

BUILDING FUTURES IN THAILAND

*Support to Children Living in
Construction Site Camps*



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for every child

Acknowledgements

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This project was initiated to identify the challenges facing a large population of extremely vulnerable children living in and around construction sites in Thailand, and the recommended responses to overcoming those challenges.

Crucially, this project documents key initiatives from private sector stakeholders that have aimed to support these children in the framework of CSR & Sustainability efforts.

By exploring the children's needs, examples of responses, and companies, a *Framework for Action* is proposed in order to structure future discussions for scaling up support to children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand.

Who are the children?

Children born to migrant parents or migrant children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand.

Who are the private sector stakeholders?

Real estate companies, construction companies, contractors, and subcontractors.

What next?

Based on input from several real estate and construction companies, migrant construction worker families, and other stakeholders, a Framework for Action proposes starting points for achieving sector-wide improvements that respond to the children's needs.

FOREWORD

There is a population of vulnerable children living in Thailand whose needs must be understood and addressed: migrant children living in construction site camps.

These children were born in Thailand to migrant parents, or they have come with their parents or relatives who hope to earn a basic wage in exchange for manual construction labor – most of them from Myanmar or Cambodia. Sadly, while these parents contribute to the thriving real estate and construction industry in Thailand, their children for the most part grow up in conditions that jeopardize their basic well-being and impair their childhood development. They grow up without a chance at a childhood.

Acknowledging such vulnerabilities, key private sector stakeholders – ranging from major property developers to local subcontractors – have shown strong interest in improving the lives of these children. This project aims to document the initiatives conducted in partnership with these real estate and construction companies that respond to the children's needs. Ultimately, this project captures the positive impact that such committed stakeholders have started to achieve and now wish to broaden.

To this end, the new data presented here first clarifies the range and depth of the challenges that these children face. The report finds that they often lack access to basic health services and vaccines, they too often do not attend school, they face language barriers, and they grow up in environments that pose serious safety threats. They also have too few opportunities for safe play time, or having fun with their friends – in other words, many of these children don't get to be kids.

In response to these challenges, a number of initiatives are already taking place throughout Thailand to help some of these children, several of which are led by the real estate and construction companies themselves. What is perhaps most remarkable is that our analysis of these initiatives suggests that they are beneficial to *both* children and companies. Leading real estate and construction companies that have invested in support to these children have reported benefits to their companies' business and operations (*Sections 2.2 and 2.3*).

While the children experience greater well-being and childhood development when they grow up in safe environments and can access health care, education, and child protection services, the companies who initiate these improvements report benefits to their business, such as:

- Improved Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) performance with the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) that positively influences foreign investment,
- Improved conditions of environmental impact that may increase chances of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) approval for major construction projects, and
- Improved workforce retention that yields greater productivity and may reduce the workers' risk of accidents, both on the worksites and in their temporary living environments.

In addition to understanding these benefits, this report also highlights great initiatives that already exist. They must now be scaled up nationally throughout Thailand, through sector-wide improvements that will transform the lives of generations of vulnerable children.

To guide this transformation, we have proposed a *Framework for Action* that is based on our consultations with these companies, government Ministries, NGOs, and the children themselves, which concludes this report with actionable recommendations (*Chapter 3. Key Solutions, page 72*).

Together, we can improve the lives of children living in construction site camps in ways that benefit both these children and the construction industry at large throughout Thailand. We sincerely hope that this project will be instrumental to achieving this objective.



Nicola Crosta,
Founder - Baan Dek Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola' followed by a stylized flourish.



Thomas Davin,
Representative - UNICEF Thailand

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TD' followed by a large circular flourish.



N. and her two sons (7 and 3 years old) are from Myanmar. She and her husband have been working for construction companies in Thailand for 6 years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on in-depth interviews with migrant children and parents, real estate and construction companies, government Ministries, and NGOs. It explores the challenges faced by children living in construction site camps, and suggests solutions that can be scaled to foster social responsibility within Thailand's construction sector.

This study shows that it is possible to provide effective support to migrant children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand, and that this support is beneficial for both children and private sector stakeholders. These key stakeholders are real estate and construction companies who are becoming increasingly aware that small investments in support of these kids can lead to enormous gains in their lives, and that these investments can even lead to beneficial results for the company's business and operations. While support currently exists for a small fraction of these children, it is possible to achieve for all of these children in Thailand.

In order to determine the most successful investments that support these children, this study contains three key chapters that:

- 1. Clarify the challenges faced by migrant children** living in construction site camps in Thailand through new data and evidence.
- 2. Identify current initiatives** that effectively help children overcome these challenges through private sector partnerships.
- 3. Put forth a *Framework for Action*** in order to structure and scale these initiatives to support all of these children throughout Thailand.

The challenges that have been identified and clarified through in-depth interviews with migrant children and parents focused on the areas of infrastructure, child protection, and access to health and education services. Highlights of these findings include the following.

Concerning the physical **infrastructure** of the construction site camps where children grow up, participants reported issues such as inadequate showers and toilets, and they also reported electrical hazards that have led to serious accidents. Notably, child and parent participants reported a strong desire to have showers that are separated by gender (almost 90% of participants). When asked about overall satisfaction with their living environments, children placed high importance on social opportunities within the camp; they expressed desire to have other children for more friends in the community, and to have more activities and toys to be able to play.

Relevant issues related to **child protection** were explored, including access to essential services (given the examples of health and education); identification documentation; and vulnerability to social exclusion and discrimination, family separation, domestic violence, and child labor. It was reported that there is a lack of routine information-sharing about services for newly arriving families to the camps. It was determined that networks of employees and community leaders currently exist within most camps, but participants reported that there is a lack of routine information-sharing about services for newly arriving families to the camp. These networks represent a clear opportunity for routine training and information-sharing about access to essential services for families.

For access to **health** services, challenges were found to include access to vaccinations and health cards. Since vaccinations are both a public health priority and a necessary health measure for individuals, this challenge highlights another opportunity to provide priority support to these children. The main barriers to obtaining health cards were reported to be the cost and required documents, which are challenges that can also be overcome through several approaches to support (e.g., information-sharing that leads to improved access to documentation services, life skill training on financial literacy).

For access to **education** services, it is reported by a variety of stakeholders – both companies and NGOs familiar with the conditions of construction site camps – that many children living in these camps do not attend school. As all children in Thailand have the right to attend school, barriers include lack of transportation to local public schools, the ability of families to pay school costs, and the need for older children to act as child caretakers and look after younger siblings while the parents are at work.

After clarifying the children's challenges through interviews with them and their parents, we reviewed current initiatives from NGOs and CSOs that support these children in Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Chiang Mai, Sangkhlaburi, Mae Sot, and Pattaya, with a special focus on initiatives that involve private sector collaboration with real estate and construction companies. Since private sector stakeholders play a significant role in the living conditions of migrant workers, such multi-stakeholder partnerships between social sector actors and private companies (in addition to government) are especially relevant for achieving support to migrant children living in construction site camps. Sustainable Development Goal 17 *Partnerships for the Goals* establishes the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, which engage a range of actors to address development issues and achieve sustainable progress.¹

The initiatives presented in this documentation project were also selected for the range of children's challenges that they address, through the creation of safe spaces to vaccination

¹ The Global Goals for Sustainable Development, '17 Partnerships for the Goals', <www.globalgoals.org/17-partnerships-for-the-goals>, accessed September 2017.



campaigns. Six current multi-stakeholder initiatives are highlighted, all implemented through partnerships with real estate and construction companies:

- A safe space in construction site camps – Sansiri with Visavapat + UNICEF + Baan Dek Foundation
- Non-formal education support - Narai Property and Foundation for Better Life of Children
- Improvements in safety, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) – Chiang Mai Rimdoi + Baan Dek Foundation
- Training sessions on access to health, education and safety services – Pingnakorn + Baan Dek Foundation
- Vaccination campaign – Sansiri with Contractors + WHO + UNICEF
- Learning centers – Areeya Property + Local NGO

In order to advance these initiatives from a limited number of construction site camps to all children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand, a *Framework for Action* is proposed in order to structure and scale these recommended forms of support. This *Framework for Action* provides general guidelines for improving the infrastructure of these camps where children are growing up and the children's access to child protection and health and education services. These general guidelines are complemented by specific examples of recommended improvements (e.g., updates to a camp's WASH systems, training already existing camp networks in routine access to medical centers and local public schools).

Altogether, these elements show promising ways to improve the environments in which these children grow up, child protection, and their access to essential health and education services. By investing in the recommended forms of support, companies even report certain benefits to their business operations – ranging from increased brand value to improved workforce retention (see *Section 2.3 Benefits for companies*). This project therefore carves out a clear path toward the future of support to these children: moving from sporadic initiatives to large-scale improvements that make children's well-being the norm across the construction sector nationwide.

GLOSSARY

Child or children – Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as every human being under 18 years old unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.²

Child protection – Safeguarding of children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child, through all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures as specified in article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.³

Children's rights and business principles (CRBP) – A series of ten principles set out by UNICEF, Save the Children, and UN Global Compact to promote the corporate responsibility to respect and support children's rights in the work place, market place and community in conjunction with the government duty to protect and safeguard children's rights.⁴

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) – An organization's initiatives to assess and take responsibility for its effects on environmental and social well-being. Child-focused CSR refers to efforts towards positively changing business behavior and practices as they affect children, positioning business within a web of relationships and obligations, intergovernmental standards and agreements, governmental regulation and policy, supply chains, multi-stakeholder business platforms and other key business influencers.⁵

Creating shared value (CSV) – The process of considering the impacts of core business practice, positive and negative, on development goals, and recognizing how progress towards each goal is dependent on complex and inter-related factors.⁶ This concept is often referred to as "Sustainability" by businesses.

Irregular migration – The movement of a person, or group of people, that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit or receiving countries. From the perspective of destination countries it is entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorization or

² United Nations Children's Fund, The Global Compact, and Save the Children, *Children's Rights and Business Principles*, New York, 2012, p.36.

³ United Nations Children's Fund, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, <https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.230307871.265105619.1508816283-641166473.1508816283>, accessed September 2017.

⁴ United Nations Children's Fund, The Global Compact, and Save the Children, *Children's Rights and Business Principles*, New York, 2012, p.11.

⁵ United Nations Children's Fund, *Corporate Social Responsibility*, <www.unicef.org/csr/>, accessed 19 October 2017.

⁶ Save the Children, *Shared Value*, <<http://www.sharedvalue.org/partners/funding-partners/save-children>>.



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documents required under immigration regulations. From the perspective of the sending country, the irregularity is for example seen in cases in which a person crosses an international boundary without a valid passport or travel document or does not fulfill the administrative requirements for leaving the country.⁷

Memorandum of understanding (MOU) – A formal agreement between two or more parties.

Regular migration – The movement of a person, or group of people, from his or her usual place of residence to a new place of residence, in keeping with the laws and regulations governing exit of the country of origin and travel, transit and entry into the destination or host country.⁸

Survival and development – One of the four core principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this recognizes that there are optimal conditions for childhood. Rights such as social security, health, adequate nutrition and standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education, leisure and play are all relevant to ensuring the healthy development of each child. Protection from violence and exploitation is also vital to each child's survival and development.⁹

⁷ International Organization for Migration, *Key Migration Terms*, <www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>, accessed 19 October 2017.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UNICEF, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNHCR, 1995, <www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.





1 MIGRANT CHILDREN LIVING IN CONSTRUCTION SITE CAMPS IN THAILAND

*New data clarifies
their challenges*

1.1 METHODOLOGY

Scope

This exploratory study investigated access to child protection, health, and education services for migrant children living in construction site camps in Thailand. Data was gathered through interviews that intended to capture emerging themes and trends that affect this population of children.¹⁰ In order to respect accountability to families living in these camps, as well as the construction companies operating these camps, child and parent participants were recruited from 21 camps operated by construction companies with whom Baan Dek Foundation maintains authorized agreements to legally access and support communities.¹¹ Consequently, all represented construction site camps are located in Chiang Mai Province. Further studies may be useful to understand the specifications of these findings as they relate to other areas of Thailand. Other limitations as well as future recommendations are indicated throughout the text.

The field interview methodology was developed based on principles from various sources¹² and Baan Dek Foundation staff's extensive experience in survey research and working with migrant workers and children.

