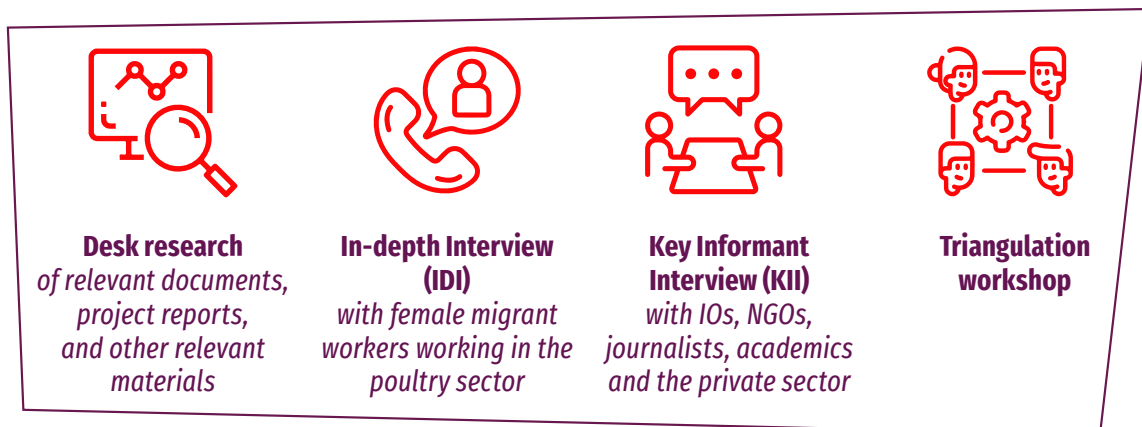
## 2.3. Study design

The study was carried out using a mixed-methods approach, including both primary and secondary data collection. A document review was carried out during the initial inception stage, examining relevant documents including past research reports, policy documents, national development plans, and other relevant materials. The IDIs were carried out first, followed by field visits to the factory locations by the Rapid Asia and WeWorld research team to observe the situation on the ground and

document stories from selected migrant workers. For the KIIs, a list of potential participants was developed in collaboration with WeWorld and most of the interviews were carried out after the field visit. Once all data had been collected and analysed, a workshop was held to analyse the results, extract recommendations, and agree on the report structure.

The detailed methodology, outlining each stage of the study design, can be found in Annex 3.

**Figure 2: Study design**



## 2.4. Limitations

Findings from qualitative interviews cannot be regarded as representative of all workers in the poultry sector, nor of all migrant workers from Cambodia. The study was intended to be exploratory, tapping into the experiences and perspectives of women migrant workers from Cambodia. To ensure their views were presented with a reasonable level of balance, the findings presented in this report are those mentioned by

multiple participants.

The initial plan was to interview more employers from the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association. However, they proved unwilling to participate and, in the interest of time, replacement participants had to be found. The replacements included the Migrant Worker Rights Network and the Solidarity Centre.





III.

**FINDINGS**

## 3.1. Recruitment process

### 3.1.1. Reasons for migrating to Thailand

Cambodian women migrant workers interviewed for this report are on average 33 years old. On average, they arrived in Thailand when they were 30 years old, and have stayed in Thailand for more than three years. Those who come to Thailand have a range of stories and histories but share a common ambition: to earn more money than they would in Cambodia.

All but three Cambodian migrant workers interviewed for this report explained that they came to work in Thailand because there are not as many job opportunities in Cambodia, and the jobs that exist there offer smaller salaries than those offered in Thailand.

***“There are less jobs for me to do in Cambodia. I can only work on a paddy farm once a year. When I come to Thailand, I can earn good income.”***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

Nearly half of the respondents (48%) were previously engaged in agricultural work (such as on paddy rice and other crop farms in Cambodia), while the remainder were employed in various sectors, such as factories, construction, and retail. Some were not formally employed and focused on familial care. These findings affirm

that the economic prospects in Thailand are more appealing than the opportunities in Cambodia, especially for those who have incurred debts in their home country. This aligns with the results of several past studies conducted by Rapid Asia, WeWorld-GVC, and international organisations such as IOM and ILO that focus on migration issues in the region.

Another pull factor to migrate to Thailand is represented by the presence of acquaintances, such as friends, neighbours, and family members, who suggest that they migrate, telling them they would be able to earn more money working in Thailand.

***“A friend from the neighbourhood used to do [this work] before. He told me that he received a good income when working in Thailand. He also said the work is not that tiresome.”***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

Migrant workers who relocated to Thailand for reasons other than employment often did so to join a known individual, such as a romantic partner or a relative. Some even had existing contacts within Thailand. The substantial Cambodian community in Thailand, along with

cultural similarities and a long-standing tradition of migration from border provinces to Thailand, make it an appealing choice for migration.

The information these migrant workers received through their acquaintances formed the basis upon which many of them decided to migrate. When asked about the accuracy of this information, all but three thought the information was **useful**. They explained that the information

was accurate and turned out to be true. They also thought the information was **trustworthy** because they received it from people they trust. A migrant worker told the interviewer that the information was “Very useful, because I’ve gotten to work here for real.” Moreover, 68% of women moved to Thailand with a husband or boyfriend, the others with siblings or friends. Only a small minority moved alone and then were joined by other family members.



## 3.1.2. Recruitment channels

The process of being recruited to work in Thailand occurred through several channels. As noted above, many of the migrants interviewed came through informal systems largely based on information received from acquaintances and word-of-mouth. While such informal networks may have been the source of information for such migration, recruitment agencies still played a role in the transition of many of the migrant workers (40% of interviewed) to Thailand.

For example, many of the migrants interviewed explained that recruitment agencies helped them with the documentation needed to regularly migrate to Thailand. They also helped the migrants travel to the factories at which they would eventually work. A migrant worker explained this process:

***“The recruitment agency has done everything for us, they took us to the workplace directly.”***

*Migrant workers in Saraburi and Lopburi*

Another migrant worker added detail to this description:

***“The recruitment agency is open for applications on the Cambodian side. They handle and process all the documentation for us, and accompany us from Cambodia to the factory in Thailand.”***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

A total of eight migrants interviewed handled the move themselves, completing the

documentation and necessary immigration forms without the aid of a recruitment agency. The factory still provided some help in getting to work.

***“I proceeded all by myself in Cambodia and someone from the factory came to pick me up.”***

*Migrant workers in Saraburi and Lopburi*

Indeed, Thai law stipulates that companies should cover the cost of a return trip from the worker’s home country to the workplace among the entitlements for migrants. However, in practice, this is only implemented only in a few cases and is not recognised as a right by the workers themselves.

Five migrant workers explained that they relied on the assistance of their acquaintances to help them with the passport and documentation process. In keeping with the IDIs, some of the KII participants mentioned that migrants usually arrive in Thailand through two main channels. There is a growing trend among migrants to migrate regularly. They do so through a regular channel under which they have the proper documentation, allowing them to work in the country. However, due to the complex nature of the legal migration process, many migrants opt to migrate irregularly with the help of relatives, without the right documents or visas to work in Thailand.



### 3.1.3. Challenges faced by migrant workers

Only a few of the migrant workers interviewed faced challenges in migrating to Thailand. One migrant worker explained that this was due to not having their migration card, a form of identification that permits migrant workers to legally reside and work in Thailand.

*“I had to hide from police as I didn’t have a migration card at that time.”*

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

Another noted that they had issues when they migrated because they did not have the migrant card at the time.

However, as the majority of these workers filed proper documentation and received support from a recruitment agency, the factory, a relative, or a combination of all three, the vast majority of migrant workers interviewed for this report did not face challenges in migrating to Thailand.

That is not to say that the migrant workers did not have to do anything to migrate. Indeed, the workers had to pay a number of costs to migrate to Thailand. For example, most had to pay expenses in the range of **10,000 baht [USD**

**288] to 30,000 baht [USD 865]**. According to the Thai Ministry of Labour, the cost for a work permit, visa and insurance can range from 11,490 to 22,040 baht.<sup>38</sup> This includes the passport fee, travel, health insurance and checks, among other sundry costs. The law states that employees must cover the costs of the passport, but the visa and travel expenses should be covered by the employer.

*“There is an operation fee of 20,000 baht for passports, including travelling and food expenses to come here. We can get to work right away upon arrival!” – Migrant worker in Saraburi*

While not applicable to every migrant worker, in four separate cases the employer or agent shouldered the fees on behalf of the worker and subsequently deducted these costs from the worker’s wages. In three such instances, it was the employer, and in one instance, it was an agent. The workers reported that their passports were withheld as they had not yet finished repaying the document costs. This contravenes international labour rights standards, which explicitly prohibit employers from charging

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.mol.go.th/news/%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99-3-%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%8D%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B4-%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%AE-%E0%B8%A8%E0%B8%9A%E0%B8%84-%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%BO-%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B3%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%82%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2-mou-%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%87%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AD>

recruitment fees to their employees.<sup>39</sup> One worker explained:

***“Paying for about ten thousand baht a passport, the owner deducted it from my wages at around one or two thousand baht weekly.”***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

Once they arrived to work, some migrant workers faced other challenges, some of which may constitute violations of international labour rights. For example, the migrant workers’ employers withheld their passport and related ID documents in a number of cases. One migrant worker explained:

***“It’s with the owner, he handles all documents. They kept the documents because the owner helps to apply for the extension of the documents as I haven’t paid him back in full yet, but if you want to use documents, you can ask the owner for it.”***

*Migrant worker in Lopburi*

As noted above, it is against international labour rights and standards for an employer to charge an employee for the costs associated with their recruitment. In addition, while not always the case, when an employer withholds an employee’s passport (particularly when the worker is foreign and/or is expected to pay additional

recruitment fees), such a situation can indicate forced labour due to the power dynamic at play between the worker and employer. Both cases highlighted here are concerning for this reason. A total of three migrant workers interviewed told Rapid Asia that the employer was holding their passport at the time of the interview.

