

Bangkok, 26 August 2025 – The Cabinet of Thailand has approved a significant policy allowing individuals displaced by armed conflict from Myanmar, currently residing in nine temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border, to undertake lawful employment in Thailand. This represents a major policy shift with positive implications across multiple dimensions. Its primary objectives are to reduce irregular labor practices and to ease the long-term burden on the Thai government in supporting displaced persons.

Under this policy, registered residents in the nine shelters are permitted to work in all sectors not prohibited for foreign nationals, for a period of up to one year, subject to health screening and registration for health insurance. This development not only benefits displaced persons by fostering self-reliance but also contributes to tax revenue, increases productivity, and addresses national labor shortages, supporting Thailand’s sustainable economic growth.

The Thai government’s decision is highly commendable, as it reflects not only a systematic approach to addressing economic and social challenges but also a clear commitment to humanitarian principles. By granting displaced persons the right to work legally, they are enabled to live with dignity, generate income for themselves and their families, and reduce reliance on international assistance. Importantly, this measure also helps to ease tensions in border areas and enhances the credibility of Thailand’s foreign policy. The policy demonstrates a balanced approach between domestic management and compassion for fellow human beings, drawing recognition from the international community, particularly United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which publicly praised the Thai government’s courageous decision.

MRN welcomes this crucial step, which reflects a shift in perspective, from viewing displaced persons primarily as a national burden or security concern to recognizing them as part of Thailand’s valuable human resources. This policy may serve as a positive model for other countries in the region facing similar challenges. Especially in times when international organizations face limited budgets, enabling displaced persons to become self-reliant represents a sustainable and mutually beneficial solution.

Nevertheless, various stakeholders must prepare to implement the policy in ways that meet the specific needs of displaced persons. This includes ensuring legal status that allows them to remain in Thailand safely. At the policy level, considerations should extend to labor quotas, effective registration and oversight mechanisms, and the inclusion of economic, social, educational, and health dimensions. At the community level, measures should be introduced to promote local economic participation and strengthen mutual understanding with host communities.

In addition, there is an urgent need to develop policies and operational mechanisms to address the situation of displaced persons who have arrived from Myanmar since the 2021 coup, many of whom are high-skilled professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, academics, lawyers, and engineers. Oversight should include processes to recognize and certify these skills in line with Thai standards, the strengthening of the National Screening Mechanism (NSM) to extend work rights to individuals granted “protected person” status, or the establishment of new mechanisms to match business sector needs with refugee skills. Such mechanisms must be adapted to the complex realities of displaced populations from Myanmar, ensuring both economic and social benefits for Thailand and adequate protection for these groups. These proposals are consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Studying the Economic and Social Impact of Granting Work Rights to Refugees in Thailand: A Case Study of Tak, Chiang Mai and Bangkok research study, which highlighted that granting work rights to Myanmar displaced workers who arrived after 2021 not only enhances individual income potential but also generates substantial overall economic value.

Finally, MRN commends the collaborative efforts of government agencies, the private sector, academia, and civil society organizations that contributed to this successful policy advocacy. We sincerely hope that this spirit of cooperation will continue to address future challenges, strengthen protection for diverse displaced populations, and contribute to sustainable economic and social stability in Thailand and across the region.