In addition to interviews with children and parents, exploratory interviews were conducted with other stakeholders in order to determine which initiatives to highlight in *2.1 Current initiatives*. These stakeholders included 14 real estate developers, construction companies, and subcontractors; 3 government Ministries; and 20 NGOs working with migrants throughout Thailand. Interview guides were developed for these respective stakeholders based on understanding their current forms of support to migrant children living in construction site camps, their organizational priorities for such support (e.g. public health priorities through vaccinations), and challenges to overcome.

Interview recruitment strategy

An opportunity sample of participants were interviewed for this documentation project during regular Baan Dek Foundation program visits to the construction site camps from November 22, 2016, to May 12, 2017. Interviewers aimed to interview a fairly even number of men, women, and children from each of the 21 construction site camps represented. Adults were eligible to participate if they were migrant parents with at least one child living in one of the construction site camps where Baan Dek Foundation had authorized access; spoke Thai, Shan, Burmese or English;

¹⁰ While this population of children are referred to as migrant children living in Thailand, many of them are born in Thailand. The number or proportion of children born in Thailand to migrant parents is not currently known, but should be investigated in future research.

¹¹ As a measure of child protection for children living in construction site camps, a formal agreement should always be requested prior to support from an NGO or CSO. The company operating the camp should request this authorization and inquire thoroughly into the organization's practices (especially child protection mechanisms) before granting authorization.

¹² Horizons Population Council and IMPACT Family Health International, *Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources*, 2005; Mack, N., et al., *FHI360's Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide*, 2005; The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice*, 1999.

and were able to provide informed consent to participate.¹³ Children were eligible to participate if they lived in one of the construction site camps where Baan Dek Foundation had authorized access; were between the ages of 6 and 17 years old at the time of the interview;¹⁴ spoke Thai, Shan, Burmese or English; were able to provide informed consent to participate; and a parent or guardian provided informed consent for the child's participation.

Project staff roles

Each interview involved an Interviewer and an Interpreter/Research Assistant (RA) from Baan Dek Foundation staff. The Interviewer was responsible for leading the interview according to the questionnaire guide while the Interpreter/RA was responsible for directly interpreting the Interviewer's questions from English to the participant's preferred language (Thai, Shan, or Burmese). The majority of the interviews with parents were conducted in Shan (more than 80%), while almost all of the interviews with children were conducted in Thai (almost 95%). The Interpreter was also responsible for interpreting participants' responses back into English for the interviewer to record. All study notes and data were written and analyzed in English.

All project staff had experience working with migrant workers and children and upholding the principles of child protection.

Interview types and questionnaire

All interviews used the same structured, mixed (both open-ended and closed-ended) questionnaire which consisted of up to 182 questions, including follow-up questions, on the following topics: Demographics and Migration; Access to Health Care; Access to Education; Language and Internet Access; Psychological Health and Well-Being; Discrimination and Social Exclusion; Financial Obstacles (parents only); Documentation Obstacles (parents only); Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH); Safety and the Living Environment; Alcohol Use in the Family; and Violence (women and children only). Where relevant, questions were added to the questionnaire to explore themes that emerged through discussions with private sector stakeholders (real estate developers, construction companies, and subcontractors), Government Ministries, and civil society organizations (CSOs) working with migrants throughout Thailand.

Prior to beginning this documentation project, three construction site camps were randomly selected to field test the questionnaire and interview procedures with a small group of each of the three populations of interest (women, men, and children). The questionnaire topics, question wording, and consent and referral process were all modified based on this pilot study before beginning the first official documentation project interview.

¹³ If a mother was currently pregnant at the time of interview, this counted as 1 child. One mother was included in analysis who had 1 child who passed away as an infant, although she had no living children at the time of the interview.

¹⁴ One girl stated that she was "5 or 6 years old" at the time of interview, but she was otherwise able to participate without any comprehension issues. She was included in analysis and is noted as the one participant who was 5 years old at the time of interview.



Ethical considerations

Special consideration was given to assess the safety and wellbeing of involving children in research. The project was explained to both a parent or guardian and the child, and both the parent's and child's informed consent to participate was obtained for anyone under the age of 18 years. Referral plans were also put in place to follow-up on any reported safety concerns with case management and social worker involvement.

Domestic violence questions were developed following the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women.¹⁵ Since women were asked questions about domestic violence (and men were not, based on the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations), they were always interviewed individually, in a private setting. If 2-5 fathers, or 2-5 children were interested in participating at the same time, then the interview could be completed in a group setting (a group of men, or a group of children) if all participants agreed. Every participant responded to each question individually and each individual response was recorded and analyzed in the same manner regardless of whether the interview was conducted privately or in a group setting. The project staff completed 98 interviews in a group setting (33 sessions, median of 3 participants per session) and 21 individual interviews over the course of the project.

All interviews were conducted in a private space in the construction site camps where participants live or at Baan Dek Foundation's main office. The Interviewer followed research methodology procedures in order to ensure that participants' privacy and confidentiality was protected as much as possible throughout the processes of data collection, organization, and analysis.

¹⁵ World Health Organization, *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women*, Department of Gender and Women's Health: Family and Community Health, Geneva, Switzerland, 2001, <www.who.int/gender/violence/womenfirstseng.pdf>, accessed September 2017.

Data analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires and interviews was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. For the latter, grounded theory methodology was used to analyze the data for thematic content.

Interview responses were coded based on participant's attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions. As data was collected and reviewed, codes were sorted in order to analyze patterns and relevant themes that emerged. These themes reflect the main points that were summarized in order to explain participant's stated experiences. These codes and themes were revised in an iterative manner as patterns within the data became more apparent, and until no new themes emerged (thematic saturation).

Limitations of the methodology

Limitations of the methodology include a relatively small sample size, especially when analyzing data within subgroups of adults, mothers, or children; and when analyzing data for newer questions that were added throughout the interview period.¹⁶ The median age of child participants was 9 years old, so our sample represents primary school aged children (6-12 years) well, but we were limited to a very small number of older adolescent participants. Another study design limitation includes the use of opportunity sampling, since participants who were easily identified to be approached about participation may be different from those who were less visible (e.g., those who stay in their rooms with the door shut compared to those who spend time in public areas) or those who did not want to participate. The option to participate in a group setting is another limitation since participant responses may have been influenced by the presence of other participants in the group setting, although this option was only utilized if it was actually preferred by the participants. Interviews were also limited to participants from 21 construction site camps (median of 6 participants from each camp) and reflect conditions that may be particular to Chiang Mai, and therefore cannot be generalized to every area of Thailand.

In addition, all responses are self-reported, and it is possible that participants may have provided answers that they thought the interviewer would view as "correct," (social desirability) or they may have been uncomfortable or hesitant to report certain information (e.g., information about their legal status in Thailand or about violence). Lastly, certain concepts and vocabulary may not have translated well between the language of the interview and English, especially for qualitative questions and when analyzing quotes.

Despite these limitations, the study has established relevant information across a wide range of themes, which can now be explored in greater depth through future research. Future research should extend to migrant children living in construction site camps elsewhere in Thailand, particularly Bangkok as a major urban hub for labor migrants, as well as construction site camps in remote rural areas, where children's access to protection, health and education services is affected by different factors.

¹⁶ Throughout the report an (*) will be included next to the number when findings are based on less than 30 cases.

1.2 LABOR MIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN THAILAND

Thailand's economy has undergone remarkable growth in the past four decades. In 2011, Thailand's status officially advanced from lower-middle income country to an upper-middle income country, while its main neighboring countries of Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR have maintained their status as lower-middle income countries.¹⁷ Combined with its central geographic location, this marked economic growth has led many people to cross the borders in search of work opportunities in Thailand. Today, Thailand has evolved into a regional migration hub in Southeast Asia as a place of origin, transit, and destination for many migrants from neighboring countries.¹⁸

The main labor migration trends in Thailand can be described according to area, industry, and occupation; but the figures available for this information vary among sources. There are currently no official figures for irregular migrants in Thailand, yet it is commonly recognized that irregular migrants comprise a significant share of overall labor migrants in Thailand. Bangkok and the northern and southern provinces of Thailand¹⁹ are consistently cited as the geographic areas with the highest concentrations of labor migrants. The industries in Thailand that represent the highest numbers of labor migrants include construction, agriculture, fisheries, processing and manufacturing (often grouped together in the literature as "factory work"), and domestic work. Within these industries, labor migrants generally hold low-skilled positions.

Many labor migrants enter Thailand through irregular migration channels,²⁰ which the Thai Government has addressed through a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR; first in 2002-2003, then in 2007-2008, and more recently through MOU amendments in 2015-2016.²¹ These MOUs are supplemented by processes for Nationality Verification (NV), which were intended to allow irregular migrants already working in Thailand the opportunity to regularize their status.

Most recently, the Thai Government announced a new law concerning labor migration in June-July 2017,²² which introduced extremely high financial penalties for both irregular migrants and the

¹⁷ World Bank, The World Bank Group, 2017, <<http://data.worldbank.org>>.

¹⁸ Baan Dek Foundation, 'Access4Kids', 2016.

¹⁹ Martin, Philip, *The Economic Contribution of Migrant Workers to Thailand*, 2007.

²⁰ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asia-Pacific Migration Report*, Bangkok, 2015, p.26.

²¹ Paitoonpong, Srawooth, and Yongyuth Chalamwong, *Managing International Labor Migration in ASEAN: A Case of Thailand*, Bangkok, 2012, p.28ff; International Organization for Migration, *Infosheet: Labour Migration Trends in Thailand*, <<https://thailand.iom.int/sites/default/files/Infosheets/IOM%20Infosheet%20-%20Labour%20Migration%20Trends%20in%20Thailand.pdf>>, accessed 19 October 2017.

²² Bangkok Post, 'Decree on Migration Labour Passes', 7 July 2017.



companies employing irregular migrants in Thailand. The law also reiterated deportation for irregular migrants. Irregular migrants living and working in Thailand were granted an amnesty period of six months to register directly with local authorities in Thailand, but many of them reported not understanding this process or whether it applied to their specific circumstances.²³

The construction industry is the largest employer of labor migrants in Thailand,²⁴ and this industry is also a major driver of the Thai economy. In 2017, the Thai construction market was predicted to grow by 15% to reach more than \$40 billion USD for public infrastructure projects, outstripping Thailand's neighbors Malaysia and Singapore, where the construction market is worth \$30 billion USD and \$25 billion USD per year, respectively.²⁵ Construction companies have turned to migrant labor in order to meet industry labor needs, making construction one of the largest industries for employing migrant labor in Thailand.²⁶ Moreover, as these labor migrants have already moved from their country of origin and will likely be willing to move for new projects in different locations, their mobility aptly corresponds to the nature of construction work. Since the industry is project-based, construction work is often characterized by short-term projects that make use of temporary labor in different locations.

²³ Khaosod English, *From Alien Workers to Workers from Neighboring Countries*, 2017, <www.khaosodenglish.com/opinion/2017/07/15/alien-workers-workers-neighboring-countries>, accessed 15 July 2017.

Baan Dek Foundation, Interview with Manager and Social Worker on 10 March 2017.

²⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asia-Pacific Migration Report*, Bangkok, 2015, p.73.

²⁵ Thailand Business News, *Thailand's construction market is now driven by public infrastructure*, published 23.01.2017.

²⁶ International Organization for Migration, *Thailand Migration Report 2014*, United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand, Bangkok, 2014.



M. lives in a construction site camp in Chiang Mai with her three children, including these 2 twin boys. A local NGO helped her to obtain birth certificates and access medical services for these 2 newborns.

The construction sector is also characterized by the fragmented nature of its organization, as projects are planned and executed by different combinations of real estate and property developers, large- and mid-sized construction companies and contractors, and a variety of smaller subcontractors. As described in a recent publication from the ILO²⁷:

“The sector encompasses more than 80,000 Thai-registered construction companies.²⁸ In addition, there are many unregistered companies and operators, some of which are small teams. There are differences in scale and type of construction and sources of financing (private, public, PPP). Particularly striking are the layers of companies, contractors, and multiple layers of subcontractors in lengthy supply chains providing materials and labor during different phases of the build. In addition to the diversities within the sector, there are the diversities amongst the workers: including in gender, nationality, ethnicity, status, and language.”