Moreover, a rural employer interviewed in Saraburi explained that she must cover the cost of 2,000 to 3,000 baht every three months to accompany her migrant employees to the migration office for reporting. She highlighted the expenses of the operation, and noted that the fee for any infringement could be 2,000 baht per worker.

Finally, four of the migrant workers interviewed had not signed a contract with their employer. They explained:

***“No, I have not signed a contract because I am already aware of what to do because my sister worked here and told me what to do.”***

*Migrant workers in Saraburi and Lopburi*

Such a dynamic goes against international standards and creates vulnerabilities for migrant workers who rely on their employment status to legally reside and work in Thailand. The box story below is based on the KIIs regarding the challenges workers face.

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<sup>39</sup> International Labour Organisation, *Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs*: “The definition reiterated that recruitment fees and related costs should not be borne by workers or jobseekers.” Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/news-statements/WCMS\\_682734/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/news-statements/WCMS_682734/lang--en/index.htm).

## **Challenges faced by migrant workers**

The issues that come with migrating are only the tip of the iceberg. Once they are given a job, migrant workers often face a host of violations in the workplace. Several migrants reported illegal pay practices within their workplaces, including withholding wages, unpaid overtime work, irregular wage deductions, or being paid below the minimum wage. Other financial constraints include having to pay extra fees to process documents, especially in light of new restrictions imposed during the pandemic, further leaving migrant workers in debt. Additionally, insufficient safety standards within factories were reported, without regular inspections to evaluate work conditions. Some migrants were also left to live in substandard living quarters and with little to no access to healthcare services.

Alarming, these irregularities are more common among undocumented migrants who are usually hired by smaller companies. Despite these violations, migrants receive limited or no protection from the government. While some KII participants claimed more laws exist to protect migrant workers, in reality, they are seldom enforced.

Furthermore, there are limited policies in place to regulate and minimise the cost of migration. Participants reported that enforcing existing policies would be costly, meaning that there is no motivation for officials to act. While some employers do cover their employees' documentation fees up front, many migrants end up covering these expenses in the form of wage deductions.

During the field mission jointly conducted by Rapid Asia and WeWorld, in-depth interviews were carried out with 10 Cambodian women working in the poultry sector. All such workers, including those employed by the largest companies, reported that they were not in possession of a signed contract. This issue has been discussed and shared with key informants. While the use of irregular recruitment practices for migrant workers is widespread on informal rural farms, in the case of larger companies it seems more likely that a contract may exist but without the worker being in possession of it. Situations may also arise where the worker is directly recruited by an agency that holds a workforce provision contract with the company, meaning that the agency is the holder of the

migrant's contract.

The absence of sufficient awareness among migrant women regarding the existence and importance of these contracts in establishing their rights and responsibilities confirms their vulnerability to exploitation. The lack of a contract may be even more prevalent on rural farms. A female employer interviewed confirmed that contracts were not used for her nine workers, highlighting not only a lack of attention to the use of contracts but also, probably, little awareness of the importance of contracts.

***“At the end of the day having or not having a contract does not make a difference in terms of working conditions”***

*A rural farm employer in Saraburi.*

## 3.1. Work conditions

### 3.2.1. Work entitlements

On paper, labour laws should inform migrant workers of their benefits, and some companies do have staff to do so; communication is often in Thai, however, making it difficult for many migrant workers to understand the benefits. The situation for irregular migrant workers is even worse, as they have no say regarding the work benefits that they are entitled to.

*“In the factory, there is a person to explain about worker’s rights and benefits, but most of the time, workers do not understand due to their limited knowledge and language competency.”*

*A representative from Solidarity Centre*

#### ***Migrant workers’ entitlements in Thailand***

**Box 3**

Under Thai law, migrant workers are entitled to a range of benefits. These include working a maximum of 48 hours per week, receiving overtime pay (no less than 1.5 times the regular hourly wage), being granted sick leave (up to 30 days), and receiving annual leave (at least 13 paid days). In addition, they are entitled to sufficient rest days (a minimum of one day per week) and rest periods (no less than one hour per day after five consecutive hours of work).

It is important that migrant workers understand these rights in order to ensure they receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Additional benefits include access to social and healthcare services. Employers are required to contribute to a social welfare fund that provides a social security and safety net. This fund covers events such as illness, accidents, disability, death, and maternity leave (up to 98 days). It also offers child benefit, retirement provision, and unemployment benefits.

Workers should also receive a minimum wage, round trip travel costs from their country of origin to the workplace, and housing that meets safety and sanitary standards. Improvements to these benefits should be undertaken via transparent processes. Moreover, provisions should be made to allow seasonal workers to work longer and access these same benefits.

Migrant workers interviewed for this report broadly stated that they enjoyed and benefited from the rights to which they are entitled. However, there was a poor level of understanding of what these benefits were and, when asked, most migrant workers could not list them.

Companies employing migrant workers should provide accessible training sessions that explain what these rights entail. In so doing, they should address existing language barriers with migrant workers systematically, and ensure that all internal policies, training sessions and briefings, grievance mechanisms, employment contracts, and other relevant documents can be accessed in simple, clear language, that is understood by all migrant workers.<sup>40</sup>

### **Working Hours and Annual Leave.**

The majority of the interviewees reported working six days a week, for eight hours each day. In addition, many were doing two to three hours of overtime daily, at the request of their employer. This could result in a total of up to 60 hours worked in a week, exceeding the standard maximum of 48 hours per week legally allowed.

In the in-depth interviews conducted in the two provinces, all of the women stated that overtime requests were frequently made without clear planning. This unpredictable approach also applied to rest days, which could change weekly according to production needs. While such practices pose difficulties for the women

in organising their personal lives and may be viewed as a form of control, most mentioned that they could refuse overtime if they wished. Moreover, they did not seem to take issue with the fluctuation in their rest days.

As for annual leave, all interviewees were aware of their entitlement, but the reported number of leave days varied from 4 to 12, averaging at 7.5 days. This falls short of the 13 days mandated by law. A quarter of the interviewees said they rarely took advantage of annual leave due to work requirements and personal choices.

These results appear consistent with a common sentiment expressed during the interviews: the primary reason these women were in Thailand was to maximise their earnings, often at the expense of their private lives.

### **Salary.**

While migrant workers broadly enjoyed these rights, it was not clear from the interviews whether the poultry company was paying the workers properly. Under Thai law, the minimum wage in the Lopburi province is 340 Thai baht [USD 9.78] a day. The migrant workers reported varying minimum wages, but not consistently over 340 Thai baht a day. Furthermore, Thai law requires that overtime pay must be 1.5 times the normal working wage. With a daily rate of 340 THB (equivalent to an hourly wage of 42.5 THB [USD 1.22]), the overtime pay should amount to 63.75 THB [USD 1.83] per hour. The migrant

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<sup>40</sup> IOM, *Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers*, p. 16.

workers reported being paid around 60 baht extra per hour of overtime work. This is in keeping with the required minimum.

However, poultry factory work may be regarded as dangerous to the health and safety of the migrant worker (something that emerged from the interviews, as reported in the following paragraphs). In such circumstances, the maximum number of hours per week allowed by law is 42 (seven hours per day for six days of work in a week); any work over 42 hours is considered overtime.<sup>41</sup> Working at a poultry farm could be considered dangerous to the health of the migrant workers, which would alter the overtime pay to which they are entitled. This issue warrants further investigation.

### **Deductions.**

Another issue that migrant workers generally face is salary deductions. This occurred in situations in which migrant workers received lower wages than they worked for, later than agreed upon. Some migrant workers may never get paid at all. This occurred in the case of four migrant workers interviewed for this report. There may also be support systems in place in larger factories, such as dormitories. Approximately half of the women interviewed paid around 200 baht for electricity and water use per person per month, and others only paid if consumption exceeded the level agreed with the employer. They are also able to take leave

for check-ups, but doing so would result in less pay and there is uncertainty as to whether the cost would be covered by the employer.

### **Safety, Control and Constraints regarding Changing Employers.**

In general, working conditions at the larger companies seem acceptable. However, there are a number of issues worth noting.

Firstly, safety concerns arose, as a significant majority (over 70%) of workers reported experiencing cuts of varying severity during chopping activities. This was cited as the leading cause of injury among the women interviewed and was described as the primary safety issue in the workplace.

Use of mobile phones was also restricted, particularly in production areas. During our field visit, a worker told WeWorld and Rapid Asia that taking and sharing images inside the factory was strictly prohibited. This restriction led to a significant degree of fear among the workers, who understood they risked termination if found to have taken and shared any multimedia content from their workplace.

A related concern was limited mobility for some migrant workers. This was often due to employers withholding their identity documents, hindering their freedom of movement.

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<sup>41</sup> Thailand's Labour Protection Act, B.E. 2541, Sections 23–24. Available at: <https://msnagroup.com/thailand-business-and-company-information/thai-labour-law/labour-protection-act-2541-english/>. See also, Thai Lawyers Ltd., Working Hours per Thailand Labour Law, <https://thailawyers.com/working-hours-per-thailand-labor-law/>.

