Considering Integration Pathways: New Futures in Thailand's Immigration Governance

Date: 14 December 2026 (9:00 - 5:00 PM)
Location: Best Western Chatuchak, Bangkok

Introduction

As refugee-receiving countries have increasingly restricted access to asylum and resettlement and transit countries in ASEAN struggle with integration, there is a need to understand the political circumstances and legal and practical mechanisms available to people fleeing religious or political persecution and life-threatening conflict. On the other hand, both undocumented migrant workers and urban refugees still struggle for entry into legalization and recognition while residing in Thailand. Given the economic and social protection necessities, the region is due for a consideration of comprehensive integration reform.

Currently, the international refugee protection system is under growing financial pressure. According to UNHCR, by the end of 2025, there were 41.6 million refugees, 9 million asylum seekers, and 68.7 million people displaced[1] due to conflict or violence within their own country (IDPs). UNHCR also reported that available funding covered only 37% of total needs, down from 48% in 2024[2]. These pressures have raised important questions about what legal and practical mechanisms remain available for the right to work. These questions are particularly relevant for Thailand. Thailand introduced its National Screening Mechanism (NSM) in September 2023[3] to identify individuals who may qualify for "Protected Person" status. However, protection gaps remain for urban refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants, particularly in access to secure legal status, documentation, and essential services. These gaps highlight the need for a more coherent approach to immigration governance in Thailand.

These protection gaps also raise concerns about the implementation of international standards. While non-refoulement is the acceptable international standard, significant gaps remain between international standards and practices in the region, where refugees and asylum seekers continue to face risks of detention, deportation, and return to places where their lives or safety may be at risk.At the same time, the United Nations agencies have lost much of their funding and political leverage; the implementation of existing international standards for the 1951 Refugee Convention[4] and its 1967 Protocol needs to be rethought considering these changing circumstances.

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[1] https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance
[2] UNHCR aimed to protect and assist 129.4 million people, close to 2024 levels. At the same time, available resources fell by $1.246 billion to $3.932 billion. Funding covered only 37% of total needs, down from 48% in 2024. https://www.unhcr.org/publications/global-report-2025
[3] The Royal Thai Government (RTG) launched the National Screening Mechanism (NSM) in September 2023. The NSM is a legal process created by the Royal Thai Government to identify individuals who may qualify for "Protected Person" status in Thailand. https://help.unhcr.org/thailand/asylum/national-screening-mechanism/
[4] https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/1951-refugee-convention-1967-protocol.pdf

Integration is considered as a gradual process involving interconnected legal, social, and economic dimensions: secure legal status, access to essential services, participation in community life, and decent work.

In this regard, this workshop is part seminar and part workshop for legal and NGO practitioners, graduate students in ASEAN, allied government practitioners, to reflect experiences and explore better practices from the US, Europe, and other countries including Canada, Norway and South Korea in roundtable settings. Participants will be asked to prepare perspectives from legal and protection pathways, support mechanisms needed for legal integration, social programs for pathways toward job skilling/up-skilling, language capacity training, resettlement plans that integrate community needs, and occupational pathways relevant to Thailand for migrant workers(without legal status), urban refugees, and camp asylum seekers. The workshop will also discuss relevant lessons for strengthening protection mechanisms and possible comprehensive immigrant/migrant integration reform in Thailand.

Goals & Objectives

In this situation, it is an opportunity to create a space for practitioners, academics, graduate students, allied government, and activists to strengthen their understanding of refugee and asylum seeker protection and consider how international experiences can inform better practices and policy development in Thailand.

The workshop will not only provide a venue for critical exchange between humanitarian legal theory and practice, but also some foundational training for recent graduate students and junior practitioners.

Target Participants

The workshop will bring together approximately 20–30 participants, including Thai NGO and civil society practitioners, legal practitioners, activists and researcher-activists, Master's and PhD students, academics, and others working on refugee, asylum, migration, and human rights issues. The workshop will be conducted primarily in English, with simultaneous English-Thai interpretation provided throughout the workshop.

Deliverables

1) One-day workshop at IPSR, Mahidol (max: 40,000THB)
2) One page brief noting update situation and better practices
3) Optional(we have a small budget for compensation): Draft curriculum written by the planning committee for future workshops, if there is an interest for scaling by other community participants

Planning Committee

1) Prof.Hiroshi Motomura,Distinguished Professor of Law,Faculty Co-Director, Miñana Family Center for Immigration Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law
2) Dr.Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University
3) Mr.Adisorn Keardmongkol, Founder and Team Member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)
4) Mr.Chawaratt Chawarangkul (Mic), Asia Pacific Regional Manager,International Detention Coalition
5) Mr.Polwish Subsrisunjai, Program Director at the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) Thailand, Member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)
6) Dr.Sudarat Musikawong, Associate Professor of Sociology, Principal Investigator of Mahidol Migration Center-Joint Research Unit (MMC-JRU), Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University

Workshop Agenda

Date: 14 December 2026

Time: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Venue: Best Western Chatuchak, Bangkok