Combined with the project-based, temporary workflow of this industry, its fragmented organization leads to particularly precarious work conditions for labor migrants. While contractors face the challenges related to securing a sufficiently sized and able workforce in order to complete a project on time, the members of this workforce face challenges related to lack of documentation, inadequate social protection, discrimination, and untracked, unfair, delayed or unpaid wages.²⁹

These challenges are evident in the systemic issue of informal and irregular recruitment processes. Labor recruitment is often arranged by brokers or brokerage agencies, who serve as a liaison between labor migrants and construction contractors to arrange work contracts and visas. These brokers are based in either the migrants' country of origin or in Thailand, and there are many reports that they charge untracked or unfair fees and/or do not provide clear, standardized, or lawful services for obtaining work contracts or legal documentation. As labor migrants may be dependent on these brokers for work and regular migration status – and the significant forms of precarity affected by these issues – this topic should be explored in-depth through future studies.³⁰

When labor migrants are actively working for a construction contractor in Thailand, many are paid below the minimum wage, and there are many reported cases of unpaid accident compensation for injured workers.³¹ Moreover, migrants are not permitted to form labor unions or associations, and they are not allowed to travel outside the specific province where they are employed. These

²⁷ International Labour Organization, *High Rise, Low Pay*, Bangkok, 2016.

²⁸ Oxford Business Group, *The Report: Thailand 2014*, London, 2014.

²⁹ International Labour Organization, *High Rise, Low Pay*, Bangkok, 2016.

³⁰ The issue of informal and irregular recruitment also affects migrants' transportation to Thailand or to specific work sites within Thailand, which may lead to high fees for drivers (especially when drivers risk high penalties if they are caught transporting irregular migrants), corruption fees for check-point patrollers and/or other public officials, as well as risks related to exploitation and human trafficking.

³¹ International Organization for Migration, *Thailand Migration Report 2014*, United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand, Bangkok, 2014.

restrictions on their civil rights can lead to exploitation and trafficking, in addition to extremely limited means to redress such issues.

Since many migrants are required to move from one construction site to another following construction labor demands, construction sites represent a temporary living environment for labor migrants and their families. Once the construction project is completed, the workers and their families must move to a different site for a new project, or they must move in search of new work opportunities. These temporary living environments figure prominently into the scope of the present study, as they represent the fundamental living conditions and the practical exercise of rights for the children of these construction workers.

1.3 CHILDREN LIVING IN CONSTRUCTION SITE CAMPS

Many parents who come to Thailand for construction work bring their children with them, or they have children while they are living and working in Thailand. The construction workforce in Thailand includes many female workers,³² which may contribute to higher birth rates among these adults.

These parents typically live with their children in temporary structures when they are working on a project in Thailand.³³ These temporary structures are typically built by the company and

³² Napier-Moore, Rebecca and Sheill, Kate, 2016, *High Rise, Low Pay: Experiences of migrant women in the Thai construction sector*, International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-asia/-ro-bangkok/-sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_537743.pdf>; United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand, *Thailand Migration Report 2014*, Bangkok, 2014.

³³ If parents are able to secure long-term work contracts and regular migration documents and status, they may be able to reside long-term in a certain area. While this often means long-term residence in a construction site camp, some parents are able to live collectively in apartment buildings or small houses (small number of known cases in Chiang Mai).

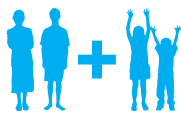


located near the construction site or on the construction site itself.³⁴ The living conditions of these construction site camps are extremely hazardous, including child protection risks, poor sanitation, minimal access to safe water, unreliable electricity, limited or hazardous waste management and garbage disposal, and high population density that facilitates the spread of disease.³⁵ Moreover, the isolated nature of these temporary communities perpetuates the families' social isolation and impairs their opportunities for integration into Thai society.³⁶

While these factors negatively affect the labor migrants' fundamental well-being, their children represent a particularly at-risk population, in terms of both their present living conditions and their future opportunities and overall well-being. In order to develop a clear and accurate understanding of children's needs, the living conditions for migrant children are explored in terms of their camps' infrastructure and the children's access to protection, health, and education. By gathering information through in-depth interviews with these children and parents, their challenges and needs are clarified in the sections that follow.

1.4 THE CHALLENGES

Participant demographics

119 
parents and children

21 
construction site camps

A total of 119 migrant parents and children³⁷ living in 21 construction site camps participated in this study. The majority of participants self-identified as Shan (55%) or Palong/Ta'Ang (32%). Participants also included small numbers each of Khmer (3%), Wa (3%), Pa'O (3%), Burman (2%), and both Shan and Pa'O (1%) ethnicities.

The median family size of participants is two children, and almost all (95%) of the parents interviewed are married and living with their partner, while the remainder are either divorced (2 participants) or single and living with a partner (1 participant). Those interviewed live in a room with a median of three people (range of 2-6 people). More than 40% of those interviewed live in a room with more than one child.

³⁴ There are several known construction sites in Chiang Mai where parents and their children live on the first story of a multi-story building that they are in the process of building.

³⁵ Baan Dek Foundation, 'Access4Kids', 2016.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ A total of 123 individuals were interviewed, although 4 participants were excluded from analysis since they were ethnic Thai (1 girl) or ethnic Lahu and born in Thailand (2 men and 1 woman).

Table 1. Demographic information for study participants

	Women	Men	Girls	Boys
Number of participants	29	29	32	29
Median age of group	27	31	10	9
Age range	20-45	20-38	5-17	6-15
Ethnic self-identification	15 Shan	15 Shan	16 Shan	12 Shan
	8 Palong/Ta'Ang	5 Palong/Ta'Ang	14 Palong/Ta'Ang	12 Palong/Ta'Ang
	2 Wa	2 Khmer	1 Wa	1 Pa'O
	2 Burman		1 Unknown	1 Khmer
	1 Pa'O			1 Shan and Pa'O
	1 Khmer			2 Unknown
Employment status	50% currently working	86% currently working	N/A	N/A

46% of adults interviewed have one or more children who were all born in Myanmar, and another 35% of adults have one or more children who were all born in Thailand. Two adults interviewed had one or more children who were born in Myanmar and one or more who were born in Thailand, and three participants' children were born in Cambodia. Similarly, 57% of children interviewed were born in Myanmar, while the rest were born in Thailand.

1.4.1 INFRASTRUCTURE

The construction site camp is central to families' experience of working in construction in Thailand, as it represents the family's home in a foreign environment. When a construction company recruits workers for a new construction project, the company usually rents an area of land where temporary housing will be set up for workers and their families. The company provides materials (often plywood and tin metal) and hires several workers to build the camp. The average land area, housing capacity, and estimated duration of these construction site camps vary greatly, according to the scale of the given construction project. The construction of temporary shelters for employees is subject to general laws on residential buildings under the Building Control Act and other relevant regulations, but several companies have reported difficulties in following regulations for temporary shelters due to constraints such as non-conducive urban environments, budget limitations, and short-term building projects that make it difficult to justify costly or complex improvements.³⁸ The camp's infrastructure significantly affects children's fundamental development and well-being, as well as their overall satisfaction with their living environment.

³⁸ Tilleke & Gibbins. 'Memorandum: Legal Requirements for Housing and Good Living Conditions for Migrant Workers in Thailand', 5 May 2017.



Showers and toilets

“Women wear a sarong wrap and the men can see their chests through it.”

Girl, 11 years old

“The women wear sarongs and sometimes the men will look at the women, and it is not good. I feel uncomfortable.”

Girl, 16 years old

“When the ladies have soap to take a shower and the soap falls down, the girl goes to pick up the soap from the floor and the men can see her. It is not good for the girl.”

Girl, 8 years old

Overall, children and parents reported that the camps' showers and toilets are inadequate. The showers in construction site camps are typically large, aboveground basins of water where people taking a shower will use a bowl to scoop water out of the basin. Eighty per cent of the 21 camps represented in the present study, do not have shower basins separated for men and women; rather there is only one large, aboveground basin of water for everyone to use together.

Almost all children and parents living in camps without separated shower areas expressed that the showers should be separated by gender, and this did not differ by participant age or gender. The majority of these participants think the showers should be separated because it feels immodest or makes them feel shy to shower in front of members of the opposite sex. Other children and parents mentioned that the showers were too crowded or that they feel afraid using the showers.

Most construction site camps have squat toilets that do not have running water, and they often do not have water for cleaning or manual flushing. More than 60% of children and parents think that these toilets are inadequate, and they reported a wide range of problems related to hygiene and sanitation, including toilets that are frequently dirty, full, or broken; toilets that are not private; and lack of sufficient water



“I would not be afraid [to use the toilets] if there was a light, but some toilets do not have a light.”

Boy, 9 years old

necessary for flushing the toilets. Sanitation and hygiene issues caused by inadequate facilities are beyond the scope of the present study, but should be explored in future studies.

On the protection side, lighting was also reported as an issue.

Moreover, 70% of children reported that they do not feel safe using the toilets. Approximately half of these children explained that they are afraid because of snakes or another type of animal (as these toilets are typically located outdoors, without flooring or full-length siding).

While construction site camps typically have electricity, more than one-third of children and parents reported that the electricity in their camp cuts out frequently. Slightly more than half of parents reported that they pay for the electricity themselves; it is not paid for or provided by the company who sets up and operates the construction site camp. Electricity-related accidents must also be further investigated, as few parents reported that they have heard about how to keep children safe around electricity. About half of the interviewed children reported hearing about accidents related to electricity in their camps, including children getting minor shocks, a worker who was shocked to death when trying to fix the electricity, seeing a flame or spark, and seeing an electric cooking pot burn.

Satisfaction with living environment

Both children and parents reported that minor improvements to a camp's infrastructure can make a significant difference to families' overall satisfaction with their living environment. Furthermore, both children and parents place great importance on social connection to other community members (friends and relatives) who live in the camp.

Migrant children living in construction site camps in Thailand

New data clarifies their challenges

When children were asked what changes they would most like to see in their living environment, more than 40% reported wanting minor improvements to the camp's infrastructure such as functioning toilets, better showers, roofs that don't leak when it rains, and a cleaner living environment; while about the same number wanted more toys or activities to improve the camp environment. Approximately one-third of parents reported improved toilets, showers, electricity, and access to drinking water as their most desired changes to their living environment. Several parents also reported that their room is too small or too hot, that the roof of their room leaks when it rains and requires repair, and that a door for the camp's main entrance was needed to protect the children.

Children were slightly less satisfied with their living situation than parents overall, but children and parents both reported that their main reason for satisfaction was their friends and relatives who also live in the camp. Children who reported dissatisfaction with their living environment attributed it in part to a lack of other kids or people in the camp or the lack of activities or toys. Few mentioned that the camp is too far from the school, the city, or shops.

1.4.2 CHILD PROTECTION

Migrant children living in construction site camps may face challenges to child protection ranging from barriers to learning about their rights, to obtaining the documents that facilitate the full exercise of their rights. In exploring these children's access to child protection, it is also important to explore potential threats such as discrimination, separation from their parents, abuse through domestic violence, and exposure to child labor.

Information on how to access services

Upon arriving in a country, a new province, or a new construction site camp for the first time, a family may not fully understand their right to access local services such as health centers or public schools, nor how to do so in practice. In addition, if the worker's children do not register as a follower of their parent to Thailand, the children will be staying in Thailand illegally.³⁹ Therefore, it is of particular importance for employers (or other points of contact) to inform migrant families how to register and access such services for their children.

The safety officer of every company is responsible for informing workers about benefits during weekly safety meetings. A variety of issues and services are generally discussed in these meetings including safety, health, and legal documents.⁴⁰

The majority of parents were informed about the services for their children upon arriving in their present community (given the examples of doctors, schools, and identification documents).

³⁹ Raks Thai Foundation, et al. 'Thailand: A Joint Submission on Migrant Workers and Their Families in Thailand for the 12th Session of the Universal Periodic Review, October 2011', OHCHR, October 2011, <<http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session12/TH/JS4-JointSubmission4-eng.pdf>>.

⁴⁰ Reported by Social Worker from the Baan Dek Foundation responsible for coordination with construction companies in Chiang Mai. Baan Dek Foundation, Interview on 10 March 2017.



T. is a construction worker who moved from Myanmar to Chiang Mai with his wife almost five years ago. They are both hard workers, and last June 2016 they gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

However, 12% of parents reported that they were not informed. Of the parents who were informed, most were informed by relatives or other community members, and only 16% mentioned their employer, Luk Pi,⁴¹ or community leader as a source of information. Even when specifically asked about information provided by their employer, more than half of parents stated that the employer did not help them learn about such services.