Of particular note, some migrant workers, and particularly those who migrated irregularly, were effectively unable to quit their jobs. This was often because they were in debt to their employers, who also withheld their documents. There were even reports of employers locking workers inside factories during working hours, preventing them from leaving (although these cases were not documented in this report).

These findings should be considered in the context of Thai law, which itself imposes limitations on migrant workers' ability to change employers, thereby increasing the risk of exploitation.<sup>42</sup> However, data from the questionnaire indicated that some migrant workers, and particularly those legally employed, felt confident about their ability to leave their jobs if they chose to do so, without fear of retaliation or reprisal. They chose to stay mainly because they would earn less in their home country, and a significant portion had to repay debts incurred for migration purposes. Moreover, leaving their job would also mean losing their legal status.

### **Accommodation.**

The majority of migrant women interviewed live

in dormitories made available by the employer. Despite the fact that “the international standard on worker housing states that it is generally not desirable for employers to provide housing for their workers directly”<sup>43</sup>, the interviewed migrants accept this solution to reduce costs for private accommodation, as well as the expense and time involved in commuting to the workplace. However, the accommodation facilities provided do not meet the basic standards recommended by the ILO to ensure adequate and decent housing and a suitable living environment, especially in terms of availability of services, materials, facilities, infrastructure, and habitability. During the field visit, the migrant women interviewed explained that, on average, a 16-square-metre room is shared by four people. Generally, while two roommates sleep, the other two are at work. They all have a mat that they fold up when they go to work, to make space for their roommates. The room has no other furniture for the migrants to store their belongings. There is one shared bathroom for every four people. There are some shared outdoor spaces, such as tables and benches, but no kitchen, so the migrants must buy takeaway food at the market, which they heat on a camp stove, a practice that carries a degree of risk.

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<sup>42</sup>^ An MoU migrant worker can change employer only under specific conditions, such as an employer terminating the contract, being declared bankrupt, the migrant worker suffers physical assault and abuse at the workplace, or the employer fails to comply with the contract or labour law. In such cases, the migrant worker must then find new employment within 30 days”, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. Thailand Social Protection Diagnostic Review: Social Protection for Migrant Workers and Their Families in Thailand. IOM, Thailand.

<sup>43</sup>^ Home truths – Access to adequate housing for migrant workers in the ASEAN region, ILO 2022.

### ***Working conditions on small rural farms***

The rights of women migrant workers are at greater risk on the small rural farms. Living and working conditions on such farms are poorer than those provided by the larger companies that supply the international market.

Especially vulnerable are women workers, who often find themselves in difficult circumstances. The prevailing practice on such small, informal farms is to hire whole families. Men typically negotiate the terms of employment, dictating the type of work, schedule, conditions, remuneration, and living arrangements for the entire family, including women. This patriarchal system leaves women under the control of men, who receive the payment and decide how much to allocate to the women. In many instances, women become 'invisible', as contracts are only issued to men, reinforcing their irregular status. This practice has been documented in other sectors in Thailand such as construction, where the jobs performed by women are not adequately recognised and remunerated, and where some women suffer discrimination (High rise, low pay: Experiences of migrant women in the Thai construction sector, ILO, 2016).

Moreover, family-based labour agreements covering all members of a family, combined with the use of a piece-rate pay scheme based on the volume of meat processed (10 baht/kg) instead of working hours, encourages the use of child labour. One employer stated that they pay an average of 1,000 baht for a family of 3 workers, without considering the number of hours worked or the age of the workers.

A further complication arises with regard to the types of deductions made from workers' salaries. From the interviews conducted with the workers, the deductions from their salaries were identified as:

- Social security
- Water and electricity bills (if used more than specified by the factory, extra charges apply)
- Health insurance
- Documentation fees

These deductions, particularly for essential utilities and documentation fees, can add to the financial burden of migrant workers, increasing their dependence on employers. In some cases, additional charges were reported for electricity usage beyond a set limit, while others faced a standard 300 baht per person for water and electricity bills.



This marginalised status is exacerbated when migrant workers depend on farm owners for accommodation, and meals, significantly heightening women's vulnerability. Their ability to make autonomous decisions, such as returning to their country of origin or reporting violations by owners, becomes heavily compromised.

On these small farms, migrant workers are often completely dependent on their employers for to provide for their living conditions and basic services. They reside on the farm, isolate, without transport, and are often underpaid. Many bring their families along, and with children unable to attend school, the families remain isolated in the countryside. Women, in particular, are left to handle caregiving duties and other domestic tasks on top of their work on the farm, which can extend to 10-12 hours a day, six days a week. In the best cases, this situation seems to also give rise to a sort of 'employer paternalism', in which the company owner takes care of the workers in all areas of their lives, imposing their standards and living choices.

When pregnancy occurs, these issues are amplified. Without documentation, many women fear arrest or deportation, which prevents them from accessing essential services, such as healthcare or education for their children. The reality for these workers is stark, leading to dangerous living conditions and vulnerability to exploitation. Conversely, large companies tend to have the resources to provide workers with some basic facilities and support, albeit often minimal.

Currently, the widespread use of recruitment agencies to hire migrants further complicates matters. These workers do not always have direct contracts with the companies they work for. Instead, the agency handles the contracts

and working conditions. This arrangement may absolve the company of responsibility, particularly in the case of large companies, and adds another layer of potential exploitation.

## 3.2.2. Challenges for female workers

There were some challenges faced by workers that were specific to male or female workers. For example, female migrant workers reported that they were assigned lighter tasks than their male counterparts. These tasks often took place inside the factory and included packaging and administrative work. Male migrant workers, however, are given more laborious tasks, such as carrying heavy items or caring for the chickens. One migrant worker explained:

*“The other kind of work that uses a lot of strength (involving defeathering, lifting, pushing, carrying) would be done by male migrant workers.”*

*Migrant worker in Lopburi*

### **Violence and sexual harassment.**

There were other issues faced by female migrant workers in particular. For example, though less prevalent due to social media, female migrant workers or those living in migrant camps may suffer sexual abuse or harassment. One former migrant worker explained this dynamic to Rapid Asia:

*“In the past, there may have been sexual abuse or harassment, but it no longer happens in the poultry sector nowadays due to the power of social media. Most sexual abuse would commonly happen in construction worker camps, when daughters and wives are left at the camp while the parent or husband goes to work.”*

*A representative from Workers’ Union*

According to a legal support NGO in Thailand, the issue is more deeply entrenched than reported, as most of the time women migrant workers do not even know what constitutes sexual harassment. They experience a lot of sexual violence in their lives. Some male workers may touch the women, but they do not recognise this as violence. This ignorance and normalisation of harassment is common in Thailand, especially from employers or team leaders. The inability to recognise such violence, say no, or leave a job due to such violations exacerbates the psychological and human rights abuse.

It should be clarified that Rapid Asia and WeWorld did not document any instances of sexual assault or harassment via the interviews conducted with migrant workers for this report. However, these issues do arise in supply chains featuring migrant workers in Thailand and need to be addressed.

### **Pregnancy.**

Pregnant migrant workers also have certain entitlements. For example, they should be given less strenuous work, not given overtime (both such provisions were reported as having been met during field work) and are entitled to avail of social services if they have the proper documents.

Female migrant workers also experienced limited reproductive freedom. Taking care of

chicken farms makes it impossible for female migrant workers to get pregnant as they are on birth control, and if they do become pregnant, there is a possibility that the employer might ask worker to leave their job as they can no longer work effectively. This pressure, and the potential of returning to their home country, sometimes gives rise to mental health issues when such workers return from Thailand, as highlighted by the legal support NGO.

However, it should also be noted that many of the migrant women interviewed explained that they received alternative work assignments while pregnant, and a period of maternity leave, as well as a stipend of 600 baht per month to buy milk.

***“During pregnancy I chopped bones. If I was not feeling okay, I could have a rest in the room. The owner bought me some baby products and took me to the hospital to give birth.”***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

***“There is a subsidy for maternity leave for about three months according to the daily wage and breastfeeding allowance of 600 baht/month.”***

*Migrant worker in Lopburi*

***“Pregnant migrant workers are entitled to less strenuous work and can avail of social services if they have the proper documents. There may also be support systems in place for larger factories such as dormitories. They can also take leave for check-ups, but doing so would result in less pay and there is uncertainty as to whether the cost would be covered by the employer.”***

*A representative from ILO*

Furthermore, the questionnaires and in-depth interviews with migrant women indicate that only a small minority number of respondents have children residing with them in Thailand. Of those who are mothers, a significant proportion (76%) leave their offspring in Cambodia under the care of grandmothers. The facilities provided by the factory system are not designed to accommodate children, given the absence of kindergartens and prohibition on minors living in dormitories. Additionally, the conditions faced by migrant children growing up in Thailand are incredibly precarious. Parents often have to leave their children locked at home alone for many hours, or even take them to the workplace (particularly in rural farms). This latter practice can lead to premature involvement in the workforce, further exacerbating the issues faced by these migrant families.



Finally, there are **inadequate facilities** for female employees at migrant worker factories. For example, though employers are obliged by law to provide sanitary facilities, most do not provide much beyond separate toilets. In fact, some even limit the time workers can spend in the toilet. There are, however, NGOs that provide workers with basic sanitary necessities.

