

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL INFORMATION OF SAMUT SAKHON

1. General Information

Samut Sakhon is located in the central part of Thailand, near the Gulf of Thailand and from Bangkok, i.e. around 30 kilometers (from Rama 2 Road). This province composes of three district; Muang, Bang Paw and Kratumban. In the census records (31 July 2004), there are 449,090 people in this province; 218,924 people are male and 230,161 are females. The living condition is half city-half rural because it is a realm of Bangkok. People are sited along the river in rural areas and it is crowded in the central area because of many industries. There are 5,249 industries and 316,473 labors, most of them come from Northeast, North and central Thailand. (Available from: <http://www.samutsakhon.go.th>)

This province is the center of marine business and there are 3,291 fishery factories that need many workers. However, this kind of industry has a bad condition for Thai labor such as hard work, bad smelling and unfixed time that makes the lack of a stable Thai labor. Consequently, employers need migrant workers who do not mind the poor living condition and hard job. Many uncomplicated factories and each process need unskilled workers. In the past, most of the workers came from northeast of Thailand but at the present; most of them are Burmese migrants. The Thai Government allowed illegal migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia to work in Samut Sakhon province from 1996 until now.

In Muang district, there are many fishery factories, in particular Mahachai sub district. In Muang district, there are eighteen sub districts composing of Mahachai, Tha Chin, Tha Chalom, Krok Krak, Bangyaprak, Tha Say, Bangnam Jeed, Nadee, Bang Kok, Kok Krabea, Pantai Narasing, Kalong, Bang Krajaw, Bang Torad, Na kok, Bang Bo, Kok Kam, and Chai Mongkol (Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office, 2004:29). Burmese migrant workers, living in those areas, work for fishery factories and other industries.

Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office is responsible for basic education in Samut Sakhon province and there are 137 schools that have undertaken this as shown in the table.

Table 1: Number of schools, teachers and students in each district of Samut Sakhon, 2004

	District	No. of schools	No. of teachers	No. of students	Teacher: Student
1	Muang	74	1,636	40,146	1:25
2	Kratumban	28	692	19,385	1:28
3	Bangpaw	35	559	12,499	1:22
Total		137	2,887	72,030	1:25

Source: Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office p. 44

2. Migrant Workers and Children in Samut Sakhon

2.1 Migrant workers

In 2003, there were 37,047 migrant workers who registered in this province. There were 35,644 Burmese workers, 1,221 Laotian workers and 182 Cambodian workers. The proportion of Burmese workers was 96.23 percent while 3.67 percent was the proportion of Laotian and Cambodian workers. (ARCM, TDRI and Institute of Social and Population research, 2004:175)

The term “Burmese or Burmese migrant” compose of many ethnic groups of people from different areas in Myanmar such as Mon state, Karen and Tanintaye etc. From a cabinet resolution on July 2004, there are 101,842 illegal migrant workers (93,560 Burmese, 6,386 Laotian and 1,896 Cambodian workers) who register in Samut Sakhon province. (Available from: <http://www.samutsakhon.go.th>)

Regarding to Samut Sakhon, geographically, this province is far from Myanmar and Thai-Burmese border, so most of migrant children in this province were born in Thailand. Among the migrant communities in Samut Sakhon, an average age of children is around 0-5 years old. From the statistic of the Ministry of Health between 1996 and 2002, there were 200-500 migrant children who were born in

hospitals per year. It is estimated that there are nearly 4,000 stateless children. (Sanitsuda Ekachai, 2004:97) Moreover, there were some children who were born in their houses. Consequently, the number of migrant children in Samut Sakhon is higher than the statistics from the Ministry of Health. Children who were not born in the hospital do not receive their birth identifications which are important for their living. Consequently, they will be illegal migrants that will cause problems in the future.

Now a day, in this area, there is an increase number of migrant children, born in hospital, i.e. about 200-500 per year.(ARCM et al.,2004:178) After they were born, the hospital give usual a birth document that indicates the parent's citizenship but the children, born outside the hospital are not identified their citizenship. Additionally, some illegal schools for migrant children are operated by Burmese migrants or the religious organizations. They teach Burmese, Thai and English, and mathematics. Few migrant children go to Thai school although the Ministry of Education launched policy that migrant children could study in Thai school. From the research of the Ministry of Education in 2003, sixty Burmese migrant children studied in Thai school. (Kritaya Archavanitkul, 2004:217) The reason why there is few Burmese children get access to formal school is misunderstand of local government officers.