Figure 1. Learning about basic services



Documentation

In order to work legally, labor migrants coming to Thailand are required to have a valid passport, a non-Immigrant B visa, and work permit. The visa and work permit must be obtained with the support of the employer, and they are often processed by labor brokers or brokerage agencies before migrant workers enter Thailand,⁴² as discussed previously. The process of obtaining regular status for employment can take a considerable amount of time (ranging from weeks to years) and, particularly in cases where labor brokers or agencies are processing workers' documents, the cost of documents can be very high.⁴³

Parents' responses to questions about documentation illustrated several overall trends: the process of obtaining all legally required documents is complex, time-consuming, and difficult for families to afford. It remains a persistent challenge for many workers to fully understand their right to register as well as the practical steps of the documentation processes, which leads them to be overly reliant on the services of labor brokers.

⁴¹ The Luk Pi is a subcontractor or construction foreman; the Luk Pi sometimes lives in the construction site camp.

⁴² International Labour Organization, *High Rise, Low Pay*, Bangkok, 2016.

⁴³ International Labour Organization, *High Rise, Low Pay*, Bangkok, 2016.

All but 3 parents reported that they first came to Thailand illegally, and the majority of these parents reported that they have since been able to obtain documents to become regularized. However, confusion surrounding which documents are necessary to obtain such regularization was evident in their responses: of the parents who reported that they now possess documentation permitting them to live and work in Thailand legally, at least 9 different documents or combinations of documents were reported, several of which did not in fact entitle the bearer to regular status in Thailand. Legally, companies will only hire workers who have regular, legal status in Thailand at the time they are hired.

According to the Foreign Workers Administration Office of the Ministry of Labour, workers are responsible to obtain and pay for their own passport and visa (910 THB), as well as a health insurance card (an additional 1,000 THB to cover 3 months).⁴⁴ Nearly half of the parents who reported that they have legal documents (20 out of 44 responses) obtained them through a labor broker or agency, and approximately one-third obtained them through their employer. The median reported cost of a passport was more than 12,000 THB (ranging from 1,800 THB-16,000 THB), well over the 910 THB mentioned above. Similarly, pink cards were reported to cost those interviewed a median of 7,000 THB (ranging from 1,200-10,000 THB). However, the registration process for pink cards is now closed and every worker who previously had a pink card needed to change from a pink card to a Certificate of Identity (CI) before December 13, 2017.⁴⁵ The high reported costs of documents may be due to an additional broker/facilitator fee. These costs are very difficult for families to afford when the average wage of migrant construction workers in Thailand is often less than the Thai minimum wage of 300 THB per day (approximately \$9.06 USD).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ministry of Labour, Foreign Workers Administration Office, July 6, 2017, <https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/bkk_th/f8765a984b0cd7e6707c2b28f43e05b6.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Thai Bureau of Registration Administration, <http://www.bora.dopa.go.th/images/snbt/book/60/mt03091_v4.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Napier-Moore, Rebecca and Sheill, Kate, 2016, *High Rise, Low Pay: Experiences of migrant women in the Thai construction sector*, International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-asia/-ro-bangkok/-sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_537743.pdf>. Page 29 further reports that: "The average day wage for the migrant workers interviewed for this research is THB 282 (USD 7.99) a day; for migrant women it is slightly lower at THB 274 (USD 7.77). In addition to this underpayment, the migrant workers in this study reported a range of differences and discriminations in the pay system." The labor migrants participating in this report from the ILO were located in Bangkok, and further study is needed to understand how these estimates (average wage and difference by gender or skill set) may change throughout other areas of Thailand.





Barriers to documentation therefore include financial obstacles and the lack of knowledge about documents and administrative processes,⁴⁷ which themselves create barriers to accessing essential services and exercising one's full rights.

Social exclusion and discrimination

“*[Thai children] don't play with me. I want to play with them, but those kids don't want to play with me.*”

Girl, 6 years old

“*When I speak Shan, (language of ethnic Shan/Tai people from Myanmar), people will look at me, kind of make me feel bad.*”

Girl, 13 years old

“*I am afraid that Thai people will yell at me and ask the police to come and catch me.*”

Girl, 7 years old

The construction site camps where these children live are physically enclosed and isolated from surrounding communities. In addition to physical separation from others, the children living in these camps may experience language barriers, xenophobia, and other social obstacles that may make them the victims of social exclusion and discrimination.

Almost half of children interviewed said they have felt uncomfortable or out of place in Thailand. Most children could not state a reason why they felt this way, but the majority of children who did state a reason reported that they are “not Thai,” or that they are “different from Thai people,” as the main reason they have felt uncomfortable or out of place in Thailand.

A few children also reported that they do not have many friends in Thailand, they are unable to speak Thai as well as Thai people, or they lack documents and are afraid of the police.

⁴⁷ Baan Dek Foundation, Interview on 10 March 2017.

These responses indicate factors in the children's living situation that may have negative effects on children's social and emotional development and lead to serious consequences for their experiences with other children and adults, their aptitude for learning, integration into schools, future opportunities, and overall well-being.

Moreover, when asked if they have felt that they have been treated differently or unfairly by others in Thailand, half of children interviewed said that they felt this way, the majority of whom attributed this to perceived discrimination.

“One time I wanted to buy chicken and I went a different way, not the direct way, and someone said, ‘If you go to buy chicken on this road, I will call the police to catch you.’”

Boy, 9 years old

“We parked in the wrong place once and people said, ‘You are an alien,’ and they took pictures and posted them on social media... [probably] saying we are not Thai and that we did something wrong... One woman scolded us...because we were speaking together in Shan. We tried to apologize but she wanted to call the police and wouldn't accept our apology. She even asked for the motorbike's registration to prove that it was really our bike.”

Girl, 13 years old and Girl, 17 years old

Almost two-thirds of parents said they have felt uncomfortable or out of place in Thailand, few of whom attribute these feelings to perceived discrimination.

“Some of them [Thai people], make me feel uncomfortable, [they think] ‘you are not Thai, you are Burmese’...I feel like when we go to the festival, or have a group of people, I feel like the others look at me as a migrant [and they are] watching me.”

Mother, 26 years old

Nearly one-quarter of these parents (7 out of 30 responses) feel uncomfortable or out of place because of their migrant status.

“I am afraid that one day the Thai people will get rid of the migrants and send me back to Myanmar.”

Mother, 27 years old

“Mostly [I feel uncomfortable or out of place] because I don't have papers. If I had papers, then I would be completely fine.”

Father, 20 years old

Other parents reported feeling out of place because they do not speak Thai well, or feeling out of place or uncomfortable at work.

“ I cannot read Thai, I cannot speak Thai, and other people don't want to talk to me and they look down at me. ”

Mother, 20 years old

“ [One time], I went to the hospital and I didn't understand what the doctor said [in Thai] and the doctor said 'You know nothing!'. The doctor asked how tall I was, but I didn't understand what the doctor said. ”

Mother, 30 years old

More than two-thirds of parents said they felt they have been treated differently or unfairly in Thailand, nearly half⁴⁸ of whom reported that they have felt this way at work or that they feel that they have been treated unfairly by their employer.

“ I feel like when I work with Thai people, if it is a difficult job they ask me to do it, but if it is an easy job they ask for Thai people to do it. We can't say we want to do this or that [type of work], but Thai people can talk to each other and do an easy job not the difficult job. So it makes me feel treated differently. ”

Father, 26 years old

More than one-third⁴⁹ of parents who reported that they have been treated differently or unfairly in Thailand said this was a result of their 'status'.

“ In some places people treat us unfairly because of status, like Thai people have a good education and qualifications, and migrants have low education. It is discrimination - they look at and treat us unfairly because of status. ”

Mother, 33 years old

⁴⁸ Figure based on less than 30 cases - 29 responses.

⁴⁹ Figure based on less than 30 cases - 29 responses.



Family separation

“Our son and daughter live with relatives near [somewhere in Chiang Mai]. We lived there before and when we moved here our children didn’t move with us because here is very far from the school. We moved here because we changed jobs.”

Father, 32 years old

“My son lives with my parents in [a different province]. No one can take care of my son here, so we sent him to that place about 4 or 5 months ago.”

Father, 25 years old

“I live with my older sister and two younger nieces [the older sister’s 2 young children]. My parents have never been to Thailand. I came here with just my sister...I don’t know why.”

Girl, 13 years old

“I am the only one in my family who came to Thailand. I live with my aunt and uncle. My parents and siblings are in Myanmar. My aunt has twin kids and asked my parents if I can take care of them so that she can go to work. This is the reason why I’m still in Thailand.”

Girl, 9 years old

Family separation is prevalent among labor migrants both around the world and those working in Thailand.⁵⁰ When parents migrate in order to find work, they may not be able to move with all of their children. In such cases, children may be left behind with other relatives or community members, or in orphanages or shelters. In the context of construction labor, family separation is particularly common because this sector frequently requires a mobile workforce who will meet the demands of short-term projects that are built in different locations. This means that workers are likely to experience frequent, repeated migrations and consequent periods of family separation.

Family separation bears very serious consequences on children’s fundamental development and life circumstances. Many studies have shown that family separation leads to detrimental effects on the psychological health of children separated from their parents,⁵¹ and it also increases children’s vulnerability to a wide range of risks, such as neglect, abuse, exploitation and human trafficking.⁵²

In the present study, parents reported that about 10% of their children (8 out of the 85 total children reported in their families) were living separately from them. However, children reported that about 30% of the children in their families (54 out of 175 total children reported in their families) were living separately from their parents, either elsewhere in Thailand or in the parents’ country of origin. There is concern that parents may have underreported this information, or that children may have incorrectly included cousins or other children as their siblings, both of which could account for this difference in reporting between parents and children. Regardless, family separation represents a fundamental barrier to children’s development

⁵⁰ Jampaklay, Aree, et al., *Children Living apart from Parents due to Internal Migration (CLAIM)*, Institute for Population and Social Research Mahidol University, 2012, <<http://www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/ipsr/Research/CLAIM/Download/CLAIM-Report-FinalReport.pdf>>.

⁵¹ Studies specific to family separation in Southeast Asia include:

Jampaklay, Aree, et al., *Children Living apart from Parents due to Internal Migration (CLAIM)*, Institute for Population and Social Research Mahidol University, 2012, <www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/ipsr/Research/CLAIM/Download/CLAIM-Report-FinalReport.pdf>;

Graham, Elspeth and Lucy Jordan, *Migrant Parents and the Psychological Well-Being of Left Behind Children in Southeast Asia*, Journal of Marriage and the Family, 2011, <www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3229683/pdf/jomf0073-0763.pdf>; and

Tang, Alisa, *The Impact of Parental Migration on the Children Left Behind and Their Caretakers*, UNICEF Thailand, 2012, <www.unicef.org/thailand/reallives_19165.html>

⁵² United Nations Children’s Fund, *Child Trafficking in East and South-East Asia: Reversing the Trend*, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok, August 2009, <https://www.unicef.org/eapro/Unicef_EA_SEA_Trafficking_Report_Aug_2009_low_res.pdf>



and well-being and exposes children to protection risks, and the reporting from parents and children confirms its occurrence among migrant families. It is highly recommended that this topic be further explored in future research in order to clarify its occurrence in the specific context of migrant construction labor, including possible regard to different age and gender groups.

Domestic violence

When women and children were asked questions about specific acts of verbal or psychological abuse (embarrassment, threats, etc.) and physical violence (being hit, kicked, pushed, etc.) in the camps, more than 40%⁵³ of mothers reported experiencing some form of verbal/psychological abuse or physical violence, and almost 90% of children participants reported experiencing some form of physical violence from their parents or guardians. 93% of children reported witnessing adults fighting with each other, almost 90% of which were physical fights. These experiences of violence are severe barriers to children's physical, emotional and social development, in addition to threats to their basic safety and well-being.



Violence against women

Almost half of the 22 mothers interviewed about domestic violence reported that they have experienced at least one form of verbal abuse or physical violence in question, and 5 reported that they have experienced two or more forms of physical violence in question.

⁵³ Figure based on less than 30 cases - 22 responses.

Table 2. Reported personal experiences of violence

Has anyone (including your husband/partner, your employer, other family members, or people you don't know)...	Number of women who reported this incident
Said or done something to embarrass you in front of others?	4
Threatened to hurt you?	3
Pushed or shaken you?	2
Thrown something at you?	2
Slapped you/hit you?	1
Hit you with something else that could hurt you?	0
Kicked you?	1
Dragged you?	0
Strangled or choked you?	0
Threatened you with a knife or other type of weapon?	2
Attacked you with a knife or other type of weapon?	0
Forced you to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?	0
Forced you to do other sexual acts when you did not want to?	3

Women reported having been pushed or shaken, having something thrown at them, having been threatened with a knife or other type of weapon, or having been slapped or hit. Three women also reported that a man had tried to force them to perform sexual acts that they did not want to do.