Additionally, Thai law requires companies to offer certain facilities depending on the number of employees that work there, for example a nurse's rooms or emergency vehicles to send employees to the hospital. In practice, however, employers may only have such facilities as a "box-ticking" exercise, without actually

implementing it in practice. An NGO worker explained:

*"For example, regarding Thai Laws, there is a requirement for employers to have a nurse's room [clinic] in the factory if they employ more than 200 workers or have an available vehicle to send workers to the hospital or medical clinic (if they employ more than 1000 workers). In reality, a nurse's room may be provided but there is no doctor or nurse working there, or there may be an emergency vehicle but it is occupied with other tasks, etc."*

*A representative from Migrant Workers' Rights  
Network*

## ***Work conditions***

According to some KII participants, female migrant workers are often assigned less physically demanding tasks within the factory, such as packing goods or administrative work. On the other hand, male migrant workers tend to be assigned more physically demanding tasks, such as carrying heavy items or tending to livestock. However, other respondents note that the segregation of work between men and women may also vary depending on individual skills and abilities.

Concerns were also raised regarding the facilities provided to workers. Respondents pointed out that although employers are legally obliged to provide sanitary facilities, most only offer separate toilets. Some employers also restrict the amount of time workers can spend in the restroom.

Some workers encounter difficulties when trying to leave their jobs. This is particularly true for irregular migrant workers, who are often indebted to their employers or have their documents withheld. Some employers have also been found to lock workers inside the factories during work hours to restrict their movement.



### **3.2.3. Support systems**

When things go awry, workers need a variety of support services from their employers. For example, workplace injuries are not uncommon, particularly in a factory-setting, and under Thai law and international best practice, employers are expected to provide the migrant worker with time off with pay, and to assist in their rehabilitation. The majority of the migrant workers interviewed reported that they were provided with such care.

***“I’ve been cut just a little and then let the doctor at the factory infirmary heal the wound. The factory has a doctor, medicine, equipment, and the chief gave me a break”.***

*Migrant worker in Saraburi*

Several migrant workers reported that their boss actually took them to the hospital for treatment, or had an interpreter take them. The majority

confidently reported that they would get time off for injuries. Some went so far as to say that the owner was kind and they felt safe working there. These are admirable qualities insofar as they are accurate. Indeed, according to an informant, when injuries happen, employers will attempt to prevent their employees from claiming compensation from the Workmen’s Compensation Fund so the employer does not have to pay extra. This single informant however stands in contrast to the dozen or so positive reports from the migrant workers interviewed.

The assistance provided by the employer often spares migrant workers the burden of queuing for public services. However, this also reinforces a form of dependency on the employer. This dependency is particularly significant in the case of isolated workplaces, such as rural farms.

### **3.2.4. Female migrant workers, abuse, and social protection**

While not extensively documented here, there are serious issues with regard to the treatment and exploitation of female migrant workers in the poultry sector in Thailand. When such abuse occurs, female migrant workers are entitled to an effective remedy and to social protection. To access these protections, migrant workers need to have connections to social institutions with power.

For example, although they are entitled to file complaints and join unions, migrant workers may not do so due to language barriers or fear of retribution. The paucity of such reports creates the false impression that the underlying criminal or unlawful acts do not occur. However, this is not necessarily the case. Instead of relying on formal trade unions or police reports,

most migrant workers prefer instead to turn to NGOs that have the resources, such as hotlines or monitoring procedures, to address their complaints. Workers largely ignored suggestion boxes or welfare committees organised by the government.

***“There are workers’ unions but, in most cases, even if abuse or exploitation happen, migrant workers do not want to speak out or raise the issue.”***

*A representative from Workers’ Union*

***“[The migrant workers] reported that the living conditions in government shelter is poor, so they’d prefer to be sent back to home country or ask helps from NGOs.”***

*A representative from Migrant Workers’ Rights*

*Network*





There are, of course, government agencies in the Thai system tasked with addressing many of these issues. These include government bodies such as the Provincial Labour Protection and Welfare Office, and the Ministry of Labour, and there are also village volunteers, but their effectiveness is limited by bureaucracy or lack of effort. Moreover, not all labour laws cover migrant workers, and those that do often are limited in their protections. As a result, many migrant workers prefer to rely on NGOs for support. They provide migrant workers with information, financial aid, and medical assistance, amongst other services.

Migrant workers cannot form unions, and face repercussions from the government if they do so. For instance, a protest held by migrant workers

on Labour Day resulted in the government warning employers to prevent their employees from participating in such events. A protester was also threatened with Article 112. However, there are NGOs and volunteer networks that work to inform migrant workers of their rights.

Moreover, the ability of these workers to join unions and the strength of the unions themselves are undermined by the rapidly increasing use of recruitment agencies. These agencies hold contracts with the workers, effectively preventing them from becoming union members. Additionally, many large companies obstruct the presence of unions, often by creating internal worker councils which lack the collective power of a sector-wide union and do not offer external support to the workers.



## Support System

Based on a survey of 25 migrant workers in Thailand, it is clear that access to support systems and services, both inside and outside the workplace, remains limited.

With regard to workplace complaints or concerns, most respondents did not know where to go for help. Some mentioned turning to their boss or a specialised complaints section, while others feared retribution due to language barriers, or were unsure of where to address such concerns. This indicates a lack of clear communication pathways and worker support systems within the workplace.

With regard to community involvement or group membership, most migrant workers had not joined any organisations or community groups since their arrival in Thailand. Some had attended mandatory factory training sessions on labour rights, but this was not a common experience. This lack of community involvement could further isolate migrant workers, reducing their access to collective support or resources.

When asked about access to government services, many respondents mentioned having used healthcare services, often facilitated by social security or factory interpreters. Their experiences were generally positive, although long queues were a common complaint. Some respondents also mentioned receiving assistance from their employer or broker to extend their work permits. While these services are critical, they do not cover all the potential needs of migrant workers, and many workers might not be aware of all the services available to them.

Lastly, when asked about constraints in accessing the justice system, a vast majority of the respondents indicated that they did not know. Some respondents mentioned the need for equality and mutual help in the workplace, but these did not specifically address access to the justice system. This reveals a significant gap in knowledge regarding their legal rights and how to seek justice in the event of violations.

Finally, migrant workers were sometimes aware and sometimes unaware of their legal rights and entitlements. They stated that “I know that we have the same rights as the Thai people. If there is any problem, we can go and report it at the

office in front of the factory.”

The box story above looks at support systems from the perspective of the KII participants interviewed.



**IV.**

**CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, the situation of migrant workers in Thailand is often precarious: they work in industries that are poorly regulated and exposed to abuse and poor treatment. This is particularly true for female migrant workers, who face additional challenges and poor treatment compared to their male counterparts and colleagues. These issues have been well-documented in reports covering these topics in Thailand for years.

In the present case, however, it is encouraging to see that many of those issues were not present in the largest factories in the Lopburi and Samburi Provinces. The worst forms of abuse typically seen – such as gross mistreatment, lack of social protection and services, withholding wages, and situations analogous to forced labour – were not found there. But work conditions on the small rural farms may be different, based on testimonies from workers and employers encountered on the field visit.

This is not to say that the situation documented here is ideal. Indeed, as emerges throughout the report above, there are a number of problematic issues with this poultry farm and the treatment of workers there. They are as follows:

- **Recruitment fees and deductions:** The majority of migrant workers interviewed had to pay some form of recruitment fee. The cost for document renewal is sometimes passed on to the worker in the form of salary deductions. As noted above, it is prohibited under international standards to

charge the cost of recruitment to a migrant worker. The employer or recruitment agency must pay those fees, and they cannot be passed on to the worker in another form. Doing so is a violation of their rights as workers that should be remedied. Moreover, migrants are not informed of the cost of document renewal, and salary deductions are not always transparent, placing the worker at risk of debt bondage.

- **Withholding identity documents:** Some of the migrant workers reported that the employer held on to their identity documents for a variety of reasons. Under Thai law, this practice is only permissible in limited circumstances; under international standards, it is only acceptable for short periods of time and for specific reasons that are for the benefit of the migrant worker. These criteria were largely not met in the cases identified here, and the identity documents should be returned to the migrant workers by the employers as soon as possible. Withholding identity documents is a serious practice, considering the constraints it can place on the worker through the restriction of movement.
- **Contracts and training:** Workers were not made fully aware of their rights pre-departure or post-arrival in Thailand. There is an obligation for both the recruitment agencies and the company to ensure that migrant workers fully understand the process and their rights at each stage of recruitment and work. This mandatory training needs to be

provided in a language the workers understand and should be readily accessible. Furthermore, contracts should always be provided and in the possession of the workers. It is crucial that they have a solid understanding of their contracts, as such documents serve as the primary source of information regarding their rights.

