



1 Million Cambodian Migrant Workers in Thailand Might Miss Voting Registration

About 9.6 million Cambodians are now eligible to vote, according to the National Election Commission for the next commune elections scheduled for 4 June, 2017.

Eligible voters can register to vote between the 1st September and the 29th November, 2016. Where they register is where they will have to vote.

Although registration procedures have been somewhat simplified and a new electronic voter list will replace the old controversial one, eligible voters currently working in Thailand, estimated to be around 1 million could be disenfranchised as they must return to Cambodia in order to register to vote. Failure to do so, will eliminate their right to vote in the 2017 commune elections.

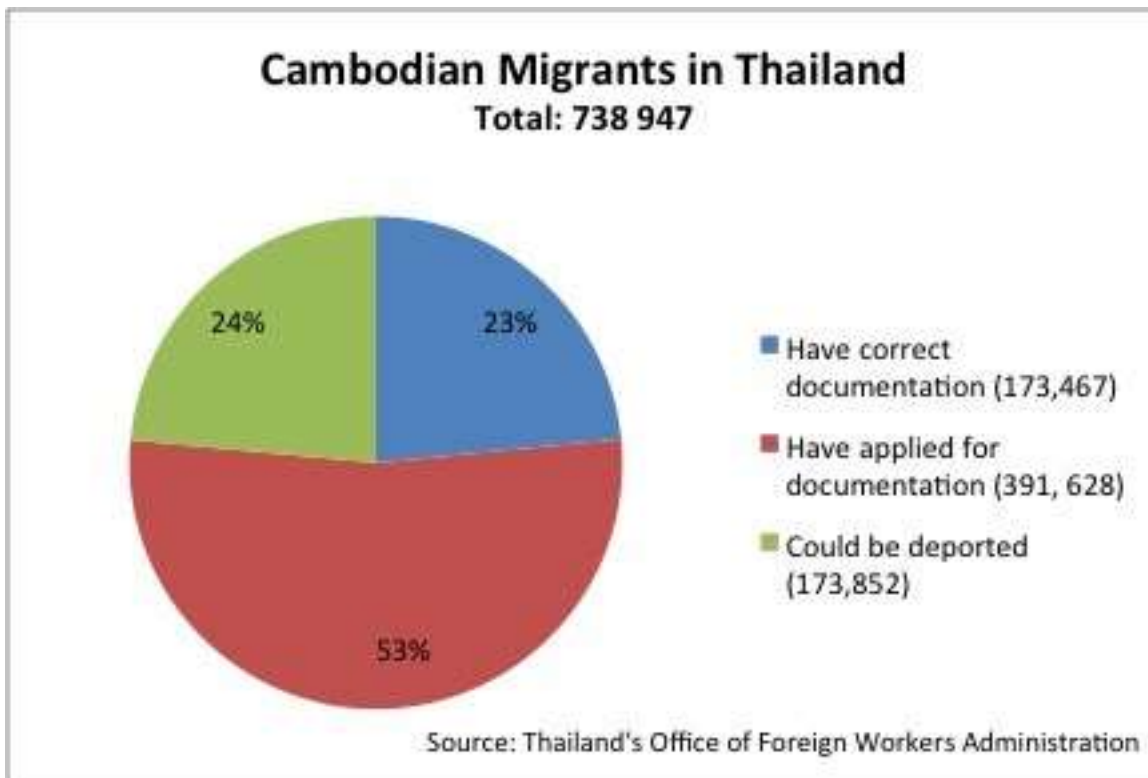
CNRP Migrant Worker Adhoc Committee

On the 12th August, the Cambodia National Rescue Party established an Adhoc Committee for Migrant Workers headed by lawmaker Mu Sochua to look into voter registration and to take necessary measures to ensure Cambodian

migrant workers' voting rights as stipulated in the 1990 ILO Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Their Families are upheld.

With support from the Migrant Forum Asia, members of the Adhoc committee travelled to Bangkok, Ryong and Trat provinces to meet with close to 1,000 Cambodian migrant workers in rubber plantations, at market places, in the service, hotel, fishing and construction industries.

Figures of Cambodian migrant workers provided by Thailand's Office for Foreign Workers Administration do not include unreported Cambodians who cross the border every day through unofficial crossing points.



The Cost of Returning Home

Transportation to the border check point can be as much as US \$12 each way. In addition, official and unofficial fees to cross check points on both sides of the border could be as high as \$ 22. Getting home to their communities could add another \$15-\$20. In total, the trip could cost each worker up to \$50-\$60. A very costly trip for unskilled workers who make around \$10 a day.

An Almost Impossible Trip for Short-Term and Unreported Migrant Workers

For undocumented migrant workers, the biggest risks that they will face should they decide to return to Cambodia to register include:

1/ short- term work permits mean they are only allowed to travel within the province where they register to work or they may face a fine or detention;

2/ unreported migrant workers may face deportation or lose work.

Measures for Intervention

1/ The government of Cambodia, through the Ministry of Labor should negotiate with the Thai government to allow Cambodians to return to Cambodia without facing penalties and cross border fees during the voter registration period.

2/ The Thai Ministry of Labor should issue a notice to all employers to authorize Cambodian migrant workers sufficient time to return home to register to vote. All employers should be asked to comply with such an order. No workers should risk losing employment for returning home to register to vote.

3/ The Government of Cambodia should allow Cambodians to cross the Border check points without charge.

4/ The NEC should collaborate with The Royal Cambodian Embassy in Thailand and use all means to disseminate voter registration information to Cambodian migrants workers.

3/ ILO, IOM, the UN Special Rapporteur on Migrant Workers and the UN Committee on Migrant Workers should facilitate and monitor the situation to protect Cambodian migrant workers' voting rights.

4/ The Colombo Process that will accept Cambodia as its new member in August should urge Cambodia to guarantee migrant workers' political rights.

Phnom Penh

22 August, 2016