“The man was not drunk, but he tried to grab me and kiss me when I went to the toilet... At that time my husband and I were arguing, and when I went to the toilet alone, the man came up to me and tried to grab and kiss me.”

Mother, 33 years old

These forms of abuse or violence were found to occur at the community-level, not only as domestic violence within a single household. Few women reported acts of verbal abuse or physical violence from someone living in the camp other than their husband or another family member. A small number of women also reported acts of verbal abuse or physical violence from their employer or someone they work with.

When discussing violence toward women other than themselves, 11 women reported that they knew friends, family members, or others in the community whose husbands were physically violent towards them. Significantly, nearly all of the women participants said that they think it is important for their husbands to learn to avoid physical violence.

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“ I’ve seen some people here do this [demonstrates a kick with her foot]. Sometimes between a husband and wife, and sometimes other men hitting women. ”

Mother, 23 years old

“ I have seen this here...when the wife and husband argue and fight each other. I just hear the noise but I have never gone and looked at what they were doing. ”

Mother, 27 years old



Violence against children

Almost 90% of children reported experiencing some form of violence from their parents or guardians. Nearly three-quarters of children reported that parents have hit them with something that could hurt them other than the parents’ hand or fist, including a stick, a broom, a piece of wood, and a clothes hanger.

“ [My mother/father] uses a long stick...They take off my shirt and hit me on my back. ”

Boy, 7 years old

“ My father used to take a broom and hit my butt. My father used to hit me with a broom and I was afraid so I went in bed and covered the blanket over my head because if I cover my head with a blanket then I will not feel pain and it won’t feel as hard. ”

Boy, 8 years old

Almost 60% reported having been slapped or spanked. Almost one-third of children reported that their parents have thrown something at them, and more than 20% reported having been pushed or grabbed by their parents.

“ My father threw something at me that you use to collect coins, like a piggy bank. I don’t want to talk about it. ”

Girl, 10 years old

“ When I was young, I didn’t want to go to school so my father threw me on the ground. I got hurt when he threw me... it only hurt a little bit, I didn’t have to go to the hospital. ”

Boy, 10 years old



Table 3. Reported violence against children

In the last year, has your mom or dad (or guardian who they live with as applicable) ever...	Number of children who reported this incident
Thrown something at you?	14
Pushed or grabbed you?	7
Slapped or spanked you?	30
Hit you with something else that could hurt you (like a stick, a piece of wood, etc.)?	35



Children witness to violence

93% of children reported having seen adults fighting each other. From those, almost all reported witnessing physical fights.

Table 4. Children reported witness to violence

In the last year, have you...	Number of children who reported this incident
Seen adults fighting together?	49
Seen mom or dad throw something at the other?	11
Seen mom or dad push or grab the other?	3
Seen mom or dad slap or hit the other?	16
Seen mom or dad hit the other with something else that could hurt them (like a stick, a piece of wood, etc.)?	6
Had someone threaten you or someone else you know with a knife or other type of weapon?	12

“It happens often – mostly when the men are drunk and they come back to the room, they hit their wives and complain, and the men are angry and get into fights.”

Girl, 16 years old

“They argue first and then fight each other. I want to move somewhere else when I see it. Sometimes it happens very often.”

Boy, 9 years old

“I see men fight men, but I don’t see women fight women. I get scared when they fight and don’t want to stay...When we see this, we’re afraid that they will come and hit or push us, so we stay away. When I see adults fighting, I just go to my bed and put a blanket over my head.”

Girl, 8 years old

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In addition, more than one-quarter of these children reported either themselves or someone they know having been threatened with a knife or other type of weapon.

“ My father held up a knife to my mother and said, ‘I will kill you.’ But he will not kill my mother. He says he will, but he won’t really kill her. ”

Boy, 8 years old

“ I saw someone use a knife to hurt someone. They took the man to the hospital. I felt afraid. ”

Girl, 10 years old

When asked how they felt when they saw violence, the vast majority of children said they felt scared or afraid. Other children said that it made them feel “sad,” “annoyed,” “pity,” “angry,” or that he/she “wants to move” or “wants them to stop.”

Children’s reports of witnessing violence between their parents differs from women’s reporting of their own personal experience: almost 60% of children reported witnessing some form of physical violence among their parents or guardians, compared to 22% of women who reported experiencing a form of physical violence. These children reported seeing their mother slapped or hit by their father, witnessing something being thrown at their mother, having seen their mother hit with something else that could hurt her (a stick or broom), and witnessing their father pushing or grabbing their mother.

“ I’ve seen my father and mother fight each other. My father grabbed my mother’s hair and dragged her around on the floor. My father was beating my mom. ”

Boy, 8 years old

“ When [the child’s younger sister] was sleeping, my father choked my mother and she almost died. I heard the noise from the room. ”

Boy, 9 years old

“ My father hits my mother after drinking alcohol. ”

Boy, 10 years old

“ My parents fight each other, and one time my mother had a bloody nose. ”

Girl, 8 years old

In order to protect women and child participants, the men were not asked questions about violence. However, some men did bring up these community issues themselves during other responses, two of whom are quoted here:

“ Some people drink a lot in the community... every day. There are problems with it... it's noisy and we can't do much about it. Many people drink every day. I'm afraid of fights in the camp... afraid for my child when this happens. Sometimes men get drunk and scare the kids. ”

Father, 31 years old

“ There used to be a family [living in this camp] who argued a lot, and the man would hit the woman. If that happens, the subcontractor tries to stop the situation... This used to happen once or twice a month. ”

Father, 22 years old

Vulnerability to child labor

In Thailand, the legal minimum age for working is 15 years of age, with restrictive conditions such as hours and safety for individuals 15 to 17 years of age.⁵⁴ According to the *ILO Conventions and Recommendations on child labour*, the minimum age for children to work is 15 years old.⁵⁵ Migrant children living in construction site camps are particularly vulnerable to child labor. Children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development, or education.⁵⁶

Almost one-third of children interviewed who are under the age of 15 reported that they have done paid work before, and two-thirds of these children reported that they have worked since moving to the construction site camp where they currently live. Most of these children have been paid to work as caretakers to watch after other children in the community, as labor in agriculture, or as housekeepers for domestic work/cleaning. Small numbers of children reported working in construction, working as day laborers organizing bags or moving sand from a temple, collecting and selling recycling to earn money, or working in a restaurant.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Labour of Thailand, *Using Child Labor*, 2017, <www.mol.go.th/employee/Using_child_labor>.

⁵⁵ International Labour Organization, 'ILO Conventions and Recommendations on Child Labour', 2017, <www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang-en/index.htm>.

⁵⁶ United Nations Children's Fund, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNICEF UK, London, 1990, <https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.230307871.265105619.1508816283-641166473.1508816283>.



1.4.3 HEALTH

If they were to become very sick or have an accident or injury, the vast majority of participants reported that they would go to the hospital or health center, and about 15% reported that they would buy medicine at the pharmacy. Only one participant reported that he would do nothing if he was to become very sick, because he does not have enough money to pay for healthcare or medicine.

In order to explore the children's access to health services, interviews with children and parents focused on immunization, which is a public health priority; and health cards, which represent the right to regularly access medical services.

Vaccinations

Vaccination coverage and correct timing of vaccine schedules is important for both individual and population health,⁵⁷ and it is well-documented that migrant children living in Thailand have lower rates of vaccinations than Thai children and must be specifically targeted in order to meet national vaccination standards.⁵⁸

Overall, almost one-fifth of parents reported that not all of the children in their families have received vaccinations. In addition, parents often did not remember how many vaccines their children had received, so it is unclear whether the children of parents who reported that they did receive vaccines are fully vaccinated according to the National Immunization Program (NIP) vaccination schedule for children.

⁵⁷ Kaji, Aiko, et al., 'Immunization Coverage in Migrant school Children Along the Thailand-Myanmar Border', Springerlink, 2016, <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7z88q4kx>>.

⁵⁸ Deglise, Carole, *Healthy Microinsurance: A Review of the Landscape and Determinants of Performance*, Dreamlopmments, July 2016, <www.dreamlopmments.com/images/files/review_of_health_microinsurance.pdf>; Muangchana, Charung, Piyanit Thamapornpilas and Opart Karnkawinpong, 'Immunization Policy Development in Thailand: The role of the advisory committee on immunization practice, vaccine', Elsevier, <www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X10002112?via%3Dihub>.

Of the parents who reported that their children have received vaccinations, about 70% received these vaccines at the hospital or public health centers. Of the remaining parents, one-fifth reported that a foundation arranged transportation and appointments for their children to receive vaccines, four reported that their children received vaccinations at school, and a few participants reported that their children received vaccinations in their home country. Reasons reported for why children didn't receive vaccinations include lack of knowledge about how or where to go to get vaccinations (especially for children not born in Thailand), forgetting the appointment, or being too far from a hospital or health center.

Health insurance cards

“I don't know how to do it and no one takes me to do it and no one helps me to do it.”

Mother, 30 years old

“The baby has [a health card], but my older daughter does not. My older daughter can get it but she is 9 years old and if she does the card I have to pay the same [for her] as the adult price. So I have to pay a lot of money for her to get it and right now I don't have enough money to get it for my daughter.”

Mother, 29 years old

“My child was born in my village. There was miscommunication from the agency. They said I couldn't get it for my child so I didn't bring the document when I processed the yellow card because the papers were in Cambodia. They wouldn't make it.”

Father, 31 years old

Thai citizens can obtain the public health insurance care to access public medical services in Thailand at the lower price. Alternatively, employees of private companies can access health services through their company's social security fund. Migrant construction workers have the right to use either the public health insurance system or the private social security system, provided that they are directly recruited and hired by the construction company.⁵⁹

Many migrant construction workers are recruited and hired by subcontractors and, consequently, not able to access this private social security system. These migrant construction workers must therefore obtain the health insurance card, which costs 2,100 THB per adult annually and 365 THB per child annually (for children younger than 6 years old), and requires regular documents (including birth certificate, one parent's passport, and proof of employment in Thailand). According to Thai law, health services will not be refused to individuals without the health insurance card, but those individuals could accrue debt for services, as determined by the health center or hospital in question.⁶⁰

Nearly half of parents reported that not all of their children have an active health card. The majority of these parents are unable to obtain health cards for their children because they lacked sufficient documents at the time they arrived or when their child was born, and/or they cannot afford the health card.

⁵⁹ Deglise, Carole, *Healthy Microinsurance: A Review of the Landscape and Determinants of Performance*, Dreamlopmments, July 2016, <www.dreamlopmments.com/images/files/review_of_health_microinsurance.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Whether children were born in a hospital or at home may also affect the documentation barrier, as children born at home were less likely to have all necessary documents. Only a few children who were born at home have an active health card, compared to the majority of children who were born in a hospital. Similarly, more than 20% of children who were born at home do not have a birth certificate, while all children who were born in a hospital have access to this document. Less than half of parents reported that all of their children were born in a hospital, which varies dramatically by the children's country of birth: all of the children born in Thailand or in Cambodia were born in a hospital, but none of the children born in Myanmar were born in a hospital.

Responses show that immunization and the possession of health cards are significant challenges for migrant children living in construction site camps, indicating inadequate access to health services for these children overall.

1.4.4 EDUCATION

At the policy level, Thailand has passed comprehensive national education policies⁶¹ that ensure the right to an education for all children living in Thailand (even non-Thai children), without exception. In practice, certain barriers are known to hamper this inclusive access to education, particularly for migrant and/or stateless children. It is essential to understand these barriers in order to fulfill Thailand's commendable national education policies.

School preparation and integration

Migrant children face many challenges during their preparation for and integration into formal education, including language and literacy barriers, the inability to start school with peers of the same age group due to lack of age-appropriate learning, and discrimination from school staff and/or other children.⁶² Non-formal education is often necessary to prepare out-of-school children for integration into public schools.

⁶¹ United Nations Children's Fund. 'Education: Overview', UNICEF, <<https://www.unicef.org/thailand/education.html>>.

⁶² Dowding, Laura, et al., *Pathways to a Better Future: A Review of Education for Migrant Children in Thailand*, Save the Children and World Education, 2014, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9016/pdf/migrant_education_annual_report_full_resized.pdf>.