- **Minimum wage and overtime pay:** Migrant workers reported wages that are generally consistent with the requirements set forth by the Lopburi Province, Thailand. However, given the hazardous nature of some tasks, the maximum standard working week should be reduced to 42 hours, from the current 48 hours. Such a change would inevitably increase the number of hours regarded as overtime, thus potentially decreasing net wages to a level below legal stipulations. Moreover, the current amount of overtime is excessive, resulting in an average of 60 hours per week, which exceeds the maximum of 48 hours. Stress associated with overtime could increase the risk of work-related injuries. Moreover, biomechanical overload in the limbs is known to occur in the poultry meat processing sector, and reduced hours are therefore recommended.
- **Accommodation:** The majority of migrant women live in dormitories provided by the employer, to reduce costs for private accommodation and travel expenses. In rural set-

tings, this solution seems practical due to the isolation of the workplace. However, the dormitories provided do not meet the basic ILO-recommended standards to ensure adequate and decent housing accommodation and a suitable living environment (especially as regards the availability of services, materials, facilities, infrastructure, and habitability), despite the fact that deductions may be made from the worker's salary to cover accommodation fees. Employers should significantly improve the conditions of dormitories by adhering to minimum adequate housing standards for migrant workers and, together with the institutions, facilitate access to privately owned accommodation for migrants, respecting the seven criteria for rights-based housing for migrant workers.<sup>44</sup>

- **Protect maternity:** Considering the working practices and rhythms, and the services available to young mothers, maternity is scarcely compatible with working in large poultry processing companies. In addition, children are often forbidden to access to the dormitories that the company provides, As result mother migrant workers leave their children with their grandparents in their country of origin with the risk to affect care and emotional and psychological development. Authorities and entrepreneurs, especially in large companies, should ensure maternity and childcare services such as

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

crèches, flexible working hours, and facilitate access to family accommodation services considering that “the international labour standards explicitly extend the right to adequate and decent housing to the family members of migrant workers and [...] State to ensure the protection of the unity of the families of migrant workers”<sup>45</sup>.

- **Complaints mechanisms:** Employers should provide migrant workers with access to a grievance mechanism that ensures the anonymity of those who use it and provides an effective remedy for violations of their rights. Most migrant workers interviewed did not know where to go to report complaints.

This situation is exacerbated and different on small rural farms where other issues are also present such as:

- **Irregular Migrant Workers, Forms of Exploitation, and Child Labour:** Cases of irregular migrant worker employment are present and associated with document withholding, absence of contracts, generalised use of unpaid overtime, use of piece-rate pay schemes that mask exploitation, non-compliance with minimum wage provisions, and the involvement of children of migrant workers in work tasks. Employers on small and rural farms should fully apply the labour law. They should not compromise migrant workers’ rights in response to the strong com-

petition in the sector, but should instead fight for a fair price for their product.

- **Dependence and Gender-Based Discrimination:** Dependence of migrant workers on the employer in all areas of their lives – including access to services, food security, accommodation, daily shopping, transport, and social relations – is widespread. Women in this system are further penalised by a family negotiation mechanism whereby male breadwinners liaise with the employer to agree upon the women’s wages, hours, types and forms of work, while women also bear the burden of childcare. Employers should not accept practices that arise from forms of patriarchy, but should instead consider the individual rights of women migrant workers, preserving their dignity and capacity for self-determination through direct negotiation and contracts, taking their specific needs and aspirations into account.

More strategic and systemic issues should be addressed to achieve sustainability and combat unfair and exploitative labour conditions for migrant workers in the Thai poultry sector:

1. **Trade Unions and Collective Voice and Bargaining:** Small farms, as well as large processing companies, often lack robust representation in the form of trade unions. On one hand, this is due to the high number

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<sup>45</sup> Ivi, p. 15.

of irregular and informal workers, who are unable to join unions. On the other hand, large companies may hinder or discourage workers from joining trade unions. They may sometimes allow internal workers' councils, but these do not hold the same power as unions, which have broader representation and support in upholding and protecting worker rights. Migrant workers, in particular, also face obstacles from within the legal system with regard to establishing their own unions, which may represent unique challenges and conditions.

2. **Relationship Between Small and Large Companies and Externalisation of Exploitation:**

Larger companies have greater economic power and can thus internalise many aspects of the value chain, yielding significant cost savings. In contrast, smaller farms struggle to compete, often leading them to drastically cut salaries and human resource costs. Moreover, small and large companies may be linked by a subcontracting relationship according to which the latter buys poultry, semi-finished products, or services from the former, imposing low price conditions, short delivery times, and other strict conditions. This is reflected in worsening living and working conditions on these smaller farms, of which the larger company may be aware, and indeed take advantage, giving rise to a form of "externalised exploitation" for which they can absolve themselves of direct responsibility.

3. **Due Diligence:** The increased use of a workforce directly contracted by third-party agencies that provide manpower to large companies has driven a form of discharge of responsibility regarding unsustainable and unfair labour practices. The responsibility for adhering to contractual and labour laws often falls to such recruitment agencies rather than to the companies themselves, particularly in the case of larger farms. This can absolve the companies of some of their responsibility and lead to issues of exploitation. Due diligence must be conducted to ensure human rights are respected across the entire value chain, not just at the individual company level.

4. **Limited Legal Protection and Access to the Justice System:** Migrant workers face significant obstacles when it comes to accessing justice. Challenges include language barriers, costs, time constraints, and potential irregular status if the worker reports abuse. The situation is worsened by policy regulations that prioritise penalising employees, and especially migrant employees, for working without proper documents. Rather than improving conditions for migrant workers, these policies should facilitate the migration process through MOU (regular channel), thereby reducing cost, time, and bureaucracy. Both Thai and Cambodian governments have taken steps to tackle these issues, but progress is slow, and problems regarding coordination and standardisation remain.



V.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**To the poultry farm:**

- End the practice of passing recruitment costs on to the migrant worker and publicly commit to repaying the costs of recruitment to each migrant worker currently employed at your farm;
- Put contractual provisions in place that require all partner recruitment agencies to similarly end the practice of charging migrant workers for their recruitment fees;
- Use external and independent auditors to verify compliance with the recruitment fee prohibition;
- Provide contracts and training sessions to migrant workers on their rights, in a language and form they understand, either through translation or interpretation;
- Pay workers a wage consistent with the status of the work as dangerous and hazardous to health, with a maximum number of hours worked per week to 42 with any additional hours considered overtime and duly paid, and not exceeding 48 working hours per week;
- Return any and all identity documents currently held to migrant workers and commit to only withholding such documents in the future for limited and certain lengths of time for specified and approved purposes;
- Ensure a safe and healthy workspace, and promote practices that uphold dignity and full rights of workers;
- Bring practices into line with human and environmental rights according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Through meaningful involvement of CSOs, trade unions, migrant representatives, and communities, this alignment process should provide for a reliable assessment of the risk of violations in your company and throughout your entire value chain, and the basis for preparing and applying a plan to eliminate and mitigate such risks, and provide remedies in the event of violations;
- Establish a grievance mechanism in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that provides migrant workers an anonymous, safe, and accessible space to voice complaints and receive a remedy;
- Publicly commit to not retaliating against any worker that files a complaint (either using the aforementioned mechanism or a state-based grievance mechanism);
- Permit migrant workers to end their employment, and commit to not retaliating against any who do;
- Participate and allow third-party auditors, including civil society organisations, to inspect your facilities to ensure that they are in line with international standards for the treatment of migrant workers;
- Facilitate independent accommodation for migrant workers, ensuring adequate services, and guaranteeing rent, financial support, provision, and access to kindergarten, and cooperate with institutions in this regard;
- Advocate with the Thai government to extend the grace period following the expiry of work permits, to allow migrant workers more time to find new jobs;



- Promote gender-based analysis of worker needs. Respect the labour and human rights of women, foster a culture of gender equality, and enforce zero tolerance against any form of gender-based violence, whether physical, psychological, social, or economic;
- Improve legal assistance for women migrant workers reporting cases of gender violence, to ensure better safety and security;
- Abandon aggressive price-cutting competition practices, which facilitate mechanisms that reduce labour rights, especially among smaller competitors. If you are a large company, promote a system of growth towards quality and sustainability of the entire industry and suppliers, including small rural farms.

**To the Thai Government:**

- Promote migration through MOU (regular channel), reducing cost, time, bureaucracy.
- Decriminalise irregular migrant workers while ensuring his/her human rights. Increase controls and inspections of companies to ensure that all labour, human, women, and migrant rights are respected, and extend responsibility for protecting such rights to companies using workers hired by recruitment agencies.
- Provide for the legal possibility for migrant workers to freely change employer without losing their work permit.
- Promote trade unions and collective representative voice and bargaining, and particularly migrant associations and migrant trade unions. Extend this possibility

to workers hired by recruitment agencies. Enforce penalties against any company or other subject that imposes obstacles or discourages workers to join unions.

- Adopt a mandatory human rights due diligence law that requires companies to review their value chains according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Promote due diligence activities throughout the poultry sector that incentivise large companies to encourage compliance with human and environmental rights throughout the entire production, processing and distribution system.
- Strengthen opportunities for workers and migrant/female workers to access justice by removing language barriers, costs, and time constraints.
- Reverse the burden of proof from worker to companies in the event of violation of human and environmental rights and allow class action and legal representation of CSOs and Trade Unions. Ensure that companies exporting poultry to Europe are prepared to comply with the upcoming HRDD law by reforming their labour practices, complying with audits, and facilitating access for CSOs and trade unions. Support compliance by such companies, and smaller farms in particular.
- Enable victims of violations that take place in companies in Thailand that are part of global value chains to access the same compensation provided for by European law.
- Provide services to ensure decent housing

for migrant workers and access to services that facilitate family union, such as kindergarten.

- Promote campaigns against patriarchy and gender-based discrimination and violence

at all levels and provide training to officials at different levels.

- Ratify ILO Convention 190 to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, and apply it.