Table 2: Number of illegal migrant workers who are allowed to work in Samut Sakhon in 2002 register and 2003

Sector \ Year	Burmese		Laotian		Cambodian		Total	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
General Workers	2,596	1,991	111	111	43	26	2,750	2,088
Fishery industry workers	25,612	20,261	161	126	75	25	25,848	20,412
Industry workers	5,166	3,689	601	471	39	26	5,806	4,186
Agricultural Workers	1,025	748	24	14	4	3	1,053	765
Farm workers	244	141	17	7	4	2	265	150
Household workers	1,001	677	307	190	17	12	1,325	879
Total	35,644	14,072	1,221	8,791	182	94	37,047	28,480

Source: Department of Employment, Samut Sakhon province.

Although this information is just a part of the migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, it shows that Burmese migrant worker is the largest proportion of migrant workers. They especially work in the fishery industry.

Route of Burmese coming to Samut Sakhon

- From Ranong, they go by boat from Kok Song, Myanmar.
- From Kanchanaburi, they arrive to Thailand by entering Shaiyoknoi, Suan Pung, Sangkla and Tongpa poom district. They also come to Thailand on foot entering at check points. Some of them got arrested but some are aided by Karen living along Thai-Burmese border.
- From Tak province, they enter at Mae sod district. Their arrival is by their relatives, families or brokers who charge more than 5,000 to 6,000 Baht per person.

They take one to three days from their homes in Myanmar to arrive in Samut Sakhon. For traveling on foot, they had to spend about 4,000 to 10,000 Baht per time. (Pinyo Pothipeantong, 2004:7)

The Burmese migrant's residence in Samut Sakhon

Burmese migrants have stayed in Samut Sakhon province for several decades and have their own communities separated into many areas depending on their careers. They are not separated their home by the ethnic groups. They stay in many kinds of homes such as rent-room (one floor of building divided into many little rooms), flat and rent-home, and some live in the Thai community. Their rooms are quite crowded because there are many people in one room. In tall building, there are about 10-20 people in one room and they have different rest time. Moreover, there are some families in one room because of the lower cost. Consequently, they have to live in poor and difficult living condition. Most of them cook inside their rooms but some cook outside depending on the size of the rooms. (From observation between April and July 2005)

The relationships with Thai people

Burmese and Thai people have relationships such as Thai shops in Burmese communities or Thai and Burmese people living in the same community. Some live in rented rooms that are owned by Thai people. However, some Thai people are doubtful about Burmese because they are afraid that Samut Sakhon will become a Mon city. (From observation between April and July 2005)

Burmese Migrant career

Most migrants in Muang district work for fishery industries and fishery related industries depending on whether they are male or female. Males work as fishermen in fishery industries whereas females work in refrigerated rooms and as employees. The average income of one family is about 13,000 Baht a month. This is estimated based on one family where there are at least two people—mother and father who work but sometimes their children also work for gain extra income. Their expenses are 1,500 Baht for their house and 6,000 Baht for food and the rest is sent back to Myanmar. (Pinyo, 2004:8)

Migrant religion

Most of them are Buddhism. There is a Mon temple in Samut Sakhon such as Wat Kok where monks pray and teach in Mon and Burmese language. (Pinyo, 2004:9)

2.2 Migrant children

There are two kinds of migrant children in Thailand; the children who were born in Thailand, and the children who came with their parents and their relatives who are migrant workers across the border. From the research of Institute of Asian studies, Chulalongkorn University addressed that in 2001, the migrant's followers were one-fourth of all migrants in Thailand. According to the Ministry of Health survey, there were 15,777 migrant children were born in Thailand and whose parents are migrant workers and were born in Thailand.

Migrant children come into Thailand because of economic factors, political unrest, civil wars and poor living condition, all of which are factors pressuring people to leave their home. Thailand's high economic growth combined with geographical features make it for workers easy to come into Thailand. An estimated one fourth of these migrant are children (Pinyo, 2004: 41). Some of them came in with their families, relatives or friends who came into sell their labor.

From the survey a number of non-Thai nationalities in 2004, there are about 3,425 Burmese migrant children at the age of 0-14 in Samut Sakhon province. The migrant children who are born in Myanmar can write and read Burmese or Mon language but some are born in Thailand just speak Mon or Burmese. When they stay home or chat with their friends, they will speak Mon or Burmese. However, most of

them could speak Thai and can communicate with Thai people. They learn to speak Thai by watching television or taught by their parents.