There are also confirmed reports of public schools refusing to enroll migrant children in Thailand, either because they are not aware that all children are entitled to this right in Thailand, or because the fulfillment of this right may bring certain challenges that the school is unwilling or unable to address, such as the provision of additional resources in order to teach the children Thai, or extra courses for children who are behind their age groups.⁶³

School attendance

The number of migrant children who attend school – indeed, even the total number of migrant children in Thailand – is not available due to many being undocumented and mobile. Many children living in construction site camps in Thailand are believed to not attend school, unless their communities are supported by an NGO or other CSO that specifically helps these children to enroll in schools.⁶⁴

Most participants in the present study do attend school because the communities where they live are supported by an NGO.⁶⁵ The rates of school attendance is more than 80% (77 out of 95 responses) of school-age children were enrolled in school, and those who were not enrolled at the time of the interview were then referred to BDF social workers and enrolled in school for the next term are therefore not necessarily representative of construction site camps in Thailand in general. While overall rates of school attendance were not representative among these participants, it was still possible to explore the children's previous or potential barriers to accessing education.

The Thai government provides free education to all by supporting the costs of school management, the salary of official government teachers, standard school books, school supplies and uniforms, school activities, and lunch. On top of this, the government also provides a basic subsidy directly to

⁶³ Baan Dek Foundation, Interview with Manager and Social Work Coordinator on 10 March 2017.

⁶⁴ Reported by Baan Dek Foundation, Interview with Manager and Social Work Coordinator, 10 March 2017; reported by MAP Foundation, Email correspondence with Director and field colleagues, 14 December 2017; reported by Mercy Centre, Email correspondence with Project Coordinator and field colleagues, 7 November 2017.

⁶⁵ These communities are supported by Baan Dek Foundation, working on school enrollment of out-of-school children through MOU partnerships with local public schools in Chiang Mai.

the school in the amounts of 1,700 THB/child/year for pre-school/kindergarten; 1,900 THB/child/year for primary school, 3,500 THB/child/year for grades 7-9, and 3,800 THB/child/year for grades 10-12. However, in order to provide quality education, schools supplement this support budget by asking for additional fees (e.g. teacher fees, used by schools to hire additional teachers beyond the quota they can hire from the government education budget; the cost of school uniforms, which can be 2,000-3,500 THB depending on the school⁶⁶; accident insurance; and/or the cost of transportation). These costs can be about 1,000- 3,000 THB/child/semester. Of families interviewed with children who do not attend school, more than 40%⁶⁷ said the children do not attend school because they do not have enough money and cannot afford the extra costs of attending school that are not covered by the government. Other parents reported that a child does not attend school because the child is a caretaker for younger siblings (n=4), or that the family has to move too frequently for their children to attend school (n=4).

Frequent migrations clearly represent a significant barrier to school attendance. The vast majority of children who do not currently attend school did attend school previously. Some of these children attended school in their home country, and others attended school when they lived in a previous construction site camp. More than 30% of children reported that they thought they would stop attending school if they had to move, but almost all of the parents said that their children would continue to attend school elsewhere if they were to move.

“My child’s life is more important than my life, and I want him to study and get a good education. So wherever we move, we will ask for a moving letter from the old school [so that he can stay in school].”

Father, 33 years old

⁶⁶ A school must accept a child in classes if he/she does not have all required school uniforms, although there is concern that the child may face discrimination from other students and teachers.

⁶⁷ Figure based on less than 30 cases - 18 responses.







2

CURRENT INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Successful initiatives that benefit
both children and companies*



2.1 CURRENT INITIATIVES

A RANGE OF ENGAGEMENT MODELS

A number of initiatives are already taking place to support these children throughout Thailand, enacted by various public, private and social sector stakeholders. Significantly, certain initiatives demonstrate both positive impact on the children's well-being, and they even lead to certain benefits for companies – ranging from investors' positive perception of social responsibility to workforce retention.

In order to document and explore these initiatives, a mapping was conducted that identified initiatives to support these children in Bangkok Metropolitan Region, Samut Sakhon Province, Chiang Mai Province, Chonburi Province, Tak Province (focus on Mae Sot District), and Kanchanaburi Province. The following initiatives were selected for their support to migrant children living in construction site camps that is achieved through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Sustainable Development Goal 17, *Partners for the Goals*, affirms the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships among public, private and civil society actors, since these actors are able to leverage diverse resources and areas of expertise to achieve the SDGs and other forms of positive social impact.⁶⁸ The multi-stakeholder approach ultimately fosters cooperation and long-term solutions to achieve development goals and address social issues. With regard to migrant children living in construction site camps, these partnerships include real estate and construction companies as key private sector stakeholders.

⁶⁸ United Nations, 'Goal 17: Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development', United Nations, <www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/>.

Current initiatives and partnerships

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In addition to multi-stakeholder engagement, it is recommended that initiatives supporting migrant children in construction site camps in Thailand follow rigorous children safeguarding standards and implement social impact monitoring and evaluation. A full review of these practices was beyond the scope of the present documentation project, but it is recommended that these and all such initiatives fully integrate the following practices:

Child safeguarding

For initiatives that support children, rigorous child safeguarding standards must be articulated and implemented through a child protection policy. Many good practices have been established for effective child protection, and these practices should be comprehensively integrated into efforts to support children.

Social impact monitoring and evaluation

In order to determine the effectiveness of certain forms of support, initiatives must follow a monitoring framework that defines clear objectives for social impact and describes how the achievement of those objectives will be measured. Such monitoring makes it possible to assess an initiative's impact and ultimately evaluate its failures and/or successes.





A safe space in construction site camps

In order to create a safe place for children to play and learn, child-friendly spaces can be designated and built directly within the construction site camp. The safe space lends itself to community childcare, a place for non-formal education or school support, and a community-gathering area for children and families. The creation and use of the safe spaces may ultimately prevent injuries and child labor for children growing up in otherwise unsafe environments.

Sansiri with Visavapat + UNICEF + Baan Dek Foundation

Since 2014, Sansiri PCL and UNICEF Thailand have implemented the 'The Good Space' campaign among 30 construction site camps throughout Thailand. In a camp in Chiang Mai operated by Visavapat Co., Ltd., Baan Dek Foundation has been an implementing partner for this safe space since 2015. Sansiri provided the materials to build a large, one-room structure as well as the salaries for two full-time childcare providers hired and trained by Baan Dek Foundation. With the consent and support of Visavapat, Baan

Dek Foundation enrolled school-age children in local public schools and then implemented an early childhood development curriculum at The Good Space for children too young or otherwise unable to attend local public schools.⁶⁹ Sansiri has replicated this initiative in collaboration with other contractors in different construction site camps throughout Thailand and also developed a comprehensive guide on safe spaces in construction site camps, the *Child-Friendly Space Guideline Booklet*.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Baan Dek Foundation reported a range of circumstances that prevent some children from being enrolled in schools, including: children who are not enrolled within the registration period for a new school semester, children living with disabilities that cannot be accommodated by the school, parents who choose to not enroll their children in school because they will need to

move to a different construction site camp in the near future, and parents who are unable to afford school fees. Baan Dek Foundation, Interview on 10 March 2017.

⁷⁰ Sansiri PLC, 'Social Change: Building the Future for Children', Issuu Inc., <https://issuu.com/sansiriplc/docs/new_manual_eng_12_feb>.

Current initiatives and partnerships

Successful projects that benefit both children and companies

Non-formal education support

In Thailand, all children have the right to receive an education and attend public schools, regardless of their ethnicity or legal status.⁷¹ Migrant children living in construction site camps may face a range of barriers that make it very challenging for them to attend public schools, particularly frequent, repeated migrations. In order to meet children's needs for education and fundamental development, non-formal education sessions that follow an adapted curriculum provide an alternative when repeated migrations prevent these children from attending Thai public schools.

Narai + Foundation for the Better Life of Children

Since 2016, the Foundation for the Better Life of Children ('Sang Sun Dek' in Thai) has partnered with Narai Property Co., Ltd. to provide non-formal education sessions to children living in the camps it operates. Among the construction site camps it supports, FBLC reports that migrant children stay an average of 3-8 months in a given camp before migrating elsewhere. This short time-frame prevents children from enrolling in local public schools (in addition to financial obstacles and language barriers), so non-formal education

sessions provide a curriculum that addresses children's need for education and fundamental development. In 2016, Narai provided FBLC with a vehicle that has been converted into a "mobile school" with a team of teachers that rotate among 7 different camps, supporting approximately 700 children since 2016. These teachers deliver on-site non-formal education sessions, and they arrange for assistance when children are identified in need of health or protection assistance.

⁷¹ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Education: Overview', UNICEF, <www.unicef.org/thailand/education.html>.



Improvements in safety, waste management and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)

By improving the basic infrastructure of construction site camps, it is possible to achieve significant gains in safety, waste management and WASH for all camp residents, including children. The provision of building materials (e.g. light fixtures, wiring, paint, shelves) leads to safer living conditions. Improvements to toilets and showers lead to overall healthier hygiene and sanitation, and they may also positively influence related safety and protection issues. These improvements leverage the building materials that construction companies are able to provide, as well as the training and skills of the construction workers who reside in the construction site camp.

Chiang Mai Rimdoi + Baan Dek Foundation

Chiang Mai Rimdoi PCL demonstrates the positive impact that local developers and subcontractors can achieve in the lives of children living in construction site camps. Based in Chiang Mai, this company has partnered with Baan Dek Foundation since 2015 to strategize improvements to the camp environment and provided its workers with building materials to use, including sheetmetal, paint, tables, and a bookshelf. Camp residents used their construction skills to carry out improvements, and they have since reported

that electrical improvements have led to better camp safety, and new paint has dramatically improved the camp's appearance and cleanliness. Community leaders from this camp have even built a safe space.⁷² This space is now actively used as a safe environment for the 40 children (between 2-17 years old) who currently live in this camp, as well as a place where Baan Dek Foundation can hold regular support sessions.

⁷²This information was communicated to Social Workers from the Baan Dek Foundation by more than five community residents. Baan Dek Foundation, Interview on 10 March 2017.

Current initiatives and partnerships

Successful projects that benefit both children and companies



Training sessions on access to health, education and safety services

Through educational training sessions, community leaders and parents can learn how to access essential health, education and safety for themselves as well as the children living in their construction site camps. These training sessions may include many other life skills for adults, such as financial literacy and STD prevention. Once they are trained in these skills, these adults become empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve major improvements in their communities – e.g., all the children living in their camp can be vaccinated, obtain health cards, attend school, and benefit from child protection awareness and services. While these training sessions can benefit these adults' current construction site camps, they can also benefit other camps these individuals may migrate to in the future.

Pingnakorn + Baan Dek Foundation

Since 2017, Pingnakorn has partnered with Baan Dek Foundation to deliver training sessions through the Migrant Empowerment Project, wherein community leaders in Chiang Mai learn skills in accessing services to become certified 'Peer Educators.' In 2017, 68 community members living in camps operated by 8 different contractors were successfully

certified as Peer Educators, including 24 community members from 2 camps operated by Pingnakorn. In 2017, the Peer Educators employed by Pingnakorn enrolled 8 children in school for the first time, facilitated vaccinations for the children living in their camps, and received training in child protection.



Vaccination campaign

Vaccines are a basic medical need for children, and they represent a foremost public health priority for society at large. It is well-documented that migrant populations in Thailand do not currently meet national vaccination standards, particularly children.⁷³ The provision of vaccines to migrant children living in construction site camps can be arranged at local health centers or directly within the camps (according to the circumstances of a given camp and available medical resources). Vaccination campaigns can achieve high-impact health support to individuals and entire communities.