## **To European Governments and the European Union:**

- Advocate with the Government of Thailand to adopt a human rights due diligence law that covers the poultry sector throughout the value chain and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;
- Require European companies and those that do business with companies in Europe to conduct thorough human rights due diligence activities throughout their entire value chain to ensure that they are not associated with violations of human rights, with a particular focus on migrant women workers' rights, human rights defenders and communities.
- Adopt an ambitious CSDD Directive, *fully in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, which includes:
  - Application of CSDD to all companies regardless of their size, considering that the most serious violations, as evident from this report, occur in smaller companies throughout the entire global value chain. *At the same time, the Directive should also ensure full accountability of all involved actors and prevent any practices to elude responsibility or discharge to the smaller business actors and taking duly accounted also larger and parent companies, while not over-relying on audits;*
- Application of CSDD to the financial sector as a relevant influencer of companies' choices;
- Application of all international Conventions and Agreements on Human and Environmental Rights;
- Use of gender-based analysis in risk and damage assessments;
- Meaningful involvement of stakeholders, including CSOs and trade unions;
- Access to justice for the most vulnerable groups, including: the opportunity to be represented; economic support; reverse burden of proof;
- Civil liability and proportionate penalties and fees for restoration to victims and to discourage new violations.
- Impose penalties on companies that do not conduct HRDD activities, including exclusion from public incentives, funds, and commercial agreements.
- Apply due diligence in all commercial agreements with Thailand and other third countries.
- Require companies that trade in Europe to be transparent about the provenance of products, their components, and processing. Provide labelling and information to consumers to enable an awareness of the sustainability of the product and rights compliance.



**VI.**

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**VII.**

**ANNEX**

## **Annex 1: KII moderator guide**

### **KII moderator guide - Employers**

**Date**

**FINAL**

Respondent full name		Location			
Date	/ / 2022	Time begun		Time ended	
Sex		Working Position			

### **Declaration**

I confirm that I have checked that the moderator guide meets and was carried out in accordance with WeWorld's guidelines and instructions supplied to me for this study. I understand that the information given to me during the interview must be kept confidential.

**Signed by moderator:** \_\_\_\_\_



## **Introduction**

Thank you for spending the time talking with me today. I'd like to introduce myself

I am (NAME) from RAPID ASIA.

We really appreciate you giving us your time today. We are currently undertaking a study for WeWorld, an Italian-based foundation that advocates for the rights of women, children, and local communities, about the working conditions of female migrant workers in the poultry sector. This will allow us to provide them with better-informed assistance. I would like to hear your views on this subject as they will be very valuable to us.

I will record our discussion to ensure the information you have given during the interview is documented accurately when we write our report. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give us your honest opinion. The recording will only be used for internal processing purposes. Your recording will not be shared with anybody outside our research team.

May I record our conversation? **(Yes/No)** \_\_\_\_\_

The interview will take about *45 minutes*. Please be assured that anything you say is confidential and your participation is completely voluntary, you can withdraw at any time.

Do you have further questions about this interview? **(CLARIFY AS NEEDED)**

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Do you understand and give your consent to be interviewed? **IF YES, CONTINUE**

**Warm-up questions**

Tell us a little bit about your organisation?

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How is your work related to labour migration?

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**A. RECRUITMENT** - [EMPLOYERS ONLY]

How many migrants are employed at your company?

What channels do migrants use to come to Thailand and work in the poultry sector?

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What are the most common problems migrants face when migrating into the poultry sector?

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What is the Thai government doing to support labour migration into the poultry sector?

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What policies are in place to regulate the costs of regular migration for migrant workers?

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Do most migrant workers in the poultry sector have complete legal documents?

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## **B. WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS**

What are the most common tasks/jobs female migrant poultry workers do?

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How are the workers made aware of work benefits such as minimum wage, leave etc.?

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Are there any differences in terms of financial compensation and employment benefits between male and female migrant workers in the poultry sector? Yes  No

*IF YES: please elaborate.*

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Labour rights abuses are common in many sectors.

Which abuses are most common for female migrant workers?

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Are women treated differently from men in the poultry sector? Yes  No

*IF YES: How are they treated differently, and why?*

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Are workplace injuries and illnesses common in the poultry sector?

Yes  No

*IF YES: What is being done to prevent such injuries and illnesses?*

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Are women's sanitary needs considered in the poultry sector?

Yes  No

*IF NO: Why not?*

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Can migrant workers quit their job if they want to?

*IF YES: What kind of benefit might they lose?*

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*IF NO: Why not?*

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## C. SUPPORT SERVICES

What services or facilities are provided for female migrant workers in the poultry sector who face exploitation and abuse?

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Are governmental agencies or other organisations supporting female migrant workers in the poultry sector? Yes  No

*IF YES: What kinds of support do they provide?*

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Can female migrant workers join trade unions and other worker organisations? Yes  No

*IF NO: What are the key barriers to joining a union and other organisations?*

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For migrant workers with children, what arrangements for childcare are available?

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For pregnant migrant workers, what services are available?

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Regarding health and safety, what types of information and services are provided to migrant workers in poultry work?

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What recommendations do you have for improving the policies and laws relating to labour migration in the poultry sector?

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**D. POLICY AND REGULATIONS - [EMPLOYERS ONLY]**

What are employers' biggest regulatory challenges when hiring migrant workers?

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Are you aware of any mechanisms for multi-stakeholder cooperation to support the development and implementation of migrant workers' rights? Yes  No

*IF YES: Please elaborate*

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What kinds of due diligence activities concerning workers' rights are in place at your organisations or in the poultry sector?

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*[EMPLOYERS ONLY]* What legal obligations regarding workers' rights do your organisation, or the poultry sector, have in order to export poultry products to the EU?

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*[EMPLOYERS ONLY]* Does your company, or do you, know any company that exports to France, Germany, or Norway?

Yes  No

*IF YES: What are the specific regulations/requirements related to human rights and environmental protection for exporting to these countries?*

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*[EMPLOYERS ONLY]* How do companies in the poultry sector, including yours, ensure that their operations comply with the legislation?

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*[EMPLOYERS ONLY]* If the EU introduces legislation that bans products where human rights and environmental exploitation are not fully respected, how will Thai companies respond?

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

## **Annex 2: IDI moderator guide**

### **IDI moderator guide**

#### **Poultry workers**

**FINAL**

Respondent full name		Location			
Date	/ / 2023	Time begun		Time ended	
Gender		Working Position			

#### **Declaration**

I confirm that I have checked that the moderator guide meets and was carried out in accordance with WeWorld's guidelines and instructions for this study. I understand that the information given to me during the interview must be kept confidential.

**Signed by moderator:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Introduction**

Thank you for spending the time talking with me today. I'd like to introduce myself – I am (NAME) from RAPID ASIA.

We are currently undertaking a study on poultry workers in Thailand. The study aims to better understand their work experiences so that better assistance can be provided. We selected you because you work in poultry and have some interesting experiences. I would like to hear about your work and your recruitment process. Your contribution is very valuable. Any information we collect from you is confidential.

I will record our discussion to ensure the information you give during the interview is recorded, so I can concentrate on what you are saying. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give us your honest opinion. The recording will only be used for internal processing purposes. Your recording will not be shared with anybody outside our research team.

The interview will take up to *45 minutes*. Please be assured that anything you say is confidential and your participation is completely voluntary, you can withdraw at any time.

Do you have further questions about this interview? **(CLARIFY AS NEEDED)**

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Do you understand and give your consent to be interviewed? **IF YES, CONTINUE**

## Warm-up and background questions

How many years have you worked in poultry in Thailand?	
What was your job before migrating to Thailand?	
Please tell me about your current work and what you do on a typical day.	
What product do you contribute to producing?	
What is your highest education level?	
How old are you?	
Did you migrate alone or with someone?	ALONE <input type="checkbox"/> WITH SOMEONE <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If with someone:</i> How many people live with you in Thailand?	

**A. RECRUITMENT**

Can you tell me why you decided to seek employment in Thailand?

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How did you end up working in poultry?

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How did you get information about migrating?

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To what extent was the information accurate and useful?

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Did anyone help you to migrate or find a job in Thailand?

Yes  No

*IF YES: How did they assist you?*

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What problems did you experience when migrating to Thailand, if any?

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How did you pay the migration costs?

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Did you have all the required documents to work in Thailand?

Yes  No

*If NO: Did you have any difficulties getting the documents?*

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Who keeps your identity documents?

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*IF EMPLOYER OR RECRUITER, ASK: why do they keep your documents?*

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Do you have a written job contract?

Yes  No

*If NO: was it clear to you what your job would be like?*

Yes  No

## **B. WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS**

1. What is the best part of your job? Explain

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2. What is the worst part of your job? Explain

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3. How many days do you work per week, on average? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many hours do you work per day, on average? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How much rest time do you have per day? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you have any paid annual leave?

Yes  No

*If Yes: how many days?* \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you required to work overtime?

Yes  No

*IF NO, skip to 18*

*IF YES: How were you informed about the overtime requirements?*

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8. Can you refuse to work overtime?

Yes  No

9. Do you get extra pay when working overtime? Yes  No

If Yes: What is your overtime wage per hour? \_\_\_\_\_

If No: Why did you not get paid?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. How much can you earn each month, including overtime? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Does the pace of work create any physical or mental stress for you? Yes  No

IF YES: In what ways?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you take any medication or stimulants? Yes  No

IF YES: Please specify what kind and why you need to take them.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Are men paid more for the same work than women in your workplace? Yes  No

IF NO, skip to 26

IF YES: How much more than women? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How is the pay difference justified?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you find the pay difference acceptable? Yes  No



16. Do men in your family/community also get paid more than you for the same job? Yes  No   
*IF YES: Do they find it acceptable?*

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17. Which of the following deductions, if any, are made from your salary?