However, some children who are under 15 years old work. They are both vulnerable and invulnerable with a need to help their parents work. Sometimes they work to at late night unload fish or peel shrimp heads. These child labors are always unpaid because their jobs are considered as supplementary to the parents' job. The child labor work forces can increase the families' outputs and they increase their parents' wage. In addition, they rarely enter the schools because they have no permanent status in the house registration documents or Ta Bian Ban. At the beginning, from the regulation of the Ministry of Education, Ta Bian Ban is the most importance for school access but in 2005 the new regulation addressed that whoever living in Thai territory without Ta Bian Ban could get access to basic education in school. Although they can enter the Thai school, they can not receive diplomas or certificates after graduation.

**Table 3: Number of non-Thai nationality students in schools
in Samutsakhon, 2004**

	School	Number of student
1	Wat Bang Nam Von	10
2	Wat Lak Si	4
3	Wat Tai Ban Boo	7
4	Samutmaneerat	2
5	Wat Tha Kra Bae	16
6	Ban Ply Klong Noi	32
7	Wat Nok Kai	47
8	Ban Plong Leam	16
9	Wat Mai Nong Pa Ong	25
10	Ban Nong Had Yai	1
11	Chareansilseksa	2
12	Ban Ran Sai Bau	7
13	Kra Tum Ban Visat Samut Khun	7
14	Ban Suan Luang	14

	School	Number of student
15	Wat Pho Jirr	3
16	Tepnorrarat	3
17	Wat Bang Plee	5
18	Wat Bang Yak Prak	2
19	Wat Donkositaram	2
20	Wat Thamjadisripipat	1
21	Wat Klong Ton	6
22	Wat Kok	1
23	Ban Klong Ton	5
24	Wat Bang Ping	1
25	Thairat Witthaya	2
26	Wat Sri Sam Ran Rad Bam Rung	1
27	Wat Ched Rew	5
28	Wat Lak Song Rad Ban rung	1
29	Wat Aom Noi	1
30	Ban Klong Ser	1
31	Wat Suwan Rattanaram	9
32	Ban Dan nern Sadoak	3
33	Wat Ang Tong	60
34	Wat Phan Thu Wong	5
35	Ban Klong Kra Thun Ban	21
36	Wat Siri Mong Kol	8
37	Ban Wong Nok Kai	22
38	Samutsakhon Wittayalai	1
39	Ban Klar Lai	65
40	Wat Rad Bun Rung	48
41	Wat Ban Rai	2
42	Wat Ban Yang	12
43	Laung Pad Kosol Auppathom	7
44	Wat Sammakkee Sathatham	7
45	Wat Klong Karu	2
46	Ban Tha sai	3
47	Wat Rat Rang San	3
48	Ban Don Kai Dee	9
	Total	517

Source: Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office

The table above shows the number of non-Thai nationality students in Samut Sakhon. From the survey of resume and health checking of migrant students—non Thai nationalities studying in Schools undertaken by Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office, there are 517 non-Thai nationality students in 48 schools. These students compose of many nationalities such as Chinese, Laotian, Mon, Burmese and hill tribes--Lua, Palong, Wa, Karen, Aka etc. But the exact number is not reported. Interestingly, most of hill tribe students are Lua who changed their nationality from Burmese to Lua because it is different status between hill tribe and Burmese. According to the statistic of the Ministry of Education in 2004, there are 60 Burmese children who study in Thai school in this province. Thai teachers of these students mentioned that most of their parents believe that being hill tribe seems better than Burmese.

In summary, Samut Sakhon is the one important province where are the center of marine business composing of 3,291 fishery industries that need many workers. These kinds of work are bad condition such as hard work, bad smelling and unfixed time that lack of stable Thai labor thus; many migrant workers, especially Burmese are hired instead of Thais. Most of fishery industries are located in Muang district particularly Mahachai sub district. Consequently, Muang district composes of a large number of Burmese migrant workers. Most of them live in poor condition, rent-room and flat where are crowded because there is one family about 8-12 person per room. In case they share room with their friends, there are 10-20 people in one room of flat. Their communities are separated in many areas but some live in Thai communities.

There are about 4,000 Burmese migrant children who were born inside and outside Thailand. In Samut Sakhon, there are 200-500 children increasing per year in this province and some are stateless that causes many problems based on basic rights including basic educational. Samut Sakhon Educational Service Area Office is responsible for basic education in this province. There are 137 schools undertaken by this government official and there are 517 non-Thai nationalities studying in 48 Thai schools but 60 students were known as Burmese who get access to formal schools.