Sansiri with Contractors + Ministry of Public Health + WHO + UNICEF

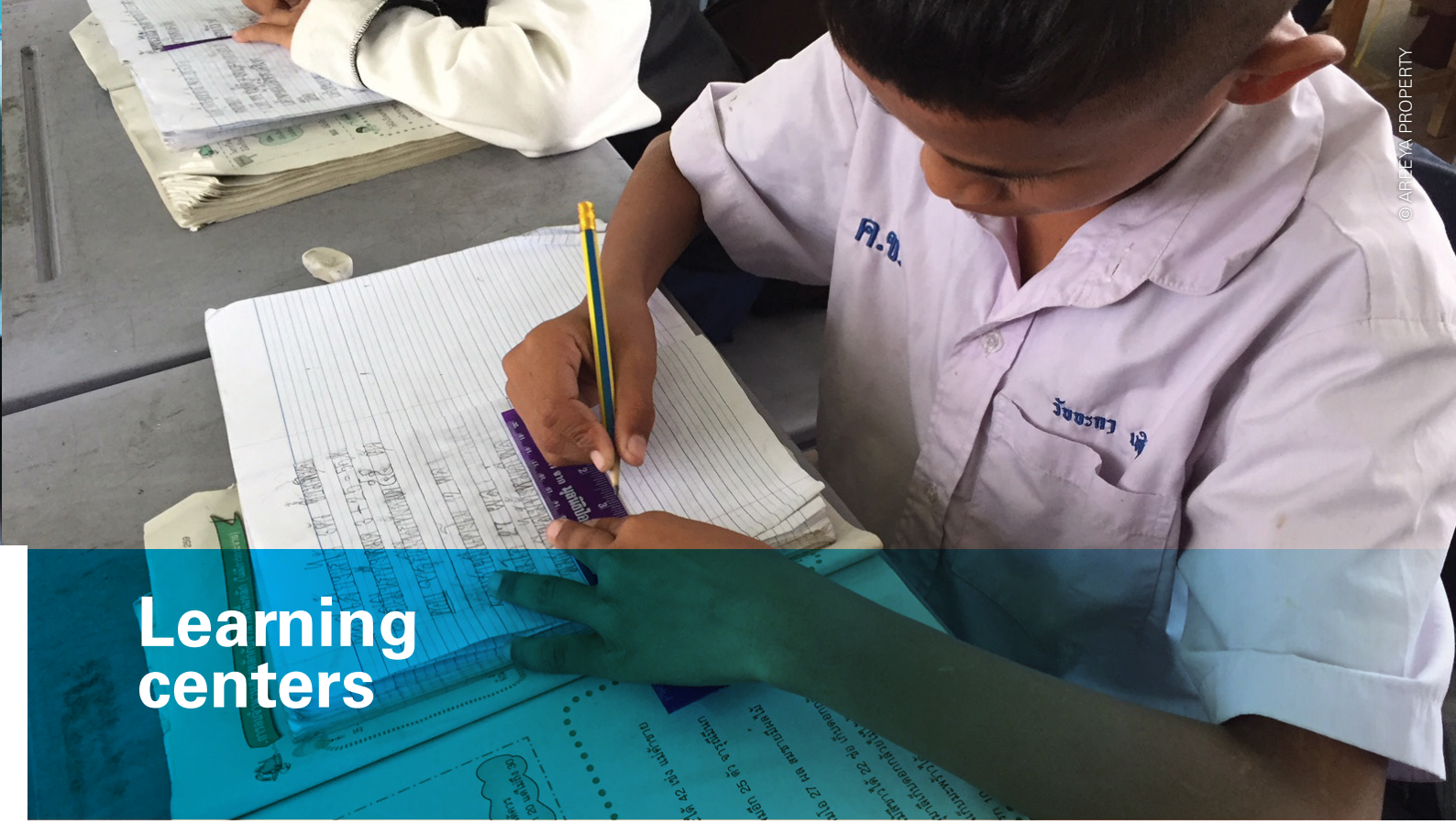
In 2016, Sansiri PCL incorporated preventive healthcare and health promotion for construction workers and their children as a key corporate policy and launched a vaccination campaign for the children of construction workers in multiple sites in Bangkok. Sansiri has formed a multi-stakeholder partnership with the Thai Ministry of Public Health, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF Thailand to provide full vaccinations for 595

children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand in a 2-year period. Through this campaign, Sansiri and its contractors arrange transportation for children and parents to be vaccinated at designated medical centers or liaise with public health officers to provide vaccinations on-site.

⁷³ Kaji, Aiko, et al., 'Immunization Coverage in Migrant school Children Along the Thailand-Myanmar Border', Springerlink, 2016, <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7z88q4kx>>.

Current initiatives and partnerships

Successful projects that benefit both children and companies



Learning centers

As the majority of migrant children living in construction site camps do not attend school,⁷⁴ on-site learning centers make it possible for children to learn Thai and other skills essential to their integration into Thai public schools. Such non-formal educational opportunities support the children's fundamental development, ranging from language skills to cognitive development and social growth. Moreover, learning centers also provide a safe space within the camps. In order to ensure the children's long-term opportunities for education, the most effective learning centers teach the children skills needed for eventual enrollment in Thai public schools (e.g., Thai, literacy and numeracy), or they follow an accredited educational curriculum that is recognized by the public education system of the children's countries of origin for primary and secondary school to allow for transfers between systems, in cases where a family plans to return to their country of origin.

Areeya Property + Local NGO

Since 2015, Areeya Property has formed a multi-stakeholder partnership with a local NGO to build and operate five learning centers among construction site camps, supporting a total of 45 out-of-school migrant children in 2016. These learning centers provide a safe space that serves as a safe, stimulating environment for the children living in the camp.

Teachers are recruited and specially trained by this NGO that specializes in support to migrant workers, who provides social expertise that ensures an adapted curriculum and additional support tailored to the needs of these children.

⁷⁴ As reported by CSOs supporting this population of children, including Baan Dek Foundation and MAP Foundation in Chiang Mai and Mercy Centre in Bangkok.

2.2 BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN FROM SHORT TO LONG-TERM

Extensive data and evidence demonstrate the universal importance of meeting Early Childhood Development needs,⁷⁵ and data is now emerging on the needs specific to migrant children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand. The initiatives highlighted in this section aim to achieve the following measurable benefits for these children.

⁷⁵ Shonkoff, Jack P., Richter, Linda, van der Gaag, Jacques, et al. *An Integrated Scientific Framework for Child Survival and Early Childhood Development*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/2/e460.full-text.pdf>; and Walker, Susan P., Wachs, Theodore D., Grantham-McGregor, Sally, et al., *Inequality in early childhood: Risk and protective factors for early child development*, *The Lancet*, 2011, doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60555-2



INFRASTRUCTURE Growing up in adequate living environments

Short-term benefits

- Less injuries and accidents caused by unsafe environments
- Less health problems caused by inadequate hygiene and sanitation, e.g., better sleep gains for children who are less often sick

Long-term benefits

- Improved social opportunities, including the ability to interact and play with other healthy children in safe environments
- Improved health overall that leads to increased well-being, learning outcomes and greater future opportunities

CHILD PROTECTION Knowing one's rights and how to practice them

Short-term benefits

- Less vulnerability to risks such as exploitation, neglect, abuse or trafficking
- Less exposure to harm and injuries related to violations of children's rights

Long-term benefits

- Improved risk mitigation that allows for childhood development and access to essential health, education and safety services
- Improved child protection leading to greater well-being and future opportunities

HEALTH Accessing health services

Short-term benefits

- Reduced child mortality due to preventable illnesses
- Reduced medical problems and complications for treatable injuries and illnesses

Long-term benefits

- Improved prevention, medical responses, and timely intervention
- Overall improved health and well-being for children, families, and communities

EDUCATION Accessing education services

Short-term benefits

- Reduced illiteracy and social exclusion
- Reduced risks of exploitation, neglect, abuse, child labor, or trafficking for unsupervised children in hazardous environments

Long-term benefits

- Improved social development that enables children to contribute to their families' and communities' overall well-being
- Improved levels of education that allow children to have greater opportunities

2.3 BENEFITS FOR COMPANIES SECTOR-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES

While these initiatives lead to benefits for children that are increasingly evident, there has been very limited research to date on whether such CSR and Sustainability initiatives lead to any measurable benefits for real estate and construction companies themselves. Companies interviewed for this research who are active in providing support services for the children of migrant workers also lack tangible measurements of the impact on business derived from the support they provide. However, this analysis pulls together a wide range of evidence and indicators of trends to detail the business risks and opportunities associated with investing in support services for children.

This section examines the property development and construction sector in Thailand and the incentives for companies in the sector to invest in welfare support services for migrant workers and their children. The analysis is based on interviews of property development executives and personnel, subcontractors, and industry insiders. It draws on examination of company annual reports and company sustainability reports and various secondary materials that indicate influences and trends in the market. The companies included in this study were selected according to their listing on the Stock Exchange of Thailand of property development companies with a market capitalization over 5 billion baht and their demonstrated interest in social responsibility as highlighted through their public company reports.

Companies researched for this analysis mostly demonstrate an interest in aligning their CSR activities with their business strategy through developing what they call “in-process” and “after-process” CSR activities. However, research on CSR in Thailand illustrates how executives and managers see CSR as a civic duty rather than key to their business performance.⁷⁶ They consider CSR as a merit-making act motivated by their personal convictions, leading to a weak connection to the company’s business. Based on this approach, many companies tend to give strong attention to children, especially children’s education, and companies across the real estate and construction sector also have a focus on running CSR activities for children. However, these activities tend to represent a misalignment of their CSR activities with their business strategy, since the children of focus tend not to be closely connected with or impacted by the company’s business operation. Few companies identify the migrant workers and their children as key stakeholders who should be supported through CSR activities.

⁷⁶ Rajanakorn, Nutthanun, *Examining Corporate Social Responsibility in Thailand: A view from Thai companies*, University of Tennessee, 2012, <http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2655&context=utk_graddiss>.

Current initiatives and partnerships

Successful projects that benefit both children and companies

Through weak alignment between CSR, business strategy and key stakeholders, the sector is undermining its business performance and economic value generation opportunities. Property developers and construction companies can reverse this weakness by using CSR as a medium to mitigate business risks and improve their social impact among key stakeholders while developing their ESG credentials among investors. Moreover, CSR can be strategically used to deliver brand value, improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Company case studies

Major Thai real estate and construction companies attest to a wide range of benefits to their business that result from their CSR & Sustainability support to children living in construction site camps. Sansiri PCL's experience attests to the positive impact of CSR on brand value, and Areeya Property and Pruksa Real Estate report that improved living conditions in camps positively influence labor stability and retention. These benefits therefore range from high-level foreign investment to the productivity of on-the-ground building operations.

Investors and social responsibility branding

Sansiri is the property developer that has been most active in developing a child-oriented CSR program that treats the children of migrant workers as key stakeholders, and it is also one of the strongest property brands in Thailand. Sansiri has been judged the most admired real estate company in Thailand by BrandAge for the past four years.⁷⁷ According to a survey conducted by Chulalongkorn University, Sansiri is also considered one of the most trusted brands in the Thai real estate market and is the most trusted brand in the townhouse segment.⁷⁸

Sansiri also performs well in attracting investment from international asset management institutions. Its top ten shareholders consist of investment subsidiaries of UBS, JPMorgan Chase, Northern Trust, OP Financial Group of Finland, Norges Bank of Norway, State Street Bank, and The Bank of New York Mellon. To attract such a diverse range of institutional investors, the company must have an impeccable reputation. Sansiri has established a strong reputation for its CSR program, which is spearheaded by support for children – particularly the children of migrant workers. These programs are showcased when Sansiri presents its business to investors, which is evident in the opening pages of the company's annual reports that highlight their active engagement in support for the children of migrant workers as well as other children-oriented activities.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Sansiri PCL. 'Sansiri Named Thailand's Most Admired Brand for the Fourth Time in a Row', Public, <https://article.wn.com/view/2017/03/07/Sansiri_named_Thailand_s_Most_Admired_Brand_for_the_fourth_y/>.

⁷⁸ Maikaew, Piyachart, 'Familiar Names Top Ranking for Most Trusted Brands', Bangkok Post, 2017, <<https://property.bangkokpost.com/news/1260839/familiar-names-top-ranking-for-most-trusted-brands>>.

⁷⁹ Sansiri PCL, *Annual Report 2016*, Sansiri PCL, Bangkok, August 2017, <www.sansiri.com/pdf/AnnualReport/ar2016-en.pdf>.



P. has grown up in construction site camps in Thailand with his 4 siblings. A local NGO has helped them to enroll in local public schools.

Labor stability and retention and improved productivity

Areeya Property has sought to turn the risks associated with labor market stability into a strength. Since 2012, they have engaged in employing their own workforce through MOU agreements. An aspect of this risk mitigation strategy is providing the workforce with adequate living conditions and various social benefits to drive long-term employee engagement, including a child learning space and daily teacher-led learning activities for the children of migrant workers living in construction site camps.

By applying this long-term workforce engagement strategy, Areeya Property has mitigated reputational risks and the risk of labor shortage, and they have also improved the skill levels of their labor. As workers have stayed with Areeya Property for longer periods of time, they have also improved their skills and familiarity with Areeya Property construction processes, which has resulted in dramatic improvements in productivity and construction speed. In addition, Areeya Property is in a strong position to apply to renew MOU agreements with source country agencies responsible for sending workers to Thailand.