- Social security
- Accommodation
- Food
- Uniform, clothes, or equipment
- Debt or advance on pay
- Penalties
- Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

18. How much is deducted each month? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Have you ever been paid less than you expected when you received your wages? Yes  No   
*If Yes: What was your employer's explanation?*

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20. Do you experience any challenges in meeting your living costs? Yes  No   
*IF YES: What challenges do you have?*

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21. Which of the following do you have where you live?

- Own house or room
- Clean water
- Own bathroom
- Easy access to transportation
- Local health clinic
- Education for children

22. What kinds of challenges did you face when you were searching for accommodation, if any?

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23. Do you currently have debt?

Yes  No

*IF NO, SKIP TO 36*

*IF YES: What is the debt for and to whom?*

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24. How do you repay the debt?

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25. Will it be easy or difficult to pay off the debt? Why?

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26. Which of the following employment benefits do you have?

- Health insurance
- Pension scheme
- One day off per week
- Paid sick leave
- Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

27. Did you have protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and protective clothes/shoes, including masks, during the Covid-19 pandemic? Yes  No

*IF YES: Who provided the protective equipment during the pandemic and/or for your work?*

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*IF NO: Why not?*

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Have you experienced or seen any injuries or accidents at work? Yes  No

*IF NO, skip to 42*

28. Did your employer or supervisor provide any medical assistance? Yes  No

29. If necessary, could you go to the hospital? Yes  No

30. Was any compensation provided when injuries or accidents occurred? Yes  No

31. What specific problems do you face as a woman working in the poultry sector, if any?

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32. Do you feel physically and mentally safe at your current job? Yes  No

*IF NO: What do you want to improve in terms of your working conditions?*

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33. Have you experienced/seen any discrimination based on gender, nationality, etc.? Yes  No

*IF YES: please tell me what happened.*

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34. Do you face any difficulties with your work when you have your period? Yes  No

*IF YES: What hygiene facilities are provided at work, if any?*

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35. What kind of support is provided for pregnant workers?

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36. Have you experienced or seen any forms of violence (psychological, physical, sexual etc.) in your workplace? Yes  No

*IF NO, SKIP TO 49*

*IF YES: please tell me about what happened.*

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37. Did you or the person experiencing the violence report the incident to authorities? Yes  No

*IF NO: Please explain why not.*

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38. Can you quit your job? Yes  No

*IF NO: What prevents you from leaving?*

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**C. SUPPORT SERVICES**

39. Is it possible for you to interact with other workers during your working hours? Yes  No

40. Do you ever feel isolated? Yes  No

*IF YES: Who do you ask for help when this happens?*

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41. Can you bring your mobile phone with you to the workplace? Yes  No

*IF NO: Why not?*

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42. If someone at your workplace had concerns or a complaint about the working conditions, where could they go for help?

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43. What organisation or community group have you joined since coming to Thailand, either at work or where you live?

*IF ANY: Why did you join the group(s)?*

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44. Do you interact with migrants from Thailand or other countries at work or where you live?

Yes  No

45. IF YES: How would you describe your relationships with them?

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46. What government services have you accessed while in Thailand?

IF ANY: How would you describe your experience with them?

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47. Do you have children with you in Thailand?

Yes  No

IF NO, skip to 59

IF YES: How old are they?

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48. Who is looking after your children when you work?

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**D. LEGISLATION**

Are you aware of any legal entitlements, such as minimum wage, annual leave, etc., related to working and living conditions? Please elaborate.

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What are the main constraints in accessing the justice system?

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Would you be available for a follow-up interview in the last week of April (24-28 April)? Yes  No

**IF YES, COLLECT NAME AND CONTACT PHONE NUMBER**



## ***Annex 3: Detailed methodology***

### ***Exploratory study objectives***

The primary objective of the study was to gain insight into the poultry value chain in Thailand and determine whether there is evidence to suggest that Thai companies may not always follow the due diligence standard established by the EU. More specifically, the study set out to explore the following two objectives.

1. To provide a deep understanding of social and human violations among female migrant workers in Thailand, who are part of a global poultry supply chain.
2. To reflect on the contributions and challenges of EU legislation in minimising exploitation of workers.

Because the study is qualitative, results cannot be generalised to the supply chain as a whole. However, it did provide insight into potential common violations, thus offering valuable guidance for legislators with regard to shaping an effective CSDD Directive. Furthermore, it offers companies operating in the European market a better understanding of what to consider when evaluating their suppliers and business partners. Another study outcome was to identify potential interventions that can improve compliance and formulate recommendations for future, more targeted research.

## Study scope

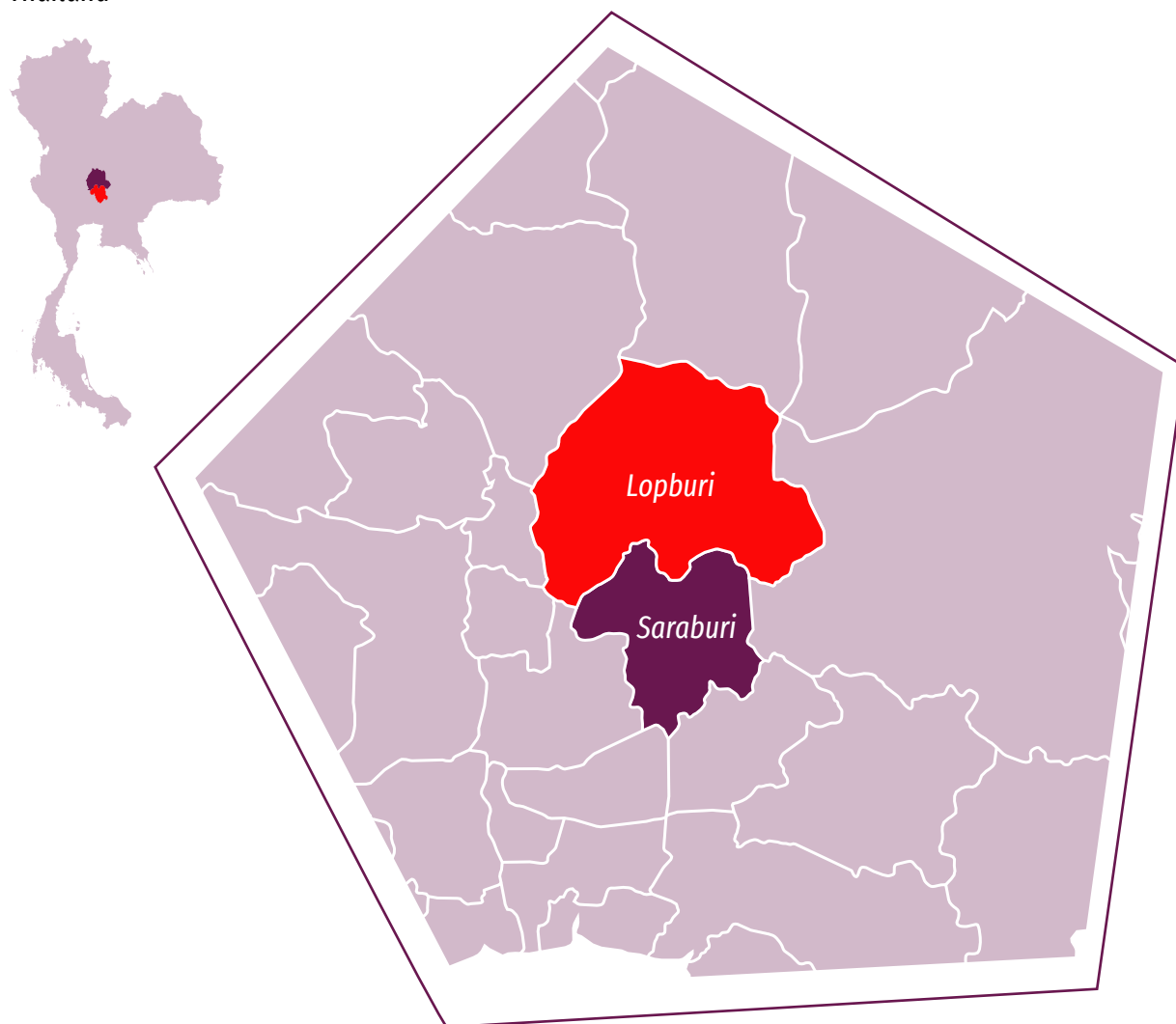
The study focused on Cambodian women migrant workers in the poultry sector. The poultry sector was selected because it has not been the subject of much research compared to other sectors such as fishing and seafood processing. Cambodian migrant workers were chosen as they are a more homogeneous target group, and because the majority of the

employees interviewed in the area of focus for the investigation are of this nationality.

In-depth interviews (IDIs) with migrant workers were carried out near poultry factories located in the Lopburi and Saraburi Provinces (**see Figure 1 below**). The key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders were carried out as face-to-face interviews and by phone.