Time	Session / Activity	Speakers / Facilitators
9:00–9:30	Registration/PDPA	
9:30–9:45	Opening Remarks	• Dr.Chalermpol Chamchan,Director, Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University
9:45–10:45	Session 1: Legal Integration Models in the US and Europe	• Prof.Hiroshi Motomura,Distinguished Professor of Law,Faculty Co-Director, Miñana Family Center for Immigration Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law • Dr.Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University
10:45–11:00	Coffee Break	

Time	Session / Activity	Speakers / Facilitators
11:00-12:00	Session 2: Lessons Learned from Past Migration Governance in Thailand • Access to public health of migrant children • National Screening Mechanism • ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)	• Dr.Sureeporn Punpuing, Director of Mahidol Migration Center, Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University • Dr.Chalermpol Chamchan,Director, Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University • Mr.Adisorn Keardmongkol, Founder and Team Member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)
12:00–12:30	Q&A and Discussion	
12:30–1:30	Lunch Break	
1:30–2:30	Roundtable 1: Legal integration; focused on law/legal reform mechanism as brainstorming roundtable for legal practitioners	**Facilitator(s):** • Prof.Hiroshi Motomura,Distinguished Professor of Law,Faculty Co-Director, Miñana Family Center for Immigration Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law • Dr.Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University
2:30–3:30	Roundtable 2: How US and other countries are organizing programs for refugee and undocumented resettlement and integration.	**Facilitator(s):** • Mr.Chawaratt Chawarangkul (Mic), Asia Pacific Regional Manager,International Detention Coalition • Dr.Sudarat Musikawong, Associate Professor of Sociology, Principal Investigator of Mahidol Migration Center-Joint Research Unit (MMC-JRU), Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University
3:30–3:45	Coffee Break	

Time	Session / Activity	Speakers / Facilitators
3:45–4:45	Roundtable 3: Occupational and Economic Integration - what are success models in other countries that could be adapted for Thailand.	**Facilitator(s):** ● Mr.Adisorn Keardmongkol, Founder and Team Member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR) ● Mr.Polwish Subsrisunjai, Program Director at the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) Thailand, Member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)
4:45–5:00	Evaluation Form and Closing Remarks	● Representatives from Mahidol Migration Center-Joint Research Unit (MMC-JRU) and Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)

Bios

Sureeporn Punpuing is Professor of the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University. She was a Director of IPSR during 2008-2016. Her research focuses primarily on population, particularly migration, urban refugees, screening mechanisms for asylum seekers in Thailand, interactions in health and cross-border migration. Dr. Punpuing used to work as a Population Affairs Officer at United Nations (head quarter) in New York City, a consultant for ESCAP, IOM, ILO and WHO in Bangkok, and UNFPA in Mongolia. She was served as a President of Thai Population Association during 2008-2010 and 2014- 2016; an elected-Asia representative- council member of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) during 2014-2017, and now as the Asia Population Association (APA) council member, and also a site leader of the Kanchanaburi HDSS which is a member of INDEPTH network - longitudinal study sites in Asia and Africa based on health - demographic surveillance system.

Sriphapa Petcharamesree is a faculty member at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University and previously served as Associate Professor and Director of the International Ph.D. Program in Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University. She has been part of Working Group for an ASEAN human rights mechanism. Active in human rights field both among academic community and human rights activists both at national and regional levels, she works closely with NGOs, grassroots people and some marginalized groups, ethnic minorities, migrant workers, asylum seekers, etc. Her recent works focus mainly on issue of citizenship, economic, social and cultural rights, rights to development, human rights-based to poverty eradication,

community rights, and human rights education both within and outside educational system. By mid- 2008 she has completed a research project on "Towards and ASEAN Commission for the protection and promotion of rights of women and children" and preparing a book dealing with the issues of citizenship, statelessness, border and discrimination. She was recently appointed to represent Thailand in the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights.

Hiroshi Motomura is one of the leading scholars in the United States of U.S. immigration and citizenship law and policy. At the UCLA School of Law, he is the Susan Westerberg Prager Distinguished Professor of Law and Faculty Co-Director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy. He is the author of three books on immigration and citizenship: Borders and Belonging (Oxford 2025), Immigration Outside the Law (Oxford 2014), and Americans in Waiting (Oxford 2006). He is also co-author of the casebook, Immigration and Citizenship (West 10th ed. 2026), which is a basic text for teaching the subject in US law schools. He has received several university teaching awards and is one of 26 US law professors profiled in What the Best Law Teachers Do (Harvard 2013). Professor Motomura has testified in the US Congress, is a Nonresident Scholar of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and is a member of the International Migration Review editorial board. He was an outside advisor to the Obama-Biden Transition Team in 2008, has been active as a volunteer attorney in court cases and advocacy efforts, and is a founding director of the Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network (RMIAN). Professor Motomura is also co-host of the podcast, Unsettled: Immigration in Turbulent Times, and he is featured in the Try Guys video, The Try Guys Try Immigrating to America.

Adisorn Keardmongkol is a founding member of the Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR) and currently working as a working group member of the Migrant Working Group (MWG) and the Action Network for Migrants, Stateless Watch Project, and Thai Labour Solidarity Committee.He is also a committee member of the Grassroots Human Rights Education and Development Foundation and part of the editorial team of *Friends Without Borders Magazine*. Previously, he worked as a Programme Officer at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and was involved in parliamentary committees and policy discussions on migration, refugee and stateless persons.