Prukso Real Estate is another company strategically addressing business risks associated with an unstable labor market. In 2015, Prukso experienced a shortage of labor that caused construction disruptions. The company then engaged in a plan to improve the workforce's living conditions. Although Prukso does not employ workers directly, they provide housing for workers employed by Prukso's contractors and subcontractors. To improve the workers' quality of life, Prukso has sought to meet the highest legal requirements for workers' living conditions. Prukso also conducts regular training for their contractors on the laws and expectations for employing migrant labor to ensure they have the knowledge necessary to recruit migrant labor legally. Contractors are also educated on laws regarding human trafficking to ensure the lawful recruitment and use of labor for Prukso projects.

As a result, Prukso's management report that they no longer face a labor shortage, despite the recent tightening of the construction labor market due to a surge in public works projects and stronger regulations on the employment of migrant labor. According to Prukso's management, workers' non-wage factors, particularly adequate living conditions, are driving workers to prefer employment by Prukso's contractors and subcontractors. The result has been a stabilized workforce, which is providing a platform for Prukso to invest in human capital development through its supply chain.

Business opportunities for positive impact

The following areas of positive impact have been identified through analysis and interviews with real estate and construction companies based in the greater Bangkok who demonstrate a focus on social responsibility. The resulting themes and observations are presented here, but further study as well as quantitative analyses are recommended for future in-depth information.

OPPORTUNITY	POSITIVE IMPACT
1 Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) and investors' perception of social responsibility	• Improved business sustainability and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance that positively influence how a company is presented to potential investors • Improved reputation for sustainability and ESG performance that attracts key institutional investors
2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval	• Improved conditions of environmental impact that are examined by the EIA Permitting Agency and the Expert Review Committee • Increased chances of EIA approval for major development projects
3 Public perception of social responsibility	• Improved brand value that positively associates a company with social responsibility and impact • Improved brand value can ultimately lead to increased square meter price premiums of residential properties
4 Labor stability and retention	• Increased stability and retention in migrant labor • Improved compliance to migrant labor employment regulations
5 Workforce engagement	• Improved reputation for quality working environment that drives workforce motivation and productivity, leading to better project completion results • Increased skill development for families who contribute productively to the Thai labor force

Current initiatives and partnerships

Successful projects that benefit both children and companies

GREATER CONTEXT

Investors, especially asset management institutions, avoid industry sectors and companies that do not make sufficient efforts to minimize the social impact of their business operation. As awareness of the conditions experienced by children of construction workers grows, the SET may give greater attention to how companies address the well-being of children when judging the sustainability of a business and ESG performance of companies on the stock exchange. Through SET's Sustainability List and Awards program, perceptions of business sustainability and ESG performance can impact how a given company is presented to potential investors.

Support for the children impacted by the construction process would improve the reputation of individual companies and the sector as a whole in terms of sustainability and ESG performance, which is critical for attracting institutional investors.

The growing awareness of the conditions faced by the children of construction workers could also impact a real estate developer's potential to receive EIA approval for new construction projects. Currently, the health and safety of workers and the impact of construction activities on communities living in the vicinity of a construction site are important considerations in granting EIA approval. In the future, the basic well-being and educational opportunities of the children living in construction site camps could also become important in granting EIA approval.

Attention to the well-being of children affected by construction works, in particular the children of migrant workers, will heighten the chance of EIA approval in the future, which is necessary for all major development projects in Thailand.

The brand value of a given company can be significantly influenced by public perception of a company's treatment of its workforce.

Support for children would positively influence the branding of real estate development projects, which leads to improved brand value and higher demand for companies' services and products. Improved brand value can ultimately lead to increased square meter price premiums of residential properties. See more in *Highlight: The impact of brand value* on page 67.

Companies would be able to stabilize access to labor by adhering to migrant labor employment regulations and by fostering a reputation for being responsive to the well-being and rights of migrant workers and their children.

The sector can improve labor market stability by ensuring that subcontractors abide by regulations for the employment of migrant workers through contractual arrangements and training, which will uphold and reinforce MOU agreements with source countries.

Support for the well-being of migrant workers and their children as part of human resources and CSR and Sustainability programs can drive workforce engagement. If conducted effectively, this could increase business profitability by reducing workforce turnover and absenteeism, increase skill development, and minimize workplace accidents and process mistakes. All of these factors contribute to a faster construction time that would save operational costs, reduce the cost of finance, and improve the reputation of the company.

The property and construction sector is an essential contributor to the Thai economy, and labor migrants are fundamental to this sector's operations. By providing essential support to the children of this workforce, companies can mitigate labor market instability, while improving business sustainability and brand performance, and deliver greater workforce engagement. All of these elements contribute to business profitability in the long-term.

In conclusion, migrant workers are the backbone the property development and construction sector, which is a major contributor to the Thai economy. While migrant workers not only contribute to the sector, they and their children are also impacted by the construction process. The safety, health, welfare and education of children are impacted by living in construction site camps. Therefore, they should be understood to be significant stakeholders in the industry and the broader economy. Failure to take into account the children of migrant workers in the sector and minimize the impact on them carries significant business risks. But these risks can be turned into an economic opportunity if addressed strategically. The provisioning of welfare support for children would mitigate labor market instability while improving business sustainability and brand performance, and deliver greater workforce engagement, and thus contribute to business profitability in the long-term.



Highlight: The Impact of CSR on Brand Value

Meaningfulness and trustworthiness are brand elements that deliver value for businesses. A study conducted by Havas Group,⁸⁰ which covered 1,500 global brands, more than 300,000 people and 15 different industry sectors across 33 countries, demonstrates the importance of meaningfulness. For every 10% in meaningful performance, the Havas Group estimates that the brand increases its price premium by 12%. It also increases the chance of purchase by 10% and consumer advocacy by 7%. The study considers the factors that contribute to meaningfulness and shows that 22 of the 30 most meaningful brands in the world gain their rating by being perceived to contribute to collective well-being.

This indicates that CSR, when understood to be supporting collective well-being, can increase a brand's meaningfulness in the eyes of consumers. Marketing scholars, Melo and Galan,⁸¹ agree that CSR can make a significant contribution to brand value, but most of the potential of CSR is unrealized since it tends to have weak incorporation within brand strategies.

According to Rajanakorn,⁸² Thai companies are cautious of using CSR as means to build brand value as they are concerned about using CSR for PR purposes. This can result in under-communication of what the company does for collective well-being. However, Rajanakorn notes cases of companies that realized CSR was contributing to their brand value and subsequently made more of a concerted effort to develop their CSR activities strategically and communicate their CSR activities to consumers.

⁸⁰ Havas Group, 'Welcome to Meaningful Brands 2017' Havas Group, 2017, <http://dk.havas.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2017/02/mb17_brochure_final_web.pdf>.

⁸¹ Melo, Tiago, and Jose I. Galan, *Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Value*, MacMillan Publishers Ltd, 7 December 2010, <www.researchgate.net/publication/263114057_Effects_of_corporate_social_responsibility_on_brand_value>.

⁸² Rajanakorn, Nutthanun, *Examining Corporate Social Responsibility in Thailand: A view from Thai companies*, University of Tennessee, 2012, <http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2655&context=utk_graddiss>.





3 KEY SOLUTIONS

How to support children living in construction site camps

3.1 FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Based on the children's challenges clarified in Chapter 1 and the current initiatives identified in Chapter 2, initiatives that support this population should be structured and scaled to reach all children living in construction site camps throughout Thailand. A *Framework for Action* is needed to guide systematic scale-up of effective support, transforming these sporadic initiatives into sector-wide improvements.

To this end, comprehensive action is required nationally and locally, ranging from policy-level advocacy to community-level implementation of good practices. The multi-stakeholder approach is recommended in order to involve all key stakeholders according to their areas of expertise, including:

- 1. Real estate and construction companies** who deliberately decide to implement CSR and Sustainability principles;
- 2. Non-profit partners** who provide social development expertise and have the technical resources necessary to carry out specific initiatives; and
- 3. Public sector actors** who create a conducive public sector environment or regulatory framework that supports access to services and the respect of rights.





The initiatives highlighted in Chapter 2 have stemmed from multi-stakeholder partnerships among such private, social and public sector stakeholders. In addition to the importance of such cross-sector collaboration, it must be understood that the results of such initiatives are highly influenced by the availability of public services and the overall regulatory framework surrounding migration and labor in Thailand. Such issues represent the context for this report, not its focus.

A *Framework for Action* is now necessary to guide multi-stakeholder partnerships within this overarching context, and also to ensure that all stakeholders pursue initiatives that are firmly grounded in responding to children's needs. The support undertaken in these conditions will make it possible to structure and scale the effective initiatives, ultimately reaching all children with support to overcoming their challenges.

The table below presents the *Chiang Mai Framework For Action*. This framework is intended to provide guidelines for initiatives throughout Thailand, and its name underlines that it is grounded not only in research but in successful initiatives – particularly those examined in Chiang Mai – that have been implemented and studied in-depth to provide a needs-based, practical *Framework for Action*.

THE CHIANG MAI FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Focus	Children's Needs
Infrastructure	1 Improved safety of living environments
	2 Improved waste management and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)
	3 Opportunities and space to interact and play with other children
Rights	4 Knowledge of child rights and child protection and their practical application
	5 Knowledge of how to access services (health, education, legal documentation)
	6 Improved social development and well-being (prevention of discrimination, domestic violence, child labor)
Health	7 Access to vaccines
	8 Access to health cards
	9 Knowledge of common medical needs and responses
Education	10 Preparation for integration into formal education
	11 Access to formal education through school enrollment
	12 School support through non-formal education

Note: This Framework for Action has been developed and implemented as an assessment and programming tool by Baan Dek Foundation. It has been further refined through findings from the present documentation project with UNICEF.

Key solutions

How to support children living in construction site camps

12 Key Actions that make a difference

Required Responses

Donated building materials for living environment improvements (ex. electricity, metal hazards)

Opportunities to improve living environments through updates to camp's physical infrastructure (ex. showers, toilets, WASH)

Safe spaces of designated areas and materials for kids to interact, learn and play within construction site camps

Life skills programs with a focus on rights and child protection that target parents and children

Information-sharing through existing networks focused on how to access services from a given camp (training key community members such as the Luk Pi, Po Baan, and Mae Baan)

Individual Support Programs to address the most serious situations affecting kids (ex. serious health issues, neglect, abuse, violence, exploitation), with clear referral pathways to Thai public services

Vaccination campaigns targeting children in need of vaccines

Health card campaigns via information-sharing through camp networks on how to obtain health cards

Life skills programs with a focus on healthy habits and prevention of diseases that target parents and children

Life skills programs with a focus on education that target parents and children

Facilitated school registration, especially organized transportation and one parent off of work on registration day (half-day), prepared for necessary school fees

Flexible learning strategies (ex. after-school support, digital educational tools)



D. started attending school for the first time at 9 years old. When she turned 15 years old, she had to quit school to support her family by working in construction with her parents. D. found out she was pregnant when she was 16 years old, and her husband left her to raise the child on her own. Today, she and her healthy baby are able to receive health insurance through assistance from a local NGO.

3.2 SUMMING UP

Overall, the study presented in *Chapter 1* of this report has highlighted the challenges faced by children living in construction site camps across Thailand, and *Chapter 2* has offered an overview of recommended initiatives that already take place. These initiatives have demonstrated benefits for both the kids and the companies that make them possible, indicating that small investments in such initiatives may lead to ultimate gains for the companies who decide to make them a reality.

The Chiang Mai *Framework for Action* (pages 72-73) puts forth recommendations that can lead to large-scale improvements for all children growing up in construction site camps throughout Thailand. These recommendations address many different approaches: from community-level awareness of how to obtain necessary documents and practice child protection, to camp-specific improvements such as updated WASH conditions and designated safe spaces. This *Framework for Action* may be tailored to many types of camps and circumstances, guiding improvements in adequate infrastructure, access to rights, health and education that positively impact children's well-being and development across Thailand.

The groundwork has now been laid for sector-wide improvements that will address the challenges faced by this population of vulnerable children. Effective initiatives already exist and are ready to be brought to scale, ultimately transforming the sector's dynamics and setting new norms. Within the regulatory frameworks established by government Ministries, the real estate and construction companies that take on these challenges through recommended actions will guide the future of social responsibility for these children and families.



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