**Figure 1: Data collection locations**

Thailand

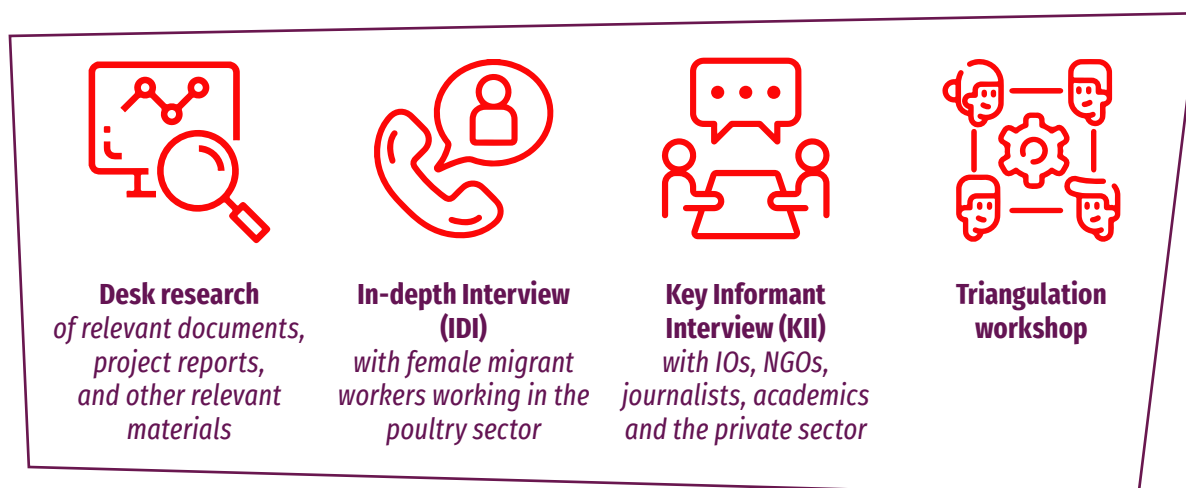


## Study design

The study was carried out using a mixed-methods approach, including both primary and secondary data collection. A document review was carried out during the initial inception stage, examining relevant documents including past research reports, policy documents, national development plans, and other relevant materials. The IDIs were carried out first, followed by field visits to the factory locations by the Rapid Asia and WeWorld research time to observe the

situation on the ground and document stories from selected migrant workers. For the KIIs, a list of potential participants was developed in collaboration with WeWorld and most of the interviews were carried out after the field visit. Once all data had been collected and analysed, a workshop was held to analyse the results, extract recommendations, and agree on the report structure.

**Figure 2. Study design**



### Desk research and document review

The desk review assessed relevant project documents, including past research reports, documents produced by implementing partners, project reports, peer-reviewed studies, and other pertinent material. The desk review helped in the selection of interview locations,

identifying suitable participants for the KIIs, and selecting suitable topics for the IDIs and KIIs. Following the desk review, the work plan was finalised in consultation with the WeWorld team and the moderator guides were translated into Thai.

## **Data collection stage**

The primary data came from qualitative interviews with both beneficiaries and stakeholders. The IDIs were conducted face-to-face, in accordance with Covid-19 precautions. Rapid Asia has carried out several studies in multiple countries during the pandemic, and protocols have been developed to ensure the safety of enumerators/moderators while collecting data. Key informant interviews were conducted via phone, online communication tools and, in some cases, face-to-face.

Rapid Asia carried out training with the moderators prior to the fieldwork. All moderators received detailed training and pre-designed moderator guides to ensure consistency of questioning and manageability of the analysis collected. The tools were also pre-tested as part of the training, which served as a final quality check.

### **In-depth interviews**

Participants for the IDIs were recruited in the vicinity of the poultry factories at the end of the work shift. Interviews were either conducted immediately or an appointment was made to do the interview later on. Consent forms were used, and each interview was recorded

for quality control purposes. A total of **25 IDIs** were conducted with women migrant workers from Cambodia. Moreover, a joint field mission was carried out by Rapid Asia and WeWorld in May 2023 after the first analysis of collected interviews. During this field mission, a further eight women migrant workers were interviewed.

### **Key informant interview (KII)**

For the KIIs, the aim was to capture a broad selection of senior stakeholders, including policymakers from relevant ministries. Participants were initially notified of the process by WeWorld to encourage their participation. Rapid Asia then contacted each stakeholder to set a time for an interview. An endorsement letter was prepared and shared with participants beforehand to emphasise the legitimacy of the study and to assure participants that data was being collected independently and impartially. During the field mission, additional interviews were carried out. Verbal consent was obtained, and each interview was recorded for quality control purposes. A total of 11 KIIs were conducted with (i) IOs, (ii), CSOs (iii) Employers of migrant workers and other experts as shown in **Table X** below.

**Table x: Stakeholders interviewed**

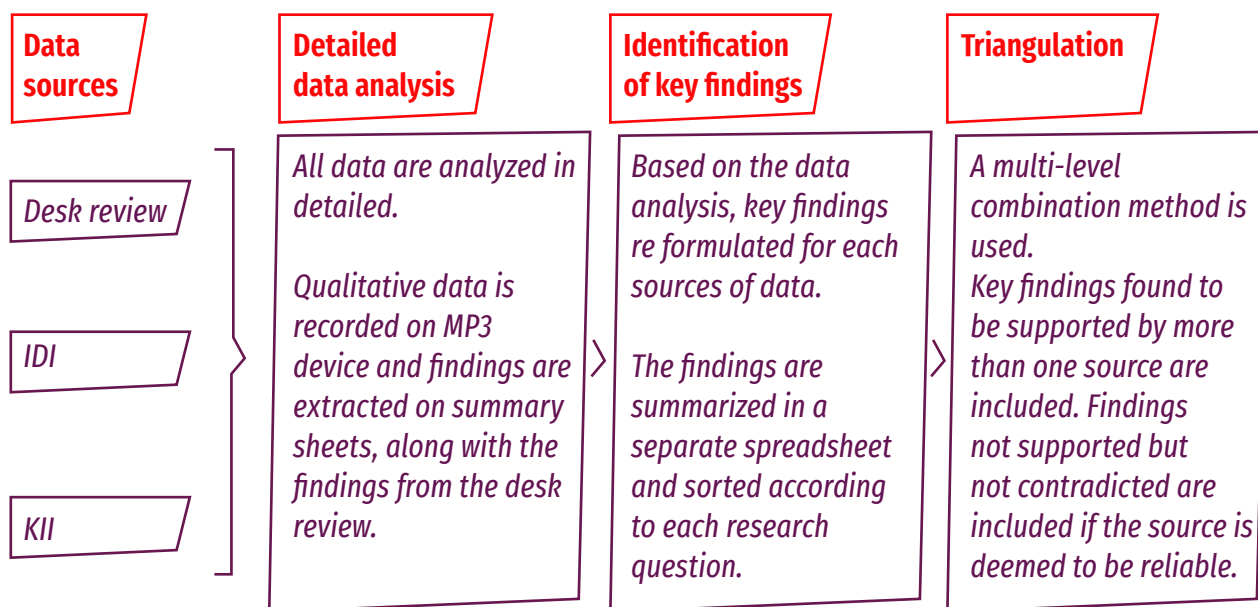
<b>N°</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number of KII</b>
<b>International organisation</b>		
1 - 2	<i>International Labour Organisation (ILO)</i>	<i>II</i>
3	<i>International Organisations for Migration (IOM)</i>	<i>I</i>
<b>NGOs</b>		
4	<i>Labour Protection Network (LPN)</i>	<i>I</i>
5	<i>Solidarity Centre (SC)</i>	<i>I</i>
6	<i>Workers' Union (WU)</i>	<i>I</i>
7	<i>Migrant Workers' Rights Network (MWRN)</i>	<i>I</i>
8	<i>Human Rights Watch (HRW)</i>	<i>I</i>
9	<i>Wild Life Conservation Society (WCS) Cambodia</i>	<i>I</i>
10	<i>Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW) Cambodia</i>	<i>I</i>
<b>Other stakeholders</b>		
11	<i>Employer: Chicken factory in Saraburi</i>	<i>I</i>
12	<i>Journalist: Correspondent</i>	<i>I</i>
13	<i>Academic: Professor in gender and development studies</i>	<i>I</i>

## Data triangulation

The qualitative interviews were analysed, and the relevant findings were brought together to form a comprehensive view of the perspectives and perceptions. All interview summaries were checked to see if further clarification was needed, in which case they were sent back to the moderator for revision. Detailed analysis of the findings was then carried out by triangulation (Rapid Asia and WeWorld), pulling out the key findings from the KIIs and the IDIs (See Figure

X). Common statements supported by multiple respondents were identified and summarised for each question asked. Opposing views of multiple respondents were also highlighted as counterarguments. The key findings were then compiled into summaries, linking them to the different project components. Lastly, quotes supporting the key findings were extracted so that they could be incorporated into the final report.

**Figure X: Triangulation process.**



Following triangulation, the project team (Rapid Asia and WeWorld) held a workshop to discuss the findings, and formulate recommendations

and the structure for the final report. The process was useful as it also helped to shape the presentations for the validation workshops.

## ***Ethical considerations***

Rapid Asia is a member of ESOMAR and must follow international best practices for professional conduct when collecting and managing data. The evaluation team is also bound by and abides by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines, norms, standards, and code of conduct for evaluations in the UN system. The guidelines include the independence of the evaluators, the anonymity and confidentiality of individual participants, sensitivity to the social and cultural context, and acting with integrity and honesty when interacting with all stakeholders.

For this study, the project team also adhered to the following principles:

1. Provide complete and transparent information about the project before seeking consent, and adequate time and opportunities for potential participants to consider the risks and benefits of their

participation.

2. Consent is voluntary and without coercion.
3. Participants can withdraw their consent at any stage without consequence.
4. Participants must consent to participate in the evaluation, which can be verbal or in writing.

5.

Consent was obtained from the respondents at the beginning of each interview. The enumerator read out the consent form and proceeded with the interview only if they received verbal consent from the respondents.

All interviews were recorded for quality control purposes, allowing moderators to listen to the recording when preparing the interview summaries. The recordings were not shared with any third parties and were deleted six months after the project had finished.



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