

Labour Rights Foundation (LRF)



The Labour Rights Foundation (LRF) is a worker-led organisation in Thailand dedicated to protecting and promoting migrant workers' rights. It empowers migrant workers to be able to organise themselves, raise their voices, and engage in a meaningful social dialogue with the government, employers, and other stakeholders. LRF also assists workers to get access to justice when their rights are violated.

What are the main issues facing the workers you support in Thailand?

In Thailand, migrant workers from Myanmar face big challenges related to their immigration status. Some leave Myanmar to avoid conscription law and are still undocumented. Some companies in Thailand exploit this situation, making migrants work long hours, with little rest and low wages. But when workplaces are raided by authorities, the migrant workers are arrested and deported because they do not have a work permit or their permit doesn't correspond to that employer or site. Action is rarely taken against employers, just workers.

Wage theft, and situations of forced labour are also big issues. In some large factories like seafood processing, we often see forced labour situations. Workers are pushed to produce more than the standard quota but don't get paid overtime to complete the work. Most don't complain because they are worried about losing their jobs.

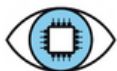
In our latest profile, we talk to Hnin Wut Yee, Director of the Labour Rights Foundation, about the issues facing migrant workers in Thailand and how the partnership with Electronics Watch helps drive systemic change.



Hnin Wut Yee, Director, Labour Rights Foundation

Tell us about a workers' rights achievement you are most proud of.

Last year, we were able to help migrant workers negotiate with management at a seafood factory and get remediation. The Thai government allows migrant workers to renew their work permits by crossing the border back to Myanmar for a few days, during which time factory management should submit list of names to the Ministry of Labour. However they did not do so. Workers who had been at factory for 4-5 years lost their legal status and their jobs. After they asked us for help to talk to the management, over 300 workers eventually got compensation from the factory.





Worker protest. Photo credit: Labour Rights Foundation

We have also helped migrant workers to organise informally. Unionisation is low in Thailand and migrant workers can't form their own unions or become leaders in local unions. So we provided legal support to a group of migrant workers in the electronics and seafood sectors to establish this informal group called Migrant Workers' Solidarity Community, MWSC, together. In early 2025 we helped them hold their first annual meeting, adopt democratic processes and elect 21 committee members. Thanks to the [ElectroPower project](#), we have been able to begin conversations with local unions about collaboration and expanding their membership to include migrant workers.

What are the biggest challenges in your monitoring work right now?

The political environment is challenging right now. It has affected financing, and finding donors to support our work is more difficult, especially with the USAID funding gap. The complex situation in Myanmar, where many migrant workers in Thailand come from, has implications for our work. We also notice increased anti-migrant attitudes.

How does the partnership with Electronics Watch support your work?

Our partnership with Electronics Watch has helped us to understand good quality data, and how to collect reliable evidence. As a civil society organisation we were already collecting the data that workers reported to us, but training on the worker driven monitoring methodology has increased our knowledge. For example, we monitored a large electronics factory where there was a mass layoff of over 400 workers. We were able to systematically collect evidence and get access to remedy for the affected workers.

The partnership has also allowed us to participate in the ElectroPower project. We will be able to monitor five further factories, and offer training to local and migrant workers on how they can use the Electronics Watch worker-driven methodology to raise issues and achieve remedy.

“ We were able to help migrant workers negotiate with management, and get remediation. ”



What changes would you like to see for workers' rights, at national and international level?

In Thailand, the government needs to make sure the recruitment process for migrants is streamlined and made more accessible to workers. At the moment it is very complicated and relies too much on brokers. Thailand and Myanmar should work together to improve the migration system, but the lack of effective government in Myanmar makes this a challenge. We would also like to see Thailand amend the Labour Relations Act, to allow migrants access to freedom of association, to form their own unions and raise their voices. At a global level, supply chain due diligence legislation like the CSDDD should be implemented.

We also want brands to change their ordering practices. The prices that brands offer are so low that many factories hardly make a profit. When brands are sourcing from the global south, they should take workers' rights seriously, not just on paper but in practice. This also means they can't rely solely on audits to ensure suppliers adhere to ethical recruitment and that there is no forced labour. Brands should do due diligence on supply chains with a multistakeholder approach, talking to stakeholders like workers and civil society organisations.



Awareness-raising session for migrant workers.
Photo credit: Labour Rights Foundation

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What are LRF's goals for the next 5 years?

One important goal is for migrant workers to be able to form unions and to independently organise. We want to see the labour laws amended so they can do this, but if they aren't then we hope the informal group we helped set up will get stronger. We want to see migrant workers take leadership roles, and raise their voices at factory and industry level, so we are focusing on empowering them to develop leadership skills.

And a more personal question to end with: what do you enjoy most about your work?

The best part is to earn trust from migrant workers. That they trust me and come to me for workplace (and even personal) issues, and I can give advice and find solutions. I listen to them and respect them so they come to trust me and the organisation, and relax around us even in stressful situations. I have ears for them: I can listen and offer moral and spiritual support. These informal interactions are what I find the most satisfying about the work.

